Towards a 21st Century Social Contract

How did we get here?

A short history of 19th and 20th century social contracts in France and the UK

IDDRI HotorCool

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Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Context and problem

Like the shipwrecked sailors of 1864 who became stranded on a hostile island and were forced to rewrite a constitution to organize their new collective lives,[1] it seems that Western societies need to reflect in depth on their own social systems. The context is one of recurring social and political tensions in recent decades (the Yellow Vests in France, Brexit in the United Kingdom, the farmers protests in several European countries, etc.), a rise in democratic mistrust and polarization of the public debate, and a growing vote for far-right populist parties. It is becoming increasingly clear that the status quo is not a viable option. We need to understand the roots of current predicaments so that we can take action.

The hypothesis guiding this research is as follows: these tensions stem from promises and agreements that are unfulfilled for a significant part of the population. We are talking here about long-term promises and deals, anchored in our social model and our democracy, and structuring dynamics between social groups, the life paths of individuals and their relationship with society. These promises and arrangements are not written down anywhere, and no short-term political proposal can fully respond to them, as they are intertwined in a larger scheme. We therefore think it is crucial that these promises are fully revealed. This report aims to build a framework to comprehensively account for and explain these promises and arrangements, and to mobilize this framework to describe the past trajectory up to today. Analyzing the evolution of these promises over time should help us understand that they are not immutable and identify the conditions for change.

We–IDDRI and the Hot or Cool Institute–as think tanks committed to the ecological transition, believe that this task is essential, because our role is to describe the necessary conditions for a global transformation that will make possible the emergence of societies that respect the planet's boundaries. The obligatory ecological transition seems both very difficult to achieve in the current context, while also requiring the major overhaul of existing social and political systems. We are convinced that today's social tensions and ecological crises share similar socio-economic roots.

1 We refer here to the 1864 shipwreck of the Grafton on the Auckland Islands, and how five crew members survived here for 19 months. This story provides a fascinating case study to teach the foundations of law in this book: https://teachers.plea.org/uploads/content/Shipwrecked-2022-12-02-HB-WEB-revised.pdf

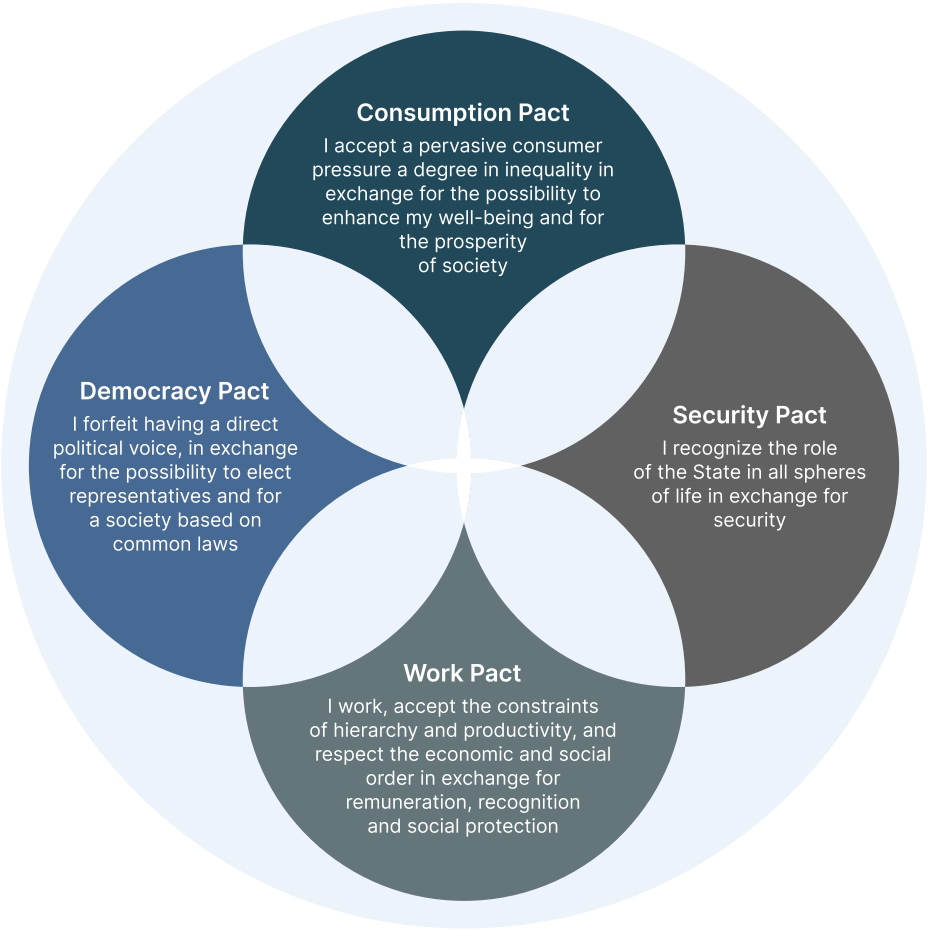
Our framework and approach

Like other organizations, we use the concept of the **social contract** to simultaneously understand the fragility of our current social balances and narratives and their unsuitability for the new ecological context. For the Green Economy Coalition, this concept constitutes an approach to debate and negotiate new agreements to address the polycrisis and implement an environmentally-friendly economy. Workers' unions, both international (ITUC) and European (ETUI), have seized on this concept to highlight the need to discuss the "Work Pact" in light of the ecological transformation, to ensure a just transition. The European think tank Friends of Europe stresses the need for a renewal of the European social contract, at a time when the European project is at a crossroads, with many crises and facing three transitions (digital, green and demographic). We also believe that the concept of the social contract is extremely relevant in reflecting what holds our collective life together and reminding us that we can renegotiate the arrangements/trade-offs that structure society. As we shall see, this makes it possible to examine essential promises such as autonomy and security. This research aims to contribute to these collective considerations by providing an in-depth analysis and a dynamic approach, based on a historical and empirical examination of the social contract.

Based on theoretical study, our framework consists in formulating four pacts (Democratic, Consumption, Security and Work) to understand and investigate our western European social contract. Each pact represents agreements and "compromises", between society and the state, and between different social groups. Together they define social and political rules for the functioning of society. These pacts also represent master narratives that give a meaning to the lives of individuals because a social contract comes with collective promises (e.g. social mobility, recognition of work). This set of rules and deals constitutes the space in which individuals exercise their autonomy (ability to manage their own lives) and cultivate a good life.

This original framework makes it possible to go beyond the usual segmentation of these four major fields (or pacts) and to build a comprehensive vision. Historical analysis shows that it is by taking into account both the rationale of each pact and the interactions between the four of them that we can understand how society works. This social contract approach also enables us to identify the structuring aspirations of our modern society, and to understand what best reflects our collective expectations, promises and disillusionments.

A legacy of the past: representation of the current social contract (in Western European democracies)



This infographic represents our understanding of the current social contract. The space that unfolds around the four pacts is the place where we are supposed to achieve autonomy and the good life. Each pact follows a similar logic: "I accept the current system for democracy, security, consumption and work, despite their disadvantages, provided that I receive enough benefits". Note that these pacts are somehow intangible and implicit and the "I" is more a theoretical subject that expresses the collective mentality, rather than a signifier of a conscious commitment by each individual. This is especially the case for the Consumption Pact: few people would acknowledge being part of this pact; consumption can seem self-evident or taken for granted.

The **Democracy Pact** reflects the lasting tension that exists around the exchange of sovereignty, the ways in which political representation is conceived and by whom power is actually exercised within society. Originally, the **Security Pact** was summed up as follows: it held a monopoly on legitimate violence and, in exchange, ensured the physical security of goods and people. However, it has been extended to a multiplicity of spheres (health, food, social security, etc.), always with the idea that individuals accept a form of consensual exchange, notably in the form of rules and norms. The **Work Pact** is a reflection of the rights and duties of workers and more broadly represents the exchange embedded in the logic of solidarity and the welfare state that we know, for example the exchange of time and productive effort, and the recognition of a social hierarchy based on a meritocracy. The **Consumption Pact** reflects the idea that consumption is not just a right, but also an economic duty (to ensure prosperity in a model based on productivism), a social duty (to conform to a standard of living) and a promise (to belong to society and to rise within it through consumption). In practice, it therefore has its costs: the pervasive pressure of mass consumption, and the concomitant need to earn money, and the resentment of those on the lowest incomes who are left behind.

Our societies cannot be easily changed because they are built on an intricate set of implicit deals between consumers, workers, citizens and institutions. These deals have evolved over long periods of time and have strong implications for the present: they are our socio-political legacy. However, the social contract concept presupposes that we can change these agreements, that the future rests in our ability to adapt them to the challenges society now faces–both environmentally with the crossing of planetary boundaries and socially. To do this, we need to discuss the exchanges and the benefits to be shared by all actors in society. This is the essence of what we call a social contract approach.

Method and scope (France & UK)

On the basis of theoretical work, we first sought to update the social contract concept to provide a framework suited to the questions we are asking in our project, of which the above figure is a simplified illustration. We then used this framework to carry out a historical review of the four pacts in the cases of France and the United Kingdom (or England for the Democracy Pact), over the modern period. Indeed, United Kingdom and France have shared historical and contemporary similarities, such as experiences with world wars and consumer booms: both nations have established national social security systems and cherish their healthcare services. Certainly their paths to democracy differ, with England evolving its democratic system gradually while France experienced a revolutionary introduction. Nonetheless, the narratives of both countries are shaped by prosperity in the mid-20th century, offering insights into broader European social contracts. The contribution and originality of our approach is to anchor reflection on the future social contract in an understanding of its past evolution and current perceptions, with an empirical focus on these two countries.

On the basis of our theoretical and historical work, we define the social contract as follows:

The social contract encompasses the rights we enjoy, the duties we agree to, the responsibilities incumbent on institutions and the narratives we believe in – our adherence presupposes, in theory at least, that we have decided on all these elements collectively, sometimes through fruitful social struggles. These pacts are likely to vary from one social group to another (benefits/compromises, specific rights and duties), while the overall pact remains the same.

The current social contract has, in a way, been the implicit constitution of our common life since at least the end of the 18th century, i.e. the period when we moved away from a divine conception of power towards a democratic and shared conception of power, even if this period has also included some major authoritarian episodes. It should be noted that this contract, if it appears to be a consensus, has in fact been the subject of sometimes unequal power struggles, of political choices that have not been democratically debated, of social struggles, which we wish to transcribe. This social contract is not an 'inevitability'; it could have been quite different, and many social actors have at times tried to bring about alternative narratives, which would include different compromises between social groups.

The social contract of each country is made up of several historical layers. In this sense, it covers much more than the doctrine of one political camp, as well as ideologies such as neoliberalism,[2] even if it is influenced and modified by them. What we call the social contract is the dominant and heterogenous (criss-crossed with diverse influences and histories) form of collective organization that has prevailed for several decades, embedded in a longer history and updated by the dominant ideologies of the period.

Main results and lessons drawn from the historical review

Firstly, this exploration has shown the relevance of seeing the social contract as promises, i.e. as something dynamic that is never attained, but also as something that is bound to change according to collective expectations (no social contract is definitive). This leads to two ways of discussing the limits of our current social contract:

A never ending race for the Consumption and Security Pacts?

The Consumption Pact has led to significant progress in living conditions, and consumption has become an invaluable economic driver for governments, which carefully organize and maintain mass consumption and consumerism. Consumption has thus become the social activity "par excellence", in the sense that it is now expected to fulfil the promises that were once strictly associated with emancipation through work or a deepening of democracy (contribution to common good via ethical consumption; sovereignty of individuals in a market equated with a democracy;

2 Neoliberalism, if we were to define it briefly, would consist of the affirmation of three principles: 1. society is made up of individuals who have a natural right to freedom and who seek to increase their well-being; 2. the aim of any healthy society is to increase its wealth and that of individuals through economic growth–which implies, inter alia, labour flexibility and the globalization of trade; and 3. the role of governments is to regulate markets so as to guarantee free competition. We refer in particular to the definition of the report "Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking Political Economy" written by the Hewlett Foundation (2018): https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Beyond-Neoliberalism-Public-Board-Memo.pdf

social status in society). For all, it is a never-ending race, in which you always have to buy more, and where new services and objects constantly renew and raise consumer standards. As for low income households, the limits on their income, combined with pervasive consumption, puts them in an unbearable situation. In other words, a pact based on achieving a standard of consumption, which is constantly being raised by the functioning of a consumption-based economy, cannot be maintained in an unequal society. The Security Pact has also seen the creation of numerous institutions and rights to reinforce security in various areas of life (health, work, food, civil protection etc.), which has been an important path for social progress, but has gone hand in hand with the ever-increasing sensitivity of society to risk, which can be seen as both a good thing and as something that constantly seeks to raise the bar in terms of security, i.e. what sets the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable risk. This pact is now set to be increasingly confronted with the challenges of climate security.

The Democracy and Work Pacts – are they in standby mode?

The Democracy Pact faces the constant challenge of making possible this radical project of popular sovereignty, but it is riven by power struggles and the perpetual tension between representation and the ideal of direct participation. The Work Pact has also enabled significant progress in the recognition of workers, but is caught up in the classic struggle between labour and capital to share value, and the consequences of economic competition, especially in this era of neoliberal globalization. In a way, we may wonder whether the Work and Democracy Pacts suffer from a lack of renewed promises. Have we really renewed the Fordist compromise around the promises of work and its purpose, and what is now the underlying project? These questions resonate particularly when you consider that 30% of the working population reports experiencing poor job quality at the European level (39% in France),[3] in the sense that the demands of a job exceed a job's resources. As for our duties as citizens, what changes in democratic life could give rise to new collective involvement and contentment? Here too, context is critical, particularly if we consider the politicization of citizens: the number of members of political parties and trade unions has fallen 5 to 10 fold over the last half-century in France and in the United Kingdom.

In addition, a lot of expectations in terms of emancipation have historically been placed on work, but this has come up against limits in the implementation of meritocracy, the valuing of key workers, the quality of working conditions, and the ability to fulfil oneself in one's work. Similarly, as touched on earlier, we today place a great deal of expectation on the Consumption Pact in terms of emancipation and integration into an affluent society, with the above-mentioned limitations. Overall, is the rationale underlying the promises of these four pacts no longer relevant?

Secondly, this analysis also leads us to the following four lessons, which are politically important because they sometimes run counter to preconceived ideas.

A sense of belonging to society is about experiencing and having access to the benefits of the enduring promises of our social contract

There is a lasting legacy of the past, because pacts have become institutions, rules and collective expectations (e.g. the welfare state). For example, it was on the basis of the Consumption and Work Pacts after the Second World War that the concept of the middle class was constructed, with all that it implies in terms of representations and expectations. Moreover, by functioning as master narratives and social norms, these pacts, and particularly the Work and Consumption Pacts, have in a way determined the directions of people's lives. For example, key workers may have oriented their lives according to the attractive promise that they would enjoy social recognition in exchange for their investment: their sense of personal esteem and their social expectations have therefore been constructed in accordance with the dominant norms of the Work Pact. In this context, the gap between the social situations promised and the actual social positions, which are sometimes disappointing, is politically very sensitive. And economic indicators are not always sufficient to identify "slight" social deterioration. However, these "small" differences in terms of relative social positions can translate into major impacts in terms of people's feelings and social self-appraisal, which is not without effect on their socialization and politicization. For example, a small drop in salary can lead to the feeling that one can no longer consume like "everyone else", that one is not part of "normal" society. And questioning your sector of activity can lead to a weakening of the ability of workers to belong to society (recognition, fear of the future, insecurity). A social contract approach makes us more aware of these issues.

Not only freedoms to protect but also autonomy to build

The historical review reflects an overall increase in autonomy. The last two centuries have strengthened the ability of individuals to choose their work and their role in society, to develop their lifestyles and to improve their living conditions through consumption. Individuals have benefited from institutions providing various forms of security enabling them to plan for the future and to manage one's own life, while also providing greater accountability of public decision-makers and better voting conditions. The demand for autonomy has mutated over time, and the realization of this aspiration is never complete. Promises and associated disappointments must be understood in the light of this overall movement towards greater autonomy (which also corresponds to a fundamental need according to the theories

3 https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/job-quality-pivotal-addressing-todays-workplace-and-societal-challenges

of human needs). In a way, we need to think dynamically and abandon the convenient but misleading idea of equilibrium when we consider the state of society.

Autonomy, emancipation and freedom are connected concepts at the heart of our social contract, because society is both what makes freedom possible and what constrains us. Too often, freedom is perceived only as an individual reality to be protected, in opposition to a society that would limit it. Our historical analysis reminds us, on the contrary, that while freedom has been established as a fundamental right,[4] its actual implementation in a complex society is a collective and social process (Polanyi, 1944), accomplished through the four pacts. To speak of autonomy and emancipation therefore implies taking a close look at the institutions and the real situations and processes that condition our experience of freedom via access to consumption, democratic life, working conditions and the implementation of a protective framework. It implies, in other words, the examination of the concrete application of our social contract that is currently creating social tensions. Increasing autonomy is not therefore a natural law, nor is it a quiet, consensual process of gradual improvement, but more the result of collective actions and social conflicts. While the 'quest' for autonomy is not without its political opponents, nor without encountering obstacles or generating downsides when it is not supported by the resources and institutions that make it accessible in practice, or when the logic of individualization and responsibility goes too far, leading the most disadvantaged to a feeling of insecurity or being left behind. These lessons are crucial for thinking about the ecological transition, which itself brings its own challenges in this regard.

More individual autonomy and more solidarity can go together

While individualism is often associated with selfishness, it is clear that autonomy and solidarity are not mutually exclusive–on the contrary. The more individuals become singularized and specialized in their professional roles (which is the trend in modern societies), the more they need each other. This can be seen in two ways. The historical review shows that it is largely through collective action–associated with technical and economic progress–that gains in individual autonomy have been achieved. Work on cultural values tends to show that the more individualistic we become, the more value we place on the individual, which translates into growing values of altruism and aspiration for solidarity.

Security as a result of fulfilling the four pacts

A certain level of security is a prerequisite for being able to live one's life with dignity, and with a minimum of autonomy, as our historical review shows. And our framework underlines the fact that the sense of security has to be considered through all of the four pacts, as it is clear that the social insecurities created by job conditions, the state of public services, and inequalities in consumption are cumulative in their impact on individuals. At a time when ecological crises are an important threat to our security, it is crucial that we consider employment, the organization of consumption and democratic practices in the search for a greater sense of security.

A broken social contract for some is a broken social contract for everyone

Finally, a historical analysis of the four pacts right up to the present situation reveals signs of unfulfilled promises and a logic that has run out of steam. For a section of society, the social contract no longer seems to be (totally) fulfilled. A broken social contract for a significant part of the population means a broken social contract for society as a whole. While weakening the rules and grand narratives that we all share is far from harmless: it means a democracy at risk, a society torn apart, and an economy that can no longer deliver the shared prosperity we expect. Why? Because the social contract symbolizes the collective rules and arrangements that must be respected to make the constraints on our freedom legitimate and acceptable. Behind the pacts, there is also a form of social contract between elites (i.e. those with the most political and economic power) and the rest of the population. Taken together, these elements seem to be a good way of understanding the rise in tensions, and in particular the vote for authoritarian populist parties.

The good news is that our social contract can change, as our historical review clearly shows. No social pact is 'inevitable' or 'natural' in the sense that it is self-evident, or could not have been conceived otherwise: it is always the result of choices derived from a diversity of possible projects for society. The constant possibility of change is a powerful political lever.

How to use this study and the next steps of our project

A template for a new conversation

The social contract approach that we have developed and applied, with this study as a first milestone, seems usable for several purposes. 1) To gain a new perspective on pressing political issues and to better understand the present situation and challenges ahead, as illustrated in this report. 2) To provide a basis for thinking about new political narratives, which can be useful to political parties, civil society actors and the business world. It seems clear that we lack powerful political narratives that have fully integrated the new ecological situation into a renewed social and political vision. 3) To provide material for participatory democratic processes (a historical review, a lexicon specific

4 "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can only be based on common utility", Article 1, *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, 1789.

to the idea of a pact and negotiated exchanges) because the concept of the social contract implies, in one way or another, forms of democratic deliberation. Fundamentally, this constitutes a template to organize the complex discussions we need to have on how we can reconcile social progress and ecological transition, for example, by facilitating joint reflection with sectoral experts who are facing implementation difficulties, with the promoters of initiatives embodying new models of society, with civil society committed to a more equitable and sustainable society.

Conditions and coalitions for a new social contract

The social contract approach makes it possible to formulate the question of the conditions for change in society. While this concept refers to a fictitious situation, over the course of history it has taken concrete form in institutions, promises, concepts and demands that are well established in our societies. The changes in the pacts have sometimes also been made clear through landmark events and reports.[5] This gives us some guidelines: are the nature and intensity of social, economic and political tensions comparable with these historical moments? Can the problems identified be resolved within the current paradigm? Do we have enough critical ideas to bring about an alternative? What coalitions will enable us to project ourselves into the future and into a balance of power favourable to a new social contract?

The social contract approach is another way of looking at the issue of how to ensure a good life for all, and how to achieve this within planetary limits, an issue of growing interest to the scientific community. Considering the subject at the intersection of these four pacts means looking at the 'good life' not just in terms of what is provided to the individual, but in terms of what links him or her to others through the four pacts, what links past promises to present achievements, what links rights and duties, and what binds social groups together. Each pact contributes to a specific definition of what a good life is, and the relative influence of pacts on social life, which says something about the appearance of society overall. Raising the question of a new social contract is also a way of addressing the social and political sources of well-being. For example, crossing a well-being threshold due to insufficient income could be interpreted as the social conditions that make it no longer possible to live in a way that is consistent with the dominant norms stemming from the Work and Consumption Pacts in particular.

Next steps of our exploration

This first historical stage has enabled us to mobilize numerous empirical elements to bring them into dialogue with our theoretical framework. We need to continue in this direction. How do citizens perceive their society's social contract, its rights and duties? How does it relate to the direction their lives have taken and their consumption, work and democratic practices? How can we visualize our social contract more empirically? To answer these questions, we will publish a second part of our exploration based on 1) a series of focus groups of citizens organized in the UK; 2) a number of semi-structured interviews carried out in France; and 3) the construction of a dashboard of quantitative indicators representing key dimensions of our social contract. This will enable us to deepen our understanding of the current situation: is it a crisis, in the sense of a loss of landmarks and a questioning of the existing order, when tensions and failures become widely identified within the population? While we are often only aware of economic (e.g. the 2008 crisis) and, more recently, health crises, our work provides the added value of raising the question of a latent crisis at a socio-political level, whose occasional eruptions must be understood and addressed.

5 Such as the strikes occurring in France after the victory of the Popular Front in 1936; the Beveridge Report in 1942 in the United Kingdom; and the resistance programme *"Les Jours Heureux"* in France that founded the welfare state; the Mont Pelerin Society created in 1947; and Reagan and Thatcher's speeches of the 1970s that framed the neoliberal project.

Introduction

Context: facing the ecological crisis with a weakened social contract

The ecological transition is on everyone's lips these days. Yet there still seems to be a huge gap between this general concern and the practical implementation of environmental *and fair* policies

This is because, even before the environmental crisis, there remains an even more worrying problem, that of the apparent malfunctioning of our current social contract. Disillusioned by the unfulfilled promises and the grand narratives of our modern societies (meritocracy, equality, greater autonomy through work, the right to employment and housing, the democratization of consumption, etc.), many citizens seem to feel that social degradation is underway. This observation, which is a starting point for our approach, was reflected in particular in the Yellow Vests Protests in France and similar episodes in other European countries since then.

At what level exactly? As we shall see in the historical analysis, all four of our pacts, namely democracy, work, consumption and security *(see diagram below)*, are experiencing challenges, failures and questioning. The Work and Security Pacts have been weakened by the return of a form of social instability and insecurity, aggravated by deindustrialization, which dismantled the structures of strong collective links among the working classes.[6] Work has become more precarious, with the development of atypical forms of employment, which for too many people has led to an inability to project oneself into the future[7] and a feeling of losing control over one's social pathway. At the same time, the promises associated with mass consumption are generating frustration and inequality, and representative democracy is going through a series of difficulties and disputes. There is also a growing and dangerous disillusionment with politics and democracy. This feeling seems to be progressing through the social structure from the bottom up, and now affects the lower middle classes who have previously been spared.[8] This situation has lead to an increase in the vote for far-right parties and leaders who exploit this resentment. In other words, our society's most basic social pacts seem to be unravelling.

A broken contract for some is a broken contract for all. Weakening the rules and grand narratives that we all share is far from harmless: it means a democracy at risk, and an economy that can no longer deliver the shared prosperity we expect. Why? Because the social contract symbolizes the collective rules and arrangements that must be respected to make the constraints on our freedom legitimate and acceptable. A broken social contract undermines both the meaning of individual pathways through life and the ties that bind us together.

This raises profound questions about how the transition is promoted. The feeling of mistrust is immense, and the benefits of lifestyle changes are difficult to see when budgets and daily life are constrained for so many, particularly when promises are made with long-term perspectives. Regarding the narrative of an ecological transition that is "joyful" because it is socially favourable, this is unlikely to be sufficient for it to win assent and support. The optimistic expectation for the widespread awareness of ecological crises to translate into a growing consensus for the implementation of ambitious environmental policies appears to be illusory, given the extent to which the transition challenges social balances, established interests and norms. This will require more than a gradual increase in awareness within society; it will require new negotiations and new social and political compromises. The Yellow Vest Protests in France have been a clear expression of this, and since then, numerous movements in other European countries (e.g. the recent protests by farmers) have revealed the same reality. Added to this are other crises, which have also had profound consequences in terms of polarization and damaging trust in experts and scientific research, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. This context has an impact on the ability to debate and determine what constitutes a "just" ecological transition, and therefore to overcome the multiple social resistances it encounters.

We urgently need to understand the roots of our current condition and to identify ways of dealing with accompanying political problems to support the process that will reconcile ecology and social progress. We believe that political and social life is a set of compromises, rights and duties, negotiations, expectations,

6 Nonna Mayer, "Le sentiment dominant chez les ouvriers et les employés est de ne plus être politiquement représentés par aucun parti", *Germinal*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2021, pp. 148-155.

7 Nicolas Duvoux, *L'avenir confisqué. Inégalités de temps vécu, classes sociales et patrimoine,* PUF, Paris, 2023.

8 OECD (2019), Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/689afed1-en; Camille Peugny, Marion Fontaine, Cyril Lemieux, "La montée des risques de déclassement contribue à la distance entre classes moyennes et classes populaires", *Germinal*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2021, pp. 44-51.

compensations, promises and agreements between citizens, the state and intermediary bodies, which means that the notion of a social contract seems particularly relevant to a better understanding of *what is failing to happen* currently, and to identify what social conditions need to be preserved or proposed for a transition to take place. This will enable us to reflect on the objective of transition by first considering the various balances and social pacts that we hold dear, and which are always likely to be shaken when we undertake a global transformation. We believe that framing political debate by means of a social contract is a way of progressing and reconnecting as many people as possible with a democratic process that is giving rise to growing mistrust and high levels of abstention.

What do we mean by "social contract", where does it come from and why is it a helpful approach?

A "new eco-social contract": a notion on the agenda for many organizations

Over the past few years, a wide range of actors from a variety of backgrounds and countries have mobilized the concept of the social contract. It would be impossible to provide an exhaustive list within these pages of the articles, op-eds and speeches that mobilize this concept. All these initiatives and works seem to converge towards a shared observation: given the major hazards ahead and the absolute necessity for a great ecological transformation, it is essential to review the pacts that structure our society and to forge new ones to ensure a just transition. The economic dimension, linked to work and the sharing of value, is generally quite central to these approaches.

In the middle of the pandemic in 2020, the UN Secretary-General A. Guterres called for a world of equal opportunities, rights and freedoms, evoking the idea of a new social contract, which is to be found in the work programmes of several institutions. This concept also resonates with the idea of the Green New Deal discussed in the USA and the European Green Deal.[9] For UNRISD (2022), inequalities have been, in a context of neoliberal globalization, a "driver, amplifier and consequence of multiple and overlapping crises – economic, social, political and ecological", leading to ruptures in our social contracts. Assuming that existing contracts have been renegotiated during periods of crises and junctures, it is time to open up new processes for new eco-social contracts. For the Green Economy Coalition it is now necessary to give ourselves the means to debate and negotiate new deals to face up to the polycrisis and implement an environmentally-friendly economy. These discussions need to take place on all continents and at different scales and the growing wave of deliberative democratic action is an opportunity to do just that (Mohamed, 2023). Workers' unions, both international (ITUC) and European (ETUI), have seized on this concept to highlight the need to reappraise the "Work Pact" in light of the ecological transformation, to ensure a just transition. The European think tank Friends of Europe has made the renewal of the European social contract one of its priorities, at a time when the European project is at a crossroads, with so many crises and dangers, and three transitions that lay ahead (digital, green and demographic). This has led them to put forward 10 proposals, with a view to the European elections, combining economic governance and taxation, democracy and institutional reform, social policies and geopolitical strategy, to revitalize the European project and rebuild trust. It is also worth mentioning the work of the former director of the London School of Economics, N. Shafik (2018),[10] as presented in the journal of the International Monetary Fund: a new social contract is needed to respond to the fear generated by technological development and globalization and the rejection of an economic system that does not work for everyone. These social problems (insufficient social mobility) and economic problems (inequality) are reflected in the political sphere (anger towards those in power, mistrust...), creating a tipping point for many democracies. We need to both rethink our welfare state systems along with the rights and obligations of citizenship. The concept also resonates with those who point to the limits of neoliberalism and call for a new paradigm. As part of the Hewlett Foundation's "New common sense" initiative, which aims to consider the next ideology to replace neoliberalism, the social contract term is used to describe the new political economy to be created (i.e., the set of ideas that helps to make sense of the world and the set of principles organizing the power relations between economic actors).[11] As part of a wide-ranging expert appraisal involving the natural sciences, the humanities and social sciences, the WBGU has mobilized the concept of a social contract for sustainability to think about the "great transformation" required (in reference to K. Polanyi's description of the emergence of industrial societies), a challenge that is unique from a historical point of view in that it

9 See the article in the Grand Continent by L. Tubiana "The Green Deal is the new social contract", which refers to the intersection between the growth pact (production and consumption) and the solidarity pact; the text emphasizes the issue of the distribution of costs and benefits of the transition to justify the need for a new "contract".

10 What We Owe Each Other: A New Social Contract for a Better Society

11 Neoliberalism, if we were to define it briefly, would then consist of the affirmation of three principles: 1. Society is made up of individuals who have a natural right to freedom and who seek to increase their welfare; 2. The aim of any healthy society is to increase its wealth and that of individuals through economic growth–which implies, among other things, labour flexibility and the globalization of trade; and 3. The role of government is to regulate markets so as to guarantee free competition. We refer in particular to the definition of the report "Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking Political Economy" written by the Hewlett Foundation (2018). Online: https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Beyond-Neoliberalism-Public-Board-Memo.pdf

must be actively organized and planned, whereas past examples were the result of "gradual evolutionary change". In France, the Ecological Transition Agency has mobilized the concept of the social contract to think about the conditions for efficiency and fairness in the future of carbon taxation, based on past French experience (the Yellow Vest Protests) (Ademe, 2022). Finally, the Dutch political party "New Social Contract" was founded in 2023, highlighting the need to strengthen countervailing powers in the governance of the state and to reduce neoliberal influence.[12] This non-exhaustive overview shows that many organizations share a common diagnosis and are working on different aspects. Our work is part of this movement and aims to provide analytical foundations to advance this area of interest.

The originality of our approach

In this context, and on the basis of the diagnosis made by these works, which we share, **the contribution and originality of our approach is:**

1. to provide a historical and empirical approach to anchor reflection on the future social contract in an understanding of its past evolution and current perceptions, with a firm focus on two countries (France and the UK). It is not a question of immediately mobilizing the social contract approach to find solutions–which of course remains the objective–but of first mobilizing it to understand social problems and causes and to propose a framework. This historical framework will also highlight the alternative narratives and the diversity of pact proposals that have emerged at different times in history but have failed to take hold: they also make up our framework and the precedents we need to re-examine.

Future stages of the project will involve empirical work to better connect with the reality of citizens (interviews, focus groups, indicator dashboard) and a translation into the field of participatory democracy.

2. to mobilize this notion from the perspective of environmental policies, notably in relation to lifestyles, a subject which mobilizes both our institutes. The lifestyle prism (food, transport, housing, etc.) is attracting growing scientific interest, as it enables us to fully grasp the issues and make progress in identifying the conditions for change. It allows the individual scale to be illuminated by the collective scale, and for connections between the two to be made (HotorCool, 2021, IDDRI, 2024).

3. and thus to broaden the use of the social contract concept. In the above-mentioned studies, the main focus is the democratic and economic dimensions, and we think it is also crucial to introduce the question of consumption, which has become so central to our societies; and that of security (and solidarity), which is very present in the historical notion of the social contract and which is crucial in a time of ecological crisis. In doing so, and in addition to an approach that would focus solely on economic aspects, with this approach we seek to understand the social (e.g. recognition and dignity; reality of interdependencies), political (e.g. who has the decision-making power) and economic (e.g. how to ensure an equitable sharing of resources) dimensions of any agreements. The question of nature as a reality of the social contract is also an element to be considered (*see Box: The place of Nature in social contracts*). Within this framework, we wanted to develop the use of this concept further, which will involve mobilizing empirical approaches to visualize and grasp this concept (interviews, focus groups, mobilization of an indicator dashboard).

A little background on the concept and our approach

An idea with a long history

The idea of a social contract emerged in the 17th century and presents itself as an inspiring fiction about our political life: the social contract refers to the process whereby disassociated individuals one day decide to associate to extricate themselves from an apolitical and unjust state. Such a narrative suggests that our political system emerged from an agreement and negotiations between the rulers and ruled, which legitimized the power of the state without having to resort to any divine order. For the political philosophers of the time, such as Hobbes and Locke, this idea made it possible to understand that it was in the interests of citizens to submit to a political sovereign who maintained law and order, despite the loss of certain freedoms for civil society. As we can see, the idea of the social contract is typical of modernity: it considers that politics should be the subject of enlightened rational discussion, and that we are capable of making our own political rules. This concept allows us to work in depth on the issues of autonomy and freedom (*see Theoretical note*).

Philosophical foundations of our society

The social contract gave rise to the idea of a society defining its own laws, without any divine transcendence or imposition from external authorities. It is therefore natural that we call for a new social contract to build the society of tomorrow–because this construction rests in the hands of its members and not in a superior and external authority. It also conveys the idea of compromise, of negotiated exchange (natural rights versus protection, in Hobbes; false liberty versus true liberty in Rousseau, etc.); and social life. The daily coexistence of individuals is made up of compromises and negotiations–which means being aware of any unequal power relations. And other dimensions have been added to think about the question of morality and justice. For Kant, the moral autonomy of the individual through the principle of universality links the individual and the collective (an action is good when the principle underlying it can be universalized, i.e. it applies to the world as a whole without making human life impossible). J. Rawls also showed that we can agree to principles of justice to organize society, through the collective experience of the "veil of

12 The creation of this party is linked to the scandal of the false accusation of fraud over childcare benefits https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/14/pieter-omtzigt-centrist-outsider-who-wants-to-remake-dutch-politics-in-his-own-image. See the manifesto: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_New_Social_Contract

ignorance" (a fictitious situation in which individuals are completely unaware of their natural assets and their place in society, but each knows that they are "partners in a cooperative project: society"). To put it simply, this framework makes it possible to secure the link between the individual and the collective at the centre, and to productively consider the issue. As we will see, this involves crucial issues and concepts such as emancipation (a collective process enabling the acquisition of rights through social struggles), autonomy (a capacity to manage one's own life, which involves a certain degree of social protection, social relations and solidarities e.g. at work) and freedom (an ideal right that requires the struggle for emancipation and autonomy to be implemented in the reality of society).

Our own vision of the concept

However, this notion, if it is not updated, reveals several limits: for example, it is sometimes too abstract, too binary and it excludes nature from its figuration of social life. (see Theoretical note for further developments). Nor should this notion of a social contract obscure the fact that our arrangements have been the subject of often unequal power struggles and social struggles, and that they are far from expressing a perfect social consensus between groups. Each time a pact is established or made explicit, it is in a way a vision that has imposed itself among the diversity of social proposals then in confrontation. Moreover, we have to go beyond the definition of the individual as a free electron, as in the fictitious situation, to see the individual as the result of a social life based on solidarities and rich in social relationships. We have decided to modernize it, while respecting its theoretical principles, to make it adequate for the challenges of today. In other words, we adapt it to the needs of an exploration that is intended to be empirical. We have identified four dimensions that are essential to our modern social contract: work, consumption, democracy and security. They are central elements of our social contract, because they embody spheres of activity that are always subject to negotiation, changing legislation, social struggles, conflicts over recognition and justice, and are the product of collective decisions. Thus, to the classic political dimensions–the exchange of freedom for security; a society giving itself its own laws–are added two other dimensions completing the socio-economic plan. Work and consumption are two forms of negotiated exchange which have become central to the governance of society in the broad sense, i.e. of its political order, because of the major social and political place acquired by the market and its needs.

This leads us to name and specify what we mean in concrete terms by this concept.

The social contract is the set of rules, expectations, promises and social balances that we have, over history, collectively agreed (sometimes unfairly for certain groups, sometimes only in theory and without actually putting them into practice) and which explain our current social and political life. In other words, the social contract encompasses the rights we enjoy, the duties we agree to, the responsibilities incumbent on institutions and the narratives we believe in–all adherences that presuppose that we have decided on all these elements collectively, sometimes through fruitful social struggles. These pacts are likely to vary from one social group to another (benefits/compromises, specific rights and duties), while the overall pact (Consumption, Work, Security or Democracy) remains the same.

The current social contract has, in a way, been the implicit constitution of our common life since at least the end of the 18th century, i.e. the period when we moved away from a divine conception of power towards a democratic and shared conception of power, even if this has also included some major authoritarian episodes. It should also be noted that this contract, if it appears to be a consensus, has in fact been the subject of sometimes unequal power struggles, of political choices that have not been democratically debated, of social struggles, which we wish to transcribe. This social contract is not an 'inevitability'; it could have been quite different, and many social actors have at times tried to bring about alternative narratives, which includes different compromises between social groups.

The social contract of each country is made up of several historical layers. In this sense, it goes beyond the doctrine of one political camp,[13] as well as ideologies such as neoliberalism,[14] even if it is influenced and modified by them. What we call the social contract is the dominant and heterogenous (criss-crossed with diverse influences and histories) form of collective organization for a few decades, embedded in a longer history and updated by the dominant ideologies of the period.

13 This article by former French Prime Minister E. Philippe shows that, in a way, it is the reflection on the need for a new social contract that implies the need to renew political doctrine. https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/06/27/une-doctrine-pour-les-droites-de-nos-annees-vingt/

14 For a definition of this ideology, see footnote 11 p. 13.

Why a social contract approach is very useful

Our societies are difficult to change because they are built on an intricate set of implicit arrangements between consumers, workers, citizens and institutions. These deals have evolved over long periods of time and have strong implications for the present: they are our socio-political legacy. But the social contract concept also presupposes that *we can change these deals*, even if they have strong effects in the present, in order to adapt them to the challenges society is now facing–both environmentally and socially. To do this, we need to discuss the compromises and the benefits to be shared by all actors in society. This is the essence of what we call a social contract approach.

This social contract approach enables us to identify what the structuring aspirations of our modern society are, and to understand what reflects the most of our collective expectations, promises and disillusionments. In our framework, we have identified a Work Pact, a Consumption Pact, a Security Pact and a Democracy Pact because they seem to subsume several of the most fundamental aspects of our modern lives (*see figure below and our Theoretical note, to understand the choice of these four pacts*). In particular, and as we will see in the historical chapter and the lessons learned section, the issues of autonomy and security are at the crossroads between these four pacts and at the heart of our social contract approach.

So, in relation to the challenges described above, this approach seems to us to be crucial for understanding why there are tensions. It brings a better understanding of what is being shaken up by the transition and possible changes, which must necessarily be thought of in systemic terms because societies are an intricate set of agreements between consumers, workers, citizens and institutions. With its four pacts, our framework allows a comprehensive look.

Moreover, it brings a fundamentally democratic approach, which considers that society can set its own rules through ideas of compromise and negotiated exchange. In this way, we see our work as a method, as a way to support debates and prepare participatory initiatives, i.e. as a way to think forward in a democratic way. The social contract approach does not imply that everything can be, and has been in the past, the subject of consensus: on the contrary, it reveals the compromises made through history, which include losses and gains, and which are also the result of conflicts between actors in society. This will also be the case for a new social contract. In this perspective, if the social contract approach is useful for understanding the production of past compromises, elaborated by diverse "social/political coalitions", then it seems also useful for making progress in building new social/political coalitions capable of implementing an ambitious ecological transition.

Our framework and method. A historical review to provide references for understanding the present and thinking about the future

The method used in this study is 1) a theoretical work to build our analysis framework using the social contract concept: a working paper is available to complement the section of this report. On this theoretical basis, 2) we carried out a historical analysis on the French and British cases as a first step of the project. The approach consisted of compiling a list of the elements that make it possible to describe the history of these four pacts.

This historical review is a critical foundation for our work on the future social contract. Imagining new pacts for the future requires an understanding of where current pacts come from, and how they were built and evolved in the past. Indeed, our current institutions, representations and expectations are still influenced by the pacts of the past, but these pacts are sometimes implicit, or seem hard to distinguish (e.g. the Consumption Pact). Moreover these pacts are likely to vary slightly from one social group to another: while the overall pact (Consumption, Work, Security or Democracy) remains the same, the content of its benefits or compromises may vary according to the social actors involved.

We want to clarify this complexity or these implicit notions to better understand the challenges that lie ahead and to prepare for action: there is an enduring legacy of the past which we need to understand. This historical review is also important to show that social contracts can change. While this may seem a formidable challenge, history shows that change and negotiation are possible. The evolutions of the pacts in the past constitute a repertory of experiences to use in current debates. They can inform us on the changes concerning promises, collective expectations, and values that happened in the past. Our framework distinguishes four distinct pacts to facilitate the analysis. But it is clear that crucial things happen with the feedback between pacts. The historical review is useful to shed light on the interactions between pacts, thus revealing the true logic of the social contract.

The social contract concept and our approach

Theoretical background

This section is based on the work of Clémence Nasr, which will soon be available on the IDDRI website as a working paper.

The social contract: a theoretical concept

The notion of the social contract is a theoretical concept in terms of both its content and its origin: its content is theoretical because the social contract is an abstraction, a fiction, which offers a metaphorical story (and not a real description) of the origin and function of society. It explains that human beings previously lived in a chaotic state of nature, characterized by the absence of institutions, power struggles, rivalries between individuals and perpetual dispossession. Deciding to put an end to this permanent state of war, they came together, *formed a society,* and gave themselves institutions, laws and protection. According to this narrative, society is the result of a shared will, and all its members are consenting signatories.

Moreover, the notion of the social contract is theoretical in the sense that it was developed through theoretical texts, particularly those of the political philosophy of the Enlightenment. This is how Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau came to conceive of the existence of a political order specific to modern societies. In this case, the recourse to this fiction, in which individuals leave behind the state of nature and come together to create a political authority, stems from a normative ambition common to all three thinkers: to put forward a theory of the most desirable political configuration. While the different theories of the contract vary in many respects, they converge on at least the following points:

→ The social contract refers to an act of defining the relationship between governors and the governed–in other words, an act of defining the conditions for exercising political sovereignty. The social contract thus establishes not only the obedience of individuals to political authority but sometimes also implies bonds of mutual obligation between those who govern and those who are governed". This being the case, the social contract is compatible with different political regimes, i.e. different forms of government

→ The social contract is also linked to individualist theories because it relates the origin of human societies to an agreement between free and voluntary individuals, who predate collective life. They are therefore the first realities of collective life, rather than the product of that collective life–even when the political order is based on a general will, as is the case with Rousseau.

With that in mind, what do we gain from reviving this theoretical notion, whose origins lie in philosophy? What does it allow us to see, and what directions does it urge us to follow?

A term that marks the entry into modernity

1. "Modernity: what are we talking about?

First, we need to clarify what we mean by "modernity". The term refers to the period after the Middle Ages, characterized by a 'social revolution', a 'new type of society' that gradually emerged because of various economic, technical, political and social dynamics (Hulak 2013, 555) in the West and still constitutes our background today. The valorization of rationality, the formation of a critical mind towards traditions, the accentuation of the division of labour, the development of a new form of State, as well as the attachment to democratic values and individual rights, are characteristic features.[15] Finally, it should be noted that modernity seems to combine a dynamic of emancipation and self-determination–a dual aspiration characteristic of modern societies–with the gradual introduction of a capitalist economy and modes of production: the exploitation of resources is seen as a condition for abundance, prosperity, and social progress (Charbonnier, 2020).

It should be noted that such a type of society, from the perspective of a sociologist like Émile Durkheim, is not based on the disappearance but rather on the transformation of the solidarity at work in our collectives. modernity no longer activates mechanical solidarity (societies with little differentiation, characterized by a weak division of labour and a strong attachment to collective values), but organic solidarity (highly differentiated societies, characterized by the interdependence and complementarity of

15 See Florence Hulak, "L'avènement de la modernité. La commune médiévale chez Max Weber et Émile Durkheim", *Archives de Philosophie*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2013, pp. 553-569; Jean Baudrillard, article "Modernité", *Encyclopaedia Universalis;* Hans Blumbenberg, *La Légitimité des Temps modernes* (1966), Gallimard, Paris, 1999; Georg Simmel, "L'individualisme moderne" (1917), in *Philosophie de la modernité,* tome 1, pp. 281-325, Payot, Paris, 1989; Bruno Karsenti, "Sociologie, philosophie: la modernité en question", *Archives de Philosophie,* vol. 76, no. 4, 2013, pp. 547-551.

professional functions, and the individualization of practices).[16] In modern societies, professional activities are becoming increasingly complex and specialized, making individuals *dependent on* one another–an interpretation that contradicts the commonplace view that modern individuals are increasingly disengaged from one another.

From this point of view, modernity is inhabited by what appears to be a paradox: the individual, rather than the community, is elevated as an absolute value (this is individualism), but this cultural mutation goes hand in hand with an objective increase in the types of links (professional, institutional, economic, social, etc.) between the members of a society, and even between nation states. Today's globalized trade provides a good example of this: never have relationships been so developed and complexified from one end of the chain to the other, between buyer and seller, compared with the trading relationship of the medieval era.[17]

Lastly, it should be pointed out that although the establishment of modernity is a long-term process, it has nonetheless had several pivotal moments, which support and accelerate its evolution: the 17th century in United Kingdom, the French Revolution in terms of law, mores and mentalities, and then the Industrial Revolution in terms of socio-economics and technology, marked a break with the preceding centuries, and introduced ways of producing, working, travelling, politicizing, consuming and exploiting nature that were truly modern.[18]

2. The social contract and modernity

The notion of the social contract is interesting because it represents a historic entry point into modernity, and crystallizes a moment when people began to think differently about the meaning and value of political and social life.

The social contract refers to the idea that the political order is henceforth conceived as separate from the divine order: the theories of the contract, in the history of political thought, are part of a major break. With these theories, political authority can no longer be explained or justified by the existence of God. Even if, as in Hobbes, the sovereign is defined as an absolute power (the Leviathan)–and must base his action on the "knowledge of God's natural laws", he does not derive his legitimacy from God but from "each of the individuals who make up the people" (Zarka 2012).

Despite its name, the 'social' contract is a concept that refers to the existence of the individual and its primacy–a characteristic gesture of modern societies: for social contract theorists, individuals exist naturally, and then they create society, a useful artifice for their organized coexistence. Their approach is therefore essentially individualistic in a methodological sense. With Rousseau, things are more complex, because the general will seems to make individuals 'disappear': it seems to go beyond the agreement between individuals and lead to a reality that we might therefore be more tempted to describe as 'social'. However, as the sociologist Emile Durkheim explains, the general will still refers to "the common interest, [which] is that of the average individual", without examining the disparities between social groups (*Ibid.*).

Modernity enshrines the importance of autonomy for individuals and social groups…

…in political terms. Autonomy has been a genuine modern concern, and it is precisely the theories of the social contract that have formalized it. Indeed, contractualist theories presuppose that individuals have rights, that they are subjects of rights, and that they must therefore debate collectively to provide themselves with their own political rules (*auto-nomos*). Thus, although social contract theories are methodologically individualistic, they introduce a collective dimension. The social contract, through the principles of deliberation and citizen negotiation that it presupposes, leads to the establishment of a society based on shared norms and the importance of *consent,* and in so doing enshrines the advent of political autonomy (Locke 1728; Quintard 2019).

…and morally. It was Immanuel Kant, in the 18th century, who established the idea of autonomy in its moral sense: for the philosopher, the individual has the capacity, at least in potential, to become the true source of their actions and aspirations. In this sense, they have the possibility of freeing themselves from several guardianships and influences that usually weigh on their decision-making–arbitrary power, social pressures, external influences, but also hidden intentions, passions, and desires. It is moral capacity that enables the individual to free themselves from these constraints.[19] In fact, Kant believes that the moral law is inscribed in every human reason, that it is universal, and that it expresses itself at every moment to indicate what is right in any given situation. To follow the moral law, then, is first and foremost to follow one's reason (rather than one's moods or volatile passions); it is also to

16 Throughout the pre-modern era, the value and even the *representation* of the individual is weak or non-existent: the destiny and social role of individuals are relative and dependent on their place in the community to which they belong; and this place is itself determined by the family into which they are born. So, in the pre-modern era, we do not represent the individual; it is the representation of the community that takes precedence. Why do we do this? Because, in a way, individuals are similar, in the sense that their consciousnesses are invested with the same impressions and feelings, and it is the "common consciousness" that predominates (Durkheim 1893, 275). The accentuation of social division changes the situation. Social differentiation and the diversity of social functions to be occupied that this accentuation entails leave more room for the construction of particular trajectories and individual particularities. See Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social* [1893], Paris, PUF, 2015.

17 See Natacha Coquery, "La diffusion des biens à l'époque moderne. A connected history of consumption", *Urban History,* vol. 30, no. 1, 2011, pp. 5-20; Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of 18th-Century England,* London, Europa Publications, 1982.

18 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, Sandrine Kott (eds.), *Thierry Nadau. Itinéraires marchands du goût moderne. Produits alimentaires et modernisation rurale en France et en Allemagne (1870-1940),* Paris, MSH Editions, 2005; Jacques Guilhaumou," La modernité politique de la Révolution française", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez,* 36-1, 2006, pp. 17-34; Stéphane Gacon, " L"âge industriel ou le triomphe de la modernité ", in *L'Europe. Histoire et civilisation,* Paris, Armand Colin, 2017, pp. 95-110; Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, Christophe Bonneuil, *L'Événement anthropocène. La Terre, l'histoire et nous,* Paris, Seuil, 2013.

19 Monique Canto-Sperber, Ruwen Ogien, La philosophie morale, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2017, p. 45.

follow one's *own reason*, rather than to obey an external injunction; and finally, it is to follow a law that we respect *as such*, because it is good, and not because it makes it possible to achieve a practical goal or satisfy a selfish inclination (Kant 2005 [1985], 89). To listen to the moral law within oneself–and to respect it, to follow it–is thus to be autonomous, because it is to conform to one's inner reason, and it is to obey a law that one has produced oneself for oneself.[20]

The notions of the individual, consent and autonomy are thus constitutive of modernity, and closely link the defence of individual rights to the inauguration of the rule of law. They also put the spotlight back on the importance of collective negotiation and deliberation. In this respect, the theories of the social contract foreshadow democratic expectations that are destined to grow and become more explicit throughout Modernity, just as they inaugurate a form of modern rationality. This raises a legitimate question: why mobilize the imagination and narrative of the social contract to evoke not the political order but social life in its entirety? Why use it to analyse social relationships rather than individuals?

A contested political theory to describe social reality

At first sight, contract theories may appear limited in describing the social world. According to some critics, 'the problematic of the contract [tends to] cut politics off from any relationship with social division' (Terrel 2011). Indeed, contract theories, by starting from a fictitious state of nature in which the socio-economic characteristics in which every individual is necessarily embedded are absent, cannot take charge of economic, productive, labour and other issues. Neither economic and political life, nor the individual relationship with institutions, boil down to freely consented relationships between [individuals] without qualities cut off from their social belonging" (Terrel 2011, 85).

The other limitation of the social contract is that it is based on a contradiction: it assumes that human individuals pre-exist society (which is questionable in itself) and that, naturally, human beings always begin by leading a non-political and unregulated (and therefore chaotic) existence. Their natural, spontaneous condition is a non-social condition. But the fiction of the social contract also claims that these non-political individuals are nonetheless sufficiently politicized and rational that one day they will have the desire to leave this state of nature, and to associate in the form of a city with laws and institutions. This is the contradiction: humans live in an apolitical state of nature, but they can have very political desires, or very politically informed desires. How could this be possible? How can we desire what we have never known or seen? To support the coherence of this fiction, we would have to presuppose a previous original political state, from which the individuals would have fallen: they would then have been precipitated into a state of nature, but would be eager, inhabited by the memory of such social harmony, to reconstitute their original collective and would then endow themselves with a new social contract…

In France, it was the emergence of the sociological discipline and thinking that marginalized social contract theories. From the end of the 19th century, the discipline of sociology was built on a fundamental epistemological departure from social contract theories. Admittedly, the sociological tradition is a long way from calling into question the rule of law and what it represents, namely a space for the defence of subjective rights and the expression of individual aspirations. What it criticizes is the explanation and justification of the rule of law by liberal epistemological presuppositions, which are in fact those of traditional contractualist theories. In other words, for the founders of sociology–in France, Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim–we need to stop presupposing the pre-existence of the individual in society, and overestimating the effectiveness of individual wills in transforming institutions. We also need to reintegrate the 'long history' of our collectives and of the modern State, in all its socio-economic depth, rather than imagining a state 'instituted by and for individuals'. The very concepts of contractualism are therefore called into question by sociology, which is anxious to forge 'original concepts' (Champeau 2002, 165) that can account for this long history (such as the Durkheimian concept of 'division of labour') and the determining effects that institutions have on individuals and groups. Finally, Durkheimian sociology sets out to describe the structuring role of intermediary bodies in any society (and their democratic role as a counter-power), whereas contractualist theories tend to oppose, in a binary mode, the individual or individuals to the State–a power relationship that is necessarily unbalanced, however much it may be based on deliberative models.

From the 1970s onwards, neo-contractualism and the Rawlsian moment

The notion of the social contract was revived in political thought from the 1970s onwards. For Jean Terrel, this was due to the "crisis of Marxism" and the relative disappearance from political thought of the "theme of social division", or the problems of economic and labour relations. Nonetheless, the contractualist theories that emerged at the end of the 20th century did not completely reconcile this absence of socio-economic consideration. One of the best-known, that of John Rawls, does not consist in 'designating a legitimate political authority' but in 'identifying principles of social justice' (Hawi 2019). Rawls himself emphasizes that his theory of justice aims to create a "well-ordered society".[21] So can we say that the neo-contractualism he proposes, unlike classical contractualist theories, offers a way of thinking about the organization of interactions between the different spheres of society?

20 Michaël Fœssel, "Kant ou les vertus de l'autonomie", *Études,* vol. 414, 3, 2011, pp. 341-351.

21 John Rawls, "Social unity and primary goods", *Political Reasons*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2009, pp. 9-43.

To answer this question, we first need to recall the "principles of justice" that Rawls describes as characterizing a well-ordered society. These principles characterize the "basic structure" of society, i.e. its "major institutions": on the one hand, the political institutions, which determine our fundamental rights and duties, and on the other, the socio-economic institutions, which specify our rules of justice as regards income and wealth (Adair 1991). The first dimension specifies the political principle of our association (the equal freedom of individuals: the right to vote, freedom of conscience, expression, property, etc.). The other two dimensions characterize the socio-economic dimension of our common life: individuals must have equal opportunities to reach advantageous social positions, and as far as social and economic inequalities are concerned, they are acceptable if they benefit the most disadvantaged individuals in society.

What is the link between these principles of justice and the social contract? This link lies in the fact that these principles of justice are 'defined' and are 'the object of a consensus within the framework of an initial situation' (Adair); they are in fact adopted by individuals through an 'original agreement' (Hawi 2019), a 'social pact'. But this has little to do with the–fictitious–passage from a state of nature to a civil state. It does not refer to an actual assembly of individuals but to a 'conceptual experience' that any individual 'is able to carry out at any time in order to consider what should be the just principles of a well-ordered society' (Adair 2019). In other words, every individual must be able to place themself in an "original position", accompanied by other individuals. These individuals, situated behind a "veil of ignorance", know nothing about their natural assets and their place in society, but each knows that they are "partners in a cooperative project: society". Placed in this position, the individuals–and therefore the individual undergoing this conceptual experiment–will agree on the three principles of justice mentioned above. Here, the tool of the social contract enables Rawls to carry out a very precise gesture: to reflect on the ordering of society without having to resort to a particular conception of the good, and without having to subordinate the organization of society to a vision of what the good life is.

Rawlsian theory has been the subject of intense philosophical and economic debate. For our purposes, the criticism pointing to the idealism of the approach must be highlighted. For Amartya Sen in particular, Rawls conceives justice as, in a way, "indifferent to the lives that people actually lead"; the Rawlsian social contract leads to the guarantee of political and socio-economic "primary goods", but this list of goods ignores "the effects of goods on human beings" (Sen 1993, 211)–effects whose circumscription implies taking account of the differentiated capabilities of individuals. There is in fact a gap, a distance, between the founding principles of justice, decided at the time of the social contract, and the actual legislation, enacted on a day-to-day basis to organize how society functions. Of course, for Rawls, a link must exist, and there is this "presumption" that there will be "conformity" of the "legislative stage" with the "hierarchy of principles"; but the risk that "unjust legislation" will result from the legislative assembly remains (Adair 1991, 89). Moreover, some feminist critics have pointed out that the Rawlsian social contract, and sometimes even the notion of social contract in general, ignores the sexual contract that underpins it: formulated *in abstracto*, social contract theories can mask mechanisms of subordination that need to be eradicated.

'Sociological' and historical complementation: the social contract and the social sciences

The social contract, as understood by philosophy, provides us with an initial decisive political and social insight. However, if the social sciences were to enrich this approach, it could provide an even more empirical basis for a conceptualization that is currently rather abstract (when it is strictly philosophical). Social sciences (sociology, anthropology, ethnography, etc.) are closely linked to the idea of "historical change". Their ambition is to grasp the processes of evolution, to identify what remains the same and what changes in relation to the past, according to the idea that the dynamics of change are always partial (Karsenti & Lemieux 2017, 68-69)–rather than imagining abstract and artificial ruptures or separations between nature and society, between the individual and the collective, and so on. The social sciences can enable us to update the notion of the social contract in a different way (even if, of course, the philosophical approach to the social contract is often far from naive, and very clearly conceptualizes the political reality of the concept), to overcome its contradictions and turn it into a resolutely inspiring concept that takes account of changes in society:

→ 1. The fictitious situation covered by the concept of the social contract tends to simplify the binary divisions between the people and the state, the representatives and the represented: to apply it more empirically, the social sciences invite us to also consider the intermediate players (trade unions, companies, etc.), the existence of social groups, and the participatory dimension of democracy.

→ 2. Similarly, the theoretical approach presupposes the existence of autonomous individuals who decide on the creation of contracts and society, whereas the historical and sociological reality presents the individual as a social reality, prey to multiple ties that shape his or her relationship to society or their self-awareness. For sociology, "there are no actions or individuals that can be described as purely individual" (Karsenti & Lemieux, 71-72).

→ 3. To this theoretical concept must therefore be added a sociological and empirical approach, to understand the historical evolution of our societies and grasp the real pacts that these societies have created, which also means paying attention to conflicts, power imbalances and inequalities, whereas the theoretical social contract concept could give the impression of a perpetual consensus and peaceful agreements. Two questions can then be distinguished: (1) is society stable or not, i.e. does the social contract work? And (2) does the social contract tolerate social hierarchies and differential treatment of social groups and do they need to be reviewed?

→ 4. Finally, historically, the notion of the social contract has not really left any place for Nature, as anthropology points out (Descola, 2005; Despret, 2012). Yet it is necessary to understand the notional history of 'nature', a Western concept created from scratch and artificially set against culture or society.

In this way, we are retaining the dimensions that we find most stimulating in a social contract approach – focusing on what binds us together in society, on the collective elaboration of principles establishing and justifying the agreements and compromises that organize our freedom–while adapting it to the needs of an exploration that is intended to be empirical: how can we understand current socio-political tensions and how can we think of new arrangements for the future?

What is a social contract today?

The aim of this study is not, therefore, to revive the Hobbesian or Rousseauist conception of the social contract *stricto sensu*: the concept needs to be updated to reveal its full potential for *equitable* and *democratic management of* the problem of ecological transition. We need to propose a more precise and contemporary definition of the concept, one that differentiates it from an ideology or a political party, so that we can grasp its specificity and operational potential.

Whereas a political party formulates an *explicit* ideology (that assumes itself to be biased) and claims to be anchored in a certain place on the political spectrum, with a particular hierarchy of political values, the social contract has, in theory at least, a collective vocation and a wider scale of application, because it attempts to reconcile groups by means of common, collegially chosen regulations although it is sometimes not free from injustice and inequality (either the social contract is based on injustice imposed by powerful groups on dominated groups, or the social contract claims an idealism that is not reflected in reality). Added to this is the fact that a party's programme is more idealistic, emphasizing the gains and promises it guarantees to achieve; the social contract, on the other hand, seems half idealist, half realist, since it mobilizes the logic of rights/duty and insists on the necessary compromises. Moreover, the social contract is less the ideological programme of a few identifiable political actors than the *implicit* result of a multiplicity of processes: economic transformations, decisions by the state and political agents (who, as such, must be reminded of their historical role and responsibility), struggles and dynamics of social recomposition, geopolitical crises and conflicts, and the reactions of social groups to these various processes. The social contract of each country is therefore made up of several historical layers. In this sense, it goes beyond ideologies such as neoliberalism, even if it is influenced and modified by them. What we call the social contract is therefore the dominant form of collective organization that prevailed for a few decades and remains inscribed in a longer history and updated by the dominant ideologies of the time. Its implicit dimension does not, however, rule out the fact that the social contract can take the shape of formalized concepts and rules, as well as visible institutions: the welfare state, our Constitution, the French motto, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and labour law, for example, are very concrete embodiments of the social, political, and economic compromises that structure our society. Finally, whereas a party's programme is ideological by intention and strategy, the social contract is ideological *by accident*, because it is the result of social and political compromises worked out collectively over the long term–and in this respect it can never be neutral. Consequently, rather than being the vehicle of a single ideology identifiable as a party, the social contract is generally at the crossroads of several ideological trends, which it cultivates unevenly from one era to the next–while the different parties making up our political offering move within the same social contract (a difference of scale must therefore also be mentioned). The French current social contract thus combines socialist protective institutions, a republican democratic model, a liberal meritocratic narrative, a 'Fordist compromise' from *Les Trente Glorious*, and an increasingly neo-liberal economic matrix...

The task of a study such as ours is therefore to make the various compromises of this social contract explicit, and to take stock of the disappointments, disillusions, and frustrations that these social pacts have created among different groups since the end of the 18th century. The aim of this analysis is: (1) to understand our field of social forces and the social expectations we have inherited; (2) to regain democratic control over these pacts, rather than passively accepting or perpetuating them; (3) and, if necessary, to change the way politics works and the promises it makes, with a view to achieving social justice deepening democracy and (4) making a collective commitment to the environmental transition. Only then will it be possible to realize the oft-repeated promise of widespread access to autonomy–both individual and collective.

In states governed by the rule of law, the constitution plays the role of a kind of social contract, insofar as it consists of a series of legal texts specifying the institutions of the state and organizing the relations between these same institutions;[22] it also specifies, to a certain extent, "the political philosophy of society".[23] The difference between a state with a Constitution and a state that relies more on custom (such as England) is notable because the existence of a written constitution puts the decision-making process and formalized agreements at the heart of political life, as well as making explicit the arrangements that structure it. The non-strictly codified constitutions of customary states, on the other hand, are more adaptable and looser–and seem to better accommodate an evolving social contract, changing in harmony with social contexts. In this sense, English covenants can be more fluid, even if English institutional mechanisms and possible political reluctance potentially slow down these transformations.

22 See https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/19545-quest-ce-quune-constitution-definition-dune-constitution

23 Jean-Claude Zarka, "La Constitution", in *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques*, Paris, Ellipses, 2018, pp. 49-72, p. 49.

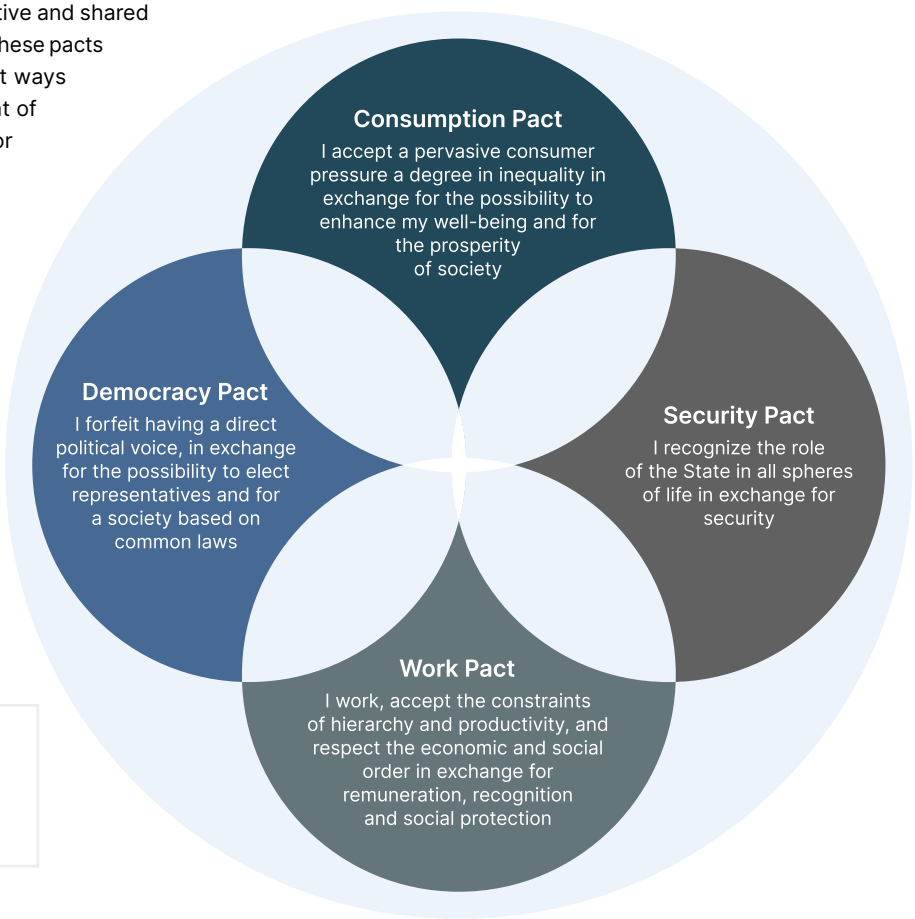
The Constitution is therefore not just a legal instrument; it is "always the expression of a global political project" and reflects "a balance of political forces"[24]–which explains why it can change, be enriched or reduced, according to the social or political victories that are contemporary with it, as was the case recently on the subject of abortion. The Charter of the Environment, incorporated into the French Constitution in 2005, also reflects this intention to update our legal commitments and incorporate the philosophical underpinnings of the transition.

The four pacts of the modern social contract: work, democracy, consumption, and security.

We have identified four dimensions that are essential to our modern social contract: work, consumption, democracy, and security. They are central elements of our social contract because they embody spheres of collective activity that are always subject to negotiation, changing legislation, social struggles, conflicts over recognition and justice, and are the product of collective decisions (which does not rule out unbalanced power relations). They are also spheres in which the logic of rights/duty and promises/expectations are strongly expressed, and may vary from one era to another. These logics represent collective and shared expectations, but it should also be noted that these pacts are likely to be embodied in slightly different ways by different social groups: the overall content of the pact (Democracy, Consumption, Work or Security) remains the same, but the definition of its compromises and benefits, and the greater or lesser degree to which social actors assimilate the 'promises' (social, political, economic, etc.) of our time, differ in part depending on which group is considered.

Moreover, they are the determining factors of individual and collective emancipation, or of a good life–not in the moral sense, but in the sense of access to autonomy and social well-being. So, to the two 'historical' and classical components of the social contract (promise of security, promise of democracy and self-legislation, as put forward by the political philosophy of the 17th and 18th centuries), we integrate two other dimensions that bring a more directly socio-economic reality, two forms of 'exchange' or negotiation that have become central to the organization of modern society in the broadest sense: work and consumption.

Each pact reflects a similar logic: "I accept the current system for Democracy, Security, Consumption and Work in spite of diverse drawbacks provided that I get enough benefits". Note that these pacts are somehow intangible and implicit and the "I" is more a fictitious subject that expresses the collective mentality than the mark of a conscious commitment by each individual. This is especially the case for the Consumption Pact: few people would recognize that they had entered into this 'pact' and consumption can seem to be taken for granted.



A legacy of the past: representation of the current social contract (in Western European democracies)

24 Jean-Claude Zarka, "La Constitution", in *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques*, Paris, Ellipses, 2018, pp. 49-72, p. 49.

Security pact

The philosophies of the social contract tell of the partial or total surrender of our freedom to a political authority deemed legitimate and competent, in exchange for our security and respect for property. While this narrative is fictitious, the reality of the advent of the state in Western societies is based on a specific historical sequence, analysed by Max Weber and Norbert Elias in particular: the moment when interdependencies "were forged, from the Middle Ages onwards, between the conduct of war, the extraction of resources that it entailed, the protection granted in exchange and the institutional innovations that resulted" (Tilly 2000). The genesis of the state therefore involves "recounting the making of political domination" (Escalona 2023) using a combination of resources. This formation was not without arousing strong resistance (Tilly 2000), which led the state to make certain concessions. In exchange for this recognition–and gradual strengthening–of the State, individuals and social groups were granted, in addition to representative institutions, a multifaceted protection, which continued to diversify throughout modernity right up to the present day and was reflected in the enrichment of our legal system. This diversification of security is partly the consequence of a continuous individualist process of acquiring subjective rights, and of a process of equalizing conditions (ensuring that everyone has a level of security that enables them not only to be protected, but to be the equal of others) that is characteristic of democracy: professional, health, military, minority protection, social, road security and, more recently, climate security. This pact is embodied in the figure of **the individual-subject** (which has become a central value in more individualistic and protective societies). *I recognize the role of the state in all areas of life in exchange for security.*

Democracy Pact

This pact is embodied in the very form of representative democracy. Why did representative democracy come to the fore after the political revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, rather than direct democracy–which might be thought to be more in line with the usual definition of democracy ("government of the people, by the people and for the people", as Lincoln put it)? If the representative system has imposed itself, it is not only because of the massification of modern societies–much larger in size than the ancient cities, the political cradles of so-called direct democracy.[25] The theorists of representative democracy (essentially the Founding Fathers of American democracy) wanted the organization of political power to include an aristocratic component: the representatives of the people are elected because of a social superiority, both material and cultural (Manin, 1995). This principle of distinction is fundamentally absent from Greek democracy, which is characterized by a combination of the drawing of lots and the rotation of offices. The modern Democracy Pact therefore involves a substitution: consent and delegation have replaced self-government, and the possibility of choosing representatives has replaced political choices *by* the represented (who would then be governors). Such a situation illustrates the *indirect* modality of the type of political autonomy that has been imposed throughout history. Finally, the Democracy Pact, in addition to being a political regime, also embodies a promise to equalize conditions: it therefore has a material dimension. Such an expectation does not necessarily imply an aspiration to strict mathematical equality, but is again based on other types of compromise, such as redistribution and equity; for example, we accept inequality if incomes continue to rise for everyone. In this respect, the modern Democracy Pact is very strongly linked to the idea of growth and abundance (Charbonnier, 2020). This pact is embodied by the figure of the **citizen**. *I give up a direct political voice in exchange for the possibility of electing representatives and a society based on common laws.*

Consumption Pact

This pact refers to the centrality of mass consumption in the modern era, not only as a promise of prosperity, justice, self-formation, and well-being, but also as a civic duty to keep the economy running.[26] "In one way or another, all modern regimes have ended up promising more goods to their subjects", observes F. Trentmann.[27] The analysis of American society by the historian Lizabeth Cohen (Cohen, 2003)[28] thus refers to the concept of the social contract to designate what was agreed between the State, businesses and consumer organizations around mass production and consumption. Consumption was seen as a civic duty, uniting the interests of citizens, workers, and consumers (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2022). And consumption is "constantly organized and governed" (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2022). Therefore, the Consumption Pact reflects the idea that consumption is not just a right, but also an economic duty (to ensure prosperity in a model based on productivism), a social duty (to conform to a standard of living) and a promise (to belong to society and to rise within it through consumption). In practice, it therefore has its costs: the omnipresent pressure of mass consumption, and concomitant need to earn money, and the resentment felt by those on the lowest incomes who are left behind. This pact is embodied in the figure of the consumer. Note that this Consumption Pact is fairly intangible and implicit: few people would recognize that they had entered into this 'pact', and consumption can be considered as a neutral practice that is taken for granted.

25 Bernard Manin makes it clear that in the so-called direct democracy of the Athenian type, the assembled people did not exercise all the powers. It was not the number of citizens involved in decision-making, but the drawing of lots (from a de facto limited number of citizens) that remained the specific feature of Athenian direct democracy, and thus marked its difference from representative democracy–which is characterized by the principle of election. See Bernard Manin, Principes du gouvernement représentatif, Paris, Flammarion, "Champs essais" collection, 1995, p. 61.

26 See also T. Jackson's analysis in Prospérité sans croissance and the anecdotes of G.W. Bush and B. Johnson urging consumers to continue consuming during the crises of 2001 and 2008, or more recently Bruno Le Maire, in the context of a health crisis in 2020.

27 See our series of three blogs summarizing the reference book by the consumer historian: https://www.iddri.org/fr/publications-et-evenements/billet-de-blog/redefinir-la-consommation-deuxieme-partie-sortir-du

28 See also: https://journals.openedition.org/interventionseconomiques/1281

I accept the omnipresent pressure of consumption and inequality in exchange for the possibility of improving my well-being and the prosperity of society.

Work Pact

This pact refers to the central role now played by the worker, to whom rights and duties are assigned. Workers are required to consent to the economic and social order (which includes inequalities) and to the organization of production, in exchange for which they receive remuneration, protection (guaranteed by the welfare state, a central notion in our four pacts) and social recognition. They can also count on the prospect of emancipation through professional mobility and autonomy. Lastly, this pact is based on a 'transaction' prior to working life: our investment in education is deemed possible and desirable if schools guarantee professional and social integration for all, regardless of our social rank, as well as emancipating training (meritocratic perspective); this pact is embodied by the figure of the worker. *I work, I accept the constraints of hierarchy and productivity, I respect the economic and social order in exchange for remuneration, recognition, and social protection.*

A social contract approach implies and enables promises and challenges

The prism of the social contract, as we have seen above, allows us to understand that our society is organized through several arrangements and pacts that embody relationships of mutual constraint between different social groups. These relationships, which are based on give and take, acquired advantages and concessions, have developed over a long period of time. These pacts also have many points of intersection and shed light on each other.

So, if the prism of the social contract is useful for *understanding* what our society is made of, is it also useful for *building* a society that respects planetary limits? A society that we need to start imagining now. This question raises the issue of the constructive political effects of a conscious, more reflexive mobilization of the notion of the social contract.

We show that mobilizing the imagined social contract, in an updated version, is beneficial for two reasons: firstly, the social contract places the idea of autonomy at its centre (which embodies a political programme that is consubstantial with modernity) and, far from taking this autonomy for granted with the establishment of democracy, leads us to examine the social conditions for its effective realization. Moreover, the notion of the social contract opens up the prospect of organizing the transition *democratically*: this specificity stems from the rejection of a conception of politics as a reserved expertise and an abstract vision of the good life that would be imposed from above by decision-makers, from a project for society drawn up "from above" for "below". We conclude with the challenges and pitfalls associated with such an approach.

1. How can we achieve a collective programme of autonomy through the social contract?

As we have seen, at the heart of modernity and the idea of the social contract lies the ideal of autonomy, that is, the fact that an individual is the subject of his or her own decisions and actions and is recognized as such–although any social contract can be perverted in practice and can deviate from its initial aspiration. It should be noted however that the scope of this ideal is not just individual. The normative ideas of Modernity can be recognized by the fact that their 'content' has gradually been embodied through 'social conflicts and struggles' (Honneth 2018). This is the case with individual autonomy, gradually acquired politically through a process of emancipation that began in the great revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries. We shall see how the notion of the social contract, in an updated version, makes it possible to think about autonomy on both a collective and an individual level.

Autonomy: an indissociable individual *and social* concept...

Traditionally, contractualist theories are methodologically and normatively individualist: the reality from which they start is the individual, conceived as primary in relation to society. However, if we reverse the perspective, we can conceive that it is actually society that is primary, especially modern society, because it is endowed with institutions and implements the dynamics of integration (of which the welfare state will be the final form) enabling the individual to form, to individuate and, ideally, to become autonomous: the "individuated individual", socialized, formed, politicized, associated with their equals, is therefore the *result of* social life, not its initial condition or component.

From this perspective, autonomy itself is not a prerequisite for politics and living together; rather, it is understood as the product of a favourable social configuration, of fruitful struggles, through which society develops institutions that are both protective and emancipatory (Honneth, 2015; Fischbach, 2005; Karsenti & Lemieux, 2017). In this sense, security, and protection (particularly social protection) of individuals and groups by the nation state are not opposed to autonomy (Renault 2009): on the contrary, they ensure the integration of the individual and the construction of solidarities that are a prerequisite for successful autonomy. Autonomy is therefore much more than individual freedom. It refers to a certain form of social relations and institutions, to mechanisms that make it possible to secure social trajectories and individuals, guaranteeing them a network of solidarity and the social recognition (Honneth) that everyone expects. Individual autonomy is freedom, but a socialized freedom (Honneth 2015).

...which, far from being abstract, opens up the possibility of a *concrete* reorganization of our common life...

It is also for this reason that autonomy has a *concrete* meaning: it requires us to rethink the way institutions work, the way we consume, the way we work, the way we vote, so as to activate a logic of solidarity and retribution in the daily lives of individuals, who have well-defined duties (and of which citizens are generally

aware), but also have rights that are the tangible mark of their presence and value in society. As such, they need to benefit from redistribution mechanisms that are perceived as rewarding, legitimate and fair, but also from opportunities for politicization and democratic investment through which they can translate their aspirations into political demands (Castel, 2003)–all of which guarantee their access to autonomy.

...and refers to an ongoing dynamic, which is progressing as we equalize societies.

Autonomy represents a horizon that is perpetually being pushed back and displaced: as individuals acquire autonomy, the demand for autonomy is relaunched in terms of other objects and other practices, so that the autonomy of individuals in our modern societies is constantly being extended (Karsenti & Lemieux, 2017; Honneth, 2020)–an extension to which we apply the word social progress or emancipation. It is also through this acquisition of rights that individuals feel *recognized*, a fundamental dimension of their political, social, and personal existence (Honneth, 2015).

Women's rights are a case in point: women won the right to vote in 1944 (political autonomy), then the right to have a bank account in 1965 (financial autonomy), then the decriminalization of abortion in 1975 (partial autonomy of the female body), and so on. And we can be sure that this fight for rights will never end: it is symptomatic of the gradual emergence from a state of belittlement, and the march towards hard-won social and political recognition, with demands becoming ever more stringent as equality is achieved. A similar diagnosis could be made of the working classes, the middle classes and all the 'minorities' still marginalized by our modern societies.

As we shall see in the historical reviews, the neoliberal period has weakened the four pacts described above–and they no longer seem able to fulfil the promise of autonomy that their establishment had, for a time, expressed. An additional difficulty arises from the fact that the material and institutional functioning of these pacts is not compatible with the ecological limits of the Earth. The situation is not just one of an evolving sense of autonomy, and the potential mismatch between this and the pacts of the Fordist compromise. It is a situation in which the ecological imperative is calling into question some of the meanings that modern autonomy has taken on in previous decades.

The effective use of the "social contract" today therefore requires us to go beyond individual freedom. The discussions and renegotiations that are underway on a new social contract must be based on and guarantee a more complete, more promising and more real version of "freedom": a freedom that is not a "freedom to act within a constrained framework", but a freedom that is based on a political and social framework that guarantees that no individual is excluded from the sustainable and effective enjoyment of his or her autonomy, in the context of a climate crisis.

A reflexive mobilization of the notion of the social contract also invites us to become aware that autonomy is built at the level of concrete reality and the daily life of individuals, and that it requires continual relaunching and rethinking according to the present situation. Today, it is the prospect of the climate crisis that invites us to reshuffle the cards.

Autonomy itself could therefore be one of the issues at stake in discussions and renegotiations around a new social contract.

2. The challenges of deliberation

Calling for a social contract to build the sustainable society of tomorrow consists precisely in demanding a space where the aspiration to autonomy can itself be put up for discussion. We need a new social contract to decide collectively–and well beyond the single issue of preserving individual freedom–on the meaning of autonomy and the concrete forms it can take in a society that respects planetary limits. The new ecological order means turning away from the single ideal of abundance (Charbonnier, 2019) and exploring the paths of sufficiency, which raises a series of questions about our social contract, which was built on this ideal of material abundance. Here we try to identify the kind of configuration that is likely to stimulate a collective and civic discussion on this subject.

The social contract to prevent the risk of a moral arbitrariness of sufficiency

The perspective of sufficiency runs the risk of being strongly rejected by those who consider that it constitutes a moral vision, and an unjust one if it imposed on individuals who do not embrace it. As Rawls has shown, in liberal societies, the visions of what constitutes a 'good life' are too numerous to constitute social justice: we need to separate morality from politics and simply ensure that institutions are just, in the sense that they bring maximum well-being to individuals, and not just to a proportion of individuals. To speak of the good life, particularly when we have in mind the prospect of a profound revision of modes of production and consumption, of lifestyles, is necessarily to consider beliefs and values about what are 'good' or 'bad' needs. If, for Rawls, in modern liberal societies, conceptions of the good life are part of the private domain and have no place in the public sphere (a vision that can be considered naive), how can we promote a project for a sufficient society? How can we avoid the risk, if not of a "green dictatorship" (Laurent, 2021), a term widely used by the political far right, at least of an unjust and coercive transition, even though the transition to a low-carbon society[29] is undoubtedly a reasonable way of adapting to the planet's limits? The social contract could

29 The latest IPCC report (Assessment Report 6, Working Group 3) strongly emphasizes the role that "demand side policies" can play in the mitigation effort, including changes in lifestyles and behaviour to promote sufficiency.

be the tool that enables us to make progress on this pathway, i.e. to combine the search for autonomy, the good life and sufficiency, and to entrust this search to the interested parties themselves. In this perspective, it also means recognizing the importance of the contribution of public goods to a good life, public goods that are necessarily the subject of collective deliberation.

We should not be naive about the challenges and pitfalls entailed by the prospect of a new "social contract".

The prism of the social contract must be approached with a degree of vigilance. Indeed, it is a form of reflexive reconsideration of the notion of the social contract that enables us to bring to light its potential and usefulness for our times. However, some of its characteristics–the original political dimension of the concept, its anchorage in the liberal ideological current–open the way for its misuse and even misappropriation, which we should mention here to be able to recognize them, and to reflect on how they can be avoided.

A strictly political and moral application of the notion of the social contract could contribute to discrediting the concrete, particular problems that emanate from the economic and productive world. This distancing is present in Rawls' ideas, even though he understood the social contract as a means of imagining the proper ordering of society, and even though the second principle of justice that he presents relates to social inequalities and access to economic opportunities. In Rawls' view, the social contract does not require citizens to "participate in day-to-day political affairs", but rather to participate "in defining the basic principles of society", i.e. "only in legislative matters, and then only under very restrictive conditions", and in "the great 'questions of society'" (Hayat 2011).

Entering the social contract strictly through the prism of the "general interest" would be unequal. The prism of the social contract is very closely associated with the prospect of a general interest, in other words with the injunction to set aside our preferences and interests. The notion of the general interest has therefore been criticized by some political theorists on the grounds that, by definition, it is blind to domination and therefore reinforces it: "The political world, insofar as it values and even requires the bracketing of social differences in order to focus on the confrontation of ideas, is by construction unfit to receive the words of the dominated" (Hayat, 2011). Samuel Hayat, Iris Marion Young and Anne Phillips have shown that the general interest–by the very fact that it requires one's social position to be disregarded, along with the claims that might be associated with it–is not only bourgeois, but gendered and ethnocentric: "instead of a fictional contract, we demand real participatory structures", in which "real people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage the representation of their distinct voices" (Young 1990). Moreover, if the social contract is seen solely as a space for the expression of the general interest and for rational deliberation, there is sometimes a risk that this space will be organized by supposedly neutral formal procedures (Pénigaud, 2021) which are conducive to dispassionate discussion. But this implies knowing and mastering the codes of such a discussion mode (which is often that of the most highly educated), which presupposes, for some people, a long-term apprenticeship. It therefore seems important that the social contract devises deliberative procedures that are genuinely inclusive, capable of overcoming inequalities in the rhetorical skills of citizens, and even of making room for all types of political expression. In other words, we need to make the most of social differences and the different ways in which people are politicized. Equal expression of all points of view does not automatically mean equal access to political expression (Hayat 2011). Other authors have pointed out the opposite risk, namely that citizen deliberations specific to the imaginary of the contract will very rapidly 'professionalize' the exercise (Pénigaud, 2021): they make citizens experts (since they often benefit from a phase of theoretical and documented preparation), who then cease to be the representatives of a more diffuse opinion.

Finally, a last element to take into account is that, all too often, deliberative models should go beyond a binary vision of politics that consists of placing a collection of disunited individuals in front of the State. Intermediary bodies, trade unions and other collective players have a crucial role to play in terms of formalizing politics and promoting social issues, and they are valuable counter-powers to statism (Durkheim, 1950). Lastly, they can support the demands of isolated or underprivileged citizens, thereby harmonizing the balance of power at work in a society. A social contract must reactivate this constructive equilibrium – while at the same time establishing an inventive mode of deliberation by which, conversely, individuals do not run the risk of finding themselves dominated by the groups present, who are experienced in speaking out politically and imposing ideas.

Key definitions

Emancipation

Can be seen as a process, the action of freeing oneself from a bond of dependence, a hindrance. It is a project linked to the modern period, which placed the individual at the centre, and to the promises of individual autonomy formulated by the Enlightenment.

Emancipation refers to:

→ Rights and the ability to develop as a person. Beyond the meaning of the acquisition of rights (for example, the emancipation of women, minorities, etc.), there is a broader meaning of the term: the ability to lead a life in line with one's aspirations, the ability to develop fully as a person (which may involve work, developing one's own lifestyle, political activity, etc.).

→ Confidence in knowledge as a prerequisite for emancipation. Emancipation requires an understanding of how society works and how it affects us (for example, demanding equality between men and women requires an understanding of the inequalities at work; demanding social progress for workers requires an understanding of the economic mechanisms that lead to their exploitation).

→ A collective and social process. Emancipation does not mean emancipation from society, but rather balanced social relations that enable people to feel fully part of society, and protective institutions that enable them to really exercise their rights; emancipation is built into society.

→ A collective process that enables individuals to flourish.

Autonomy

Can be seen as both a condition and a result of emancipation; it can be seen as a measurable capacity and state (for example, studies measure the level of autonomy in the workplace).

Autonomy refers to:

→ The ability to manage one's own life: for example, in the workplace, autonomy means the ability to modulate one's activity, deal with incidents, intervene in the workload or deadlines, etc.

→ An aspiration born of the development of our modern societies. The development of our economies, the diversity of social functions, freedom as a right and independence of mind all contribute to enhancing and reinforcing the aspiration to autonomy.

→ A form of social relationship. A relationship that recognizes autonomy (for example, we gradually give our children autonomy as we build a relationship based on a certain amount of trust and a recognition of know-how).

→ Political autonomy. Autonomy is not the absence of law, but the ability to consent to a law within the framework of a Democracy Pact that reflects the general will.

What about freedom?

Too often, freedom is perceived as an individual reality to be protected, in opposition to a society that would limit it. This diversion through emancipation and autonomy shows, on the contrary, that while freedom has been established as a fundamental right (Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can only be based on common utility, Article 1, Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789), its effective implementation in a complex society is a collective and social process (Polanyi, 1944). Talking about autonomy and emancipation therefore means returning to the real situations and processes that will determine whether or not we succeed in implementing the ideal of freedom.

Why do we frequently return to this objective of emancipation and autonomy in our analysis? Because it is at the heart of the promise of modernity, which has placed the individual at the centre, and therefore of individual well-being; because it is a point of tension when we project ourselves into a society within the limits of the planet, or when we are confronted with the implementation of ambitious environmental policies; and because the perceived reality of inequalities is better understood through this prism.

Each PACT tells the story of the debates around emancipation and autonomy: first through the rights of the citizen and his sovereignty; through the recognition of workers' rights and the establishment of a protective framework; through the ability to consume and to have free time... and this sheds light on the debates we need to have to continue to implement this promise within the limits of the planet.

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The links between our approach and other frameworks

A good life within planetary boundaries

We would like to briefly describe the links between our approach and some major initiatives undertaken by various players in the European context. A great deal of work is being done to clarify and quantify the links between well-being and resource consumption, to show how social well-being or social progress can be reconciled with planetary limits.[30] Various frameworks are used to talk about the intended goal, for example well-being for all, living well or thriving communities. Alternative progress indicators have been a key element in these approaches, helping define a new direction for society as a whole and moving away from a singular focus on economic growth. Significant work has been conducted to explore new socio-economic relationships and economic policies, new forms of governance, an orientation towards sufficiency and policies to reduce the demands on natural resources and energy.

The social contract approach shares these broad goals of achieving social progress within planetary boundaries. It also allows us to explore other facets of the issue. On the one hand, it involves understanding individual well-being as the result of social and political mechanisms–linked to whether or not the collective promises of our social pacts have been kept. On the other hand, at this stage, our goal is not so much about obtaining a normative vision of the point of arrival, or of the solution, but is more concerned with highlighting the conflicts and issues of compromise, exchange and balance between several dimensions of our lives in society. Those are the elements that must be considered to understand the tensions of the present and to carry out the necessary negotiations and arrangements to implement the transition, along a path guided by the "road map" provided by these works.

Our approach to the social contract and theories of human needs

One way to understand the social contract is to assess whether it contributes to the satisfaction of human needs. Several theories of human needs have been put forward, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs,[31] Manfred Max-Neef's nine Fundamental Human Needs[32] and Doyal and Gough's Human Needs.[33] Whilst all these theories assume a set of basic physiological or subsistence needs (in terms of necessities like water, food and shelter), there are differences in how they consider more complex needs, including psychological needs, which may be more interesting to consider in the context of the social contract. In recent years, self-determination theory has provided a dominant perspective on how to understand these psychological needs, identifying three fundamental needs for human well-being, which we believe are particularly relevant to describe modern societies: autonomy, competence and relatedness.[34] More recent work has linked these three needs directly with theories of well-being, arguing that well-being can be understood as a consequence of the satisfaction of these three needs.[35] This research has been based on decades of work, including experimental research, which has demonstrated how human behaviour can be understood as motivated by the desire to satisfy these needs, and how their satisfaction leads to better outcomes in a range of fields, including work, health and education. Some authors have argued that security should also be considered a fourth psychological need.[36]

How do the four pacts of the social contract relate to these three (or four) needs? Before we consider this question, it is important to explain what is meant by each of the needs.

30 See for example the IPCC Assessment Report 6, Working Group 3 https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf; Akenji, L., M. Bengtsson, V. Toivio, and M. Lettenmeier. 2021. 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Towards a Fair Consumption Space for All. Berlin: Hot or Cool Institute; Coote, A.. 2023. Universal Basic Services: Provisioning for Our Needs within a Fair Consumption Space. Berlin: Hot or Cool Institute; Living well within Limits – https://lili.leeds.ac.uk/; Doughnut Economics Action Lab – https://doughnuteconomics.org/; REAL project – Post Growth Deal – https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101071647; Wellbeing economy coalition https://ieep.eu/eu-wellbeing-economy-coalition/; Coscieme, L., L. Akenji, E.Latva-Hakuni, K. Vladimirova, K. Niinimaki, K. Nielsen, C. Henninger, C. Joyner-Martinez, S. Iran, and E. D'Itria. 2022. Unfit, Unfair, Unfashionable: Resizing Fashion for a Fair Consumption Space. Berlin: Hot or Cool Institute;

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According to these theories of human needs, autonomy is not strictly the same as freedom, or political autonomy. Instead it is more about the "feeling that one's behaviour is self-endorsed and volitional".[37] Competence is the feeling of effectiveness and efficiency in one's actions, feeling that one's activities have an impact (usually positive) on one's environment. Relatedness is about feeling close with others, to love and care, and to be loved and cared for. Although early studies focused on close relationships, later work considered the role of communities and community belonging in enhancing the sense of relatedness. Through the complementary prisms of history and sociology, we can see the extent to which these needs–autonomy and relatedness in particular–are structuring factors in our modern individualist societies, which are attached to individual autonomy and have developed the concepts of human dignity and solidarity (particularly during the 19th century),[38] or which have made compassion (or pity) the principles of modern political association.[39]

In the section on Key Lessons we will show how the quest for autonomy is at the heart of the social contract. The various pacts can be seen as providing layers of autonomy, partly by ensuring the security needed to allow individuals to live as they wish. So for example, the Democracy Pact is the arrangement by which citizens are able to express their political views and strive towards their realization. The Work Pact provides the income needed to live autonomously, whilst the Consumption Pact offers, in theory, the possibility of organizing your material life as you wish. But does this address the kind of autonomy that is referred to in self-determination theory?

With regards to competence, the most relevant pact is the Work Pact, which is supposed to ensure that we get recognition for the work we do and that we obtain the professional position that is most in harmony with our skills (meritocratic principle). This is effective to the extent that different types of work are valued and respected in our societies. Several political scientists have identified that support for radical right populist parties is particularly high amongst groups who feel that their relative social status is in decline,[40] demonstrating how a social contract that fails to support feelings of competence can lead to dangerous outcomes.

Another psychological need that may seem less reflected in our social contract is relatedness: it is perhaps unrealistic to expect a political theory to provide love and close relationships. Yet, a sense of relatedness or belonging is also relevant to institutions of solidarity or perhaps national symbols. A sense of belonging and identity are indeed issues of political salience: for instance, feelings of alienation and anomie, and low interpersonal trust, are a barrier to social progress and are key concerns for our decision-makers, because they are associated with a belief in conspiracy theories,[41] which may provide believers with the sense of belonging that they seek.[42, 43] These experiences have also been associated with far-right populism,[44] which again, offers the promise of a sense of belonging through national or ethnic identity.

Reflecting in this way, one can appreciate how many of our current political crises can be understood as failures of our current social contract to satisfy our psychosocial needs. Firstly, many with low incomes and 'bullshit jobs' do not enjoy the promise of autonomy that the social contract offers. Restrictions in consumption due to environmental policy can lead to a greater sense of threat. Secondly, large segments of the population, particularly in non-skilled and semi-skilled manual jobs, feel that they no longer command the recognition for their work that they did during the Golden Age between Second World War and the 1970s. With work no longer providing them with a sense of status and value, some people who identify as ethnically native seek to gain that status and value on the basis of their ethnicity, excluding other ethnic groups. But perhaps most fundamentally, the liberal social contract has little to offer in terms of a sense of belonging, meaning that many may turn to far-right populist politics or conspiracy theorists to find that sense of belonging.

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38 In France, see the solidarist theories of the politician Léon Bourgeois (1851-1925), for example.

39 About the centrality of compassion in modern politics, see Sacha Lévy-Bruhl, Par-delà la solidarité : justice et responsabilité dans la fondation de la sociologie et les transformations de la citoyenneté sociale, Paris, EHESS, doctoral thesis (forthcoming); see also Hannah Arendt, De la révolution, Paris, Folio/Gallimard, 2012 [1963], Chapitre II "La question sociale", pp. 86-173.

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Historical review of France and the United Kingdom

Introduction

To produce this historical overview, we have drawn up a state of the art and transdisciplinary scientific review, deeply inspired by social sciences (sociology, economics, history, literature, philosophy, and political science). The challenge was to identify, through the history of our social struggles, our political changes and our crises, what might have constituted the ingredients of our current social contract: what have been the structural social and political promises of modernity since the end of the 18th century? What expectations have they generated? What disappointments might they have led to? How have these pacts evolved, and what do they tell us about the way in which we have conceived–and still conceive–democracy and society, and the way in which we understand social justice and emancipation? Finally, what moments, what texts, and what upheavals have embodied clarifying moments of our pacts, whether in terms of work, consumption, democracy or security? In other words, we aimed to reconstruct, with the means at our disposal, the historical foundation of our present and past social expectations, ideals and needs. These historical chapters will therefore also highlight the alternative narratives and the diversity of pact proposals that have emerged at different times in history, but have failed to take hold–some of which may be enjoying renewed interest today.

We were careful to pay attention to the different ways in which social groups and classes have related to these pacts and needs, without naively assuming that these expectations and perceptions were universal or unanimous, or that they represented a vast social consensus about our ways of life. The story we tell is circumscribed, it is the story of European modernity–by adopting a degree of generalization that is in itself questionable, although we believe it to be enlightening–and it is also marked by disagreement and conflict.

This historical review focuses on France and the UK. The aim was not to make a strict comparison, but to draw on the differences and similarities, both in the history itself and in the way it is approached in the literature, to paint as rich a picture as possible and deepen our understanding of the pacts. We would like to note that we had fewer resources on which to base our British work, which may explain some of the differences in the sections on the two contexts.

The United Kingdom and France undeniably have their own histories and singularities, but they share a common past (starting with the world wars) and aspirations: their Security Pact is largely shaped by the experience of conflicts; both have experienced a consumer boom that has partially democratized access to certain goods, which has led to a common perception that equality and mass-produced goods go hand in hand, and that consumption functions as a compensation for a pact on monopolizing production; both countries have made work more secure at the turn of the 20th century, and devised a national-scale model of social protection. This is symbolized by the strong, shared attachment to the "NHS" (National Health Service) in the UK, and to "Sécu" (Securité Sociale) in France. Finally, both countries are shaped by narratives and expectations that stem from the experience of prosperity in the 1960s and 1970s. In terms of democracy, however, the histories of the two countries differ, illustrating a variation that we found relevant: having not experienced a brutal revolution through which democracy was introduced (as was the case in France at the end of the 18th century), England has always had both a monarchical system (despite the Interregnum, a brief republican episode from 1649 to 1660) and a parliament: over time, the latter has gradually taken on the role of censoring the sovereign, illustrating the growing demand for a balance of power and reflecting an evolving Democracy Pact. All these factors justify examining these countries together, and each one helps us to identify the major narratives of a more global "European social contract".

We must point out, however, that this study is necessarily imperfect, given the breadth and complexity of the issues raised. This historical review should be considered as a first brick, which can be progressively completed in our future work. Although each pact is less detailed than would be the case in a study focusing on one pact alone, the added value of our approach is that it brings together and discusses the history of these pacts altogether, whereas they are usually separate areas. It is this cross-disciplinary vision that constitutes the originality of our work.

We would like to thank the researchers who accompanied us informally in this bibliographical and reflexive process, helping to ensure the necessary robustness required: Sacha Lévy-Bruhl, Nathan Cazeneuve, Bruno Palier, Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel and Ian Gough.

Country syntheses

France

Democracy

Our Democracy Pact narrates a great movement towards democratization and equalization at all levels of society (schools, voting rights, etc.) since the end of the 18th century. However, this pact has regularly failed to deliver on certain promises of inclusiveness, representation and voting rights. French democracy began with the Revolution (1789), which saw the gradual replacement of the theological-political pact with a representative and democratic one. This was no longer a vertical contractual form in which the monarch secured the consent of his subjects by asserting his divine superiority, but a more extensive and popular sharing of decision-making, or rather of designation–since citizens elected electors, who in turn voted. In the 19th century, universal suffrage became a growing social demand, but its universality remained conditional (universal suffrage was for men, for example), and its implementation intermittent. From the 1870s to 1960, citizenship was still conceived for French citizens of metropolitan France. The colonial administration, despite its abundance of universalist rhetoric, drew an increasingly strict distinction between the notions of subject and citizen of the Empire: the subject was subject to the sovereignty of France but could not be a political participant, whereas the citizen participated fully and actively in democracy. Secondly, certain historical episodes in the 20th century revealed the profound failings and limitations of our democratic framework, starting with the Vichy regime. Nevertheless, after 1945, solidarity began to emerge, based on the idea that democracy is not just a political system, but also a social organization characterized by an ambition for equality and the averaging of living conditions, and that material and social equality is an essential prerequisite for the exercise of political citizenship. From this perspective, democracy appears to be also driven by a project to reduce disparities in wealth or position. In the 1950s and 1960s, democracy even became an ambition within companies and in schools. Today, since the 2000s, this representative pact seems to be increasingly challenged (abstention, elitism of political power, growing visibility of xenophobic parties, etc.). Does society now aspire to more direct modes of expression and democratic involvement?

Security

This pact recounts the multifaceted development of the notion of security. As the power of the state increases, as our regulations become richer and as the individual becomes a pre-eminent value, security becomes a more patent objective of modern societies. Initially absent from the Work Pact (19th century industrial production conditions continually put workers at risk, and these workers were held responsible for their accidents), safety gradually became a key demand and promise in the industrial world. From the 19th to the 20th century, health, food safety and hygiene made their appearance, becoming a requirement in an increasingly productivist and industrialized context. This safety issue was also linked to the conflicts that France experienced at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century. After the defeat of 1870, the Third Republic introduced universal and personal military service, based on the idea that all French people should contribute to national security, and that they should defend their families if they wanted to be protected: mobilization thus became a patriotic duty. The period following the Second World War marked a turning point in the way wars and the protection of civilians were conceived. The Geneva Conventions, signed in 1949, sought to enshrine the duty to protect non-combatants (civilians, medical personnel, humanitarian organizations, but also the wounded, sick and prisoners). Security also took on an increasingly social meaning at that time. The post-1945 period saw the establishment of the welfare state: the pact was to participate in society to receive protection at multiple levels. The gradual emergence of salaried employment is a dynamic that illustrates this logic of increasing protection. However, from the 1980s-1990s onwards, the trend was reversed to some extent, with atypical, short and unstable jobs on the increase. Furthermore, the 'philosophy' of social rights appears to be increasingly out of step with the reality of the socio-economic context: the logic that you have to prove yourself and work to receive social protection seems more questionable in a country that is no longer enjoying full employment, and is struggling to provide work for everyone – even though the Constitution states that "everyone has the duty to work and the right to obtain employment". The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century also saw the advent of a "risk society", to use a famous expression, in which the demand for safety is expressed at all levels, including the climatic level. As for the 'physical' safety of individuals, this is the subject of growing scepticism: a strong feeling of insecurity is developing or persisting among certain fringes of the population, a feeling that sometimes stems from a situation of belittlement and victimization in society. So safety does indeed appear to be a 21st century challenge, not least because of its multifaceted dimensions, and because it is symptomatic of deeper social issues.

Consumption

In the 19th century, inequalities and differences in consumption were particularly marked between the working class and the bourgeoisie: there was no real Consumption Pact at the time, so great was the material insecurity of the poorest. The end of the 19th century saw the appearance of the first consumer credit for the working classes, known as "subscription sales" or

"instalment sales". Many of the characteristics of the consumer society of the future (diversity of supply, credit, consumer habits, the Fordist model, etc.) began to emerge in the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, consumption no longer simply meant the depletion of a resource, but the practice of buying or accessing culture–which would gradually become a right and a leisure activity. Throughout the 20th century, the belief developed that it was through consumption that people became socialized, and that they conformed to their group, achieved equality and became politicized. During the 1920s and 1930s, left-wing parties gradually realized that Taylorism had led to the triumph of an alienating way of working, and turned their attention to new prospects for emancipation: the consumption of certain goods and cultural services was seen as a way of uplifting workers and as compensation for alienating work. These same decades saw the opening of "single price" department stores, creating more popular forms of consumption. The period 1939-1970 was a time of contrasts, beginning with the shortages of war and ending with the prosperity of the *Trente Glorieuses*, which enshrined the idea that equality of conditions presupposed the promise of standardized consumption. These were the years of the "Fordist compromise", put in place by the state and economic players, which linked together mass production, rising wages and mass consumption. Today, this model seems to be in crisis: while the act of consumption is a practice to which all social classes are attached, notably because it seems to offer the possibility of individuation, access to a social position, and also of conforming to one's class, social groups are unequally bearing the brunt of this consumerist incentive. The middle classes in particular are struggling to stay in the race, and the poorest are simply excluded from it. The Consumption Pact can therefore be seen as both alienating and emancipating.

Work

At the beginning of the 19th century, labour was a failing pact, struggling to establish regulations and protections for workers. As the end of the 19th century approached, however, thanks to the rise of trade unions and the strong influence of left-wing parties, France developed frameworks and laws that guaranteed an increasingly protective legal framework. As long as the Marxist and socialist heritage structured workers' militancy, then work continued to be seen as a possible path to emancipation, provided it was subject to the necessary reforms. Nonetheless, the "*Belle Epoque*" saw the lasting establishment of the scientific organization of work and the advent of piecework: this marked the beginning of a renunciation, including by the French Left, of a more emancipatory way of thinking about work. Instead, in the 1930s, the socialist and communist parties saw another area of life as the embodiment of possible liberation: leisure, now conceived as a space for rest that compensated for the drudgery of labour. After 1945, the establishment of the welfare state represented social progress in that it ensured the continuity and solidity of an institutionalized social security system, and also consolidated the French model of salaried employment. Salaried employment ensured the gradual redistribution, over a lifetime, of the wealth created by work and guaranteed a form of solidarity between generations. The 1960s and 1970s illustrate an illuminating intersection between democracy and work because they were a period of mass school enrolment. The "school pact" was formulated as follows: invest oneself in school to reverse one's social trajectory, or to reach an enviable socio-professional position. At the same time, ideals of democratization were also gaining momentum within companies, and would intensify during the "May 68" period of civil unrest. However, social improvements in the workplace slowed down from the 1970s onwards. The power of the trade unions weakened and mass unemployment emerged as a result of the first oil crisis in 1973 and a period of deindustrialization that began in France. In the 1980s and 1990s, the dynamic of progress in workers' rights broke down, or even reversed: the wage model was crumbling, and the advance of neo-liberal ideas was not without effect on the perception of labour law, which was increasingly equated with useless protection and a brake on growth. As for the liberal meritocratic narrative around schools, it has been a promise often rich in disappointment: the social lift seems to have stalled. Added to this is the fear that jobs will disappear and be replaced by certain technologies, leading to downgrading or unemployment for those who held them. In addition, the prolonged relegation of a number of "essential" workers, even though they contribute to the social functioning of our communities, is particularly damaging to the duty/benefit logic. Finally, the improvement of working conditions appears to be an issue that needs to be revived.

United Kingdom

Democracy

The British Democracy Pact emerged very gradually: it developed from the principles established by Magna Carta and evolved into a constitutionally limited monarchy in which the power of the monarch is counterbalanced by an elected parliament. In the 19th century, industrialization in Great Britain led to the rise of a prosperous middle class, which demanded greater participation in government as a necessary compensation to its growing role in the national economy. This desire for democratization was seen as a threat by the aristocracy, which preferred a restricted electoral pact and feared domination by the working classes. For a long time, suffrage struggled to be fully inclusive (in terms of both gender and ethnic minorities): before 1918, almost no women could vote in parliamentary elections. Access to the vote and to citizenship was eventually extended, culminating in the establishment of common citizenship in the Commonwealth in 1948, but a 1962 law undid many of its benefits, illustrating the persistent injustice of the pact.

Generally speaking, the way in which decisions are shared is now being challenged and criticized in Britain: the question of the disproportionate power of business to influence public decision-making, compared with that of citizens, fuels dissatisfaction Today, it is even the whole representative pact that seems to be increasingly criticized, in a context where the electoral system artificially maintains the dominance of two main parties (even though their membership has fallen considerably) and, above all, where a single party is allowed, for a minority of votes, to govern without constraint. Moreover, class differences have widened in all forms of political participation in Britain, showing that the Democracy Pact, which also promises a form of equality of conditions, has not been fulfilled in its social dimension either. Generally speaking, the whole issue of inclusiveness and representativeness seems to have been undermined by the current Democracy Pact in Great Britain.

Security

In the Middle Ages and early modern times, the British security pact consisted of very high taxation in exchange for an absolute guarantee of protection. After the Civil War, the funding of an army was supposed to reassure the population, but it also allowed it to be controlled, and served to absolutize the State. Subsequently, the state gradually outsourced its internal security functions to professional police forces, showing that the security guarantee belonged to professionals. However, this transition has not been smooth, and the police have often been perceived as a tool for controlling the working classes rather than a guarantor of public security. The extension of civil liberties began with the Bill of Rights of 1689, and tried to provide a counterbalance to the security ideology. With the advent of the welfare state in the 20th century, security took on a social meaning: the aim was to protect citizens against economic hazards through social services and assistance programmes. More recently, the British state has adopted a more global and preventive approach to security, responding to diverse threats such as terrorism and climate change, but this approach has often been criticized for appearing to thwart individual freedoms, on the pretext of providing security. Finally, the increasing privatization of security has raised concerns about the ability of the state to maintain its protective role without compromising democracy and human rights, illustrating a growing gap between security as a public good and its commercialization as a private good.

Consumption

Initially governed by protectionist laws, United Kingdom experienced a boom in free trade in the 19th century, an economic revival that was hoped to bring about a general improvement in living standards: the loss of food sovereignty was thought to be offset by greater social justice, as the liberalization of the market would give everyone access to basic consumption. Gradually, consumerism ceased to be seen simply as a matter of subsistence, and the cooperative movement emerged as an incentive to politicize and moralize the act of buying – a turning point that gave some women access to a form of political commitment. At the turn of the 20th century, United Kingdom was gradually moving towards a consumer society: the act of consuming became seen as an act of individuation and even distinction (for the more affluent). After the First World War and the experience of shortages, prosperity gradually returned, and consumption became a multifaceted activity, with strong social and symbolic meanings: people also began to "consume" cultural goods and leisure activities. Consumption is certainly a costly activity, but it elevates, entertains and sometimes even emancipates. After the Second World War, Britain became a "nation of buyers": it was the era of mass consumption. Production diversified, and citizens were offered a vast assortment of new goods whose prices fell as demand increased. In the common imagination, equal conditions and consumption seemed to go hand in hand. From the 1970s onwards, inflation and unemployment brought this golden age to an end. Neoliberal policies tried to stimulate consumption at all costs to revive the economy: the pressure of consumerism grew, multiplying its promises and encouraging permanent spending – which did not fail to provoke a critical counter-discourse in response.

Work

In the industrial world of the 19th century, workers were faced with a multitude of dangers and hardships that were detrimental to their health. At the time, the pact was elementary: work for pay. With the introduction of assembly-line work, the hope of emancipatory work faded forever, and it was leisure and entertainment, and sometimes politicization, that gradually provided the compensation for an alienating activity. Towards the end of the 19th century, trade unions and other pressure groups demanded regulations and greater state intervention: the pact changed, and opened up to the imperative of security. The challenge was to work in order to be protected. In 1942, the economist William Beveridge drew up a government report establishing the British social protection model. The emergence of the welfare state was accompanied by an improvement in working conditions and a move towards the de-individualization of responsibility: poverty, work accidents and unemployment were no longer seen as individual failures, but as failures of society as a whole. With the experience of the Second World War, the work pact gradually tended to become more inclusive, as the war economy mobilized women and altered – albeit not immediately – representations of gender. From the 1980s onwards, globalization promised greater consumption at lower prices, but in return we saw increasing recourse to a more flexible and self-regulating workforce. Minorities in particular are paying the price. Self-employment, however, sometimes offers workers greater autonomy, and rekindles desires for emancipation through work. Salaried workers, on the other hand, seem to have lost some of their autonomy – particularly in managing their careers and their day-to-day activities. Today's workforce, now relocated and geographically atomized, has almost no effective means of collective and political action.

Historical Review – France

Democracy Pact

This pact describes the long-term questioning of democracy and its principle of equality and sovereignty of the people, a radical project which is therefore constantly torn apart by criticism and tension, and never completed.[45]

The theoretical conditions for representative democracy, as carried out in France since the French Revolution, are the balance of powers (inherited from Montesquieu's separation of powers theory) and counter-powers, the representation of the governed by governments who are assumed to be legitimate and disinterested, and the commitment to equality and freedom for its citizens. The concept of representative democracy therefore combines characteristics linked to the notion of democracy with others linked to the notion of representation, which is not without its paradoxes and even a contradiction: democracy, at least in its Athenian form, implies the direct exercise of power by the people,[46] whereas representation implies the delegation by citizens of their decision-making power to a governing body deemed to be more competent. In this sense, representative democracy has, in its very definition, an aristocratic dimension that does not seem in line with our desire for modern equality. Yet this is how our Democracy Pact is formulated: citizens give up their direct political capacity, they agree to elections and to be represented by a political body that is fully dedicated to the exercise of power, and in exchange they receive the guarantee that their interests will be met and their rights respected.

Far from being uniform over time, this Democracy Pact has in fact taken on a multitude of forms over the course of history; moreover, it has sometimes been accompanied by a hierarchization of identities and citizenships that is contrary to the fundamental principles of liberal democracy. Lastly, it has sometimes struggled to fulfil its social dimension: indeed the promise of democracy is also a promise to equalize conditions. To understand the driving forces behind this Democracy Pact, which is nurtured by expectations and conflicts of varying degrees of intensity, we need to trace its origins, to identify its principles and to examine the political legacy that these historic debates leave us with today.

The French Revolution and the abolition of privileges: the first democratic experiments

On the night of 4 August 1789, the members of the National Constituent Assembly proclaimed the abolition of feudal rights and the end of privileges. The French Revolution turned the page on the Ancien Régime, which until then had consisted of hierarchical strata: the nobility, the clergy and the Third Estate, the latter comprising largely of the peasantry, who were continually hit by high taxes and injustices imposed by the lords.

The French Revolution ushered in the idea that citizens were now the legislators of their own laws, and that they could give themselves political directives that would lead to greater justice: autonomy, freedom of political expression, democratic participation and fairness seemed inextricably linked. Nevertheless, there was still much work to be done to "democratize democracy" and to enable everyone to participate in politics, particularly with regard to progress on two fronts: the direct nature of elections and a real universality of suffrage.

In France, it was the Revolutionaries in 1792 who made the first attempt at "universal" suffrage: however, participation was fairly low and at that time only men were allowed to vote. Women were excluded, as were foreigners, servants, non-property owners, citizens who paid low levels of tax, and Jews (until the 1791 decree that granted them French citizenship);[47] suffrage was indirect, with citizens not directly designating their leader(s) (they voted for deputies who themselves formed a national convention).

This system represented a profound change in the conception of the socio-political pact that was to guide society: there was no longer a vertical contractual form, where the monarch secures the consent of his subjects by asserting his divine superiority (theological-political principle), but a more extensive and popular sharing of the decision, or rather of the designation – since the citizens elected electors, who in turn voted, rather than directly voting for their representatives. From the Revolution onwards, it was the government's guarantee of the democratic management of power and the civic equality of its citizens,[48] whatever their social origin, that conditioned the legitimacy of elected representatives.

45 Jacques Rancière observes that the representative system is an "unstable compromise, the result of opposing forces" (2005).

46 See the Lincolnian definition of democracy: "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Athenian democracy also took a direct form, but it was made possible by the restricted form of the city-state.

47 Samuël Tomei, "Citoyenneté et suffrage universel en France depuis la Révolution", in *Humanisme*, 2009/1, n° 284, p. 42-50, p. 43.

48 Art. 1 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789): "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on considerations of the common good".

As underlined by the exclusion of women, this transformation of the Democracy Pact did not immediately imply fully universal suffrage. In the 19th century, the successors of 1789 were in fact hoping for a more restricted voting system that would nonetheless give citizens real decision-making power:[49] the censitary system, i.e. reserving the right to vote for those who paid the cens, was seen as a condition of capacity (the fact of exercising real political capacity). Conversely, the mass extension of voting necessarily led to a dilution of decision-making, since decisions were more widely shared.[50] The Democracy Pact was thus conceived: few people voted, but those who did had the power to make decisions. In 1795, suffrage was once again censitary.

For a long time, the electoral system did not really allow citizens to exercise their political role. In 1799, suffrage became universal, but only offered limited power: the electoral system was made up of three increasingly restrictive election levels, which prevented any genuinely popular involvement in the choice of representatives. Thus, citizens aged 21 and over elected 600,000 local notables, who in turn appointed 60,000 notables at the departmental level. The latter then elected 6,000 national notables – the "trusted list" from which Bonaparte selected the Senate. The Democracy Pact consisted simply of allowing citizens to propose candidates, but not to actually elect them. Censitary suffrage was re-introduced in 1802, remaining in place throughout the Empire (1804-1815) and was still in force during the Restoration (1814-1830).[51]

In the second half of the 19th century, there was a growing demand for universal suffrage, which was widely supported by the Left – the exclusion of proletarians from electoral citizenship was denounced as an unacceptable social injustice. Under the July Monarchy (a period of liberal constitutional monarchy in France from 1830 to 1848), although the electorate was enlarged – censitary suffrage was then used to elect the Chamber of Deputies – the people demanded a lowering of the cens threshold, which was a real barrier to universal participation in political life. The Democracy Pact required the abolition of hereditary distinctions and the granting of access for all to the electoral process. In 1847 and 1848 in particular, banquets (occasions for convivial protests) were organized to call for the lowering of the cens threshold. During these gatherings, attendees called for the electoral base to be broadened, based on the idea that there could be no democracy if the least well-off, and workers in particular, could not participate.

Their growing demands gradually worried the political authorities. In February, the Prefect of Police banned a Parisian banquet: it was the insurrection of 1848, which Flaubert recounts in the famous pages of L'Éducation sentimentale (1869), and which led to the Second Republic. Direct universal male suffrage was proclaimed on 5 March to establish the legitimacy of the new regime that had emerged from the popular uprising. In the elections of 23 April 1848, 7 million voters[52] (83.5% of those registered) went to the polls to elect a president, representing a major democratic advance: it was the first time that the French people had been able to vote directly in a presidential election. Symbolically, the moment was decisive, as it temporarily removed the institutional barriers between the political aspirations of the French and the constitution of the government. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was elected President in the first round, by universal male suffrage, for a four-year term.

The Democracy Pact did not, however, follow a path of continuous progress, and universal suffrage was subsequently restricted: the law of 31 May 1850, called for by the Chamber, imposed a residency requirement of three years to be able to vote – a means of excluding the poorest from the ballot – which de facto reduced the electorate by 30% under Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (who himself was rather resistant to this law).[53] The regime granted full democratic citizenship to French citizens who were wealthy and therefore considered better-placed to vote – a conditionality that revealed the exclusionary dimension of French citizenship during the Empire.

Other democratic dimensions were explored in the 19th century. Until the early 1880s, freedom of assembly did not exist in France, and from 1869 onwards it became the subject of growing demands from republican MPs. The law on freedom of assembly was finally passed on 30 June 1881, allowing individuals to assemble publicly if they had made a prior declaration of their intention, without the need for specific authorization as had been the case since 1810 – this freedom of assembly became unconditional in 1907.[54] However, although this right of assembly could be seen as a gain for militant citizens, in reality it was conceded by governments who, strategically, preferred to grant the right for people to express their opinions, which would make it possible to control and channel popular demands, rather than allowing space for real dissent that would be more destabilizing to those in power. Symptomatic of this is the fact that these meetings were prohibited from taking place on public highways. As the republican daily newspaper Le Siècle wrote on 25 November 1884: "We'll let them say anything in

49 As this comment by Boissy d'Anglas attests: "[The Convention] must courageously guard against the illusory principles of absolute democracy and unlimited equality, which are undoubtedly the most formidable pitfalls for true liberty", (preliminary speech to the draft Constitution, 5 Messidor year III/23 June 1795).

50 On this point, see Christine Guionnet, "La gauche et le suffrage universel", in Jean-Jacques Becker (éd.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 1, Paris, La Découverte, 2005, p. 227-246. URL: https://www.cairn.info/histoire-des-gauches-en-france--9782707147363-page-227.htm

51 David Delpech, Rollet Stella and Jean-Claude Yon, "Chapitre 1. La France dans l'Europe à l'aube du XIXe siècle : entre héritage(s) et rupture(s) révolutionnaires", in Jean-Claude Yon (dir.), *La France dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle. 1802-1914*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017, pp. 16-36.

52 Out of approximately 36 million French people.

53 All these elements are exhaustively described by Christine Guionnet, in Christine Guionnet, "La gauche et le suffrage universel", in Jean-Jacques Becker (éd.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 1, Paris, La Découverte, 2005, p. 227-246. URL: https://www.cairn.info/histoire-des-gauches-en-france--9782707147363-page-227.htm

54 Maxime Arbet, "Réunion publique", Nicolas Kada éd., *Dictionnaire d'administration publique*, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2014, pp. 440-441.

their meetings, but we won't let them do anything in the street".[55] Expression of opinion took the place of action,[56] according to an ambivalent gain/loss rationale that is fairly illustrative of the paradoxes of the French representative Democracy Pact. Moreover, from the perspective of the republicans of the time, there was no question of taking the results of collective deliberations up to the level of power, or even envisaging more immediate involvement of citizens in political decision-making.[57] Deliberation, as it was regarded at the time, was conceived as complementary to representative democracy – a compatibility which reveals the "philosophical" gap between the deliberative ideal and the participatory ideal. In retrospect, theorists have also noted that the promotion of the deliberative ideal, under the guise of being a democratic victory, actually constitutes a loss insofar as it dissipates any radical opinion that is more profoundly opposed to the system:[58] collective discussion necessarily leads to compromises that overcome individual reservations, and thus extremes are abandoned, along with more ambitious desires for transformation. In contrast, some thinkers[59] draw our attention to the way in which French proletarians organized themselves and conceived their struggle, between the revolution of 1830 and the coup d'état of 2 December 1851, by deploying participatory and egalitarian methods that placed collective decision-making at the heart of the process.[60] Without presenting their literature (pamphlets, manifestos of their associations and movements, appeals, etc.) as "theories of participation", and without exaggerating the popular origin of these texts (since they were written by the most educated, and their formalization was different from more popular forms of expression), they nevertheless deploy a more "active" and "practical" vision of democratic participation within a movement.

A "conditional" concept of French Citizenship by definition

The restriction on citizenship imposed by Napoleon III was not an isolated case in French history. The rules governing access to citizenship often proved to discriminate against those who were not considered French enough or politically competent: such a system was therefore challenged and made more flexible over the course of history, in line with the idea that a Democracy Pact should not be reserved for a privileged elite.

Conceived as relatively universalist and liberal from 1789 to 1791 (since foreigners became eligible for French citizenship), the Constitution gradually restricted the conditions of citizenship thereafter: in December 1793, foreigners were expelled from the Convention. While the Constitutions of 1793 and 1795 presented long-term residence abroad as a "presumption of renunciation of the status of Frenchman",[61] to the extent that the recovery of French nationality was complicated, and even deliberately onerous. Some interpret this restriction as an illustration of the limited inclusiveness of the Rousseauist social pact:[62] from Rousseau's perspective, citizenship requires a civilian mission statement by which one testifies to one's attachment to, and active participation within, the life and justice of the community. This was a necessary but also sufficient condition. In this case, the revolutionaries of 1793 felt that this condition could not be fulfilled by foreigners, who were considered potential "enemies of the state".[63] The fear of internal dissent and the prospect of civil war played a large part in this mistrust and the gradual closure of political citizenship – illustrating that the definition of "national security" played a large part in the understanding of democracy and the constituency of its members.

In 1848, universal suffrage continued to be granted to men only, excluding women, soldiers, prisoners, members of the clergy and peoples of the colonies. Gradually, however, over the course of the 19th century, citizenship and effective participation in democracy became equated with a contract: in theory, Frenchness was no longer conceived as something that was strictly biological, or as a prior religious or cultural identity, but as consent to a set of rights and duties prescribed by French civil law. As such, anyone could become French, which had consequences for the status of the ultramarins (i.e. people in French overseas colonies). The sénatus-consulte of 14 July 1865 stipulated that indigenous Muslims could, if they so requested, enjoy the rights of citizens and live under the civil and political laws of metropolitan France. In 1870, the Crémieux decree automatically granted French citizenship to the

55 Quoted by Paula Cossart, "7. S'assembler pour délibérer ou démontrer sa force ? (1868-1939)", in: Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches", 2011. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/la-democratie-participative--9782707157201-page-137.htm

56 Paula Cossart, "7. S'assembler pour délibérer ou démontrer sa force ? (1868-1939)", in: Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches ", 2011. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/la-democratie-participative--9782707157201-page-137.htm

57 Paula Cossart, "7. S'assembler pour délibérer ou démontrer sa force ? (1868-1939)", in: Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches", 2011. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/la-democratie-participative--9782707157201-page-137.htm

58 L. M. Sanders(1997), "Against Deliberation", Political Theory, vol. 25, n° 3, 1997, p. 347-376; I. Shapiro, "Optimal Deliberation ?", The Journal of Political Philosophy, vol. 10, n° 2, 2002, p. 196-211.

59 Jacques Rancière, Alain Faure, *La parole ouvrière*, Paris, éd. de La Fabrique, 2007.

60 Samuel Hayat, "5. Démocratie participative et impératif délibératif : enjeux d'une confrontation", Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 102-112.

61 Claude Nicolet, « Citoyenneté française et citoyenneté romaine. Essai de mise en perspective », Serge Berstein éd., *Le modèle républicain*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 19-56.

62 Claude Nicolet, « Citoyenneté française et citoyenneté romaine. Essai de mise en perspective », Serge Berstein éd., *Le modèle républicain*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 19-56.

63 Claude Nicolet, « Citoyenneté française et citoyenneté romaine. Essai de mise en perspective », Serge Berstein éd., *Le modèle républicain*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 19-56.

35,000 Jews in Algeria. Geographical and cultural remoteness was now appearing to be less of a disqualifying factor in the possibility of gaining access to real political power in French democracy.

1870-1960: a Democracy Pact designed for the French in mainland France

The Third Republic (1870-1940) established universal suffrage on a long-term basis, although its incursions into French political life until then had been brief. It was decided that the National Assembly would be elected by direct universal male suffrage, while the Senate would be elected by indirect universal suffrage; from then on, universal suffrage was no longer a contested mechanism.[64] The President of the Republic was elected by a bicameral Parliament. This parliamentary-style electoral model was little changed during the Fourth Republic (1946-1958): the President of the Republic was elected by Parliament, not by the people, and he appointed the President of the Council.

Under the Third Republic, suffrage was only "universal" in theory. The colonial administration, despite abundant universalist rhetoric, drew an increasingly strict distinction between subjects and citizens of the Empire: a subject was subject to the sovereignty of France but could not be a political participant, whereas the citizen participated fully and actively in democracy. As an illustration of this exclusion, the distinction between "French" and "assimilated" or "indigenous" people tended to replace the distinction between nationals and foreigners;[65] beyond this notional change, while the peoples of the colonies may have been French by right, as was the case in Algeria, they were in practice treated as foreigners.[66]

During the 20th century, access to benefits guaranteed by the social state remained very unequal between French nationals in metropolitan France and Muslims in Algeria: the law of 30 April 1930 on social insurance was not applied in colonial Algeria, although foreigners residing in France sometimes benefited from some protection due to the signing of bilateral agreements – as was the case between France and Poland in 1919. As for Moroccan workers, they could not receive unemployment benefit even though they had the status of "protected French citizens", which was supposed to give them rights that were at least partially similar to those of other nationals.[67] It would be an understatement to say that the Democracy Pact provided for by law was not fully met in practice: while many individuals were considered French, as was the case for Muslim Algerians, they could not enjoy full and complete equality with residents of metropolitan France – particularly because France distinguished between nationality and citizenship, and only grants the former to overseas residents. In this respect, there was little convergence between nationality and equality. It was not until the decree of 7 March 1944 that Muslims in Algeria were governed by the same laws as French citizens in mainland France; the law of 7 May 1946 (the Lamine Guèye law) then granted French citizenship to the overseas territories. On 5 July 1962, after an eight-year war, Algeria declared independence. France recognized the vast movement for the self-determination of peoples that led to the process of decolonization, and enabled several nations to finally acquire the political autonomy to which they had aspired.

It has also been an arduous journey for women, who were long excluded from the Democracy Pact. During the Third Republic, the idea spread that women should be excluded from the right to vote because they were susceptible to the influence of the priesthood and thus risked triggering a return to clericalism, representing a threat to secular democracy – something that Hubertine Auclert, a feminist activist, did not hesitate to describe as hypocrisy.[68] In response, movements were organized over a period of several decades to demand that women, who had the same duties and were subject to the same legal sanctions as men, should enjoy the same rights: there was no guarantee of democracy they pointed out, if representation and voting only concerned half the population. While only receiving marginal support by the end of 1800s, the demand for women to have the right to vote and stand for election became central to feminism from the 20th century onwards. Acquiring the right to elect one's representatives and express oneself politically was gradually understood as a central means for women to achieve autonomy and emancipation. In 1906, the Conseil national des femmes françaises (National Council of French Women) created a "suffrage section"; in 1909, the Union française pour le suffrage des femmes (UFSF – Union for Women's Suffrage) was founded; and in 1911, the Ligue d'électeurs pour le suffrage des femmes (League of Electors for Women's Suffrage) was formed. Having taken part in the war effort from 1914 to 1918, the political claims of women became more vigorous between the wars. However, it was not until 21 April 1944 that a law finally granted women the right to vote. That same year, a decree also abolished the need for women to obtain marital authorization if they wished to join a trade union. French thinking finally fully embraced the idea that democracy could not be achieved while denying the vote to half of its citizens.

Shortly afterwards, France changed its system of government: with the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958, the French once again had the opportunity to directly elect their President of the Republic, who was then elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast, in a two-round uninominal ballot. Finally, to avoid

64 https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/268977-la-iiie-republique-1870-1940-installation-definitive-de-la-republique

65 Emmanuelle Saada, "Citoyens et sujets de l'Empire français. Les usages du droit en situation coloniale", *Genèses*, 2003/4 (no53), p. 4-24. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2003-4-page-4.htm

66 Patrick Weil, "Le statut des musulmans en Algérie coloniale. Une nationalité française dénaturée", *Histoire de la justice*, 2005/1 (N° 16), p. 93-109. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-de-la-justice-2005-1-page-93.htm

67 Alexis Spire, "Semblables et pourtant différents. La citoyenneté paradoxale des "Français musulmans d'Algérie" en métropole", *Genèses*, 2003/4 (no53), p. 48-68. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2003-4-page-48.htm

68 Noëlline Castagnez and Corinne Legoy, "Hubertine Auclert et la naissance du suffragisme", *Parlement[s], Revue d'histoire politique*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2014, pp. 153-160.

any form of excessive personalization of power, the Constitution stipulated that no person may hold office for more than two consecutive terms.

Vichy France: the establishment of an anti-democratic, discriminatory and xenophobic "pact"

The dynamics of anti-democratic exclusion were violently exacerbated at the time of the totalitarian and genocidal episodes in Europe. After the defeat of 1940, France granted full authority to Pétain, established the Vichy regime, and began collaborating with Germany. The Vichy regime endeavoured to set Jews apart from the rest of the population and to gradually exclude them from a number of professions. On 3 October 1940, a law prohibited Jews from working in the civil service, commerce and industry. The worlds of the press, publishing, theatre and cinema were also closed to them.[69] The law of 4 October 1940 authorized the internment of foreign Jews. Between June 1941 and January 1942, around fifty anti-Jewish laws and decrees were published in the Official Journal of the French State. In total, 25% of French Jews were victims of the Shoah and of the French State's "zeal" in persecuting Jews. Some historians interpret the racial laws introduced by Vichy as the logical outcome of the principles of French anti-Semitism, and not just as a consequence of collaboration with Germany:[70] from this perspective, French democracy was undergoing a major challenge, it had been unable to provide normative and political frameworks that were strong enough to prevent the spread of fascism, and the programmed exclusion or even annihilation of some of its citizens – for ethnic, political and/or religious reasons.

Ultimately, the Vichy period and the 20th century in general showed that citizens could not be declared as French if they were deemed politically unfit by nature (such as women), or if their very existence contradicts the narrative of a unified Christian national identity. The citizen from a minority background would always run the risk of being identified as a traitor or an "enemy within": his or her French identity and citizenship were on borrowed time, and conditioned by an economic or geopolitical context over which the individual had no control – the very definition of an asymmetrical and rigged civic pact. In so doing, the French Democracy Pact illustrated the internal contradictions that can be experienced at moments of crisis (military, geopolitical or economic):[71] the notion of demos (people) is intended to be inclusive and homogenizing, but the "desire for the indivisible whole", which is part of the democratic aspiration, can eventually translate into xenophobic – sometimes even genocidal – concerns and policies towards foreigners.[72]

Democracy and equality: a partly fulfilled social pact, in need of development

If we refer to the Tocquevillian definition of modern (as opposed to ancient) democracy, it must be defined not only as a particular political regime, but also as a social organization characterized by an ambition for equality and the improvement of living conditions.[73] A reflection on our Democracy Pact cannot therefore be confined to considerations of an "institutional" and civic nature. At the heart of the democratic project lies the social promise that all citizens will not only enjoy the same rights, but that inequalities in living conditions will be reduced. This is how Tocqueville interpreted the meaning of democracy: a reduction in extremes, and a wider sharing of goods and qualities. With modern democracy, he wrote, "you scarcely find very learned men or very ignorant populations"; "genius becomes rarer" but "enlightenment more common", and "almost all extremes are softened or blunted".[74] In other words, Modernity renounces an aristocratic elite and the rationale of aspiring to concentrations of power, wealth and expertise, in favour of an egalitarian equalization of lifestyles. Moreover, it would be an understatement to say that the institution of a "society of equals"[75] requires the upstream implementation of the social and economic conditions necessary for the politicization of individuals and groups, and for the involvement of everyone in democratic life: "social citizenship" is a precondition for the possibility of political citizenship.[76] Equality of conditions in a democracy is not just a promise: it is an essential prerequisite to enable the system to function.[77]

Over the course of French history, this promise to reduce inequality in return for the renouncing of privileges has been partly fulfilled[78] (see Consumption Pact). More specifically, according to some economists, the period 1914-1980 can be seen as a period of "great redistribution", characterized by the rise of the welfare

69 Laurent Joly, "Tradition antisémite et politique antijuive sous Vichy", in Dominique Schnapper éd., *Réflexions sur l'antisémitisme*. Paris, Odile Jacob, "Hors collection", 2016, p. 87-97. URL: https://www.cairn.info/reflexions-sur-l-antisemitisme--9782738134783-page-87.htm

70 See Robert O. Paxton, *La France de Vichy*, Paris, Seuil, 1972; Michael R. Marrus, Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy et les juifs*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1981.

71 French anti-Semitism, already very strong at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, was exacerbated in the 1930s, against a backdrop of economic crisis.

72 A paradox highlighted by Gérard Bras, in Gérard Bras, "Expériences plébéiennes et demandes démocratiques", *Lignes*, 2019/2 (n° 59), p. 125-136. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-lignes-2019-2-page-125.htm

73 See Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1999.

74 Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, IVème volume, chap. VIII, "Vue générale du sujet", Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 2019.

75 A phrase coined by Léon Bourgeois (1851-1925), a 19th-century politician who represented solidarist thought, and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

76 Robert Castel's major thesis. On the links between political citizenship and social citizenship in a democracy, see Robert Castel, "La citoyenneté sociale menacée", *Cités*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2008, pp. 133-141.

77 For an international organization such as the OECD, the existence of a strong middle class is even essential to the proper functioning of a democracy insofar as it supports the economy through its consumption, and contributes fiscally to the implementation of most social and educational policies. See OECD report, "Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class", 2019.

78 See Thomas Piketty: "The fact remains that there has been a historical movement towards equality, at least since the end of the 18th century. The world of the early 2020s, however unfair it may seem, is more egalitarian than that of 1950 or 1900, which were themselves in many ways more egalitarian than those of 1850 or 1780." in Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021, p. 9.

state and the consolidation of a highly progressive tax system on income and inheritance: these two elements combined, among others, allow greater social mobility and significant prosperity, as well as reducing the accumulation of wealth at the top of the social ladder.[79] In France, between 1900 and 1932, the tax rate applicable to the highest incomes was on average 23%; between 1932 and 1980, it was 60%.[80] These changes were not without consequences for the definition of an acceptable social contract in France: the idea of a greater tax contribution from the most affluent, in return for the socialization of wealth, better redistribution and national prosperity, now appears to be at the heart of modern democracy.[81] The notion of equality is underpinned by the notion of fairness, which examines the resources available to each person to determine the necessary extent of their contribution.

Not only has the progressive nature of taxation reshaped expectations, which are now more demanding, in terms of the democratization of wealth, but tax revenues have also made it possible to finance the pillars of social progress. Starting with a more democratic education system: throughout the 20th century, investment in education has increased tenfold compared with the 1870s, and accounted for around 6% of national income in Western countries between 1980 and 1990, making it possible to offer almost everyone a secondary education and to encourage students to go on to higher education.[82] The contribution of the more affluent, while costly for them, is clearly seen as a means of creating greater equality between all classes, and therefore of promoting the proper functioning of democracy.[83] In this respect, the system seems acceptable to most people – at least within certain limits.

Nevertheless, inequalities have not completely ceased to have a structuring effect and class hierarchies remain, to the disappointment of those who believed in the narrative of a lasting averaging out of living conditions[84] – a narrative that created tangible expectations of equalization among the French population. While the promise of the abolition of a class-structured society has permeated Modernity since the French Revolution, the Trente Glorieuses period gave rise to the desire for a society that was simply a type of "vast middle class".[85] Although the social and economic dynamics since 1950 have led to the emergence of a larger middle class and a rise in living standards, the stratifications within and around this inflated middle class have remained significant, and the process of averaging out slowed down sharply from the 1980s and 1990s, illustrating that it is particularly difficult to achieve the social dimension of democracy. In particular, inequalities of gender, wages and wealth have persisted,[86] generating a feeling of insecurity among those who have nothing, since the ability to project oneself into the future depends to a large extent on the material, wealth and time resources at one's disposal.[87] According to Thomas Piketty, 50% of the poorest people have almost never acquired anything substantial.[88] Since 1980, income inequalities have tended to rise again, resulting from an increase in the share of national income captured by the wealthiest 10%, demonstrating once again the limits of the growth/prosperity pact for all.[89] As for women, they are still a long way from achieving anything more than formal equality with men, particularly in the workplace: in 2020, in France, their share of the wage bill was just 38%, compared with 62% for men.[90] In addition, studies that tend to show the gradual reduction in the pay gap between men and women in equal positions, a real reduction (of 7 points between 1995 and 2021),[91] at the same time underline the persistence of a gendered distribution of professions and responsibilities, suggesting the limits of an approach that considers pay inequalities on the basis of similar positions:[92] one of the major gender inequalities in the field of work is that women have far less access than men to the most prestigious and best-paid jobs. Women are over-represented in the lowest-paid and most precarious jobs, and face difficulties gaining access to positions of responsibility: in 2019, according to Oxfam, five

79 Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021.

80 See Thomas Piketty: piketty.pse.ens.fr/egalite

81 On this point, see Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021, p. 190.

82 Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021.

83 We can go by Robert Castel's definition of social citizenship. Social citizenship, i.e. being a truly integrated member of society thanks to decent living conditions and equitable redistribution by the welfare state, is a precondition for political citizenship, i.e. being a citizen who votes and invests in national political life. To develop political awareness, a form of economic and social security is a prerequisite. See Robert Castel, "La citoyenneté sociale menaceé", *Cités*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2008, pp. 133-141.

84 Thesis by Henri Mendras, *La Seconde Révolution française*, Paris, Gallimard, 1988.

85 On the subject of the middle classes, see Louis Chauvel, "Le retour des classes sociales?", *Revue de l'OFCE*, vol. no 79, no. 4, 2001, pp. 315-359; Louis Chauvel, *Les classes moyennes à la dérive*, Paris, Seuil, 2006; Julien Damon, *Les classes moyennes*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2013; OECD (2019), *Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/689afed1-en.

86 Thomas Piketty, *Les hauts revenus en France au XXe siècle. Inégalités et redistributions* 1901-1998, Paris, Grasset, 2001.

87 Nicolas Duvoux, *L'avenir confisqué*, Paris, PUF, 2023.

88 Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021.

89 See the France sheet https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2023/03/D_FINAL_WIL_RIM_RAPPORT_2303.pdf "The idea that all we have to do is wait for growth to spread the wealth doesn't make much sense: if that were the case, we would have seen the effects a long time ago." (Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021, p. 220).

90 Thomas Piketty, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2021, p. 253. We can also quote this enlightening study by the High Council for Equality: https://www.haut-conseil-egalite.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/hce_-_rapport_annuel_2023_etat_du_sexisme_en_france.pdf

91 Insee study, "In the private sector, the pay gap between women and men is around 4% for comparable working hours and positions in 2021", 2023: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6960132.

92 Insee study, "In the private sector, the pay gap between women and men is around 4% for comparable working hours and positions in 2021", 2023: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6960132; Insee, "Évolution des inégalités entre les femmes et les hommes: faut-il se réjouir ou se désoler?", 2023: https://blog.insee.fr/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/blogInsee_2023_03-evolution_inegalites_femmes_hommes.pdf

CAC40 (French stock market index) companies had no women in their management bodies, while only one woman headed a CAC40 company in 2023. Among senior managers, 40% are women and 60% are men. This latter statistic is encouraging, as it marks a clear improvement on the 1980s, but the gap has yet to be closed.[93] Finally, being a housewife remains a frequent reality for women in many households, including working class households; it is a condition that can take varying forms, with a woman alternating between periods of professional activity and periods where she devotes her time to bringing up her children. But such a condition is not without effect on politicization, because the latter is largely dependent on professional practices and varies significantly if the individual is unemployed: sociological studies show that most housewives, having internalized the hierarchical structure of the household, vote and become politicized by proxy, i.e. by concurring with her husband's voting behaviour and his political decisions.[94] From this perspective, there is an urgent need to reaffirm the right of all women to professional integration, which is a precondition for their autonomous politicization. The issue therefore remains the "key to political equality between the sexes".[95]

Regarding political parties, there are protests about the growing distance between ordinary citizens and the privileged social backgrounds of our political leaders.[96] Politicians are often from very affluent social classes and the products of a privileged, urban and educated elite, and they reveal their ignorance of the limited budgets, exclusions and social indignities faced by those in long-term unemployment and who depend on benefits – which regularly discredits them, and calls into question the very possibility of adequate sociological and political representation. Created in 2013, the Haute Autorité pour la transparence de la vie publique (High Authority for Transparency in Public Life) uses its data to demonstrate the wide structural gap between the living conditions of the elites and those of the lower classes – a sociological heterogeneity that provides fuel for the fire of populist parties.

Self-management and participatory democracy in the 1960s and 1970s: an aspiration for a more participatory Democracy Pact, that remains a structuring factor today

Self-management and participation: democratic initiatives that promise institutional and economic renewal

The 1960s and 1970s was an era of development for self-management and participatory democracy. Until then, particularly in the 1950s, left-wing parties had perceived participation with a degree of ambivalence: it had the attraction of offering the abolishment of hierarchies between those who governed and those who were governed, and a more popular sharing of decision-making; but, at the same time, there was the omnipresent fear that militants would be compromised by the system and capitalism.[97] In other words, there was a concern that participation was an empty word and represented an empty promise, and that basically it was just a way to get a few more people to participate in a failing system of representation. Nevertheless, following the unsuccessful referendum on institutional reform in 1969, the idea of participation started to gain ground among left-wing parties. A number of associations were formed, calling for new ways to participate in politics to overcome the limitations of representative democracy, which was coming under increasing criticism from both political and activist circles. The Jean-Moulin Club, a think tank set up in 1958 by Daniel Cordier and Stephane Hessel, claimed to bring "citizens to power", according to the title of a book published in 1968. While Pierre Mendès-France spoke of a "participatory democracy" in La République modern (1962).[98]

Among workers, the idea of self-management attracted a certain amount of support, in particular because it enabled them to distance themselves from all forms of political delegation, starting with the parties. The trade unions in particular showed a real interest in this area, especially the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT). In 1963 and again in 1965, it was the textile and chemical federations respectively that explicitly endorsed self-management. In 1970, the CFDT congress made self-management the central concept of its militant identity. It was then the turn of the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS) to officially adopt

93 Oxfam, "Dans le monde du travail, les inégalités femmes-hommes ont la vie dure", 15 January 2023. Online: https://www.oxfamfrance.org/inegalites-femmes-hommes/inegalites-hommes-femmes-travail/

94 Cyril Lemieux, "Figeage, empêchement, procuration. Les effets politiques de l'inactivité professionnelle", *Germinal*, 2023/1 (N° 6), p. 230-241. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/revue-germinal-2023-1-page-230.htm

95 Cyril Lemieux, "Figeage, empêchement, procuration. Les effets politiques de l'inactivité professionnelle", *Germinal*, 2023/1 (N° 6), p. 230-241. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/revue-germinal-2023-1-page-230.htm

96 Paul Pasquali, *Héritocratie. Les élites, les grandes écoles et les mésaventures du mérite* (1870-2020), Paris, La Découverte, 2021. See also the latest general election figures here and the representativeness gap: https://www.inegalites.fr/L-Assemblee-nationale-ne-compte-quasiment-plus-de-representants-des-milieux

97 Hélène Hatzfeld, "2. De l'autogestion à la démocratie participative: des contributions pour renouveler la démocratie", Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 51-64.

98 Hélène Hatzfeld, "2. De l'autogestion à la démocratie participative: des contributions pour renouveler la démocratie", Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 51-64.

the theme in 1972, notably in its "Changer la vie" (Changing life) programme. The May '68 period of civil unrest was also a particularly fertile period for experiments in self-management in companies, particularly those in the industrial sector – even if these were fewer in number than has been claimed[99] – during which directly democratic methods were trialled (no spokespersons, general assemblies, discussion forums, etc.).[100]

A few years later in 1982, the Auroux laws brought democracy to the heart of companies: annual negotiations, emphasis on employee expression, introduction of health and safety committees... the entire labour code was expanded and strengthened, both in its democratic dimension and in its promise of security.

Today's Democracy Pact: is there a growing demand for a more direct Democracy Pact?

Democracy in a state of continuous redefinition and realization

These historical elements clearly demonstrate that there is no such thing as a definitive Democracy Pact: by definition it requires perpetual adjustments, extensions and revisions, relating to our growing demand for autonomy (which is also a growing demand for political decision-making), inclusion and justice. To this can be added the fact that democracy has always been the subject of controversy and debate, because the "worst form of government except for all those other forms" is bound to be subject to criticism. On the one hand, the "government of the many", driven by a principle of equality, is regularly dismissed by advocates of elitist and vertical government, which would be carried out by selected and competent political experts. On the other hand, citizens themselves are criticized as individualistic consumers with a disinterest in public affairs, according to the idea that consumption depoliticizes individuals because it diverts them away from democratic motivation and towards strictly private ambitions.[101] In short, for some, our current system has either too little or too much democratic investment on the part of citizens (who are therefore either ungovernable or passive). Philosophers like Rancière invite us to go beyond these criticisms – which are all too convenient for elites who wish to retain power – to remind us of the radical dimension of the democratic project and to take an interest in its implementation, which is always impeded by the oligarchic forces at work.

The influence of the media cannot be ignored when considering democracy. They play a vital role because public debate must rely on a plural, reliable and honest media coverage of the events and issues on the agenda. However, the traditional challenges (independence, trustworthiness of information) are exacerbated by the concentration of the media[102] into the hands of an ever-decreasing number of actors, and by the role of social networks, that have, for example, been integral to the rapid spreading of fake news (Fleurbaey et al., 2019).[103] Given that the democratic role of the media is in danger, and that the pact has implicitly changed due to our expectation for constantly available free information, proposals have been made to rethink the "media pact". The idea would be to consider media infrastructures as common goods (Fleurbaey et al., 2019) or information as a public good,[104] with the necessary tools for governance (e.g. editorial operations), financing (e.g. overhaul of press subsidies) and regulation (e.g. allocation of channels).

Have we reached the limits of local?

In France today, no fewer than 34,935 communes and their associated municipal councillors are directly involved in democracy, which is no mean feat. Nevertheless, the way they operate still seems to illustrate democratic shortfalls. Although decentralization, initiated by Gaston Defferre in the 1980s, paved the way for a more local conception of governance modes – in particular by bringing decision-making bodies and political authorities physically closer to citizens – local participatory democracy is often partly "under control", and has even sometimes reinforced the power of notables.[105] Here again, the practical application of democracy is important: while the 34,935 communes and the associated democratic activity can be viewed positively, it must be remembered that the constraints of public action (technical and legal complexity of public policies, budget, territorial coordination issues) mean that the communal link has increasingly given way to the inter-communal link, which may have made public action more effective, but which is sometimes accused of encouraging the capture of democratic debate, according to the idea that decision-making is then seized by local elected representatives and technical experts.[106]

Furthermore, democracy is not just a formal exercise that takes place intermittently through elections: it is also a matter of practices, which in turn create or maintain democratic values and expectations, and offer an understanding of the meaning

99 Danièle Kergoat, "Une expérience d'autogestion en mai 1968 (émergence d'un système d'action collective)" in *Sociologie du travail*, 12e année n°3, July-September 1970, pp. 274-292.

100 For all these elements concerning the success of the concept of self-management among workers' unions, we refer to Hélène Hatzfeld, "2. De l'autogestion à la démocratie participative: des contributions pour renouveler la démocratie", Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 51-64.

101 Jacques Rancière, *La Haine de la Démocratie*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2005.

102 See the map produced by the Acrimed NGO: https://www.acrimed.org/Medias-francais-qui-possede-quoi

103 Julia Cagé, Nicolas Hervé, Marie-Luce Viaud, *L'information à tout prix*, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), 2017.

104 Benoît Huet, Julia Cagé, *L'information est un bien public*, Paris, Seuil, 2021.

105 Anne-Cécile Douillet and Rémi Lefebvre, "Conclusion. Quelle démocratie locale ?", *Sociologie politique du pouvoir local*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017, pp. 237-240.

106 Fabien Desage, David Guéranger, *La politique confisquée. Sociologie des réformes et des institutions intercommunales*, Bellecombe-en-Bauges, éditions du Croquant, series: "Savoir/Agir", 2011.

of collective work, discussion, deliberation, the search for solutions and compromises, and an appreciation of the occasional usefulness of representation. There are a multitude of places and opportunities for activating democratic practices (school canteens, holiday centres, health centres, social housing), but today these systems are struggling to maintain their democratic impact because they have been undermined by a logic of concentration and growth (e.g. management of mutual insurance companies) and by the privatization of their management.

A more direct democracy?

Recently, popular demands have focused on the introduction of a more direct form of democracy, based on the idea that real democracy cannot be limited to seeking the opinion of citizens once every five years.[107] Sociological surveys show that aspirations are growing in French society for a democracy that is more conducive to debate and deliberation.[108] In this context, and as we shall see in the rest of this project, attempts have been made to encourage discussion between those who are represented and their representatives: citizen trials have taken place, which attempt to organize debate without involving traditional political staff, and in the very places where so-called "ordinary" citizens live;[109] associations are being set up to improve collective decision-making processes and elections;[110] research is very active on this subject and hard work is underway to find ways of establishing a more open form of democracy, based on genuinely democratic representation. For example, certain key principles have been the particular focus of research and debates on the subject:[111] the importance of participation (rather than representation that is remote and disconnected from the civil population), collective deliberation (rather than decision-making by experts), the majoritarian principle (rather than decision-making by an informed minority), democratic representation (rather than government by the better-off) and transparency. Finally, social movements are organizing themselves and attempting to initiate a "deliberative turn", based on the idea that the value of democracy lies in the formation of political will through collective discussion,[112] or in the preservation of a horizontality of political and social relations.[113] In general , there have been several crises that have suggested that our strictly representative democratic model, with its reluctancy to allow citizen consultation, is losing momentum. The Yellow Vests Protests were a case in point, who also had a political demand: the Referendum d'Initiative Citoyenne (Citizens' initiative referendum, RIC) and the Referendum d'Initiative Partagée (Shared initiative referendum, RIP) have been devised and regularly called for by the movement.

However, the deliberative model is not without its challenges in principle:[114] deliberation, which organizes a rationalized confrontation of ideas, does not offer a place, under any conditions, to the voices of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged, who have not appropriated the abstract and intellectualized language of the dominant groups. In this sense, deliberation and participation are not ready-made democratic solutions: there is always the risk that they will end up replicating expectations and codes that essentially only the educated classes are able to master, rather than proposing participatory methods that allow all social groups to take part in the discussion.

Democratic disappointments

Another symptom of democratic dissatisfaction is the ever-increasing abstention rates, far from reflecting a "depoliticization":[115] in 1965, the abstention rate in the second round of the French presidential elections was 15.7%; in 1995, it was 20.3%. At the last presidential elections (2022), this figure reached 28.01%. There are a number of reasons for this level of abstention, not least because the French feel that the electoral process does not give them any influence on political decisions. Added to this is the protest against a form of "hyper-presidentialization", seen as a possible drift of the

107 The debate was revived at the time of the Yellow Vests protests. A recent CFDT-Jean Jaurès opinion poll seems to indicate a marked divide within society on this subject: 45% of French people are in favour of representative democracy, and 40% are in favour of a system where the people decide more directly – a distribution that is consistent with a gap in social positions: the poorest want direct democracy, the most affluent representative democracy. (Ipsos – Fondation Jean Jaurès / CFDT, "La société idéale de demain aux yeux des Français", April 2023).

108 Guillaume Gourgues et al. "Les Français veulent-ils plus de démocratie? Analyse qualitative du rapport des citoyens à la politique", *Sociologie*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-19.

109 Experience in the Centre Val-de-Loire region: https://jeparticipe.centre-valdeloire.fr/blog/retour-sur-un-an-d-experimentation-democratique-en-region; Nuit Debout Rennes; etc.

110 See Démocratie ouverte, founded in 2012; l'Institut de la Concertation et de la Participation Citoyenne; the "Mieux voter" association, founded in 2018 by Chloé Ridel ; Décider ensemble, think tank dedicated to governance issues, created in 2005; or "La Primaire populaire", co-founded by Mathilde Imer and Samuel Grzybowski.

111 Hélène Landemore, *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press, 2020.

112 Loïc Blondiaux, Bernard Manin, *Le tournant délibératif*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2021.

113 Christine Guionnet, "Nuit Debout Rennes: au-delà des traces mémorielles, l'esquisse d'un "engagement citoyen rhizome"?" in Catherine Neveu (dir.), *Expérimentations démocratiques : pratiques, institutions, imaginaires*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2022. Online [accessed 06 December 2023]: http://books.openedition.org/septentrion/128682.

114 Particularly on the part of certain feminist theorists. See in particular Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford, Polity Press, 1988; I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990; A. Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995 (mentioned by Samuel Hayat, "5. Démocratie participative et impératif délibératif : enjeux d'une confrontation", in Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 102-112). Although these are English and American theorists, their influence nevertheless penetrated French intellectual and academic circles.

115 Just because people do not vote doesn't mean they aren't interested in "political" issues (in the broadest sense of the term) and don't have a commitment or opinion on collective issues. Representative democracy and the traditional ways in which it operates may now be losing ground. Citizens sometimes prefer to get involved in local associations, and to challenge things in ways that do not involve voting or party membership. Generally speaking, non-voting, while remaining a sign of democratic crisis, can express a specific political protest (according to Cevipof's political confidence barometer, in 2022, 37% of French people surveyed believe that abstaining is a good way of protesting against the political offer; see https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/sites/sciencespo.fr.cevipof/files/OpinionWay%20pour%20le%20CEVIPOF-Barome%cc%80tre%20de%20la%20confiance%20en%20politique%20-%20vague%2013b.pdf). See Albert Ogien, "Ce que dépolitisation veut dire", *Politique de l'activisme. Essai sur les mouvements citoyens*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2021, pp. 101-120.

Fifth Republic:[116] for example, many citizens and political scientists question the recurrent use of Article 49 Paragraph 3 of the French Constitution, which allows the government to pass a bill without a vote (which has been used 101 times since the start of the Fifth Republic, and twelve times by the minister Élisabeth Borne alone).[117] The verticality of power associated with the use of this Article and its incompatibility with the idea of popular sovereignty are also causes of concern for many.[118] More recently, a number of senators and trade unions have also criticized the increasing use of consultancy firms to assist the State in developing its public policies or for crisis management – services which are regularly the subject of controversy.[119] This delegation of political power by the administration to consultants is also seen as a deliberate weakening of public authority,[120] raising fears of commercialization intruding into the heart of the welfare state.

In addition, one of the main challenges to democracy today, which is causing a significant loss of political motivation, is the way that elected representatives "forget" campaign promises:[121] as soon as they come to power, politicians neglect to bring their plans for reform or public policy into line with previous programmatic promises. As these trends continue, each quinquennium produces a new set of disappointments and disillusionments.[122]

In 2002, on the eve of the first round of the presidential election, 80% of French people questioned felt that the outcome of the election would do little or nothing to improve things in France.[123] However, the act of voting is still perceived as a duty, a feeling that may have been reinforced after the unprecedented run-off with the far right in 2002 (92% of French people surveyed in 2006 said that "voting is a duty that must be done because it is important").[124] However, the challenge then comes from the fact of no longer fulfilling a central duty if it proves no longer to offer the counterpart that it promises in law. While voting may in principle appear to be a civic obligation, it would seem that people no longer expect the ballot box to bring about any kind of social or political change; democratic investment then takes other, more contentious, forms. The decline in political party membership numbers is also symptomatic, if not of a crisis in democracy or commitment, then at least of a reconfiguration in the way it operates: in 1981, the PS had 214,000 members. In 2023, it had 41,000. As for the Communist Party (Parti communiste, PC), in 1946 it had 800,000 members, but only 40,000 by 2023.[125] The same is true on other side of the spectrum, with the now dissolved Rassemblement pour la République and today's Les Républicains experiencing similar declines.[126]

There is, however, a limit or ceiling to the extent to which totally direct democracy can be achieved at local, or even national levels, while it can be even more difficult at the European level – although since 2011 the European Union has been offering a European Citizens' Initiative, enabling a certain number of European citizens to question the European Commission on specific subjects. The EU itself is the focus of a number of tensions: some see it as a guardian against the ever-present drift towards authoritarian regimes (as is the case in Poland and Hungary), while others criticize its level of supranational governance, which creates democratic deficits in the nation states it oversees;[127] it has come up against Euroscepticism (among citizens but also among certain parties), which points to the complexity of the organization's decision-making, the remoteness and disengagement of its institutional bodies, and the loss of sovereignty of States that results from its pre-eminence.[128] In this respect, Europe is sometimes directly perceived as a level of governance that necessarily undermines the inclusive Democracy Pact originally promised in States, or

116 Bastien François, "III. Le déséquilibre présidentialiste", in *Le régime politique de la Ve République*, Paris, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 63-100; Martial Foucault, "La Constitution de la Ve République va dans le sens du Président", Titre VII, vol. 1, no. 1, 2018, pp. 18-24 ; François Reynaert, Pascal Riché, "Comment la Ve République a distillé le lent poison de la présidentialisation", L'Obs, 10 April 2022. Online [Accessed 14 February 2024]: https://www.nouvelobs.com/idees/20220410.OBS56887/comment-la-ve-republique-a-distille-le-lent-poison-de-la-presidentialisation.html

117 Romain Imbach and Romain Geoffroy, "Comment fonctionne l'article 49.3, utilisé pour la douzième fois par Elisabeth Borne?", *Lemonde.fr*, 28 September 2023. Online [Accessed 14 February 2024]: https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2023/09/28/comment-fonctionne-l-article-49-3-utilise-pour-la-douzieme-fois-par-elisabeth-borne_6146430_4355771.html#:~:text=Un%20usage%20largement%20r%C3%A9pandu%20sous,premi%C3%A8re%20ministre%20actuelle%2C%20Elisabeth%20Borne

118 See Frédéric Lebaron, "Europe: vers des irruptions démocratiques?", *Savoir/Agir*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2015, pp. 5-7 ; Bastien François, "Pourquoi il faut changer de constitution", *Mouvements*, vol. no18, no. 5, 2001, pp. 52-56.

119 "Le cabinet de conseil McKinsey accusé d'évasion fiscale en France", *Le Monde*, May 2022: https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2022/03/17/le-cabinet-de-conseil-mckinsey-accuse-d-evasion-fiscale-en-france_6117905_4355770.html

120 https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/03/06/cabinets-de-conseil-le-recours-systematiques-aux-consultants-sape-l-expertise-de-la-sphere-publique_6164279_3232.html

121 Only 29% of respondents to the Cevipof barometer believe that elected decision-makers "try to keep their election promises", p42, Vague 13b, 2022, https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/sites/sciencespo.fr.cevipof/files/OpinionWay%20pour%20le%20CEVIPOF-Barome%cc%80tre%20de%20la%20confiance%20en%20politique%20-%20vague%2013b.pdf

122 Isabelle Guinaudeau and Simon Persico, "Tenir promesse. Les conditions de réalisation des programmes électoraux", *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 68, no. 2, 2018, pp. 215-237.

123 Data from the French Electoral Panel, Cevipof, 2002. Quoted in Anne Muxel, "L'abstention: déficit démocratique ou vitalité politique?", *Pouvoirs*, vol. 120, no. 1, 2007, pp. 43-55.

124 Baromètre du Cidem 2006. Quoted in Anne Muxel, "L'abstention: déficit démocratique ou vitalité politique?", *Pouvoirs*, vol. 120, no. 1, 2007, pp. 43-55. See also the Cevipof political confidence barometer, wave 13b, 2022. For 64% of respondents, voting is a duty rather than a choice.

125 https://www.lesechos.fr/politique-societe/politique/pcf-les-adherents-appeles-a-voter-pour-ou-contre-la-ligne-de-fabien-roussel-1901241

126 https://www.slate.fr/story/199353/militants-politiques-baisse-nombre-adherents-partis-conseiquences-v-republique-crise-regime

127 See Vivien A. Schmidt "L'Union européenne crée-t-elle ou détruit-elle la démocratie?", *Politique étrangère*, vol., no. 3, 2007, pp. 517-528.

128 On Euroscepticism, see Chloé Thomas, " "L'Europe contre les peoples": euroscepticisme et populisme dans le discours des partis politiques", *Les Cahiers du Cevipol*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2017, pp. 3-30.

expectations in terms of participative enlargement. According to a survey conducted in 2022, 58% of French people questioned believed that the decision-making powers of the countries themselves should be strengthened, even if it means limiting those of the EU.[129] As such, it is sometimes seen as a ceiling on the desire for local and participatory democracy.

This historical review and the analysis of recent tensions show that the participatory ideal has not yet been built, insofar as philosophers such as Rousseau, Mill and Habermas, whose legacy has shaped our democratic concepts, conceived of political participation solely in terms of the drafting of legal norms, and not in terms of everyday politics and current affairs.[130] In this context, attempts over the last few decades have been trailblazing, showing what can be achieved – so much so that the OECD has referred to a "deliberative wave"[131] – which can be used as models.

Democracy and business

Finally, the limits of our Democracy Pact do not only relate to the lack of sharing of executive and institutional power. Democratic dissatisfaction could also refer to the limitations felt by citizens in terms of deliberating or decision-making on economic issues and production models, which are rarely the subject of collective discussion:[132] modern liberalism is based on a form of "disembedded economy" that was criticized by Karl Polanyi, i.e. a separation of economy and society through the emergence of a self-regulating market that imposes itself as the organizing institution of society.[133] This goes hand in hand with the consideration of labour power and land as mere "commodities". Recent economic history shows, for example, that the emphasis on competitiveness policies to adapt to a globalized economy, presented as an imperative necessity, suffers from a democratic deficit (Brice, 2023). Quite simply, citizens have not really had their say on the trade-off between deindustrialization and the level of competitiveness that is now arising (involving, for example, certain reforms of the labour market and the social contribution system, aimed in particular at reducing the cost of labour) in exchange for mass access to inexpensive goods (Brice, 2023).

On the same theme, at a time when a number of companies, particularly the largest, have been able to wield increasingly significant economic and cultural power, it is important to define the place they can occupy within democracy. Some political scientists have even gone so far as to define our era as a "post-democracy", marked by the rise of global and globalized firms which, by multiplying their financial arrangements and tax optimization (or even evasion) strategies, can flout national regulations and free themselves from traditional state frameworks,[134] which is perhaps reminiscent of certain historical periods.

This disembedding of the economy does not mean that companies are "out of the game" in the democratic arena: indeed economics and businesses are not totally free of politics.[135] On the one hand, companies have been key actors in the various pacts. On the other hand, as stakeholders that are considered to have a central role, companies are active in political debates and thus in decision-making, through their lobbying activities, and their role in consultations or dialogues between social partners. Their effects on political and democratic decision-making can be episodic (approaching an election, negotiating reforms, anticipating or even neutralizing a forthcoming tax law, etc.) or ongoing, when companies have the technical and financial means to do so.[136] The link with political leaders is therefore vital for companies, and public decision-making is a multilateral negotiation, at the junction between economics and politics. Furthermore, the leaders of major companies sometimes navigate in the same circles as those who operate in the political sphere, and as such have more or less direct channels of influence or discussion,[137] which they can use to their advantage.[138] Regulatory agencies, which were originally established to ensure the public good in specific sectors, find themselves particularly vulnerable to the actions of lobbyists and influential economic actors:[139] economies and politics move closely together, and not necessarily in a democratic direction – in the sense of a decision shared with citizens, moving towards a level playing field. The paradox is that these powerful economic actors remain at the centre of regulatory development (financial, legal, environmental, etc.), campaign financing, and media companies (some of which they own),[140] while their role and their place in democracy are not entirely clear. In this context, workers' unions, consumer associations and NGOs are possible counterbalances,

129 Fondation Jean-Jaurès/CEVIPOF, Ipsos/Sopra Steria, "Fractures françaises", 2022. Online: https://www.jean-jaures.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Fractures_francaises_vague10.pdf

130 Samuel Hayat, "5. Démocratie participative et impératif délibératif: enjeux d'une confrontation", in Marie-Hélène Bacqué éd., *La démocratie participative. Histoire et généalogie*, La Découverte, 2011, pp. 102-112.

131 https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm

132 On this point, see the academic work of Claire Lejeune (forthcoming).

133 Karl Polanyi, *La Grande transformation* (1944).

134 Colin Crouch, *Post-démocratie*, Zürich, Diaphanes, series: "Transpositions", 2013.

135 In the same way, it would be an illusion to believe that there is such a thing as economic neutrality, devoid of political expression. In reality, it would appear that every economic decision (such as the minimum wage, redistribution, tax measures, etc.) reflects a clearly identifiable political bias and identity.

136 Jean Ladrière, "Les groupes de pression et le processus politique global", *Courrier hebdomadaire du* CRISP, vol. 88, no. 42, 1960, pp. 1-25.

137 It is important to bear in mind that small and medium-sized businesses make up a large part of the French ecosystem: they do not benefit from a network that is as extensive as that of CAC40 executives.

138 See on this subject Jean Garrigues, *Les patrons et la politique*, Paris, Perrin, 2011.

139 Alain Supiot, *La Gouvernance par les nombres*, Paris, Fayard, 2015.

140 Julia Cagé, *Le prix de la démocratie*, Paris, Fayard, 2018.

but they struggle to redress the balance of power. This situation, that fuels popular resentment and a widespread distrust of elites, is certainly helping to worsen the already fragile state of democratic health.[141]

The latest symptom of this porous link between economics and politics is the emergence in recent decades of the consumer-actor narrative, in which individuals express themselves and act politically through their shopping baskets: from this perspective, market behaviour is assimilated to political opinions (the fall in consumption of organic products, for example, is sometimes interpreted as a lack of public interest in ecological issues), rather than as the result of socio-economic structures and environments. By extension, the market is then likened to a democracy, since the individual, through his or her preferences and purchases, is deemed capable of expressing his or her views and guiding the decisions of industries, of which he or she is a free customer, or even an advocate:[142] the limitation of such an approach is that it portrays consumers as rational agents who are perfectly in control of their choices (and who can therefore be made to feel guilty for their "unsustainable" purchases), rather than as subjects who are partly constrained by production systems, environments and economic resources.

How can companies be reintegrated into democracy in the sense of democratization? Can we legitimately attribute them with political duties and trade-offs that they will guarantee to carry out for civil society? For a number of company directors, this question is already a certainty that needs to be communicated to as many people as possible.[143] It is also needed because of regulatory changes: while the globalization of value chains enabled certain States and large companies to avoid a certain number of responsibilities on the pretext that production practices were invisible, times are changing, particularly due to the new European accounting reporting framework (CSRD for companies, SFDR for banks).[144] This framework requires companies to quantify more explicitly their impact on the social, economic and natural environment.[145] The European law on the duty of vigilance was also intended to contribute to this movement, but was rejected. It does, however, exist at the French level and has served as a basis for legal action by civil society.[146] Moreover, some economists are calling for other avenues to be explored that would link companies to the common good, and enable them to play a positive democratic role: this would involve, for example, abolishing limited liability[147] (a privilege to be discussed), transforming governance so that employees are more involved in decision-making, or changing their purpose so that the general interest is at the heart of their mission.[148] With this in mind, we should mention the Pacte law,[149] which enabled the possibility of amending the Civil Code to state that a "company shall be managed according to its corporate interest, taking into consideration the social and environmental issues related to its activity" (limited legal impact), to ensure that the Articles of Association can specify a raison d'être, validated by the Board of Directors and shareholders, and to amend the French Commercial Code so that in a company's Articles of Association it can include a mission consisting of a raison d'être and associated objectives, and a mission committee made up of at least one employee and external figures, and an evaluation by an independent third-party body. Ultimately, there is already a hierarchy of different statuses of companies, between traditional companies, with a raison d'être, with a mission, and the social and solidarity economy, which can serve as a basis for reflection on the social contract.

A vast Democracy Pact project

Before summarising the key points that seem most salient to us, let us take the time to make a final historical diversions, which we feel is central to understanding the current debates, even though it goes beyond the simple case of France. In an essay published in 2019, the philosopher Barbara Stiegler[150] traces the genealogy of neoliberal thinking and the concept of democracy that it deploys, which has gradually spread since the 1980s. To do this, she revisits the opposition between J. Dewey and W. Lippmann about the accessibility of democracy: how can democracy be made possible when society is so complex, and it is therefore sometimes difficult for citizens to have an informed view of all the issues? This opposition is illuminating for understanding the place and role that deliberation can have in a democratic system.

141 70% of respondents to Cevipof's Baromètre de la confiance politique (Wave 13b, 2022, p57) no longer know whether it is the government or private companies that make decisions. The use of private consultancies is also viewed very negatively.

142 Stefan Schwarzkopf, "The Consumer as "Voter," "Judge," and "Jury": Historical Origins and Political Consequences of a Marketing Myth", *Journal of Macromarketing*, Volume 31, Issue 1, August 16, 2010. Online [Accessed 15 February 2024]: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0276146710378168

143 See Pascal Demurger, *L'entreprise du XXIe siècle sera politique ou ne sera plus*, Paris, Éditions de l'Aube, 2019.

144 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, and Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation. See Dominique Méda's review: https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/12/30/dominique-meda-sociologue-confirmer-le-tournant-social-de-l-union-europeenne-est-la-meilleure-maniere-de-rendre-moins-attractifs-les-discours-de-l-extreme-droite_6208364_3232.html

145 See Dominique Méda, "La responsabilité des entreprises dans le changement climaitque comme dans son atténuation doit être reconnue et mesurée" in *Lemonde.fr*, 09-02023. Online: https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/09/09/dominique-meda-la-responsabilite-des-entreprises-dans-le-changement-climatique-comme-dans-son-attenuation-doit-etre-reconnue-et-mesuree_6188526_3232.html

146 https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000034290626/

147 The SARL is a commercial company in which the liability of the partners is limited to the amount of their contributions. See https://entreprendre.service-public.fr/vosdroits/F37411

148 Marc Fleurbaey, *Manifeste pour le progrès social*, La Découverte, Paris, 2019, p. 174-175.

149 https://www.economie.gouv.fr/loi-pacte-croissance-transformation-entreprises#

150 B. Stiegler, 2019, "Il faut s'adapter", NRF Essais Gallimard

For Lippmann,[151] a theorist of neo-liberalism, the most promising democratic path is to let the experts rule and to reserve a limited space for expression for citizens (deemed insufficiently equipped to understand the complexity of the modern world), that of "public opinion" and the clarification of their interests and demands. For Dewey, on the other hand, collective and participatory enquiry and experimentation are the foundation of democracy: it is through direct action and experience that citizens can gain knowledge and learn politically. What can we learn from this opposition? At the moment, in fact, the crises seem to be highlighting the limits of the first model (expert governance), which has flourished since the neo-liberal turn, as B. Stiegler explains. On the other hand, it could be fruitful to envisage more direct democratic experiments, and thus to 're-enchant' citizen involvement. In any case, these theoretical contributions are decisive in thinking about how to advance the Democracy Pact, by examining all the possible roles of the citizen: as a player in representative democracy (through voting and monitoring of elected representatives); as a deliberator in participatory initiatives; as a consulted citizen through direct democracy or through listening processes during the instruction process;[152] as a citizen engaged in the democratic act at a multitude of levels, through a more collective elaboration of the organisation of the city (local public services, associations and intermediary bodies, etc.).

A few ideas seem central to consideration the future. The question arises as to whether citizenship, the right to vote and legal access should be extended to those who, for the time being, are still deprived of one of these elements: should political citizenship be reserved for nationals only? Should the under-18s be given the right to vote?[153] Should non-human living organisms, and even future generations, be granted legal personality and a form of citizenship? How can environmental democracy be organized and brought to life at a pivotal time of reorientation (particularly for major projects) and conflicts over public policies with environmental implications? The Aarhus Convention, adopted on 25 June 1998, was of course an important step in promoting access to information and justice, as well as public participation in the environmental decision-making process. It now seems necessary to continue to build and maintain this part of our democracies. Finally, what place should be given to companies and the economic world and how should democratic debates be organized involving these actors? Our current Democracy Pact does not really allow individuals to decide on their material mode of existence.[154] The collective debate that needs to take place on this subject is all the more urgent given the growing contradiction in our society between calls for efficiency and the resistance of economic actors who prioritize abundance, the globalization of trade and production, and competitiveness.[155]

The historical elements that we have reviewed provide us with the tools for the future reworking of our Democracy Pact: the issue is about establishing in practice an equality of conditions that currently remains formal, while proposing more satisfactory, more up-to-date trade-offs than those provided by the representation/delegation of the decision-making pact. In this way, we will be able to move from a poorly representative democracy to a full and complete democracy of action and practice.[156]

Security Pact

Since the 1970s, if the political discourse is anything to go by, security seems to have been understood essentially in the sense of "safety", i.e. in the sense of protecting the physical integrity of the individual, their property, and the risks they may face from aggression or harm. Indeed, the political discourse today seems to be restricted to the sovereign dimension of security, to the point where some have suggested that since the 1970s we have seen an expansion of the "security ideology".[157] And yet, while this sense of security is undeniably important, the term covers multiple dimensions that objectively and subjectively structure our social lives, and that cannot be simplified to the strictly physical protection of individuals and populations. In this case, social, health, food and job security are all characteristic expectations of our modern world, which have become increasingly important in collective demands and throughout history have given rise to a variety of political and social responses.

151 Lippmann constructs a democratic model that links political liberalism and economic liberalism. There is an equivalent to the invisible hand in the democratic field: it is the idea of "self-government" through the expression of individual interests. In this model, there is no need to postulate the existence of a popular will, of an aim for the common good, as in classical political liberalism. This ties in with the points made above about consumers expressing themselves through their purchases, in a market perceived as a form of democracy.

152 See, for example, the ideas developed by N. Rio and M. Loisel, "Pour en finir avec la démocratie participative" Editions Textuel, 2023

153 As Friends of Europe suggests: https://www.friendsofeurope.org/press/10-policy-choices-for-a-renewed-social-contract-for-europe/

154 On this point, see the academic work of Claire Lejeune (forthcoming).

155 Benjamin Brice, *L'impasse de la compétitivité*, Paris, Les Liens qui libèrent, 2023.

156 Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Bon gouvernement*, Paris, Seuil, 2015.

157 Laurent Mucchielli, "9. Le développement de l'idéologie sécuritaire et ses conséquences en France des années 1970 à nos jours", *Regards croisés sur l'économie*, 2017/1 (n° 20), p. 111-121. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-regards-croises-sur-l-economie-2017-1-page-111.htm

Physical security increases as the State strengthens and the law deepens

Before exploring the historical origins of our Security Pact, it is important to examine two lines of reasoning underlying this pact. In France, the increasing protection of the individual has gone hand in hand with the gradual strengthening of a centralized State,[158] together with the enrichment of our legal provisions.

The gradual promotion and valorization of the individual – a typical modern Western concept – has progressed concurrently with a greater intolerance of the threats and potential vulnerability of the individual: a focus on the individual leads to a desire to protect his or her physical and social integrity. Society itself has sometimes been defined as a project of mutual protection and defence, and as a means of avoiding a primitive state in which isolated individuals would gravitate (the possible existence of such a state it is in fact impossible to theorize) in a war against each other[159]. The driver behind this trend has been the strengthening of a centralized State. Later, in the 20th century, this protection of the individual took a more macroeconomic and transnational turn: free trade agreements and the establishment of the European Union were conceived as ways to guarantee lasting peace and the protection of nations. The compromise would then be as follows: a nation State would sacrifice a little of its absolute sovereignty, to benefit from international and European cooperation in return – while federalist aspirations would sometimes be raised – all of which would be more conducive to peaceful geopolitical coexistence. The French Security Pact therefore seems to be the product of a dual dynamic: first, a movement to strengthen the nation state (which has been ongoing since the 16th century), and second, the establishment of international institutions that bind nations together and reduce the risk of mutual aggression (since the early 20th century), by asserting the need for peaceful cooperation to guarantee development.

As the legal framework of our collective and civil regulations has grown, and as this framework has better defined our private space,[160] we have become better protected – against physical aggression, against the arbitrary nature of trials, against religious intolerance and so on. In this respect, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 is in itself the formulation of a new pact under which the individual is henceforth protected, including his or her specific individual characteristics (freedom of religion, etc.) and under which democracy constitutes a route out of generalized oppression. The promise of "security" appears in Article 2, while freedom is guaranteed as long as it does not harm others: once again, security provides a limit to the area of democratic freedom, and vice versa.

However, this does not mean that improvement in laws,[161] sovereignty and state power, necessarily goes hand in hand with an increase in security for citizens: historical examples, such as Vichy France or Europe's totalitarian regimes, have clearly shown that an excess of state power, under the guise of ensuring maximum territorial protection, can lead to situations where large numbers of minority groups become vulnerable and face threats, along with an undermining of the most fundamental freedoms. Significantly, at his trial, Marshal Pétain, the collaborationist leader of Vichy France, was charged with "crimes against internal security." More recently, cases of police violence (violence against the Yellow Vest protestors, the beating of Michel Zecler in his studio, the killing of Nahel Merzouk, suppression of a demonstration in Sainte-Soline, etc.) have attested to the fact that insecurity can easily come from within, and that those responsible for maintaining order can bring about the opposite if they do not scrutinize their own methods, or do not receive adequate training in the use of "reasonable" force. These events put the 2017 French law on the use of firearms by police officers[162] back at the heart of the debate, illustrating that the promise of security, made by the forces of law and order, can only be kept if they observe a democratic use of restraint and control. Such violence is numerically less deadly than many other types of violence and security issues,[163] but it nevertheless poses a central democratic problem, insofar as the forces of law and order, and the State that directs their actions, limit people's right to civic expression and no longer play the role of protecting citizens. Recently, NGOs and international institutions such as the Council of Europe, Amnesty International and the UN have expressed concern about the lack of security for French demonstrators during large-scale mobilizations,[164] to the extent

158 Nicolas Duvoux, Adrien Papuchon, "Qui se sent pauvre en France ? Pauvreté subjective et insécurité sociale", Revue française de sociologie, 2018/4 (Vol. 59), p. 607-647. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-sociologie-2018-4-page-607.htm

159 See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651. It is worth emphasizing that this configuration (a state of chaos and war between selfish individuals, supplanted by a civil society that brings peace and protection) is unrealistic and can only be conceived as fictional: it would amount to saying that the individual pre-existed society, whereas modern sociology and history have clearly shown that the individual is more a product of society and modern morality. See in particular Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus. Essai sur le système des castes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966; *Essais sur l'individualisme. Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1983. See also Robert Castel, Claudine Haroche, *Propriété privée, propriété sociale, propriété de soi. Entretiens sur la construction de l'individu moderne*, Paris Fayard, 2001.

160 The promise of modern security, in its liberal interpretation, is partly formed through a strict dividing line between what is private, a space of freedom that must be "sheltered" and secure, and public space, which is more subject to unavoidable risks and obligations.

161 See the laws on the status of Jews promoted by the Vichy regime between 1940 and 1942.

162 Mariama Darame and Jérémie Lamothe, "Mort de Nahel: à l'Assemblée, la loi de 2017 sur l'usage des armes à feu par les policiers au centre des critiques" in *Le Monde*, 30 June 2023. Online: https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2023/06/29/mort-de-nahel-a-l-assemblee-la-loi-de-2017-sur-l-usage-des-armes-a-feu-par-les-policiers-au-centre-des-critiques_6179855_823448.html

163 Domestic violence was the cause of 216 deaths in 2021, the majority of which were women. https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2022-09/Synth%C3%A8se_Miprof_%C3%A9tudeDAV_2021.pdf And every year, around 3,000 people die on the roads.

164 See https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k18/k18t454qod, https://www.coe.int/fr/web/commissioner/-/manifestations-en-france-les-libert%C3%A9s-d-expression-et-de-r%C3%A9union-doivent-%C3%AAtre-prot%C3%A9g%C3%A9es-contre-toute-forme-de-violence and https://amnestyfr.cdn.prismic.io/amnestyfr/6a3cbef6-bbe8-45dc-ae01-622f8a114d31_french-2022_2023-03-22a+%281%29.pdf

that some have referred to a "brutalization of policing".[165] The State's security measures must therefore strike a balance between security and democracy.

We need to look more closely at the way in which our Security Pact has conceived this balancing point, and at the expectations that have been forged and consolidated throughout history, from the 19th century to the present day.

The 19th century and the beginnings of industrial capitalism: a Security Pact that sacrifices the working class for the sake of productivism

As we have already established (see Work Pact), the market is the central social institution of the industrial revolution as described by Karl Polanyi. Whereas other forms of solidarity around work existed in the feudal system (guilds, corporations), forging a compromise whereby workers gave up their independence but were protected and helped in times of need, the modern labour pact establishes a market of fairly brutal free competition: while the dominant actors are "free" to structure economic competition, workers are alone and highly constrained in the face of the emerging forces of this industrial economy, which exposes the working class to multifaceted social vulnerability.

Furthermore, industrial work in the 19th century presented a wide range of risks for this same working class: ulcers, body deformities, respiratory and gastric illnesses – the list of ailments associated with "labour" was endless. The pace of production during the industrial revolutions intensified and machinery became more widespread, which significantly increased the frequency of accidents – not to mention industrial diseases, including those whose symptoms were delayed, or caused by the repetition of a particular practice.[166]

It would therefore be an understatement to say that worker safety was not one of the compensations provided by the industrial contract. As long as the dominant rationale remained payment in return for services or goods (see Work Pact), it was difficult for workers to receive protection. They had no legal means of defending themselves: not only did the labour contract provide no specific protection for wages, but it also suspended "the applicability of the rules of civil liability under ordinary law"[167] in relations between employers and workers. Generally speaking, the labour pact, as it was then formulated, simply consisted of exchanging one's productivity for a wage, with no guarantee of being able to maintain one's physical integrity or health. By agreeing to perform a task in return for payment, the worker also "assumed" the risk of accident inherent in that task. Safety was based on a strictly monetary conception of work (people work to earn a wage, without any other form of guarantee) and a contractual conception of the law,[168] according to which a work/wage agreement between an employer and an employee was necessarily fair and sufficient, and presupposed the full and complete freedom of the two contracting parties. Even more strikingly, in terms of representations, insecurity was naturalized and individualized[169] i.e. it was conceived as *inevitable* (and even an accepted aspect of existence) with only one person holding responsibility (the person affected by an accident): this person was then required to rationalize his or her actions and take precautions to avoid disaster. Safety was not initially understood as a promise or a collective condition guaranteed by society, its institutions and its regulations.

This situation gradually gave rise to protests. Between 1836 and 1839, following workplace accidents in France, trials took place in Lyon, revealing the dissatisfaction felt by workers regarding this contractual work arrangement, which was perceived as unfair and risky: the 19th century was therefore confronted with an unprecedented social and legal problem relating to the notion of liability.[170] In 1841, a ruling by the *Cour de Cassation* (French Supreme Court) finally recognized that an employer had an obligation other than simply paying wages, and that he or she remained subject to the obligation to ensure the safety of the workers they employed – an obligation considered to be a matter of public policy. In this way, workers were supported and gained the right to challenge the organization of work that they were offered when it led to physical injury, illnesses or risk-taking. In this way, modern labour law was initiated, and the entire legal institution gained a right of review over the internal organization of the factory, which then became part of the ordinary law of safety.[171] In other words, it was now up to ordinary law to anticipate, prevent and compensate for the safety shortcomings of employers by making them accountable for their social responsibilities and the collective safety imperative incumbent upon them.

It was not until several decades later that a law passed in 1898 made the legal recognition of work accidents automatic, and introduced lump-sum compensation:[172] safety, like responsibility,

165 Paul Rocher, David Puaud and Marie Rebeyrolle, "Les armes non létales au service de la répression néoliberale", in *Journal des anthropologues*, 164-165, 2021, 207-219. Online since 2 January 2024, accessed 21 February 2024. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/jda/10875

166 Judith Rainhorn refers to a slow, silent death typical of the working classes. See Judith Rainhorn, "La mort lente au travail à l'ère industrielle" in *Vies invisibles, morts indicibles* [online], Paris, Collège de France, 2022 (accessed 27 December 2023). Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/cdf/13689>.

167 François Ewald, "Formation de la notion d'accident du travail" in *Sociologie du travail*, 23e année n°1, January-March 1981, pp. 3-13, p. 5.

168 François Ewald, "Formation de la notion d'accident du travail" in *Sociologie du travail*, 23e année n°1, January-March 1981, pp. 3-13.

169 Sacha Lévy-Bruhl, "Paul Fauconnet: une approche sociologique de la responsabilité" in *Revue Germinal*, 22/06/2023. Online [accessed 28 November 2023]: https://revuegerminal.fr/2023/06/22/paul-fauconnet-une-approche-sociologique-de-la-responsabilite-entretien-avec-sacha-levy-bruhl/

170 For a history of responsibility, see Paul Fauconnet, *La Responsabilité. Étude de sociologie*, Sacha Lévy-Bruhl (éd.), Paris, PUF, 2023.

171 François Ewald, "Formation de la notion d'accident du travail" in *Sociologie du travail*, 23e année n°1, January-March 1981, pp. 3-13, p. 12.

172 Véronique Daubas-Letourneux, "Accidents du travail: des blessés et des morts invisibles", *Mouvements*, 2009/2 (n° 58), p. 29-37. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-mouvements-2009-2-page-29.htm

was finally considered on a social scale. The notion of "safety at work" was now formulated in this way: the injured worker accepted that he or she would no longer take legal action against an employer, but gained the possibility of being compensated by the employer for an accident, in line with the logic of insurance protection.[173]

From the 19th to the 20th century – the emergence of health, food safety and hygiene: a legitimate demand in an increasingly industrialized context

Health and safety hygiene

The risks faced by workers during French industrialization were not only physical and technical, but also related to sanitary conditions. The handling of lead, in particular, was responsible for the lead poisoning of ceramics workers, and also other specialized employees who were regularly in contact with the material, such as lace workers. At the time, the health expert Jules Arnould listed 111 occupations where exposure to lead poisoning was an issue.[174] While some hygienists and chemists were complicit with industrial managers and were reluctant to acknowledge the link between occupational practices and disease (see Work Pact),[175] others made a significant contribution to increasing medical knowledge about the industrial causes of disease. The period 1860-1890 saw the start of an era marked by the accumulation of scientific knowledge on risks,[176] driven by doctors, worker groups and trade unions. Occupational hazards were put onto the agenda as topics for study, and medical research on the subject was brought to the attention of a wider public: hygiene journals, congresses, conferences and universal exhibitions were established to raise awareness of occupational hazards and develop a spirit of prevention. Industrial toxicology became a field of investigation in its own right, and one that expanded throughout the 20th century.[177]

However, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the study of safety at work was still somewhat restricted by the principle that factories had to achieve their economic objectives, whatever the cost: health and safety would be taken into account, so long as industrial profitability was not compromised, a sign that a work and safety pact was still lacking. There were also self-restraint mechanisms that existed among workers who, sometimes suspicious of these new regulations – especially those who were not union members – "preferred" to expose themselves to serious danger if it meant maintaining their productivity, rather than slow down their work rate:[178] the sense of a job well done, efficiency and performance, especially when the work carried out was in view of other workers and foremen, could be more influential than self-preservation in the structuring of practices. Even today, the phenomenon is symptomatic of the world of work in general, where national legal regulations struggle to penetrate certain professions – and to provide security for workers – where a system of implicit and internal standards governs professional conduct and managerial traditions, which is stronger than national law.[179]

However, the increase in medical knowledge accompanied the growing calls for action from the public authorities, and the gradual drafting of regulations designed to anticipate these risks or provide compensation. In 1893, a law was passed on the health and safety of workers in industrial establishments. Subsequently, certain health and safety protocols became compulsory in factories, worksites and workshops of all kinds. On a political level, the trade unions took up these health and safety issues and gave them increasing visibility, just as they succeeded in establishing them as a justifiable and legitimate quid pro quo in the workplace. In other words, the regulation of practices is more likely to occur when these issues have been taken on board by the law, which plays a major role in changing representations, formulating expectations and calling for compensation.

These concerns gradually developed at the institutional level throughout the 19th century. In 1848, the *Comité Consultatif d'Hygiène Publique de France* (CSHPF) was set up under the Ministry of Health, with the aim of bringing all health issues to the national political and administrative level. France also set up health councils to make health a national concern and an object of administration.

Gradually, the rising importance of hygienism also began to transform the structure of the city: pavements were created to guarantee pedestrian safety, water was drained into gutters, and roads were widened to encourage air circulation. All these urban developments were designed to guarantee the physical and

173 Véronique Daubas-Letourneux, "Accidents du travail: des blessés et des morts invisibles", *Mouvements*, 2009/2 (n° 58), p. 29-37. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-mouvements-2009-2-page-29.htm

174 Jules Arnould, *Nouveaux* éléments *d'hygiène*, Paris, Baillière, 3e éd., 1895, p. 1066-1067. Quoted in Gérard Jorland, "L'hygiène professionnelle en France au XIXe siècle", *Le Mouvement Social*, 2005/4 (no. 213), p. 71-90. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-mouvement-social1-2005-4-page-71.htm

175 For an account of this ambivalence on the part of hygienists in the early 19th century, see Thomas Le Roux, "L'effacement du corps de l'ouvrier. La santé au travail lors de la première industrialisation de Paris (1770-1840)", *Le Mouvement Social*, vol. 234, no. 1, 2011, pp. 103-119.

176 Caroline Moriceau, "Les perceptions des risques au travail dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle: entre connaissance, déni et prévention", *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, 2009/1 (n° 56-1), p. 11-27. URL [accessed 28-11-2023]: https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2009-1-page-11.htm

177 Caroline Moriceau, "Les perceptions des risques au travail dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle: entre connaissance, déni et prévention", *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, 2009/1 (n° 56-1), p. 11-27. URL [accessed 28-11-2023]: https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2009-1-page-11.htm

178 Caroline Moriceau, "Les perceptions des risques au travail dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle: entre connaissance, déni et prévention", *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, 2009/1 (n° 56-1), p. 11-27. URL [accessed 28-11-2023]: https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2009-1-page-11.htm

179 This is the case, for example, in the catering industry (particularly for haute cuisine), but also in some prestigious law firms and consultancies, where basic employment and employee laws are regularly flouted. See for example Valentine Servant-Ulgu, "Le meilleur restaurant du monde, critiqué pour les conditions de travail de ses employés, va bientôt fermer", in *Vanity Fair*, 10 January 2023. Online: https://www.vanityfair.fr/gastronomie/article/meilleur-restaurant-du-monde-critique-pour-les-conditions-de-travail-des-employes-va-bientot-fermer

sanitary safety of residents.[180] In addition, a sort of implicit pact was forged whereby industrial activities that degraded the environment and air quality were not banned (or at least not always), as long as they were far from human settlements and invisible – hence the frequent construction of high walls around factories.[181]

Food safety

The safety issue is not only a question of health in the workplace: gradually, different areas of life and social issues were "made safe" by the public authorities. For example, food safety concerns began to emerge in the 19th century, at a time when food contamination was commonplace. While consumer health would, in the following century, become the main driving force behind stricter regulations on food trade and production practices, the primary challenge was to propose commercial regulations that would guarantee fair competition *between suppliers*.[182]

However, the date 1905 is often cited in France as the birth of food safety, when a law was passed to punish fraud in the sale of goods and the contamination of foodstuffs.[183] From this point onwards, the State gradually organized consumer protection, ensuring that consumers had access to "honest trade", guarantees of quality and conformity, and basic information about the foodstuffs they were buying. Around a hundred public administration regulations were adopted, defining the rules on ingredients, information and labelling that were required "in the interests of the consumer".[184] With the invention of packaging, which was later conceived as a reliable way to provide information, customers became legal entities able to defend themselves against the industry.

After the Second World War and until the end of the 1960s, institutions were established in France to monitor compliance with the various food labels and certificates: the Office and then the Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs (1947), the National Consumer Council (1960), the National Consumer Institute (1968), and so on. At the same time as there was a movement towards hygiene and an increase in the number of health regulations in industry, the consumer-customer became equipped with a legal arsenal designed to protect the individual from the power of producers. This is how the food Security Pact was gradually formulated: the individual accepted industrialized production, on which he or she was becoming dependent, delegating the production of the food they consume to a third party, whose practices he or she does not see, but in exchange the individual obtains a guarantee that the industry is healthy, reliable, state-supervised and that he or she will be defended in the event of a dispute.

Food security was not just about quality, it was also about quantity. Although it is generally considered that France finally emerged from the era of famines and food shortages at the end of the 19th century, the fact remains that food continues to be the number one area for restrictions and expenditure sacrifice when times are hard. Generally speaking, food insecurity was a symptom of precariousness and a cause for concern throughout the 20th century, right up to the present day, even if the post-war challenge of providing abundant and relatively cheap food has been met. The Food and Agriculture Organization, a stakeholder of the United Nations, was a decisive influence on governments on this issue, popularizing the notion of food security in 1996, and in the long term, defining four pillars by which it would be guaranteed: availability, access, utilization and stability.[185]

Civil security

The Second World War marked a turning point in the conception of war and the protection of civilians: it was the first time that a war had organized, in such an industrialised and systemic way, the destruction of a proportion of the civilian population. In France, 22.1% of the Jewish population was killed.[186] In 1945, the concept of crimes against humanity was introduced and created in the statute of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, established by the London Charter. Among other things, crimes against humanity are defined as "persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender [...] or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court". The idea is that, even in the context of global armed conflict, individuals who are not professionally involved should receive protection, and that no part of the population should be threatened because of its ethnic, religious or political affiliation, etc. Signed in 1949, the Geneva Conventions set out to establish the duty to protect non-combatants (civilians, medical personnel, humanitarian organizations, but also the wounded, sick and prisoners), drawing a distinction between those who deliberately

180 Sabine Barles, « Les villes transformées par la santé, XVIIIe-XXe siècles », *Les Tribunes de la santé*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2011, pp. 31-37.

181 Sabine Barles, « Les villes transformées par la santé, XVIIIe-XXe siècles », *Les Tribunes de la santé*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2011, pp. 31-37.

182 See Lucie Paquy, "Santé publique, répression des fraudes et action municipale à la fin du XIX e siècle: le laboratoire grenoblois d'analyses alimentaires", *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, vol. no 51-3, no. 3, 2004, pp. 44-65; Alessandro Stanziani, "La fraude: un équipement juridique de l'action économique. L'exemple du marché du vin en France au XIXe siècle", Gérard Béaur éd., *Fraude, contrefaçon, contrebande de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Genève, Librairie Droz, 2007, pp. 563-578.

183 https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/271867-securite-alimentaire-les-aliments-plus-sains-en-2019-quen-1905#:~:text=La%20s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9%20alimentaire%20est%20n%C3%A9e,fut%20pionni%C3%A8re%20en%20ce%20domaine

184 Franck Cochoy, "Une petite histoire du client, ou la progressive normalisation du marché et de l'organisation", *Sociologie du travail* [Online], Vol. 44 – n° 3 | July-September 2002, Online since 17 October 2002, accessed 29 November 2023. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/sdt/33767

185 "*Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization and stability. The nutritional dimension is integral to the concept of food security and to the work of CFS (CFS Reform Document 2009)*." (https://www.fao.org/cfs/policy-products/onlinegsf/en/)

186 https://www.memorialdelashoah.org/archives-et-documentation/quest-ce-que-la-shoah/questions-frequentes.html#:~:text=Morts%20dans%20les%20ghettos%20%3A%20800,camps%20de%20concentration%20%3A%20300%20000

organize and participate in war (military personnel) and those who do not participate as such, and therefore deserve protection in this respect.

Establishment of an insurance-based society and the welfare state: participating in society in return for multiple levels of protection

After the Second World War, the capitalist class found itself considerably weakened – particularly due to the 1929 Wall Street Crash and revelations of collaboration (historians and journalists exposed the collaboration of French companies or their directors with the Nazis, like Renault, Vuitton and others)[187] – while the urgency was to rebuild the country and to regain a form of collective wealth and protection. The mechanisms blocking the *practical* implementation of certain social and fiscal laws (which had long existed *in theory*) were finally lifted, while the welfare state was consolidated. In this sense, the securitization of society undertaken after 1945 is partly – and indirectly – the legacy of war and the reputational damage inflicted on several ideologies and elites.[188]

Generally speaking, the 20th century saw the gradual introduction of social protection mechanisms at various stages of life for all individuals, as well as the emergence of an *insurance-based society*. The development of social insurance was designed to protect individuals from the *hazards* and *risks of life*,[189] and to reduce the risk of sliding into precariousness; the role of social insurance was therefore more one of protection than redistribution.[190]

Since the 1920s, civil liability, i.e. the obligation to rectify damage caused to others, has created security constraints at an infinite number of levels (civil liability of tenants in 1922, civil liability of hunters in 1955, civil liability of sports associations in 1984, etc.). In 1982, a natural disaster insurance scheme was introduced. These types of liability establish a multi-faceted approach to liability, while at the same time enshrining the duty of protection and non-negligence of civil parties.

The idea that employment and workers should be protected by solidarity mechanisms and legal protection, offering guarantees to workers, was also consolidated. It was a long road to this point, beginning prior to 1945. In 1910, a law on "workers' and farmers' pensions" was introduced in France that made it compulsory to fund pension schemes. The law of 25 April 1928 guaranteed "a retirement pension to an employee who has reached the age of sixty".[191] Lastly, the gradual emergence of salaried employment illustrates this dynamic of increasing protection: in 1830, less than 50% of the working population was salaried, rising to 62% in 1936 and almost 90% in the 2000s.[192] This had a knock-on effect on other sectors: from 1866 onwards, the number of craftsmen, tradesmen and industrialists declined[193] – which led to the emergence of a professional and then a political movement of sector-based protest in the 1950s. What became known as "Poujadism", the extreme right-wing movement initiated in 1953 by Pierre Poujade,[194] can be seen as resistance to salaried employment and the civil service, and as an affirmation of the desire to remain an independent trader[195] – even if it means putting freedom before security.

The impetus came particularly in the post-Second World War period, marked by the weakening of the agricultural sector and the implementation of the welfare state. The creation of the minimum wage (1950), the employment contract (resulting in particular from the standardization of the open-ended contract in the 1970s by the Labour Code)[196] and the monthly payment of wages (from 1969 to 1978) all helped to consolidate the status of workers. Generally speaking, the emergence of salaried employment is nothing other than the story of the gradual securitization of labour:

187 https://www.liberation.fr/economie/cetait-un-16-janvier-renault-est-nationalise-20220116_DB73C5KFVRGILLIF46WEP7LHVQ/; Stéphanie Bonvicini, *Louis Vuitton. Une saga française*, Paris, Fayard, 2004. François Broche and Jean-François Muracciole. "Chapitre VII. La Collaboration: le versant rose", *Histoire de la Collaboration. 1940-1945*, Paris, Tallandier, 2017, pp. 277-311.

188 Thomas Piketty, Agnès Labrousse, Matthieu Montalban and Nicolas Da Silva, "Pour une économie politique et historique: autour de *Capital et Idéologie*", *Revue de la régulation* [Online], 28 | 2nd semester / Autumn 2020, Online since 31 December 2020, accessed 23 February 2024. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/regulation/18316

189 François Ewald, "Société assurantielle et solidarité. Entretien avec François Ewald", *Esprit*, no. 288, October 2002, pp. 117-135, p. 126.

190 Nicolas Duvoux, "1. Les politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté", in: Olivier Giraud éd., *Politiques sociales : l'état des savoirs.* Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches", 2022, p. 15-28. URL: https://www.cairn.info/politiques-sociales-l-etat-des-savoirs--9782348070075-page-15.htm

191 See Philippe-Jean Hesse, "Chapitre 1. Les assurances sociales" in *La protection sociale sous le régime de Vichy* [online], Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001 (accessed 4 December 2023) : http://books.openedition.org/pur/15997

192 The French law of 1973 stipulates that the CDI (permanent employment contract) becomes the norm for the employment market. Christophe Chiclet, "Le contrat de travail", *L'Info militante*, 21 November 2021. Online: https://www.force-ouvriere.fr/le-contrat-de-travail

193 Olivier Marchand "Salariat et non-salariat dans une perspective historique" in *Economie et statistique*, n°319-320, December 1998. pp. 3-11. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3406/estat.1998.2666

194 Pierre Poujade (1920-2003) called for the defence of tradesmen and craftsmen, and fiercely criticized the civil service, parliamentarianism and excessive taxation. The Poujade movement, which began as a sectoral rebellion, very quickly took on ideas from the French far right, claiming the heritage of Action Française, the fighting spirit and the "reactionary Vichy". See Jean-Pierre Rioux, *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, Paris, Points, 1994, p. 223-224; Romain Souillac, "Qu'est-ce que le poujadisme ?", in *Le mouvement Poujade. De la défense professionnelle au populisme nationaliste (1953-1962)*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2007, pp. 385-403; Frédéric Tristram, "Combat d'arrière-garde ou mouvement social précurseur? Le poujadisme à la croisée des analyses", in Michel Pigenet (éd.), *Histoire des mouvements sociaux en France. De 1814 à nos jours*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014, pp. 446-455.

195 "Now I am no longer entitled to a tax rebate. [...] No more Social Security. Not even a family allowance... So am I no longer the same? Because I want to be independent and work like crazy, am I being downgraded? [...] If I have to, I will risk all the hard work I have put in over the years. The die is cast. I choose to fight" (Pierre Poujade, *J'ai choisi le combat*, Saint-Céré, Société Générale des Éditions et des Publications, 1955 p. 40; cité par Jean Touchard, "Bibliographie et chronologie du poujadisme" in *Revue française de science politique*, 6e année, n°1, 1956, pp. 18-43, p. 29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3406/rfsp.1956.402674

196 "The 1973 French law stipulates that the CDI (Contrat à durée indéterminée/permanent employment contract) becomes the norm for the employment market." Christophe Chiclet, "Le contrat de travail", *L'Info militante*, 21 November 2021. Online: https://www.force-ouvriere.fr/le-contrat-de-travail

by consolidating the status of salaried employees, labour laws reduced the uncertainty and instability that blighted workers in previous configurations. The pact was then formulated as follows: workers contributed to the productive effort and national solidarity from their wages and, in exchange, received economic and social protection when they were no longer able to work. The modern society created by the welfare state is based on a form of rotation and collective solidarity between generations, but also on an interdependence between activity and time off, since older workers are assured of their economic security on the day they stop working, based on the length of time for which they have been contributing. Their economic security is now dealt with at a collective and social level, rather than based on individual planning and personal savings.

The creation of social security in 1945 marked a further extension of the term "security" and the official establishment of the welfare state. The welfare state, or social state, was particularly novel because it included the functions of insurance and social protection, which until then had been largely the responsibility of private bodies. The aim of social security is to protect individuals against four social "risks": sickness, old age, family issues and workplace accidents. It should be remembered that social security, and the welfare state in general, has enabled the long-standing issue of old-age income poverty to be solved. Such an institution places the notion of solidarity at the heart of the social configuration: solidarity between the healthy and the sick, between the richest and the poorest, between workers and the unemployed, between generations. No one can be considered in isolation.

The extension of protection and security to which individuals are entitled also illustrates the that "social citizenship" precedes political citizenship, which is a typical representation of the welfare state: everyone must be provided with a stable foundation, characterized by social and existential security, so that individuals can become full political citizens and participate in democracy. From this perspective, the right to property could also be conceived as a means of social and political participation, but also of security, according to the ancient idea that the land one owns is the place where one becomes individualized and remains protected from external aggression – of any nature.[197] For this reason, even today, the acquisition of land, a house, an estate or a place of one's own, which can be bequeathed to ensure the security of future generations, is still a major expectation.[198]

For Robert Castel, social citizenship is "the other foundation of democratic citizenship".[199] In terms of work, for example, it is access to salaried employment that enables individuals to fully enjoy their social citizenship: by working, employees gain access to a set of rewards, status, guarantees, rights, protection and security that are stabilized over *time*, and to mechanisms for social and political participation (via unionization, professional socialization or the social rewards they receive simply by being *active* and stably integrated into the world of work) that guarantee not only their economic independence but also their secure integration into community life.[200]

In legal and constitutional terms, the French Constitution of 1946 lists what are known as "*droits-créances*" (benefit entitlements), i.e. benefits, rights and quid pro quos that can be demanded from the State – as distinct from the rights that individuals can *claim* from the State in order to protect themselves. These *droits-créances* include everything that symbolizes a form of material or existential security: the nation must ensure "the conditions necessary for the development of the individual and the family" (art. 10), starting with the right to retirement, "protection of health, material security", and the "right to obtain from the community an adequate means of subsistence"(art.11).[201]

Insurance, assistance, security: protection when the welfare state "fails" (1980s)

After the 1970s, the risk of exclusion and the emergence of the "new poor" became a reality that rendered inadequate the protection mechanisms guaranteed by the wage-earning system and the welfare state in its initial form. The theme of social insecurity in particular highlights the situation of the unprotected poor of the post-1945 society.

It was mainly in the 1970s and 1980s that the French public authorities really grasped the issue of poverty at a governmental and administrative level[202]. Prior to this, poverty was not a public policy as such, even though many people remained on the fringes

197 See Robert Castel and Claudine Haroche, *Propriété privée, propriété sociale, propriété de soi. Entretiens sur la construction de l'individu moderne*, Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2001.

198 For over 70% of French people, owning their own home is an ideal. Ipsos – Fondation Jean Jaurès / CFDT – La société idéale de demain aux yeux des Français – April 2023

199 Robert Castel, "La citoyenneté sociale menacée", *Cités*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2008, pp. 133-141.

200 As Robert Castel writes: "It is a wage-earning condition saturated with rights that has become the main sociological basis for the possibility of generalizing citizenship for the worker himself and for his "rightful claimants" as we say so well about his family" in Robert Castel, "La citoyenneté sociale menacée", *Cités*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2008, pp. 133-141.

201 The Nation must "guarantee everyone, in particular children, mothers and elderly workers, protection of health, material security, rest and leisure. Every human being who, by reason of age, physical or mental condition, or economic situation, is unable to work, has the right to obtain from the community an adequate means of subsistence". (Article 11 of the 1946 French Constitution).

202 Nicolas Duvoux in "Les politiques publiques de l'aide alimentaire au XXe siècle en France" (émission), *La Fabrique de l'histoire*, 2018. Online: https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-fabrique-de-l-histoire/les-politiques-publiques-de-l-aide-alimentaire-au-xxe-siecle-en-france-1248102

of the trend towards prosperity during the *Trente Glorieuses* period of economic growth in France, and continued to strive for survival.[203]

The impetus came from the voluntary sector. In the 1970s, the international movement ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World set out a programme to combat exclusion and formulated, as an individual right, the right to "income security", i.e. the guarantee of a minimum income for all.[204] In 1984, after continually alerting the public and governments during the 1950s to the plight of those living in poor housing, Abbé Pierre called on the public authorities to address the large number of people in precarious situations, who simply could not meet their food requirements: these people, referred to as the "new poor", suffered from the return of unemployment in France and a weakened economic situation due to the oil crises. In general, charities reported a change in their beneficiaries, an increase in food insecurity, and even growing physical insecurity among these "disaffiliated" people,[205] many of whom were unable to pay rent or find accommodation. In addition, while most homeless people were men, a proportion of women also found themselves homeless. In addition to their situation of exclusion, women are also vulnerable to specific forms of violence,[206] and their situation of insecurity is exacerbated by their gender.[207]

In addition, a new form of employment insecurity was increasing, due to the rise of atypical contracts that has been ongoing since the 1980s (see the Work Pact). Furthermore, since the 1980s, trade unions have been concerned about a decline in employment protection; to compensate for these shortcomings, they have negotiated for the State to take charge of more extensive tax-financed assistance for the poorest. Rather than an *insurance-based* (contributory) system, the aim was to establish an "*assistance-based* safety net",[208] i.e. *non-contributory social* benefits – which also marks the beginning of the fight against exclusion. Specific benefits were therefore created and paid out by the *Caisse des Allocations Familiales* (CAF, French family benefits fund), enabling targeted, means-tested assistance. In 1971, the *Allocation de logement sociale* (social housing allowance) was introduced; in 1975, the *Allocation parent isolé* (single parent allowance) and the *Allocation aux adultes handicapés* (allowance for disabled adults) were introduced. Poverty had finally reached the political agenda – a focus facilitated by the Left who held power from 1981 onwards – and the government became aware of the shortcomings of social protection.[209] A "Programme to combat poverty and precariousness" was adopted by the Council of Ministers in January 1983. The *Revenu minimum d'insertion* (RMI, minimum income benefit) was created in 1988, recognizing the poor as a category of people in need of official and permanent State assistance. In 1991, the Besson law established a right to housing; in 1998, the law against exclusion was passed; and in 1999, universal health cover was introduced.[210] The welfare approach (for the most vulnerable) complemented the insurance approach (for all).

French institutions were also developing the notion of "integration" (the aim is to guarantee social integration for all), nurturing the idea that the nation owes an everlasting debt to its disadvantaged citizens. The social pact was then reformulated accordingly: if democracy fails to ensure that everyone has access to a decent income and social security, it is obliged to provide compensation and assistance to those who are disadvantaged.[211] This recognition of the precariousness and economic insecurity of the most vulnerable took on a European dimension in 1986-1987, with the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). At the same time, in European statistical studies, the expression "poverty risk" became widespread,[212] making it possible to anticipate situations of precariousness, to identify their origins, but also to deepen the concepts of poverty and social insecurity, instilling the idea that they should be considered not only from a monetary perspective.[213]

These decades of public action were decisive, because they changed the social representations of precariousness, while the intolerable nature of these inequalities was set to increase. The fact that the French government targets its social action on new poverty was decisive in terms of the population's expectations of

203 Nicolas Duvoux in "Les politiques publiques de l'aide alimentaire au XXe siècle en France" (émission), *La Fabrique de l'histoire*, 2018. Online: https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-fabrique-de-l-histoire/les-politiques-publiques-de-l-aide-alimentaire-au-xxe-siecle-en-france-1248102

204 Frédéric Viguier, "Les paradoxes de l'institutionnalisation de la lutte contre la pauvreté en France", *L'Année sociologique*, 2013/1 (Vol. 63), p. 51-75. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-annee-sociologique-2013-1-page-51.htm

205 Term used by Robert Castel, *L'Insécurité sociale. Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé?*, Paris, Seuil, 2003.

206 Marie Loison, Gwenaëlle Perrier, "Les trajectoires des femmes sans domicile à travers le prisme du genre : entre vulnérabilité et protection", *Déviance et Société*, 2019/1 (Vol. 43), p. 77-110. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-deviance-et-societe-2019-1-page-77.htm

207 Elliot Liebow, *Tell them who I am, the lives of homeless women*, New York, The Free Press, 1993.

208 Nicolas Duvoux, "1. Les politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté", in: Olivier Giraud éd., *Politiques sociales : l'état des savoirs.* Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches", 2022, p. 15-28. DOI: 10.3917/dec.girau.2022.01.0015. URL: https://www.cairn.info/politiques-sociales-l-etat-des-savoirs--9782348070075-page-15.htm

209 Julien Damon, "Pauvreté, exclusion: faire face aux risques. Julien Damon commente *Réponses aux risques de pauvreté*, 1980", *Informations sociales*, 2019/2 (n° 200), p. 44-49. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-informations-sociales-2019-2-page-44.htm

210 DUVOUX Nicolas, "1. Les politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté", in: Olivier Giraud éd., *Politiques sociales : l'état des savoirs.* Paris, La Découverte, "Recherches", 2022, p. 15-28. DOI: 10.3917/dec.girau.2022.01.0015. URL: https://www.cairn.info/politiques-sociales-l-etat-des-savoirs--9782348070075-page-15.htm

211 Nicolas Duvoux, "Le RMI : retour sur un tournant des politiques d'insertion", *Regards croisés sur l'économie*, 2008/2 (n° 4), p. 182-192. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-regards-croises-sur-l-economie-2008-2-page-182.htm

212 Eurostat proposes to measure the "at-risk-of-poverty rate". See Julien Damon, "Pauvreté, exclusion: faire face aux risques. Julien Damon commente *Réponses aux risques de pauvreté*, 1980", *Informations sociales*, 2019/2 (n° 200), p. 44-49. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-informations-sociales-2019-2-page-44.htm

213 Julien Damon, "Pauvreté, exclusion: faire face aux risques. Julien Damon commente *Réponses aux risques de pauvreté*, 1980", *Informations sociales*, 2019/2 (n° 200), p. 44-49. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-informations-sociales-2019-2-page-44.htm

protection, because this focus, which was reflected in specific public policies, suddenly gave legitimacy to the fact of being helped.[214] Even more decisively, the welfare state, as it emerged in the 20th century, largely contributed to the deindividuation of the "responsibility" of the most disadvantaged: with policies to help the most disadvantaged and to improve social security, the idea was reinforced that no citizen could be held *responsible* for their disadvantaged social situation,[215] and that poverty was rather a damage created by society, a failure by the state to fulfil its duty to protect and provide security for all, which had to be remedied at the institutional level. From this perspective, it is not the citizens who are at fault; it is the State that is failing in its promise of protection. Insecurity and social disaffiliation were now seen as collective responsibilities. It was only in the decades that followed that the meaning of the pact changed, and poverty was gradually seen as "proof" that certain sections of the population were not fulfilling their duties.

Towards the contractualization of social benefits: does an individual need to deserve protection?

Among the social benefits mentioned, the RMI occupies a somewhat special place, and its evolution is a good example of the development of our representations of social assistance that the welfare state is obliged to provide.

When introduced in 1988, the RMI was not only a novelty in that it reflected a welfare rather than an insurance approach.[216] In its formulation, it also crystallizes the quid pro quo concept, thus instituting a "new philosophy of social rights":[217] recipients can receive the minimum income, but in return they must undertake to "participate in the actions or activities [...] necessary for their social or professional integration."[218] From the outset, the legislators who designed this system had deliberately created a certain amount of vagueness around the compensatory measures to be envisaged, leaving local actors free to determine the "means" of integration: the idea was to maintain a certain amount of leeway to assure and personalize the pathway of a recipient, according to their precise needs. In practice, therefore, for twenty years or so, local authorities were content to simply administer the RMI; but as the number of recipients increased considerably, and the crisis exacerbated the feeling of economic and social insecurity, a form of "solidarity fatigue"[219] spread through public opinion. The integration contract had become more rigid and required a genuine "exchange in return for social rights"[220] – a change that led to the creation of the *Contrat Insertion-Revenu Minimum d'Activité* (CI-RMA).[221] For many people, the contractual nature of the system confirms the disintegration of collective solidarity[222] by putting the idea of personal capacity and the logic of reciprocal commitment back at the centre. Another analysis of this change in collective representations and expectations of the State is that the collapse of collective solidarity has led to a growing rhetoric of "assistance", according to which citizens dependent on social benefits "profiteer" from the system and are unwilling to fulfil their side of the bargain.

This development is representative of the current tendency of needing to *qualify for social benefits*.[223] Applicants for the RSA must demonstrate that they have first tried all available alternatives (work, unemployment benefit, etc.) and all types of independent support (family and other means)[224] before seeking recourse to national benefits – which is now seen as a last resort. Personal savings, whether generating income or not, are also taken into account when calculating entitlements.[225] The provision of security for the individual through institutional aid now seems like an "exceptional" last-chance measure, contrary to the philosophy that underpinned the establishment of the welfare state: while the social pact once involved compensation for State failings through

214 On this subject, see "Les politiques publiques de l'aide alimentaire au XXe siècle en France", *La Fabrique de l'histoire*, 2018. Online: https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-fabrique-de-l-histoire/les-politiques-publiques-de-l-aide-alimentaire-au-xxe-siecle-en-france-1248102

215 On this point, see Sacha Lévy-Bruhl's work, *Par-delà la solidarité. Justice et responsabilité dans la fondation de la sociologie et les transformations de la citoyenneté sociale*, doctoral thesis, presented at EHESS on 29 November 2023 (forthcoming).

216 Insurance-based security guarantees social protection based on a rationale of contribution/restitution: workers contribute according to their income, thereby guaranteeing themselves the right to compensation if they have an accident, or if they stop working. Conversely, the rationale underlying assistance is defined as the duty to help those in need. This type of assistance can less easily be described as a pact, because the aid given does not have a contributory element. See https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/262514-assistance-assurance-et-protection-sociale

217 Nicolas Duvoux, "Le RMI: retour sur un tournant des politiques d'insertion", *Regards croisés sur l'économie*, 2008/2 (n° 4), p. 182-192. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-regards-croises-sur-l-economie-2008-2-page-182.htm

218 https://drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2020-10/er045.pdf

219 Nicolas Duvoux, "22. Le rmi et les dérives de la contractualisation", *in* Serge Paugam (éd.), *Repenser la solidarité. L'apport des sciences sociales*. Paris cedex 14, Presses Universitaires de France, "Le Lien social", 2007, p.451-472. URL: https://www.cairn.info/repenser-la-solidarite--9782130544272-page-451.htm

220 Nicolas Duvoux, "22. Le rmi et les dérives de la contractualisation", *in* Serge Paugam (éd.), *Repenser la solidarité. L'apport des sciences sociales*. Paris cedex 14, Presses Universitaires de France, "Le Lien social", 2007, p.451-472. URL: https://www.cairn.info/repenser-la-solidarite--9782130544272-page-451.htm

221 "With the RMA, the legislator has sought to introduce such a counterbalance to social legislation. The RMA is a special kind of part-time fixed-term employment contract, renewable twice, for a total period of eighteen months. During the period of the flat-rate allowance, the "employee" reimburses the allowance. (Nicolas Duvoux, "22. Le RMI et les dérives de la contractualisation", *in* Serge Paugam (éd.), *Repenser la solidarité. L'apport des sciences sociales*. Paris cedex 14, Presses Universitaires de France, "Le Lien social", 2007, p.451-472. URL: https://www.cairn.info/repenser-la-solidarite--9782130544272-page-451.htm)

222 Robert Lafore, "Le contrat dans la protection sociale, une approche française", *in* Philippe Auvergnon (dir.), *La contractualisation du droit social*, Bordeaux, Bordeaux-IV-comprasec, 2002 ; Nicolas Duvoux, "Le RMI: retour sur un tournant des politiques d'insertion", *Regards croisés sur l'économie*, 2008/2 (n° 4), p.182-192. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-regards-croises-sur-l-economie-2008-2-page-182.htm

223 The qualification for social rights refers to the tendency of public services to offer social rights and benefits on a conditional basis: people only become beneficiaries if they demonstrate goodwill and activity (taking up a low-paid job, volunteering, actively seeking employment...).

224 For example, alimony or maintenance payments are taken into account when calculating entitlements.

225 https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F24585

distribution mechanisms and support designed to ensure the security of the most vulnerable, in a society that has not been able to eradicate poverty but has made it a primary objective, the pact now consists of allocating *conditional* aid, if and only if an individual proves to be deserving and is active in their social reintegration.[226] In the former, failure is considered at a collective level, that society as a whole is at fault, and the social security of individuals is seen as an inescapable duty of the nation. In the latter, it is the individual who is deemed responsible for their own social situation: it is the individual who must prove that they are fulfilling their duties to obtain the right to social security.[227]

The feeling of social insecurity is intensified by the increasing number of measures to combat benefit fraud since the 1990s,[228] fuelling the fear of possible penalties in the event of a declaration error. In France, the negative impacts of these measures have been pointed out on many occasions by the Defender of Rights (*Défenseur des droits*), the administrative authority responsible for defending citizens whose rights are under threat.[229] In a 2017 report on the fight against fraud, it is emphasized that users are doubly constrained, first by a "declaratory procedure for accessing social benefits that is prone to errors", and second by "an increasingly robust system for combating fraud, conveying the suspicion of massive fraud on the part of beneficiaries."[230] In this sense, the institutions responsible for providing social security for individuals end up having the opposite effect, because on top of the dangers of precariousness faced by individuals, they add the fear of sanctions and financial penalties in the event of an error on the part of the claimant. In addition to the administrative complexity of the procedures involved, this situation increases the number of people who do not make use of this right,[231] therefore increasing the social and financial insecurity of the most disadvantaged. The social security contract is thus based on administrative competence and the most efficient proactivity on the part of individuals as conditions for participation, if they aspire to receive state protection.

At the same time, researchers are now pointing out the limits of our social protection framework, which is based on a productivist and industrial model that was established during an era of full employment and an outdated notion of family structure. Under the social system of the welfare state, access to social security depends directly on the contributions paid by the worker, with these contributions themselves determined by the (changing) wages received by the worker. It was therefore presumed, in a context specific to the post-war period and "reconstruction", that workers who pursued a continuous career within the same company would benefit from increasing protection as their career progressed. This shows the extent to which social protection depends on a particular economic configuration and growth strategy – the latter being increasingly discussed and questioned today. Furthermore, the system of protection still largely assumes that a man is the head of a family, and that he provides the resources, while the rest of the family are his beneficiaries. It is significant that the system grants tax benefits to married couples or those in civil partnerships, based on the idea that a wife/partner is a burden, since by definition she is not in work.[232] In summary, the entire social Security Pact needs to be revisited, because it was structured on the basis of how society and the economy functioned at a certain period. It is therefore essential to remember that the productivist part of the social model: the type of growth strategy (including the role of consumption) is closely linked to the type of social protection, and social protection reforms must be analysed in light of its economic functions, which explains the differences across Europe, between Germany, France, Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom.[233]

Is modern society a "risk society"? An ever-expanding Security Pact that is full of disappointment

The precautionary principle and the risk society

From the 1990s onwards, new forms of protection were introduced, this time no longer aimed at protecting citizens against risks by simply compensating them, but rather at anticipating these risks through the precautionary principle – a principle that was incorporated into the French Constitution in the 1990s, and at that time applied to the environment as well as to health and food.[234] The concept informs so many of today's systems of protection that some now speak of a "precautionary state", which no longer

226 Thibaud Métais and Jérémie Lamothe, "Réforme du RSA: le gouvernement s'allie à la droite pour durcir le dispositif" on *Lemonde.fr*, 29 September 2023. Online: https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2023/09/29/reforme-du-rsa-le-gouvernement-s-allie-a-la-droite-pour-durcir-le-dispositif_6191644_823448.html

227 For example, as D. Agacinski points out, the RSA presentation provided online by the Bouches-du-Rhône department considers social benefits to have a rights/duty rationale: there is a section entitled "My rights" immediately followed by a section entitled "My commitments". These commitments include "Looking for a job" and "Signing and respecting the reciprocal commitment contract" (CER). The CER is intended to formalize a recipient's pathway and set out his or her "objectives" in terms of professional and social integration. It also sets out the deadlines for the reintegration process. See also: https://solidarites.gouv.fr/le-revenu-de-solidarite-active-rsa. For an analysis of this contractual language in documents relating to social benefits, see Daniel Agacinski, "Défendre les droits sociaux, consolider la citoyenneté sociale", *Regards*, 2020/2 (N° 58), p.123-134.

228 See Vincent Dubois, "Le paradoxe du contrôleur. Incertitude et contrainte institutionnelle dans le contrôle des assistés sociaux", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 178, no. 3, 2009, pp. 28-49.

229 The Défenseur des droits, created in 2011 and enshrined in the Constitution, "is an independent administrative authority responsible for ensuring that citizens' rights and freedoms are respected." Its mission is twofold: "To defend people whose rights are not respected. To promote equality for all." (See https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr).

230 https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/2023-07/ddd_rapport_fraudes-sociales_2017_20170906.pdf

231 With this in mind, the State and its social partners are experimenting with providing assistance at source https://www.caf.fr/partenaires/caf-de-la-sarthe/offre-de-service/thematique-libre/acces-aux-droits-solidarite-la-source

232 For a full explanation, see Bernard Gazier, Bruno Palier and Hélène Périvier. "Chapitre 1. Pourquoi faut-il repenser la protection sociale?", *Refonder le système de protection sociale. Pour une nouvelle génération de droits sociaux*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2014, pp. 23-80.

233 Bruno Palier and Romain Roussel, « Stratégies de croissance, emploi et protection sociale », *Revue française des affaires sociales*, no. 1, 2016.

234 François Ewald, "Société assurantielle et solidarité. Entretien avec François Ewald", *Esprit*, no. 288, October 2002, pp. 117-135, p. 127.

hesitates to delegate and outsource its security roles, rather than to provide a welfare state in the strict sense of the term.[235] It should be noted that this principle has become increasingly important as our knowledge of science and health improves. At the same time, some people use the term *risk society* to describe our current systems and the way in which they have been weakened by an infinite number of new uncertainties and instabilities: noting that the promises of modernity, in terms of progress, have not been kept, or that this modern progress has been accompanied by new risks (pollution, natural disasters, nuclear accidents, etc.), the sociologist Ulrich Beck suggests that fear has permanently replaced confidence in our modern societies. This view was supported by the *Global Risks Report,* published in 2023, which announced the upcoming multiplication of unprecedented social, environmental, geopolitical, health and economic risks.[236] In February 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine revived the fear and spectre of war in Europe. The post-war pact of geopolitical equilibrium, based on UN vigilance and nuclear deterrence, appears seriously challenged. The latest report from the *Caisse Centrale de Réassurance* (CCR), published on 17 October 2023, forecasts a 60% increase in the cost of insuring against the risks of natural disasters.[237]

The role of citizens in national security

It is worth noting that the development of military service from the 18th century to the present day reveals significant changes in our Security Pact: the history of conscription ultimately relates the universalization (every male citizen must ensure national security) and then the professionalization (those who protect are experts in protection) of the duty to provide security. In 1798, the Jourdan-Delbrel Law instituted universal and compulsory conscription for young Frenchmen aged between 20 and 25, based on the principle that "every Frenchman is a soldier and owes it to himself to defend his country". Not every Frenchman was mobilized, however, as the army was formed by drawing lots – which may seem unbiased and random at first, but it proved rather less fair in practice, as the rich paid replacements (who were less wealthy) to go to the frontline in their place. It was not until the 1870 defeat and the establishment of the Third Republic that universal, personal military service was introduced, based on the idea that every Frenchman should contribute to national security, and that if he wanted to be *protected*, he should *defend* his family: mobilization then became a patriotic duty. The state even mobilized men from the colonies (the West Indies, North Africa, Reunion, French Guiana, Senegal, Oceania, etc.), which entailed inequalities of treatment.[238] In 1914, there were 100,000 soldiers in the French army, a figure that quadrupled by the end of the war. At the end of the 20th century, the army once again became a professional army, and Jacques Chirac abolished military service in 1997, based on the idea that the nation's security should henceforth be the responsibility of professionals, and that it was no longer the duty of every citizen.

The quid pro quo for security

As part of this "risk society" and with increasing health and medical issues to address, voices are being raised to challenge the place that has become occupied by "biopolitics"[239], as well as hyper-medicalization.[240] Excessive safety, from this perspective, can hide processes of insecurity for others. Lastly, some people reject a healthcare framework that they see as intrusive and liberticidal, and demand the freedom to smoke (banned in enclosed public places since 2007)[241], to drive without speed limits, to drink alcohol, to "put themselves in danger", without such behaviour being subject to State intervention. Added to this is a form of administrative inflation and the perpetual development of new regulations, which guarantee greater protection for individuals or the environment, but are sometimes experienced as added complexity.[242] According to a Senate report published in 2023, the Environmental Code has grown by 653% since 2002, the Commercial Code by 364% and the Consumer Code by 311%.[243] There is a tension between the frequent calls to simplify and remove standards, and the classic political exercise that legitimately generates new standards to address public problems. Generally speaking, entrepreneurs regularly emphasize the insecurity that they encounter, and the risks they face, particularly resulting from the "red tape" that they claim to suffer from in France. Risk can be defined as "any uncertain event" that has a "negative impact on the achievement of an organization's objectives" and is likely to "slow down the

235 François Ewald, "Société assurantielle et solidarité. Entretien avec François Ewald", *Esprit*, no. 288, October 2002, pp. 117-135, p. 127.

236 https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2023/digest/

237 Thomas Bezy and Lucas Chancel, "Climat: il y a urgence à préciser les contours et l'organisation de la protection sociale écologique du XXIe siècle", in *Lemonde.fr*, 4 December 2023. Online: https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/12/04/climat-il-y-a-urgence-a-preciser-les-contours-et-l-organisation-de-la-protection-sociale-ecologique-du-xxi-siecle_6203834_3232.html?lmd_medium=al&lmd_campaign=envoye-par-appli&lmd_creation=android&lmd_source=default ; https://www.ccr.fr/fr/-/etude-climat-ccr-2023

238 These men were generally relegated to the infantry, as they were deemed incapable of taking up positions in the artillery. They were also subject to degrading iconography and, as prisoners during the Second World War, to particularly ferocious Nazi repression (such as the Chasselay massacre). Today, France is still working to finally give full recognition to the sacrifices made by colonized populations, who were largely recruited by the French State during war time. See Anthony Guyon, *Les tirailleurs sénégalais. De l'indigène au soldat de 1857 à nos jours*, Paris, Perrin.

239 A neologism coined by Michel Foucault in the 1970s to describe the way in which politics attempts to govern bodies. The object of biopolitics is no longer the "people" (a political subject) but the "population" (a demographic and biological mass that needs to be regulated by hygiene standards, health and medical regulations, incentive policies, awareness campaigns, insurance pressures and a "public health" rationale). The term was used by Giorgio Agamben and Toni Negri. See the article "Biopolitics" by Frédéric Gros: https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/biopolitique/

240 Women in particular suffer from this hyper-medicalization, regularly reporting experiences of gynaecological violence or pregnancies that are excessively normalized and guilt-ridden, with the imperative of safety taking precedence over everything else. See Camille Froidevaux-Metterie, *Un si gros ventre. Expériences vécues du corps enceint*, Paris, Stock, 2023.

241 Sophie Cardon, Frank Réquéna, *Fumer en liberté*, Paris, éd. du Rocher, 2010.

242 https://www.lesechos.fr/idees-debats/editos-analyses/la-complexite-administrative-une-malediction-francaise-1320332

243 https://www.senat.fr/rap/r22-743/r22-7431.pdf

creation of value, destroy existing value and thus jeopardize a company's long-term survival".[244] For this reason, in December 2014, a law was passed "to simplify business life", as well as a law, in 2018, for a "state at the service of a society based on trust", which promotes the principle of "trust and simplicity" and is aimed at "all users, individuals and businesses alike, in their day-to-day dealings with the authorities". This problem reveals a conflict of representation at the level of the Security Pact: on the one hand, there are companies that see their role as being to take risks for society as a whole, and to ensure growth and the creation of value for the benefit of the community and the nation. To this end, they are calling for increased simplification and a lighter, less "costly" (in various ways) regulatory framework. On the other hand, many people emphasize the extent to which the neoliberal vision of some companies, especially from the 1980s-1990s onwards, raises questions about social progress and employee security, insofar as it considers the Labour Code as simply a restriction to growth, and as an excessive text that needs to be reduced.[245] It is significant that the *Droit social* review of July-August 1986 – despite being (in part) the laboratory for the Auroux laws (aimed at introducing democracy into the company; see Work Pact) – asked the polemical question: "Should we burn down the labour code?" The question was subsequently taken up on multiple occasions by many different media publications.[246]

In the 1960s, English-speaking countries also introduced an approach known as "risk management", which did not become widespread in France until the 1990s-2000s. The aim was to manage competition more effectively, and to pay attention to legal, economic, financial, strategic and, gradually, environmental risks. As some analysts have noted, the threats to competition in particular are multiplying: industrial and strategic espionage, sabotage, theft of data and information, and so on. The modern company faces multiple risks.[247]

The citizens' sense of insecurity

In terms of the "physical" safety of individuals, a strong feeling of insecurity develops or persists among certain sections of the population, a feeling which sometimes stems from a situation of marginalization and victimization in society (women, religious minorities, etc. who are more exposed). This feeling of insecurity among women can be exacerbated, leading to a feeling of being let down by the system, when supposedly protective institutions (courts, police forces, police stations, etc.) often fail to recognize the violence to which they are subjected – the law lags behind social expectations, a fact that was spectacularly revealed by the #MeToo movement in 2017.[248] Sometimes women or minorities are even blamed for their situation or the aggression they face. In the same way that in the 19th century workplace accidents were seen as the "natural" and inevitable consequences of a lack of skill and attention on the part of the worker to the risks faced (which were seen as going hand in hand with existence), sexual assault is sometimes seen as the result of the inevitable risk taken by a woman when she is careless (*victim blaming* syndrome).[249]

Conversely, feelings of insecurity sometimes reflect a fear of a decline in status rather than actual exposure to risk. In other words, "feelings are not simply a reflection of the risk incurred",[250] and they may indirectly express other social fears – as is the case for the elderly, or households living in impoverished suburban areas. Feelings of insecurity therefore play a role in revealing social inequalities and conditions, just as they express disappointment about our expectations in terms of protection. According to INSEE, in 2019, women aged 75 and over expressed a greater sense of insecurity at home than women aged 30-44 (11.1% compared with 9.7%), much more so than men aged 75 and over (3.8%). And 21.9% of women aged 14-29 avoid leaving their homes on some occasions for fear of insecurity, compared with 4.8% of men of the same age.[251]

Furthermore, the issue of insecurity, which has been instrumentalized and exploited by the extreme right to serve their own ends, has undergone a sharp increase since the 1980s, and its mobilization by certain political parties has been sensationalized

244 Caroline Diard and Olivier Lasmoles. "Le risque d'entreprendre: l'entrepreneur face à ses responsabilités", *Management & Sciences Sociales*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2019, pp. 36-50. Voir également R. Brockhaus (1980), "Risk taking propensity of entrepreneurs", *Academy of Management Journal*, 23, 509-520; P.Y. Charpentier, (2014). La gestion du risque: de l'approche juridique à l'ébauche d'une méthodologie managériale, *Revue Management & Avenir*, 74, 191-209.

245 Matthieu Tracol, "Les politiques du travail et de l'emploi depuis les années 1970. Entre protection des travailleurs et néolibéralisme", *Germinal*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2023, pp. 22-35.

246 Arnaud Bouillin, "Faut-il brûler le code du travail?", *L'Express*, 26/01/2004. online [accessed 21/02/2024]: https://www.lexpress.fr/informations/faut-il-bruler-le-code-du-travail_654890.html; Laurent Mauduit, "Faut-il brûler le code du travail?" *Le Monde*, 15 February 2005. online [accessed on 21/02/2024]: https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2005/02/15/faut-il-bruler-le-code-du-travail_398129_1819218.html; Jacques Le Goff, "Faut-il brûler le code du travail?", *Esprit*, vol. , no. 11, 2015, pp. 113-117 ; Dossier spécial "Faut-il brûler le code du travail?" *Le 1 Hebdo*, no. 76, 30 September 2015.

247 Sophie Gauthier-Gaillard and Benjamin Faucon, "Les enjeux de sûreté dans un environnement concurrentiel : un défi pour les entreprises", *Sécurité et stratégie*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2010, pp. 49-57.

248 However, the movement has a longer history, having been launched in 2007 by Tarana Burke.

249 A phenomenon whereby the victimization of the person attacked is intensified by blaming them for the situation or the attack. Although the term is now widely used, it originated in social psychology.

250 Marie-Lys Pottier, "Les préoccupations sécuritaires: une mutation?", *Revue française de sociologie*, 2004/2 (Vol. 45), p. 211-241. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-sociologie-1-2004-2-page-211.htm

251 Insee, "Sentiment d'insécurité selon l'âge et le sexe. Données annuelles de 2007 à 2019", 06/03/2020. Online https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2526402#figure1_radio3

in the media, heightening the anxiety of those already living in fear. Given the diversity of offences recorded, it makes no sense to aggregate these incidents together and then to declare that they reflect an increase – or a decrease – in crime.[252] In any case, it does not seem possible to conclude that there has been an increase in insecurity,[253] for example, if we look at the most shocking crimes, the homicide rate in France is actually at a very low level today[254], while violent robberies are falling. The figures provided by the Ministry of the Interior do indeed paint a nuanced picture.[255] It should also be remembered that increases in violence and crime do not necessarily reflect a "growth of crime" in our societies, but rather the end of social tolerance towards certain practices that are now considered criminal: to give a significant example, if the figures show a 33% increase in sexual assaults in 2021 in France compared with the previous year, it is highly likely that this is at least partly due to the fact that such crimes are now being reported to the police more frequently (even though the authorities are still largely failing in the way they process complaints), encouraged by the work of feminist associations to recognize, to give voice to victims, and to raise awareness.[256] In other words, insecurity is necessarily "higher" as our definition of crime extends to include a greater range of offences, as we feel greater legitimacy in reporting types of assault that are no longer tolerated (such as street harassment), and as our insurance systems and legal frameworks become better and impose more penalties in the interests of providing better protection for people – which gives the impression of a long-term increase in crime. In conclusion, there is much uncertainty about whether safety, in the sense of an absence of crime or aggression, has deteriorated in comparison with a hypothetical past: nevertheless, the feeling of insecurity sometimes persists among certain groups of citizens,[257] symptomatic of dissatisfaction with the promise to protect everyone, regardless of their specific identity or where they live. The fact is that – for those who live there – sensitivity to these criminal acts is exacerbated, and this insecurity is all the more unbearable when concentrated in socially deprived neighbourhoods:[258] it is symptomatic of the social deprivation and spatial segregation that many feel the State and public authorities are failing to address, a failure that is seen as a betrayal of the initial promise of collective safety. In this context, the insecurity experienced stems from *real* exposure to the objective risks of crime, but it is not symptomatic of a situation of *overall* insecurity (chronic or national), and it is coupled with an awareness of the social relegation endured. This situation reveals the extent to which social insecurity is also a subjective phenomenon, but that this phenomenon is nonetheless sociologically significant in its own right, and should be taken into account, since it is based on a real situation of greater deprivation.[259] It should be noted that some citizens also express a fear of an "abandonment" of public services and the ensuing insecurity – physical, health, social – that would result. In fact, data on public services in France show that these services are being withdrawn from large numbers of municipalities and that they are unevenly distributed across the country. Between 1980 and 2013, the number of schools declined by 24%, post offices by 36%, railway stations by 28%, maternity wards by 48% and police stations by 13%.[260]

As mentioned above, the rise of individualism has gone hand in hand with a greater sanctity of the "person", and a rejection of even the most negligible risks to that person (with the paradoxical exception of social risks, which has been surprisingly tolerated in recent decades). According to this rationale, the modern inflationary notion of the social Security Pact, necessarily leads to disappointment and a form of "security frustration",[261] because it automatically increases expectations in terms of protection, and the desire to see this protection diversify indefinitely. As is the same for autonomy, "the aspiration to be protected moves like a cursor, making new demands as previous objectives are achieved".[262] As a result, expectations in terms of safety are fuelling a growing and ongoing demand.

252 Laurent Mucchielli, "À quoi servent les 'chiffres de la délinquance'?", *Journal du droit des jeunes*, vol. 242, no. 2, 2005, pp. 29-29.

253 See the study "L'insécurité n'augmente pas en France" (Observation société), 2023. Online: https://www.observationsociete.fr/modes-de-vie/divers-tendances_conditions/evolutioninsecurite/

254 See the Cesdip study "L'homicide est rare". Online: https://oscj2.cesdip.fr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Lhomicide-est-rare.pdf

255 See the time series data portal: https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Interstats/Datavisualisation/Series-chronologiques-sur-la-delinquance-et-l-insecurite. In particular, the comparison between the annual "Living environment and security" survey and the figures collected by the gendarme and police, recommended by the Ministry of the Interior, suggests that caution should be exercised before jumping to conclusions about certain offences. See, for example, the data on physical violence.

256 See the figures given by vie-publique.fr: https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/291344-insecurite-et-delinquance-les-chiffres-definitifs-pour-2022#:~:text=La%20hausse%20est%20tr%C3%A8s%20nette,%2B33%25%20en%202021).

257 Even though some studies suggest that it has remained stable since 2010. See https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/282938-le-sentiment-dinsecurite-reste-stable-en-france-depuis-2010 and https://www.observationsociete.fr/modes-de-vie/divers-tendances_conditions/le-sentiment-dinsecurite-ne-progresse-pas-en-france/.

258 In France, 1% of local authorities recorded the majority of crime. See www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/284320-la-geographie-de-la-delinquance-lechelle-communale

259 Nicolas Duvoux, "Précarité et insécurité sociale", *Constructif*, 2022/2 (N° 62), p.32-35. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-constructif-2022-2-page-32.htm

260 See Aleksandra Barczak and Mohamed Hilal, "Quelle évolution de la présence des services publics en France?", in Thibault Courcelle, Ygal Fijalkow and François Taulelle (dir.), *Aménagement du territoire et services publics*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016. Cité par Gwénaël Doré, "Géographie inégalitaire des services publics et aménagement du territoire", *Population & Avenir*, vol. 745, no. 5, 2019, pp. 4-8.

261 Robert Castel, *L'Insécurité sociale. Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé ?*, Paris, Seuil, 2003, p. 8.

262 Robert Castel, *L'Insécurité sociale. Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé ?*, Paris, Seuil, 2003, p. 8.

Consumption Pact

To prepare for the future and to set out on an ambitious ecological and social transition, it is important to look back at the history of our social compromises, starting with those that underpin consumer practices. To enable the future of this pact to be clearly analysed, it is essential to understand the way in which our consumption-growth-prosperity pact has been constructed, to identify the social expectations on which this pact was based, to analyse the social disappointments that may have accompanied it, and to understand the way in which consumption has been practised by different social groups since the 1800s.

Late 18th to the 19th century: a highly polarized Consumption Pact

In the 19th century, the inequalities and differences in consumption between the working class and the bourgeoisie were particularly striking. Most workers had access to so-called "basic necessities", and lived in unhygienic housing; they suffered from undernourishment and malnutrition, and had a high mortality rate due the various health problems caused by their working conditions. There was a constant fear of accidents, which could suddenly plunge a family into poverty; there was also a fear of crises affecting certain sectors, such as textiles, which could lead to the loss of income or jobs. Around 1830, slightly less than half the population of Paris was considered destitute[263] – poverty being particularly widespread in urban areas. The bourgeoisie on the other hand, underwent an intensification of consumption practices: since the 18th century, the notion had started to take root that luxury sustained economic prosperity and had a social purpose. Furthermore, the middle classes were driven by a desire to imitate nobility, and therefore to acquire certain expensive goods, as part of a rationale of being a "distinctive" consumer.[264] The boom in department stores from the 1850s onwards provided the opportunity: Le Bon Marché opened in 1852; Les Grands Magasins du Louvre in 1855; and Galeries Lafayette in 1896. Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) depicts the excitement of shopping and the infinite range of consumer possibilities in these stores.

In the 1880s, the wages of Parisian workers increased. Although their lifestyle was still characterized by austerity, it was punctuated, albeit rarely, by a few festive moments of intense consumption – such as Saint Barbara's Day, which was a major feast at the time. Consumption was focused on food and sometimes clothing. The possession of more expensive goods, such as certain items of clothing or furniture, was seen by workers as a way of saving, or even of assuring landlords of their solvency[265] – even though these items might one day have to be sold at the "Mont-de-piété" or even be seized in leaner times.[266] The end of the 19th century also saw the appearance of the first type of consumer credit for the working classes, known as "subscription sales" or "instalment sales".[267] Many of the characteristics of the future consumer society (diversity of supply, credit, consumer habits, the Fordist model, etc.) began to emerge in the 19th century.[268]

Early 20th century: the beginnings of politicized consumption, and the theorizing of emancipation through leisure consumption

The 1900s marked the beginning of "consumer culture[269]", which would continue to deepen from then on – except during the 1929 crisis and the two world wars, which represented significant pauses in this dynamic. However, this culture left the working class on the sidelines, still struggling to meet their most basic needs. In the 1910s, riots took place to protest against rising bread and housing prices, particularly in Valenciennes and Picardy, two industrial regions.[270] It was at this time that the concepts of the cost of living and purchasing power emerged,[271] as did the right to a better way of life:[272] in this regard, access to more extensive or better-quality consumption was understood and experienced as a means of achieving more equal conditions.

As a result, the meaning of the term *consumption* was gradually reoriented, replacing the action of simply using a resource (burning a candle, for example) with an activity that has positive

263 Samuel Guicheteau, *Les ouvriers en France. 1700-1835*, Armand Colin, 2014.

264 This refers to distinction in the sense considered by Pierre Bourdieu. In Bourdieusian sociology, distinction refers to the judgement of taste by which the dominant classes distinguish beauty from ugliness, and establish the criteria of "good taste" and legitimate culture. Distinction then refers, in a second stage, to the result of this operation: the dominant classes take care to distinguish themselves by appreciating demanding, rare or expensive cultural objects. See Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Paris, éd. de Minuit, 1979.

265 Anaïs Albert, *La Vie à crédit. La consommation des classes populaires à Paris (années 1880-1920)*, Paris, éd. de la Sorbonne, 2021.

266 The Mont-de-piété was a pawnshop where the poor could offer an object of value as collateral and obtain loans.

267 Anaïs Albert, *op. cit.*

268 Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things. How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first*, Londres, Allen Lane, 2016.

269 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, *Histoire de la consommation*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012.

270 Alain Chatriot, Marion Fontaine, "Contre la vie chère", *Cahiers Jaurès*, 2008/1-2 (N° 187-188), p. 97-116. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-jaures-2008-1-page-97.htm

271 J.-M. Flonneau, 1970, « Crise de la vie chère et mouvement syndical (1910-1914) », *Le Mouvement social*, juillet-septembre, pp. 49-81.

272 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, "II. Au XXe siècle: vers la société de consommation contemporaine", Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel éd., *Histoire de la consommation*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012, pp. 23-44.

connotations and is desirable in itself, for individuals and society – in other words, *productive consumption*,[273] which laid the foundations for the consumer pact we know today.

At the beginning of the 20th century, consumption became socialized and politicized, it explicitly became the activity that crystallized expectations and commitments relating to the common good and justice. As early as 1902, the *Ligue sociale d'acheteurs* (LSA, Social League of Buyers) was founded, concerned about the conditions of workers who produced the goods sold in shops. This movement did not so much protect consumer rights as reaffirm their duties, encouraging consumers –particularly female consumers in this case, since at the time it was women that carried out most domestic tasks, including replenishing household food supplies – to remain vigilant about the working conditions underpinning the production of food. The LSA's action was therefore both educational and investigative. Indirectly, it also enabled women to have a political voice, since women taking action on subjects perceived as domestic was tolerated (women speaking out on other politicized issues was very badly perceived).[274]

This growing concern was soon translated into institutional measures. From 1905 onwards, the State gradually began to organize consumer protection, ensuring that consumers had access to "honest trade", guarantees of quality and conformity, and basic information about the products they bought. The right to safe consumption was formulated, culminating in the period from 1947 onwards, when bodies dedicated to consumer protection were established (see Security Pact).[275]

During the 1920s and 1930s, left-wing parties gradually came to realize that Taylorism had led to the triumph of a type of work that could be seen as the enslavement of people, a form of "alienation from the machine", and turned their attention to new prospects for emancipation. The development of free time, a sort of homage to Lafargue and his work *Le Droit à la paresse* (1883), became an area of interest for the Communist and Socialist parties, who saw the consumption of certain goods and cultural services as a way of uplifting workers and democratizing leisure activities that were usually reserved for the economic elite. Sports, choirs, theatrical associations and cinemas were now made available to the working class via facilities and clubs set up by these parties, which in so doing were working towards a "hyper-politicization of everyday life":[276] the consumption (in the non-consumerist sense) of leisure then became a powerful vector for mobilization and militancy. For Blum, it was no longer just a question of compensating for labour: leisure was certainly an inseparable counterpart to work, but it was even more conceived as a means of human fulfilment in the noblest sense of the term.[277] In other words – and this is a notable break with socialist philosophy in particular – it was a certain form of consumption that led to politicization and emancipation, rather than work or the reform of the means of production: indeed, access to certain leisure activities ultimately corresponded to a form of democratization, and it was hoped that in so doing the working classes would gain access to a cultural heritage to which they were not traditionally entitled. In the socialist conception, access to knowledge and certain skills is all the more crucial as they shape the critical mind and, indirectly, the capacity for militancy. Even more decisively, free time was conceived as family or friendship time, through which people could consolidate their social ties and develop a class consciousness that could fuel social struggles. From this perspective, the introduction of paid holidays in 1936 officially transformed leisure time from a privilege into "social time".[278] Even if these leisure activities were not yet thought of as *consumption* as such, their importance nonetheless illustrated the certainty that access to particular activities was considered more effective, from the point of view of emancipation, than the struggle for the structural reorganization of work.

These same decades saw the opening of "single price" department stores, which created more popular forms of consumption: Prisunic in 1931, Monoprix and Priminime in 1932, located on the outskirts of Paris, made "cheaper" consumption possible for even the least affluent clientele. These shops became known as "poor people's department stores", and were very successful during the Great Depression.[279] The same decades also saw the introduction of family allowances, designed to support household consumption. Cultural consumption, meanwhile, expanded: the press and then radio, along with cinema and phonograph records, became the means of disseminating a truly mass culture, especially as the invention of radio was very quickly followed by the invention of radio advertising, which created a collective desire for certain

273 This development is partly due to economists who, since Adam Smith, have progressively reinforced the role of consumption in access to prosperity, using an approach based on the creation of value. Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things. How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first*, Londres, Allen Lane, 2016.

274 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, "Aux origines de la consommation engagée: la Ligue sociale d'acheteurs (1902-1914)", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, vol. n° 77, n° 1, 2003, pp. 95-108.

275 Creation of the Office and then the Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs in 1947; creation of the National Consumer Council in 1960; creation of the National Consumer Institute in 1968, etc.

276 Term coined by Marion Fontaine. See Marion Fontaine, "Travail et loisirs", in Jean-Jacques Becker (éd.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 2, Paris, La Découverte, 2005, p. 704-723. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/histoire-des-gauches-en-france--9782707147370-page-704.htm

277 Pascal Ory, *La Belle Illusion. Culture et politique sous le signe du Front Populaire (1935-1938)*, Plon, Paris, 1994, p. 130-134.

278 Marion Fontaine, "Travail et loisirs", in Jean-Jacques Becker (éd.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 2, Paris, La Découverte, 2005, p. 704-723. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/histoire-des-gauches-en-france--9782707147370-page-704.htm The notion of *social time* refers to: "the major categories or blocks of time that a society gives itself and represents to designate, articulate, give rhythm to and coordinate the main social activities to which it attaches importance" (Roger Sue, "La sociologie des temps sociaux : une voie de recherche en education", *Revue française de pédagogie*, 1993, n°104, pp. 61-72.

279 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, "Aux origines de la consommation engagée: la Ligue sociale d'acheteurs (1902-1914)", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, vol. n° 77, n° 1, 2003, pp. 95-108.

products.[280] The "pressure to consume", whether exerted by the public authorities or by economic actors, was beginning to take hold, and was the subject of specific government policies. The power of the State to restructure the economy and to reorganize production for military purposes at the time of the First and Second World Wars, in particular, is an interesting revelation of the active role it can take in our consumption systems – and to disregard, when necessary, popular aspirations to consume certain goods.

1939-1970: from wartime shortages to renewed prosperity: achieving equal conditions through standardized consumption

There was a real consumer "crisis" during the Second World War – an event that may also explain the period of mass consumption that followed in the 1950s. During this period, industry was weakened by shortages, there was rationing of raw materials, while during the war itself the German military administration controlled production in France. In terms of household lifestyles, consumption was gradually reduced and regulated: in December 1939, the "three days without meat" were introduced; from September 1940, food purchases were regulated by rationing, which restricted supplies according to age and profession.[281] It took a long time to emerge from this era of restrictions: although rationing was officially abolished in 1949 (4 years after the end of the war), shortages remained a feature of the early 1950s.

In contrast to this era of shortages, the 1945-1975 period, known as the "*Les Trente Glorieuses*", saw the return of growth and the advent of mass consumption. It was also in 1945 that social security was created, a form of protection that some historians interpret as the confirmation (after the 1898 measure on workplace accidents)[282] and sometimes the beginning, of the welfare state, but also as a means of stimulating consumption, even if the measure was not explicitly thought of as such. In the 1950s, the "generalization of the wage condition"[283] temporarily removed economic instability, at least for some classes.

The more favourable economic climate led to the enlargement of the middle class – which nevertheless observes economic variations within it, from one sub-group to another. Expectations in terms of consumption capacity increased and the aspiration was expressed within these classes for a new "standard of living", which it was hoped would be uniform and accessible to all. Indeed, the advocates of social justice were in fact no longer interested only in extreme poverty, as in the 19th century, but also in "deviations from the standard way of life":[284] the ambition was to give as many people as possible access to a wider range of goods. This wider access to goods, while gradual, was a reality of the *Trente Glorieuses* years. In particular, the 1960s saw a remarkable increase in the diversity of household appliances: in 1954, 7% of French households had a fridge; by 1960, 27%, and by 1970, 79%. There was also a marked increase in the number of washing machines: only 8% of households had one in 1954, compared with 25% in 1960 and 57% in 1970.[285] Generally speaking, household consumption increased significantly from the 1960s onwards – by an average of 3.2% annually between 1960 and 2008.[286] Although access to certain household appliances has sometimes been described as a form of emancipation for women (in the sense that their domestic work can be made slightly less taxing), this should be qualified: while these appliances can undeniably lighten the workload – particularly for working-class women who do not have access to domestic services like middle-class households – the division of labour within the home nevertheless remained extremely gendered.[287]

Also at this time the economist Jean Fourastié published his work, cementing the myth of the *Trente Glorieuses* as a period of prosperity for all through democratized access to consumption. He spread the idea that growth enabled the "averaging out" of lifestyles, which helped establish consumption as a collective aspiration and the cornerstone of a "healthy" economy, far removed from the spectre of communism.

Moreover, according to the regulationist school of thought, the Fordist economy (which continued to prevail in the 1950s and 1960s) was a system that linked together mass production, rising wages and mass consumption on the scale of the nation state. The virtuous economic model, supported during the *Trente Glorieuses*, consisted of increasing productivity, growth and therefore wages – an increase in wages which in turn enabled individuals to consume en masse, and therefore for high productivity to be

280 Jean-Jacques Cheval, "Invention et réinvention de la publicité à la radio, de l'entre-deux-guerres aux années 1980", *Le Temps des médias*, 2004/1 (n° 2), p. 75-85. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-temps-des-medias-2004-1-page-75.htm

281 Dominique Veillon, "Aux origines de la sous-alimentation: pénuries et rationnement alimentaire" in *"Morts d'inanition": Famine et exclusions en France sous l'Occupation* [online], Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2005 (accessed 25 October 2023). Available online: http://books.openedition.org/pur/20077.

282 For François Ewald, it was this law that ushered in the welfare state and the start of an insurance-based society. François Ewald, *L'Etat-providence*, Paris, Grasset, 1986.

283 Robert Castel, *Les Métamorphoses de la question sociale*, Paris, Fayard, 1995, p.350.

284 Daniel Verger, Jérôme Accardo, Pascal Chevalier and Aude Lapinte, "Bas revenus, consommation restreinte ou faible bien-être : les approches statistiques de la pauvreté à l'épreuve des comparaisons internationals", Paris, *Direction des statistiques démographiques et sociales*, Insee, 2005, p. 15. Quoted in Jeanne Lazarus, "Les pauvres et la consummation", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 2006/3 (n° 91), p. 137-152. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-vingtieme-siecle-revue-d-histoire-2006-3-page-137.htm

285 Claudette Sèze, Évolution des activités des femmes induite par la consommation de substituts sociaux au travail domestique, 1950-1980. Effets économiques et socioculturels, Centre de recherche sur l'innovation industrielle et sociale, 1988, pp. 22-47, 50-51 and 120-123. Data quoted and approximated by Jean-Claude Daumas, in Jean-Claude Daumas, "Les Trente Glorieuses ou le bonheur par la consummation", *Revue Projet*, vol. 367, no. 6, 2018, pp. 6-13.

286 Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, *Histoire de la consommation*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012.

287 See the novel by Christiane Rochefort, *Les Petits Enfants du siècle*, Paris, Grasset, 1961.

maintained.[288] In this respect, Fordism itself represented a strong interaction between the Work Pact and the Democracy Pact, since it democratized consumption through a transformation of the rationale of labour.

Large housing estates, particularly on the outskirts of Paris, were desirable places of comfort for many families, particularly those returning from Algeria who had been temporarily housed in insalubrious conditions.[289] At the same time, advertising and marketing were making an impression, developing the idea that access to certain goods is a prerequisite for successful individuation[290] and the formation *of one's own* personality: the paradox thus consisted in presenting mass-produced goods as a means of individuation,[291] or even of distinguishing oneself.

This period also saw the emergence of the figure of the consumer and his or her rights: J. F. Kennedy's historic speech in 1962 on the four fundamental rights of consumers reflects the emergence of collective movements around consumption, and contributes to the idea that respect for these rights is a source of collective progress (Trentmann, 2016). In 1983, the date of his speech (15 March) was established as World Consumer Rights Day, emphasizing that the fight for consumer rights is a social struggle like any other, and that its celebration is legitimate.

1950-1990: Consuming to control one's identity and social trajectory: a pact perceived as both alienating and emancipating

However, the pact was not respected by everyone: very high levels of poverty persisted throughout the *Trente Glorieuses*, and many people continued to be excluded from this prosperity. From the 1950s onwards, people began to speak out against poor housing, to the point where some historians have referred to a *war against slums*.[292] At the same time, a whole critical discourse on consumer society and the alienation it produces was developing, the philosophy of which was promoted by the Frankfurt School for many years, and then by the May 68 period of civil unrest, as well as by Jean Baudrillard's emblematic work, *La Société de consummation* (1970). These decades were structured around two competing narratives, one that lauded broader consumption as a means of achieving greater justice and well-being (a very common narrative among the lower and middle classes); and the other that considered consumption as a materialistic trend that was altering social and family ties and our "real" relationship with the world (a narrative that was popular among the intellectual elite in particular). Today, many people are highlighting what we have lost by accepting the advent of a consumer society: the alteration of social and family time, the increasing predominance of a commercial ideology in sport, a multiplication of environmental and social damage, the rise of urban waste, etc. There is no doubt that a variety of interpretations must be considered: while it is certain that the *Trente Glorieuses* era was accompanied by ecological damage and the promotion of a way of life that proved unsustainable,[293] it also enabled many households to escape from a level of daily hardship that would be difficult to imagine today.

However, it cannot be said that the *Trente Glorieuses* produced a total and lasting "averaging out" of society and a dissolution of inequalities: there was indeed the advent of a larger middle class and a general rise in incomes, which is far from negligible, but this dynamic of prosperity slowed down sharply after 1980. And it has never eliminated the logic of distinction and the reality of a highly stratified society: segmentations remain, and other types of domination were appearing even beyond the democratization movements – such as mass schooling in the 1960s, which did not abolish the existence of "inheritors" (class privilege).[294] It is revealing that the term "exclusion" first appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, in the midst of economic prosperity, to designate "a visible and shameful way of surviving"[295] among those who did not benefit from the general rise in income.[296] The concept is not without its ambivalence. While the economic realities illustrate that we must not idealize the prosperity of the *Trente Glorieuses* and its long-term effects, the concept of exclusion and the vision it conveys nonetheless reveal that poverty in those decades became no longer understood as a "normal pathology" of a collective: but as an unsustainable failure, in the context of a promise of greater prosperity, and to be treated as such. In other words, just as the increasing sanctity of the individual has led to less tolerance in modern societies of threats to an individual's physical integrity (see the Security Pact), it is an individual's inclusion and "social integrity" that now appear as promises to be unconditionally guaranteed. However, not only is this paradigm of solidarity destined to continually struggle to be fully realized – and has been crumbling since the 1980s and 1990s – but the notion of exclusion itself seems somewhat rhetorical or biased, sometimes suggesting that poverty is a residual phenomenon, and that it only concerns individuals who are not suited to progress.[297] Symptomatically, at

288 See Robert Boyer, "III. Régimes d'accumulation et dynamique historique", Robert Boyer éd., *Théorie de la régulation,* La Découverte, 2004, pp. 52-74.

289 See Benjamin Stora, *L'arrivée: de Constantine à Paris. 1962-1972*, Paris, Tallandier, 2023.

290 In the social sciences, individuation refers to the process by which a person becomes an individual – usually through education, as well as social and collective norms.

291 In other words, to become an individual, through a formative process that is amply described by the social sciences.

292 Serge Paugam, *La Société française et ses pauvres. L'expérience du revenu minimum d'insertion*, Paris, PUF, 2002.

293 Pessis C., Topçu S., Bonneuil C., *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses". Modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013.

294 See the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les Héritiers. Les étudiants et la culture*, Paris, éd. de Minuit, 1964; *La Reproduction. Éléments d'une théorie du système d'enseignement*, Paris, éd. de Minuit, 1970.

295 Serge Paugam, "L'exclusion. Généalogie d'un paradigme social", in *Sociétés & Représentations*, 1997/2 (n°5), p. 129-155, p. 131.

296 See in particular Jules Klanfer, "L'exclusion sociale" in *Population*, 23e année, n°6, 1968. pp. 1137-1138; René Lenoir, *Les exclus: un Français sur dix*, Paris, Seuil, 1974.

297 Serge Paugam, "L'exclusion. Généalogie d'un paradigme social", in *Sociétés & Représentations*, 1997/2 (n°5), p. 129-155, p. 134-135.

the same time, the term "*disillusion*" flourished[298], with regard to promises of equality stemming from the Revolution, to express a hidden disappointment with our social pact, which failed to include the most disadvantaged. This new terminology crystallizes the extent of the social expectations that a more prosperous era helped to develop, along with the deepening of our modern values (starting with those of equality and emancipation).

Finally, another element likely to fuel the current critique of our modern consumer pact lies in the origin of Western wealth, highlighted by more recent historiographical trends: many studies have established a link between the flourishing economy of the great European powers and the practice of slavery, particularly at the time of the Industrial Revolution: in this respect, the "liberal pact"[299] of our modern societies appears more than compromised from the outset.[300]

In the 1970s, the first oil crisis, deindustrialization and the globalization of trade destabilized the labour market, putting an end to this period of full employment and economic prosperity. Mass unemployment made its appearance, as did the notion of "new poverty", to designate the forms of exclusion that developed during the 1980s.[301] The introduction of the RMI in 1988 took place against this backdrop.[302] Furthermore, the hidden aspects of consumer society, which are now better understood, have gradually given rise to ethical and ecological criticism, with a long list of grievances, including: corporate outsourcing in developing countries, where cheap working conditions that violate human rights guarantee profits for Western companies; the relocation of pollution; the globalization of trade and the increase in air traffic; and the extension of "ordinary" consumption in Europe to include foods from distant places, where water-hungry cultivation impacts local populations. All these issues exacerbate the criticism of "unresponsible" consumption, but above all highlight the need for our supply, production, and consumption systems to be rethought. The neoliberal pact, based on increased competitiveness, confidence in the market and the globalization of trade – an economic operation whose counterpart is a fall in production costs and therefore in the price of goods for Western buyers – seems to have run out of steam in the eyes of those who suffer from it professionally, or who observe the harmful environmental impacts of these dynamics.

From the 1990s to the present: has the Consumption Pact reached the end of its promise of emancipation?

A Consumption Pact based on a constant pressure to buy, for the sake of the economy, gives rise to social tensions

Our Consumption Pact has undergone several changes in recent years. While a French household has more consumer goods at its disposal than it did thirty or forty years ago, due in particular to the abundance of cheap goods resulting from globalization (which has therefore had a major impact on our social pact), "abundance seems to generate [...] more frustration [and less] well-being", and leads to a proportion of the middle class feeling left behind.[303] Why is this the case? Affluent consumption,[304] which is based on a continuous diversification of consumption modes and goods, has become extremely visible and constitutes a dominant social norm: it impacts on all social groups that have a growing desire to consume to conform to a lifestyle perceived as middle class, or even upper middle class, which is constantly setting higher standards.[305] In this sense, income is not the right variable to measure purchasing "power", and even less the degree of dissatisfaction or satisfaction it generates, unlike the standard of living concept, developed by Maurice Halbwachs: the way in which we differentiate between what is necessary and superfluous depends heavily on the social class to which we belong (and the standards of possession that it conveys), which is why the phenomena of frustrated consumption, and the perpetual feeling of not having enough, can occur in all social classes, although such feelings are stronger and perceived as more unfair by those who are the least affluent. Halbwachs' campfire theory expresses the idea that a given society always offers a specific hierarchy of existing needs, types of consumption and social activities:[306] the "fire", the metaphorical place of the most intense social life, is the focus of the most valued activities. The richest are those who are "closest to the fire", while those who are furthest away are the least well off, and they aspire to be closer. Society is thus organized in concentric circles around a much-desired centre, which generates a certain amount of deprivation, frustration and conflict. As soon as budgets increase, individuals move closer to the centre, through consumer practices that allow them to "do what everyone else does".

298 See in particular Raymond Aron, *Les Désillusions du progrès. Essai sur la dialectique de la modernité*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1969.

299 Pierre Charbonnier, "Le nouveau régime écologique. Révolution des droits et révolutions matérielles au XIXe siècle", in *Abondance et liberté. Une histoire environnementale des idées politiques*, Paris, La Découverte, "Sciences humaines", 2020, p. 127-162. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/abondance-et-liberte--9782348046780-page-127.htm

300 Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, New York, Penguin Books, 1986; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Penguin Books, 1944.

301 Serge Paugam, *La société française et ses pauvres*, Paris, PUF, 2002.

302 *Revenu Minimum d'Insertion*: a minimum income introduced in France in 1988 for the most disadvantaged people – those with no income at all.

303 Benjamin Brice, *L'impasse de la compétitivité*, Paris, Les Liens qui libèrent, 2023.

304 Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, "How does affluent consumption come to consumers? A research agenda for exploring the foundations and lock-ins of affluent consumption", *Consumption and Society*, 2022, vol 1, no 1, 31-50.

305 Benjamin Brice, *L'impasse de la compétitivité*, Paris, Les Liens qui libèrent, 2023. (For example, consider the appearance of digital services and devices in the budget and the rising cost of housing), See also Amossé and Cartier, 2019, Inglehart, 2018, Ginsburger, 2023. In the American context, Inglehart observes: "the real income of the working class has fallen, while the material basis of what constitutes an acceptable standard of living has risen". See also the OECD report: Under Pressure, the squeezed middle class, 2019.

306 Although this hierarchy then undergoes secondary variations within social groups: the bourgeoisie and the workers will not choose the same type of consumption.

Today, however, this aspiration to "get closer to the centre" is proving to be unattainable for many people, as the lower classes are faced with an increase in forced spending (France Stratégie, 2021) and relatively stagnant incomes since the 2008 crisis (Insee, 2019).[307] In short, the prospect of achieving an "average" lifestyle is still fuelling expectations, but this "average" lifestyle is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve for a proportion of the population, as purchasing power is becoming ever more constrained, and this "average" lifestyle is becoming ever more expensive. This situation of the middle class, which is the subject of much debate and interest in France today, needs to be seen in a broader perspective, which is the basis of our Pacts approach.

This situation is linked to the continual upgrading of products, around which our consumer system revolves: as soon as an item is owned by most of the population, a new item becomes available which represents the latest object of desire, an item that is rarer, more expensive and constitutes a new level of "distinction". However, once this new item is acquired by the majority, the cycle continues and everyone must acquire something else to control their social trajectory... This social reality reflects an economic need: gains in economic productivity allow us to produce more, which in turn presupposes that we can sell more, and therefore that we can develop a very strong system to organize and encourage consumption.[308] This dual social and economic dynamic has in fact been at the heart of the consumer pact since the post-war period. The social operation that puts consumption at the centre is perfectly suited to the needs of the economy, which in return provides material abundance and monetary wealth.

However, this frenzied race, the end of which is at best unattainable and at worst constantly moving further away, has significant social costs. On the one hand, the price of this pact is that the entire population lives under the constant pressure of consumerism, the impact of which is well understood by citizen-consumers (Ademe, 2023).[309] On the other hand, it generates resentment among proportions of the middle class, who feel perpetually insecure about their ability to meet consumer "standards" – what some sociologists describe as a fear of downgrading. This pressure, as well as the gap that emerges between promise and reality when the economic context is particularly limiting, partly explains the Yellow Vests Protests. Finally, for the poorest, the cost is twofold: not only do they miss out on better living conditions enabled through consumption, they also suffer the feeling of exclusion from the dominant norm of (consumer) society.

Beyond rising living standards: consumption and the dynamics of individualization

In recent decades, another notable contradiction has emerged. The Consumption Pact, as formalized by advertisers, marketing professionals and public authorities, seems to promise two unattainable goals: ensuring individuation *and* distinction through the consumption of new goods produced on an industrial scale. In other words, consumerism promises mass individualization,[310] it promises the singularization of the self by offering standardized services and goods – to consumers who, by making purchases, hope to both distinguish themselves individually *and* to conform to the social group to which they wish to belong, through their acquisitions – which may seem paradoxical. As Axel Honneth writes, "personal aspirations for self-fulfilment" have been transformed "into a productive force of the capitalist economy".[311] This is the type of response provided by our Consumer Pact to the project of modern emancipation. While consumption may have played a driving role in emancipation, either by raising living standards or by developing the sense of individuation and distinction so sought after by modern people, we may well wonder whether this dynamic is sustainable, regardless of ecological issues.

At the same time, another point of tension arises from the "responsible consumption" rhetoric, which aims to reduce the impact of consumption on the environment by encouraging consumers to select the products they buy more carefully. Such a demand is not only illusory (since it consists of considering consumption as an act of strictly individual choice, and ignores the structures of consumption that guide purchases and the real power relationships between the actors involved),[312] it also conflicts with the central Consumption Pact (the right to consume more to control one's social destiny) and generates its own tensions. While responsible consumption can be a useful and constructive means of raising awareness of certain transformational goals, for a small section of the population, particularly those who have the means to do so,[313] this moralizing discourse can be badly perceived by households that cannot afford to pay for "virtuous" products, or whose aspirations include consuming all of the goods they need so that they too can access the "average" lifestyle

307 France, Portrait Social, 2019, INSEE

308 Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, "How does affluent consumption come to consumers? A research agenda for exploring the foundations and lock-ins of affluent consumption", *Consumption and Society*, 2022, vol 1, no 1, 31-50.

309 This study shows the ambiguous relationship with consumption: many respondents consider that consumption takes up too much space in our lives, that we consume too much, partly because of advertising pressure, but the responses to their own consumption practices tend to show that everyone remains caught up in the social constraint to consume, which makes it difficult to question one's own consumption. https://librairie.ademe.fr/changement-climatique-et-energie/6630-barometre-sobrietes-et-modes-de-vie.html

310 Phenomenon described by Christian Le Bart: Christian Le Bart, "Introduction / De l'individu à l'individualisation", in *L'individualisation*, under the direction of Le Bart Christian. Presses de Sciences Po, 2008, pp. 9-26. The term *mass individualization* is used in particular by Juliette Poupard, in Juliette Poupard, "De l'individualisation de masse à l'industrialisation de la commercialisation. Le rôle des TIC dans la recomposition de la chaîne de distribution", *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication*, vol. 2003, no. 1, 2003, pp. 74-82.

311 Axel Honneth, *La Société du mépris: vers une nouvelle théorie critique*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006. p. 320; Christian Le Bart, "Introduction /De l'individu à l'individualisation", in *L'individualisation*, under the direction of Le Bart Christian. Presses de Sciences Po, 2008, pp. 9-26.

312 For the case of food, see: https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/public-decision-makers-must-change-their-food-transition

313 See our analysis of the food sector: https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/public-decision-makers-must-change-their-food-transition

promoted by the media, advertising and pop culture. It can also be frustrating for those who implement this practice but do not observe any overall change ("I change but nothing changes"). It therefore cannot be regarded as the dominant strategy. The rhetoric of virtuous consumption is all the more problematic given that the most affluent households, with a determination to tackle climate change and who are adept at "responsible" purchasing, are in reality also those with the largest consumption footprint.[314] The media coverage of the significant increase in the wealth of the richest people in society, along with their anti-environmental practices (e.g. the use of private jets by the financial elite) only exacerbates the feeling of injustice.[315] Such points of tension illustrate the persistence of strong social differentiation in consumption practices, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of decoupling social belonging from the type or extent of access to goods. In other words, the promise of a levelling out of living conditions through consumption has not been entirely fulfilled, as divisions persist and the contexts (pandemic, high inflation) increase tensions.

Conclusion

If we trace the path of this consumption-growth-prosperity pact, we can see that consumerism has been driven by a diverse set of social and political expectations, depending on the period and the social group concerned: whether it is the desire to democratize lifestyles and improve material living conditions, individuation, upward mobility, social distinction or conformism, a means of politicization and civic involvement, the act of buying is driven by a wide range of motivations. But they all seem to stem from the same preoccupation, which constitutes the modern demand par excellence: to have control over one's social destiny.

Although seemingly individual, consumption is in reality the manifestation of powerful group and societal dynamics, that are shaped by the productive, economic and political structures at our disposal. As for the State, it has long played a central role in the organization of consumption and the emergence of a *consumer society* in the most consumerist sense of the term. From this perspective, calling for more responsible individual consumption, even though this is within the reach of the most affluent, seems unreasonable: such a strategy takes no account of the collective and political frameworks that constrain our practices.[316]

While "consumption", or the purchase of and access to certain goods or services, has always been a marker and a means of social belonging,[317] consumption now seems to have become a major social fact, because it is still perceived as a driver for egalitarianism and for major upward social mobility: for both individuals and public authorities, consuming more chimes with social progress, to the extent that consumption has captured a large part of our promises of emancipation. It is consumption that now seems to promise individuals access to certain desired social positions, and even to a fairer social order, rather than their role in the productive system as was the case in the past.[318]

Such a narrative is central to economic actors, who need consumption to grow to enable their economic models to function, as well as society as a whole. The fact is, at the macro-economic level, it remains difficult to imagine a model where growth and unlimited consumption no longer guarantee prosperity and social progress, particularly via the welfare state.[319] Consumption now seems to achieve what work once did in terms of the overall social architecture: consumption provides access to citizenship, social security, and democracy, while work now struggles to fully deliver these benefits.

Individuals are now defined more as consumers than citizens: we are "customers" of everything, including public services, and the functioning of our economic systems depends on our spending, encouraged by advertising, brands and credit. Finally, we should note that the repercussions of such a pact also affect other pacts, such as Democracy (collective political deliberation has become the social activity of a smaller proportion of society) and Work (since our purchasing power is based on time spent at work, which has not seen any remarkable reduction since the early 2000s, despite an increase in productivity) [320] – proving once again that the most relevant approach to our social problems must be systemic.

314 Maël Ginsburger, Philippe Coulangeon and Yoann Demoli, La conversion écologique des Français, Paris, PUF, 2023.

315 For example, in 2022, an Oxfam report revealed that the wealth of billionaires had increased more since the start of the pandemic than in a decade. Oxfam report, "Inequality kills", January 2022: https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621341/bp-inequality-kills-170122-en.pdf

316 Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, "How does affluent consumption come to consumers? A research agenda for exploring the foundations and lock-ins of affluent consumption", *Consumption and Society*, 2022, vol 1, no 1, 31-50.

317 For example, we can consider the luxurious palaces of Florentine monarchs and bankers in Italy and France during the Renaissance; this "consumption", although not labelled as such (society at the time was one of craftsmen rather than industries), also had a role to play in making a political statement.

318 Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first*, London, Harper, 2016.

319 See C.C. Walker, A. Druckman, T. Jackson, 2021, Welfare systems without economic growth: A review of the challenges and next steps for the field; Ecological Economics 186; Tim Jackson, *Prospérité sans croissance: La transition vers une économie durable*, (trad. de l'anglais), Bruxelles/Paris/Namur (Belgique), De Boeck, 2010; See also the growing body of work on post-growth, de-growth and the *doughnut economy*, as illustrated by the recent European conference Beyond Growth (2023).

320 In France, effective working hours have been stable since 2003 and managerial jobs have seen little reduction in working hours with the 35-hour week. https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4238439?sommaire=4238781 At the same time, labour productivity has continued to rise. https://www.strategie.gouv.fr/sites/strategie.gouv.fr/files/atoms/files/fs-2020-dt-productivite-travail-decembre.pdf The pressure of consumerism is certainly not unrelated to the fact that, when questioned, a majority of French people prefer a pay rise to a reduction in working hours: https://librairie.ademe.fr/cadic/4382/synthese-enquete-credoc-sensibilite-francais-lancee-ecologique-2020.pdf and https://infos.ademe.fr/lettre-strategie-juin-2021/la-sobriete-une-aspiration-croissante-pas-encore-un-projet-de-societe/

Ultimately, consumption creates a degree of social satisfaction through a general rise in living standards and a greater access to certain goods that were once reserved for a richer elite; it has also been the lever through which individuals realize their aspirations to individuate and personalize themselves – a desire that is certainly fuelled and exploited by advertising, but which goes beyond the simple sphere of marketing and illustrates a project of autonomy and individualization at the heart of Modernity. It is not certain, however, that this social expansion of consumption is still underway, and it is even less certain that mass consumption is to be recommended in the context of the climate crisis. Our consumption practices and structures need to be revisited if they are to be compatible with social and environmental justice.

Work Pact

Reformulation of the pact in light of the historical record

In many respects, it is the history of work in France that is the most explicitly based on pact rationales, because it takes the form of contracts and legal obligations between the worker and the employer, and of rights and duties with the welfare state. This historical pathway firstly shows how a more favourable legal framework for workers was created – a framework that had not yet been established at the start of the industrial revolution – followed by an increasing recognition of the need to provide workers, in addition to wages, with new forms of protection and even a range of services (the era of paternalism). The promise of emancipation through work, partly undermined by Taylorism, led to demands for other forms of compensation for labour, such as free time and access to leisure activities, particularly under the *Front Populaire* (Popular Front, an alliance of left-wing parties). In 1945, the welfare state emerged as a strong embodiment of the post-war Work Pact, despite the persistence of major inequalities for women and immigrants in the world of work. Mass education and a degree of social mobility went hand in hand with this pact. These promises have gradually changed under the influence of neoliberal thought: labour flexibility has returned to the fore, while the social dimension of work has been increasingly reduced in favour of its purely economic dimension – another consequence of globalization. The promise of emancipation through work, which has endured throughout the century with some difficulty, and the growing individualization of our societies (i.e. the desire to manage one's own life, rather than selfish individualism) are today confronted with an organization of work that still does not encourage the autonomy of a large number of employees, and in which new technologies are continually destabilizing part of the workforce.

1. The beginnings of industrial capitalism: from a failing pact to the emergence of social protection institutions and compensations

To begin examining the history of this pact, we must start with the advent of the market as the central social institution of the industrial revolution, as described by K. Polanyi. While under the feudal system there were other bonds of solidarity around labour, work gradually became autonomous as a (fictitious) commodity to be exchanged on a market, in the same way as money and land: this marked the beginning of a new type of Work Pact, which above all involved the abandonment of individual workers to the emerging forces of the industrial market.

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive overview of the hardships and the philosophy of domination that affected industrial work in the 19th century, because the issues were so numerous and wide-ranging. The practice of "dispersed work",[321] the concealment of occupational health problems,[322] the denial by employers of the risks to which their workers were exposed in their working practices, inadequate regulations, long hours of work that were poorly recompensed – working conditions of the time entailed countless hardships. Within the working class itself, the mechanisms of solidarity were sometimes undermined by the economic logic of "hire of work" (payment per item) which prevailed during the industrial revolutions. This line of reasoning encouraged multiple levels of sub-contraction within the working class (a worker might, for example, delegate a task to a member of his family to ensure a merchant's order is met): it was the era of the commodification of work, blurring the distinctions between worker and supervisor, which led to mechanisms of mutual exploitation within the working class itself.[323]

321 Samuel Guicheteau, Les ouvriers en France. 1700-1835, Armand Colin, 2014. At that time, the majority of workers still alternated between work in the fields and industrial work, due to the diversification of the activities of certain factories (such as textiles), which could not always have the same activity in every season, or did not have a large enough output to occupy enough workers and to make all manufacturing activities profitable. See Jean-Michel Minovez, "Travail dispersé et souplesse de l'organisation productive" in La puissance du Midi: Drapiers et draperies de Colbert à la Révolution [online]. Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012 (accessed 12 January 2024). Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/pur/127401>.

322 Thomas Le Roux highlights the complicity that sometimes existed between hygienists and industrialists on these issues at the beginning of the 19th century: the economic imperative took precedence over workers' health. See Thomas Le Roux, « L'effacement du corps de l'ouvrier. La santé au travail lors de la première industrialisation de Paris (1770-1840) », Le Mouvement Social, vol. 234, no. 1, 2011, pp. 103-119.

323 Claude Didry, L'Institution du salariat : droit et salariat dans l'histoire, Paris, La Dispute, coll. « Travail et salariat », 2016.

However, as the end of the 19th century approached, the rise of trade unions and the strong influence of left-wing parties pushed France towards the adoption of regulatory bodies and laws to guarantee an increasingly protective legal framework for workers: the idea gradually emerged that work represented social oppression if financial reward – albeit modest – was its only compensation, and if it was not accompanied by strict protective regulations. In 1841, laws were applied to prohibit the employment of children under the age of eight, and to limit working time to an eight-hour day in factories using mechanical power; in 1884, the right to form trade unions was established (Waldeck-Rousseau law); in 1893, the law on health and safety of workers in industrial establishments was published; in 1895, the CFDT (Confédération française démocratique du travail, the French Democratic Confederation of Labour) was created, which organized all of the major social struggles of the labour movement for decades, and created the conditions for social dialogue. The law of 9 April 1898, sometimes interpreted as one of the founding milestones of the welfare state[324], established a special compensation scheme for victims of accidents at work. This text was indirectly extended in 1919 with the passing of a law that recognized work-related illnesses and introduced the need for compensation.[325] At this stage there was still a long way to go before the extent of these industrial illnesses was fully recognized, and accompanied by appropriate compensation,[326] but this legal recognition was nonetheless a decisive milestone along the way to improved professional and social protection. The notion, proposed by left-wing trade unions, parties and intellectuals, was gradually consolidated that because workers contributed to the country's industrial effort, they should in return be guaranteed protection and pay that would partly compensate for the arduous nature of their daily work and their exposure to risk. The 1898 law also created the certainty that putting a worker in danger during his or her work was a collective responsibility, not an individual one: accidents at work should be borne by society as a whole, and not by the individual worker.[327] The end of the 19th century also saw the development of forms of employer paternalism, which, by guaranteeing housing, heating, education for children and access to purchasing cooperatives for workers, found a way of controlling workers and making them dependent on the company.[328] These guarantees were in fact conditional, and required workers to maintain acceptance of their employer's decisions and domination. The rationale of the pact and the quid pro quo (in this case: work, compliance and exposure to risk in exchange for a wages and protection) was therefore omnipresent, as it revealed the imbalances that then characterized labour relations in the working world. At the same time, the State would occasionally attempt to organize and create work for those who were without. For example, after the February 1848 revolution, "national workshops" were set up to give work to unemployed Parisians, under the complete control of the State, which organized and paid the workers. This gave rise to the new idea that there was a "right to work", that there was a clear and legitimate social demand for it, and that the State was the most appropriate actor to protect and implement this guarantee.

All these measures helped to make work more secure at a time when the regulations governing the industrial environment were yet to be fully devised, and were the subject of a ceaseless social struggle. To give a wider perspective of industrial work, we should nevertheless point out that the above-mentioned mechanisms of exploitation, insecurity and enslavement in work went together with the dynamics of socialization, politicization and class affirmation through work. Workers were united, due in particular to the mobilization of trade unions, against the exploitation to which they were subjected, and sometimes benefited from the expertise they possessed (mastery of the production process, experience, specific qualifications, etc.). Through their labour, workers developed a strong sense of professional and social belonging and pride – a feeling that predates the industrial era, but which was reinforced by their situation of domination in the 19th century. In this respect it could be said that "work is the crucible of a workers'[329] identity[330]". There is a dimension of collective identity that exists within the Work Pact, which cannot be reduced to an individual relationship, that of a worker to his or her job and working conditions.

2. The advent of the scientific organization of work and its "leisure" counterpart: a time for emancipation through non-work rather than work?

For as long as worker militancy was structured by Marxist and socialist heritage, work continued to be perceived as a possible path to emancipation, i.e. as a creative activity, and as access to equal positions and social participation, in a context of division of

324 François Ewald, L'État-providence, Paris, Grasset, 1986.

325 In 1917, at the juncture between occupational safety and health safety, a law prohibited the introduction and distribution of alcoholic beverages in workplaces. In a way, this legislation supplemented the 1898 law on accidents, this time with a view to preventing them and (partly) eliminating the conditions that led to them. The aim was certainly to protect workers, but also to improve productivity, at a time when the scientific organization of work was beginning to be thought out and disseminated. Thierry Fillaut, "L'interdiction de l'alcool au travail: aux origines d'une législation ancienne et inadaptée (1913-1923)", in Florence Douguet (éd.), Santé au travail et travail de santé, Presses de l'EHESP, 2008, pp. 97-106.

326 As J.-C. Devinck points out, the law of 9 April 1898 hardly takes into account the gradual evolution of an illness, or of a disability, the causes of which are long-standing and generated by prolonged professional practice. See Jean-Claude Devinck, "La lutte contre les poisons industriels et l'élaboration de la loi sur les maladies professionnelles", Sciences sociales et santé, 2010/2 (Vol. 28), p. 65-93. DOI: 10.1684/sss.2010.0204. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-sciences-sociales-et-sante-2010-2-page-65.htm

327 Regarding the history of this "socialization" of responsibility and risk, see Sacha Lévy-Bruhl's enlightening preface, in Paul Fauconnet, La Responsabilité. Étude de sociologie, Sacha Lévy-Bruhl (éd.), Paris, PUF, 2023.

328 Marion Fontaine, Judith Rainhorn, Simon Edelblutte in "Les mines: une histoire du paternalism", La Série Documentaire, 27 March 2023. Available online [accessed 6 November 2023]: https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/lsd-la-serie-documentaire/les-mines-une-histoire-du-paternalisme-5306611

329 Samuel Guicheteau, "Introduction", Les ouvriers en France. 1700-1835, Paris, Armand Colin, 2014, pp. 3-6.

330 However, this identity should not be set in stone: it takes many forms, and is not automatically created by a situation of collective oppression, as some researchers have pointed out. See Samuel Guicheteau, "Introduction", Les ouvriers en France. 1700-1835, Paris, Armand Colin, 2014, pp. 3-6.

labour[331] where everyone needed to find their function: socialist thinking makes a distinction between alienating work and creative work, and calls for the social conditions necessary for the former to disappear in favour of the latter (better wage redistribution, greater protection, recognition of hardship, the creative dimension of work and the worker's autonomy in the creation of his or her work, etc.).

Nevertheless, during the "Belle Epoque" (i.e. the period from the end of the 19th century until the First World War) the scientific organization of work was established along with the advent of piece rates, based on an extreme division of labour – a method popularized by Henry Ford and Frederick W. Taylor in *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) – and the intensification of work rates and hence accidents. The First World War served as a kind of ratchet effect, confirming a shift towards productivism, to the extent that once peace returned to Europe, there was hardly any return to the slower industrial pace of the 1900s.

This marked the beginning of a renunciation, including by the French Left, of a more emancipatory way of thinking about work, which ceased to be seen as a possible way of equalizing conditions.[332] The fact is that the Left of the 1920s-1930s, whether Blumian or Communist, had no alternative to productivism. While it recognized the damaging effects on workers' health and well-being, and although it was aware of the social damage caused by the extreme division and deskilling of work (induced by assembly line work), it did not know how to develop a way of organizing work that would satisfy both national production imperatives and workers' well-being.

Nor did women achieve emancipation through work. Although the First World War led to an increase in female employment (particularly in the tertiary sector), it was difficult, if not impossible, to speak of the equalization of the status of women through work: the urgency and military needs created by the war led industries to suspend many of their social regulations, leaving the way open for female employees to work up to 14 hours a day in armaments factories, sometimes at night, for far less pay than men. Moreover, on 13 November 1918, two days after the armistice, a circular was released to demobilize women, encouraging them to return to the home and devote themselves to their duty of childbirth.

After the First World War, there was an urgent need for manpower to rebuild France. Foreign immigration became a major source of workers for the industrial sector, which offered new job opportunities. To facilitate their arrival, the French government signed an immigration agreement with Poland on 3 September 1919 and by 1931 15% of the working class was made up of immigrants. These immigrants were generally assigned with the least qualified, riskiest and least remunerative tasks,[333] and eventually returned to their countries of origin – manufacturers employed them for a limited time to do tasks that the metropolitan French population refused.[334] French industrialists at the time even resorted to the tactic of seeking out young men who were unfamiliar with the difficulties of factory work, and who did not have links with militant union networks that were likely to provide them with protection. The work "pact" of Western powers, in a manner typical of colonial ideology, consisted in providing the employers with a mass of workers who were profitable and unchallenging, under the guise of offering remuneration opportunities to very poor workers.

Conversely, for workers in cities, there was continued consolidation of the legal framework for work, although it was not always respected: introduced into law in 1910, but only made widespread during the First World War, the "contract of employment" finally abolished the hire for work system and created a specific relationship between the employer and their employees. This relationship started to look a little more like a bond of responsibility between the employer and his or her employees:[335] employment was then assimilated to the acceptance of subordination in exchange for security.[336] The Millerand law limited the maximum workday to 11 hours in 1900 (and then progressively to 10 hours), and then a law was passed in 1919 to reduce the working day to 8 hours, but it was only imperfectly applied. France was also hit by a wave of strikes in 1920, particularly among railway workers, who demanded better working conditions and an unbiased pay scale. In the end, they were granted a "single status", which significantly improved their working conditions. Then two laws, in April 1928 and April 1930, introduced the first social insurance schemes – while still limited in scope, they nonetheless paved the way for better employee protection.

While the notion of alienating work[337] seems to have prevailed over a more emancipatory vision of it, another area of existence embodied the potential for liberation in the eyes of the socialist and communist parties in the 1930s: leisure was henceforth

331 Emile Durkheim, De la division du travail social [1893], Paris, PUF, 1967.

332 Marion Fontaine "Travail et loisirs : l'expérience du Front populaire", Fondation Jean Jaurès, 06/07/2016. Online: https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/travail-et-loisirs-lexperience-du-front-populaire/

333 Jean Charles, Jacques Girault, Claude Willard, "Chapitre I. Les années vingt", in: Claude Willard éd., La France ouvrière. Tome 2 – De 1920 à 1968. Éditions de l'Atelier, "Hors collection", 1994, p. 11-56. DOI: 10.3917/ateli.willa.1995.02.0011. URL: https://www-cairn-info.proxy.rubens.ens.fr/la-france-ouvriere--9782708231641-page-11.htm

334 Antonin Perdoncin. Des Marocains pour fermer les mines: immigration et récession charbonnière dans le Nord-Pas-de-Calais (1945-1990), Sociology thesis, Université Paris Saclay, 2018.

335 Claude Didry, L'Institution du travail: droit et salariat dans l'histoire, Paris, La Dispute, 2016.

336 Alain Supiot, "Chapitre VIII. La sécurité", Le droit du travail, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2019, pp. 114-123.

337 Alienation at work, according to Karl Marx, occurs when three typical features of modern industrial labour are brought together: 1. the worker is dispossessed of the products of his labour; 2. his activity ceases to belong to him and faces him "like foreign property" (Karl Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, Paris, Éditions sociales, 1962, p. 8); 3. the worker is subordinated to someone other than himself, and to a logic of capitalist profitability. See Franck Fischbach, "Activité, Passivité, Aliénation. Une lecture des Manuscrits de 1844", Actuel Marx, 2006/1 (n° 39), p. 13-27. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-actuel-marx-2006-1-page-13.htm

conceived as a space for rest that compensated for the drudgery of labour.[338] The context was favourable, with a downward trend in working hours and the election of the *Front Populaire* in 1936, which introduced the 40-hour week and paid holidays. The left-wing movement tried to regulate the occupations of workers, hoping to teach them about recuperation time and to democratize sporting and cultural leisure activities for those who were usually deprived of them. It was a time of "associative exuberance" and a "leisure time policy" actively led by militant organizations.[339] While this movement was inspiring, it nevertheless marked the beginning of the gradual disappearance of intentions to improve work as such, in favour of a compensatory approach based on non-work. Finally, it was under the *Front Populaire* government that collective agreements were actually applied:[340] they enabled employees to move away from strictly bilateral relationships with their employers, relationships that had created a balance of power that disadvantaged the employee.

3. The Trente Glorieuses period: the establishment of a welfare state and a wage pact linking collective solidarity to work

Although the period immediately following the Liberation of France was painful (the aftermath of the Shoah, cities left in ruins, a considerably weakened GDP, rationing, etc.), France soon experienced more favourable economic conditions, which were deliberately mythologized.[341] Historians regard 1945 as the year that marked both the confirmation of the welfare state, with the invention of social security, and also the start of the *Trente Glorieuses*, an era characterized by full employment and the expansion of salaried work. This marked the start of a period in which the Security, Consumption and Work Pacts were linked, with economic growth based "on the virtuous interaction between the production of standardized goods, the rise of mass consumption and the generalization of social protection".[342] The welfare state observed two successive configurations of the social pact: "*la Sociale*", which referred to a form of self-government by the workers themselves and their social partners, who assessed their own needs and organized their protective systems; followed by the successive social security reforms from 1967 onwards (the "*Jeanneney ordinances*") which, on the other hand, attested to the state management of social security from then on, which necessarily led to more administrative and institutional requirements and, inevitably, less direct democracy.[343]

The creation of the welfare state represents social progress in that it ensures the durability and strength of an institutionalized social security system, and that it also consolidates, in a powerful way and from a legal perspective, the French wage-earning model, which was seen as a desirable alternative to rentier capitalism: wage-earning ensures the gradual redistribution, over a lifetime, of the wealth created by work, without requiring any savings.[344] While the power and centrality of the welfare state therefore represented an apparent loss for democracy, it nonetheless ensured the social security of individuals and increases the trend for solidarity at work – protective mechanisms necessary for the realization of a healthy and active democratic life (see the Security Pact).

On 11 February 1950, the *Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti* (SMIG, Interprofessional guaranteed minimum wage) was introduced to boost consumption and eradicate poverty, but above all to restore the freedom of wage negotiation between employers and employees – which had been abolished in 1939 (when wages were controlled by the State): the SMIG was a trade-off to ensure that, despite unbalanced negotiations between employers and employees, workers would have access to socially acceptable pay. The interdependences between work, social participation and access to consumption were clear.

A number of factors came together at the end of the *Trente Glorieuses* to make this period a milestone in terms of social progress, seeing the consolidation of the Work Pact and promises of equality: a powerful narrative about the consolidation of a large middle class, combined with a sharp rise in purchasing power, a narrowing of wage disparities[345] and the emergence of social protections. In other words, real progress and an effective narrative were achieved (although poverty and social segmentation were not eradicated).

Perhaps encouraged by a more favourable economic context, there was a deepening of a movement of reflection and action that was more critical of the company and industrial work. Sociologists questioned the extreme division of labour, which separated thought from execution and hindered the personal development of workers.[346] Some categories of workers also experienced a combination of domination: labour management could be highly discriminatory towards workers of Algerian origin, who were often condemned to stagnate in their professional positions within the

338 See our note on the history of consumption.

339 Marion Fontaine, "Conquérir le temps libre" in La Revue du projet, n° 18, June 2012. Available online: http://projet.pcf.fr/24835.

340 They were officially introduced by law in 1919.

341 See the work of Jean Fourastié. For a critical discourse on the Trente Glorieuses: Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu, Christophe Bonneuil (dir.), Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses". Modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre, Paris, La Découverte, col. "Cahiers libres", 2013.

342 Bernard Gazier, Bruno Palier and Hélène Périvier. "Chapitre 1. Pourquoi faut-il repenser la protection sociale?", Refonder le système de protection sociale. Pour une nouvelle génération de droits sociaux, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2014, pp. 23-80.

343 On the difference between "la Sociale" and state-run social security, see Nicolas Da Silva, La bataille de la Sécu. Une histoire du système de santé, Paris, La Fabrique, 2022.

344 Salary includes contributions and social benefits that protect workers from insecurity at different times in their lives – family allowances, pensions, etc.

345 Julien Damon, Les classes moyennes, Paris, PUF, 2013 ; Chauvel, L., 2001, "Le retour des classes sociales" in Revue de l'OFCE, n°79 https://www.cairn.info/revue-de-l-ofce-2001-4-page-315.htm#no15

346 Georges Friedmann, Le travail en miettes, Paris, N.R.F., coll. Idées, 1964.

factory (particularly in the car industry). From this perspective, occupational and ethnic differentiation overlapped and duplicated each other.[347] Lastly, social security initially did not extend beyond the borders of mainland France. However, workers from the Maghreb and the French overseas territories demanded the same social rights as their fellow citizens in mainland France. After widespread mobilization, the Overseas Labour Code was adopted, authorizing the creation of family allowance funds and compensation for occupational accidents in the French empire, subject to certain conditions.[348]

4. The meritocratic and egalitarian hopes of the 1960s: democratizing the company and encouraging professional advancement through school – working for emancipation

The 1960s and 1970s were a period of mass school enrolment:[349] as a result of a series of laws (such as the Haby law of 1975), an increasing number of children attended school for longer, and became able to benefit from the same educational training as the more affluent. This represents significant social progress. On the left, the idea was reinforced that the transmission of a shared knowledge base would enable all individuals, whatever their social background, to access a job that corresponded to their aspirations and was not determined by family wealth. The "school pact" was thus formulated as follows: invest in school to reverse your social trajectory, or to gain access to desirable socio-professional positions. The democratization of education, professional integration, social participation and individual fulfilment were seen as the segments of a virtuous circle, that of emancipation – in the sense of breaking away from one's original social background – through academic success and work: this was the narrative of upward social mobility, which was gradually linked, after the 1960s, to the reactivation of a long-standing meritocratic promise. Formulated in its liberal version, this promise nurtures the idea that giving the same educational opportunities to everyone from the outset is a means of guaranteeing equality in principle, which is deemed sufficient – the more ambitious version of educational justice being to ensure equality of status at the end of the school curriculum.

At the same time, interpretations of democratization within the company were also gaining momentum, and would intensify at the time of May 68. In 1963, François Bloch-Lainé published his best-selling book *Pour une réforme de l'entreprise*, which set out a modernist vision of the company. The May 68 period was a time for strikes that sometimes led to inspiring experiments in self-management, as at the Lip factory in 1973. In 1975 the Report of the Study Committee for Company Reform (the Sudreau Commission) was published, which, among other things, proposed encouraging wage negotiations and recognizing the right of employees to express their views.[350] It was also a time of the feminization of the labour market, with many women born in the 1950s becoming "active" in the 1970s.[351] Their numbers have continued to grow since then and today almost half of all workers are women – although this is not necessarily a guarantee of full emancipation: today, it is still mostly women who have to combine a professional role with a caring role when they have children,[352] or who work part-time. Furthermore, the pay for women remains much lower than that of men, not only for equivalent jobs, but also because they work in professions that pay less because of a highly gendered division of labour.[353]

5. Deindustrialization, the advent of neoliberalism and the crisis of the "Fordist compromise". A labour pact in need of compensation and emancipatory conditions?

Social progress runs out of steam

However, the pace of these social improvements has since slowed considerably. Firstly the power of trade unions weakened. In 1946-1947, half of French employees were unionized;[354] but numbers fell dramatically from 1977-1978 onwards, and by then only 10% of workers were union members.[355] Secondly, in the 1970s, mass unemployment grew as a result of the first oil crisis in 1973,

347 Laure Pitti, "De la différenciation coloniale à la discrimination systémique? La méthode Renault de qualification du travail et ses effets sur les relations professionnelles – 1952-1973", Revue de l'IRES, n°46, 2023, p. 69-107.

348 Paul Mayens, "Nicolas Da Silva, La bataille de la Sécu", Lectures [Online], Reseñas, Published on 25 November 2022, accessed 6 November 2023. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/lectures/58938; Michel Borgetto and Michel Chauvière (dir.), La protection sociale en France et au Maghreb. Regards croisés, Paris, Mare & Martin, 2021.

349 See "Edito" in Germinal, "L'école émancipatrice", n°5, November 2022, éd. du Bord de l'Eau.

350 Matthieu Tracol, "Les politiques du travail et de l'emploi depuis les années 1970. Entre protection des travailleurs et néolibéralisme", Germinal, 2023/1 (N° 6), p. 22-35. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-germinal-2023-1-page-22.htm

351 The proportion of women in the working population has increased: by the age of 40, the activity rate had risen from 69% for the generation born in 1945 to 86% for those born in 1975. https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/287556-taux-demploi-des-femmes-un-taux-qui-stagne-apres-des-annees-de-hausse#:~:text=Le%20taux%20d%27activit%C3%A9%20des,pour%20celle%20n%C3%A9e%20en%201975

352 Françoise Battagliola, "Le travail des femmes: une paradoxale emancipation", Cités, 2001/4 (n° 8), p. 75-85. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-cites-2001-4-page-75.htm; between 1974 and 2010, women continued to spend between 2 – 3 times as much time as men looking after children: Cécile Brousse, "La vie quotidienne en France depuis 1974. les enseignements de l'enquête Emploi du temps", in Economie et Statistique, n°478, 2015, pp. 79-117.

353 In 2021, women's average earnings were 24% lower than men's in the private sector. See INSEE study, "Dans le secteur, privé l'écart de salaire entre femmes et hommes est d'environ 4% à temps de travail et à postes comparables en 2021", 7 March 2023. Available online: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6960132#:~:text=femmes%20et%20hommes.-,Lecture%20%3A%20parmi%20les%20salari%C3%A9s%20travaillant%20principalement%20dans%20le%20secteur%20priv%C3%A9,6%20%25%20%C3%A0%20celui%20des%20hommes

354 Dominique Labbé, Syndicats et syndiqués en France depuis 1945, Paris, L'Harmattan, Coll. "Logiques politiques", 1996, 164 p.

355 Frank Georgi, "Être militant syndical des années 1960 aux années 1980, en France et en Belgique. Pour une histoire comparée des militantismes européens" in L'apogée des syndicalismes en Europe occidentale: 1960-1985 [online], Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2006 (accessed on 27 February 2024). Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/44553>.

and a period of deindustrialization that then began in France. In response, the government undertook a number of measures: in 1975, a system of administrative authorization was introduced for mass redundancies; in 1977, programmes were established such as the *Pacte national pour l'emploir des jeunes* (National Youth Employment Pact) to encourage the most vulnerable to join the workforce. Access to the labour market could no longer be taken for granted, and governments had to develop strategies to employ the most vulnerable. The history of subsidized contracts, from 1977 onwards in France,[356] is also symptomatic in a number of respects: aimed at encouraging the professional integration of people excluded from the labour market, and attesting to our modern certainty that the act of working constitutes an act of social participation to which we are all entitled, it is characteristic of a labour policy that is primarily concerned with reducing the costs of work, instead of re-examining its overall organization and our economic structures.

A number of historians and economists[357] agree that the dynamic of progress in the rights of workers ran out of steam, or even reversed itself, in the 1980s and 1990s: the wage model was crumbling,[358] trade unionism was losing momentum, and the promotion of neoliberal ideas was not without effect on the perception of labour law, which was increasingly equated with useless protection and a brake on growth. There was an increase in the development of short-term and "flexible" forms of employment – the adjective "flexible" becoming a company watchword in the 1980s: the share of temporary work, fixed-term contracts and part-time work rose from 4.1% to 11% of total employment between 1984 and 2000. Since 1993, in companies with more than 50 employees, the number of people taking up fixed-term contracts has increased more than fourfold, according to a DARES report, and in 2017, a third of fixed-term contracts lasted just one day...[359] These short contracts have the advantage of combating unemployment, but they make workers, especially the least well-off, more insecure over the long term – as Benjamin Brice writes, "the distinction between the chosen flexibility and imposed flexibility largely overlaps with the divide between the upper and working classes".[360] Studies have also shown that people from households made up of "non-standard workers (part-time, self-employed or temporary contracts)" were much more at risk of poverty.[361]

These employment policies had an ambivalent effect on the representation of the Work Pact: firstly, they showed that the State formalizes and understands as a duty the need to guarantee work to all citizens – a right to work which is also affirmed in the 1946 Constitution.[362] While this assumption of responsibility by the State stems from a beneficial principle of protection, it also suggests that a certain proportion of workers are not in fact necessary to the functioning of the economy (which "operates" without them) and that they do not by definition represent wealth for the State: rather, they indirectly constitute a cost and a concern, as those left behind to be reintegrated in one way or another into the division of labour. Moreover, for some (B. FRIOT), the creation of the *Revenu minimum d'insertion* (RMI, minimum income benefit) in 1988, although stemming from a concern for solidarity, is part of a movement that replaces a real wage that guarantees social integration for workers, with tax-based solidarity benefits. In addition, the democratization of the company did not really occur: on the contrary, a powerful movement towards shareholders means that employees were distanced from decision-making. More recently, government decrees have abolished company health and safety committees.[363] But what happens in the world of work is not without political effects: as recent studies have shown, the level of democracy in companies, as well as the level of worker autonomy, can be linked to the democratic activity of citizens.[364] At the same time, the national labour market is struggling to reorganize itself in the face of the new international division of labour and the relocation of companies.

The limits of the meritocratic narrative

In addition, the promise of equalizing conditions through education has not been fully fulfilled. To understand this, it is necessary to describe the dynamics of social mobility from the 1970s to the present day – i.e. the ability to progress in terms of socio-professional category or income relative to one's parents – because this ability is closely linked to the social pact and the promise of meritocracy and mass education that still shape our expectations. In this case, the promise of high social mobility based on merit has not been achieved in full. There has nonetheless been notable social progress, which is to some extent the legacy of the *Trentes Glorieuses*: upward social mobility, measured by income or socio-professional category, was significant between the 1970s and 2015, which has even been the case for women compared with their mothers. However, the analysis of certain data

356 See in particular the introduction of the National Youth Employment Pact under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

357 See the works and texts cited in this study by Marion Fontaine, Thomas Piketty and Bernard Friot.

358 Robert Castel, Les Métamorphoses de la question sociale: une chronique du salariat, Paris, Fayard, 1995.

359 https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/publications/cdd-cdi-comment-evoluent-les-embauches-et-les-ruptures-depuis-25-ans

360 Benjamin Brice, "Pourquoi le pouvoir d'achat paraît-il si contraint?", publication of the Fondation Jean Jaurès, 09/12/2022. Online: https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/pourquoi-le-pouvoir-dachat-parait-il-si-contraint/

361 See Michael Förster and Céline Thévenot, "Inégalité des revenus et protection sociale: les enseignements de l'analyse internationale de l'OCDE", Revue française des affaires sociales, no. 1, 2016, pp. 65-91; OECD (2015), Tous concernés – Pourquoi moins d'inégalité profite à tous, éditions OCDE, Paris, [online] http://www.oecd.org/fr/social/in-it-together-why-less-inequality-benefits-all-9789264235120-en.htm

362 "Chacun a le devoir de travailler et le droit d'obtenir un emploi" Foreword https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/les-constitutions-dans-l-histoire/constitution-de-1946-ive-republique

363 These have been replaced by CSEs, but the hours allocated to trade union representation have been significantly reduced.

364 DARES study, "Travail et bien-être psychologique," March 2018. Online: https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/publications/travail-et-bien-etre

show a narrowing of the space for upward social mobility (socio-professional category) and a negative trend between 2003 and 2015 for men, as well as revealing a significant gender problem for the social mobility of women in relation to their fathers, and major inequalities in opportunities to move up the income ladder. This slowdown in upward social mobility is taking place against a backdrop of a significant rise in qualification levels in society (increase in higher qualifications), but this rise is becoming less of a guarantee, for workers, of upward social mobility – which inevitably calls into question the meritocratic promise.[365] While the liberal meritocratic narrative is undeniably a "useful fiction"[366] – because it gives credence to academic effort and responds to the need to identify specific skills in each "profile" – the promise has not been well kept: it is without doubt insufficient to promise equality at the beginning of school rather than at the end, and it is illusory to presuppose that such equality can exist at the outset. Numerous studies suggest that pupils differ markedly in terms of how well they do at school, depending on their social background, even when they are in the same class and benefit from the same education.[367] On this issue, the PISA rankings are clear, revealing a strong link between social origin and academic success in France, even though primary schooling is universal:[368] French pupils ranked in the 25% most disadvantaged are four times more likely to be the worst performers in league tables.[369] Yet many French people expect schools to overturn social determinisms and enable their children to move up the social ladder. Added to this is the fact that vocational education (excluding the vocational baccalaureate) is seen by institutions and families, more or less explicitly, as a pathway for those who are failing at school or showing poor results in general subjects, particularly because of the increasing importance of the French *baccalauréat* qualification.[370] As such, vocational education mainly caters for those who are perceived as failing in the education system, i.e. children from working-class backgrounds: according to a 2021 INSEE study, 67% of *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP, certificate of professional competence)[371] students in the public sector are the children of blue-collar or economically inactive workers.[372] Vocational education has become a place of educational (and most often social) relegation,[373] and this is how it is often perceived by families – including those with the least financial resources: they anticipate and validate the choice of vocational stream offered by the educational establishment to their child, but feel a sense of injustice about the decision.[374]

Loss of meaning and a new context for work

Regarding the feeling of a loss of meaning at work, this seems to affect a large number of employees,[375] and will be difficult to resolve through the injunctions of personal development, which sees fulfilment at work at a strictly individual and psychological level. Having become a public health issue,[376] work does not seem to take place in conditions that objectively allow employees to flourish, and the tools of personal development or happiness management seem ill-equipped to respond adequately to these problems. Feelings of insecurity at work seem to be on the rise, reinforcing the idea that work should now be considered as a collective public health issue.[377]

Some companies seem dissatisfied with the strictly capitalist rationale in which they are forced to operate, and with the competitive dynamic that hinders their possible reorientation in favour of greater sustainability and a form of management that is more attentive to employee well-being. It is not easy for managers who aim to turn their companies into mission-driven businesses and to increase their environmental commitment.[378] However, certain business models were able to serve as inspiring counter-examples during the 20th century, particularly through their involvement in the process of building the welfare state – as is the case with the mutualist model, which also promotes more

365 Meritocracy requires both a de-correlation between social origin and level of qualification, and a strengthening of the link between level of qualification and social position. An analysis of the generations born in the 1960s shows that the former is effectively being reduced due to mass education, but that the latter is being weakened at the same time.

366 François Dubet, "L'égalité des chances, le pire des systèmes, mais il n'y en a pas d'autres" in Lemonde.fr, 18 December 2006. Online: https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2006/12/18/francois-dubet-l-egalite-des-chances-le-pire-des-systemes-mais-il-n-y-en-a-pas-d-autres_840608_3224.html

367 See the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Les Héritiers. Les étudiants et la culture, Paris, éd. de Minuit, 1964 ; La Reproduction. Éléments d'une théorie du système d'enseignement, Paris, éd. de Minuit, 1970.

368 Unified in principle at least, if we disregard the spatial segregation that has a de facto impact on the sociological composition of schools.

369 Marion Bet, interview with Éric Charbonnier (OECD), "Évolution du niveau et comparaisons internationals", Germinal, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 38-51.

370 Together, general, vocational and technological baccalaureates now account for more than 75% of a generation, compared with less than 25% in the 1970s. See data here.

371 And 55% of vocational baccalauréat students.

372 See INSEE study, "France, portrait social," édition 2021: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/5432431?sommaire=5435421#:~:text=Parmi%20les%20%C3%A9l%C3%A8ves%20scolaris%C3%A9s%20en,ouvriers%20ou%20d'inactifs

373 Gilles Moreau, "Formation ou formatage? Les transformations de la formation professionnelle des futurs ouvriers et employés", Germinal, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 264-275.

374 Pierre Périer, "Chapitre 9. L'indétermination de l'orientation" in École et familles populaires: Sociologie d'un différend [online]. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2005 (accessed 12 January 2024). Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/pur/24268>. ISBN: 978-2-7535-3748-4.

375 David Graeber, Bullshit jobs, Paris, Les Liens qui libèrent, 2019.

376 Coutrot, Thomas, and Coralie Perez. "Le sens du travail: enjeu majeur de santé publique", Bruno Palier éd., Que sait-on du travail?, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2023, pp. 98-113. https://www.cairn.info/que-sait-on-du-travail--9782724641905-page-98.htm

377 Moullet, S. and Salibekyan, Z. (2019). "The Perception of Job Insecurity in France: Between Individual Determinants and Managerial Practices" in Économie et Statistique. For example, fear for one's job rose from 18% to 25% between 2005 and 2013 (https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/1-3_algava_def.pdf) even though we know that job insecurity is a highly significant factor in explaining the risk of depression (https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/de_no_214.pdf)

378 Vivienne Walt, "A Top CEO Was Ousted After Making His Company More Environmentally Conscious. Now He's Speaking Out" Time, 21 November 2021. Online: https://time.com/6121684/emmanuel-faber-danone-interview/

democratic modes of governance whereby member-policyholders elect their representatives, who in turn choose the members of the board of directors.[379] This is the model that served as the basis for the social and solidarity economy, the definition of which was clarified by a law in July 2014[380] (which represents 200,000 companies in France and 10% of private-sector employment).[381] New textile brands have also shown themselves to be particularly thoughtful in recent years: campaigning for stricter regulation of their own production activities – illustrating in the process a failure of the State that is difficult to attribute to economic actors alone – they are challenging a global model in which a company's negative externalities (relocation of production and pollution, subcontracting in countries where human rights are lacking) determine its economic health.[382]

On paper, self-employed workers enjoy greater autonomy and control over their working conditions, but their situations vary greatly depending on their level of experience, qualifications and therefore their bargaining power with regard to their "clients": there are many cases of disguised salaried employment, combined with a lack of social protection – a phenomenon exacerbated by the "uberization" of work. While *auto-entreprenariat* seems like an emancipating condition for many because it guarantees greater freedom and an avoidance of oppressive hierarchical relationships, it must nevertheless be consolidated by reliable protection for the most vulnerable workers.

The recent period and its context – tensions on the labour market linked to demographic changes; the impact of Covid-19; the revelation of the role of essential workers and their working conditions;[383] job polarization linked to globalization and technological innovation, which tends to wipe out employment opportunities in the middle of the qualifications scale, while creating more at the top and retaining low-skilled service jobs (OECD, 2019) – mean that the central issue of the Work Pact is not only employment and unemployment (the focus of the last forty years), but also the quality and conditions of work (Palier, 2023, Introduction). This is all the more true given that European comparisons reveal that France has performed poorly on these issues, and on the psychosocial risks to which workers are exposed (Palier, 2023, Bigi and Meda, 2023). This situation has consequences in terms of hardships and the way in which workers perceive their own "endurance" at work: 37% of employees say they feel unable to do the same work (termed "unsustainability of work") for the long term, until retirement (Dares, 2023).[384] The "labour issue" also spills over into all the other pacts, because the failure to recognize these hardships and the progress that needs to be made in this area – as well as the destruction of medium-skilled jobs (Kurer and Palier, 2019) – feeds "a social resentment that often leads to political resentment" (Palier, 2023, Palier and Wagner, 2023).[385] The world of work is therefore not without effects on democracy – not least because a lack of autonomy for workers clashes with our aspiration to uphold democratic values, and certainly has repercussions on the rates of abstention or voting for the extreme right (Coutrot, 2018).

Work Pact and taxation

The advent of neoliberalism and the crisis of the "Fordist compromise" also point to a form of fiscal crisis. The idea of a common contribution to the public purse is at the heart of the social contract: it is in particular article 13 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen that remains the foundation of the idea of tax equality ("For the maintenance of the public force, and for administrative expenses, a general tax is indispensable; it must be equally distributed among all citizens, in proportion to their ability to pay"). The welfare state relies on social contributions to provide social benefits, a key condition for ensuring equality of conditions. So the erosion of the fiscal pact, and in particular of its promise of fairness, has effects on society as a whole because it leads to a rejection of taxes (since they are perceived as unfair), as J. Stiglitz notes: "If citizens don't believe that everyone is paying their fair share of taxes – and especially if they see the rich and rich corporations not paying their fair share – then they will begin to reject taxation" (foreword to the EU Tax Observatory 2024 report). A combination of factors is contributing to a form of tax crisis: a gradual decline in corporation tax: in Europe, the rate has fallen from 45% in 1980 to 20% today. At the global level, a significant proportion of tax revenue disappears because of tax evasion and avoidance, reducing the contribution of multinationals and billionaires (EU Tax Observatory, 2024). The agreement on a minimum rate of corporation tax in 2021 (involving more than 140 countries) showed that it was both possible to take action, but also how difficult it would be to go all the way: a series of loopholes have considerably weakened the system (EU Tax Observatory, 2024). In France, tax loopholes have a serious impact on tax yields and tax transparency, and can lead to a feeling of injustice (Cour

379 Nathan Cazeneuve, interview with Pascal Demurger and Jérôme Saddier, "L'économie sociale et solidaire. Un moyen de transformer l'investissement et les entreprises?", Germinal, vol. 6, no. 1, 2023, pp. 74-91.

380 See https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/demarches-ressources-documentaires/documentation-et-publications-officielles/textes-et-circulaires/lois/article/loi-no-2014-856-du-31-juillet-2014-relative-a-l-economie-sociale-et-solidaire#:~:text=La%20loi%20du%2031%20juillet,de%20nouveaux%20droits%20aux%20salari%C3%A9s

381 https://www.economie.gouv.fr/leconomie-sociale-et-solidaire#:~:text=2%2C4%20millions%20de%20personnes,200%20000%20entreprises

382 Léa Iribarnegaray, "Julia Faure: 'dans cette lutte contre la fast fashion, on se fait dégommer'", Le Monde, 2 March 2024. Online:

383 In addition to frontline medical workers and their working conditions, the DARES also highlights the poor working conditions of second-line workers, i.e. those who continued to provide essential services during the health crisis. https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/c278f247774c7b8cf9e4a5d9b48c7b20/Document%20d%27%C3%A9tudes_m%C3%A9tiers%20deuxi%C3%A8me%20ligne.pdf

384 While work organization that encourages autonomy and employee participation and limits the intensity of work tends to make it more sustainable https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/e91f0d39ca803c9847ac6c3a4326fc76/Dares-Analyses_Facteurs%20qui%20influencent%20la%20capacite%20%C3%A0%20faire%20le%20meme%20travail%20jusqu%27a%20la%20retraite.pdf

385 https://www.lagrandeconversation.com/politique/les-lendemains-politiques-dune-reforme-contestee/ "poor workplace relations and low job satisfaction are one of the main sources of resentment on which radical right-wing populist parties rely, particularly among workers and the lower middle classes"

des Comptes, 2023). More broadly, social security contributions are being called into question in the name of competitiveness. Against this backdrop, we need to redefine the social contract around taxation. Changes in taxation as a result of the phasing out of fossil fuels and carbon taxation could provide just such an opportunity, to envisage a fair decarbonization pathway that is consistent with changes in public finances and the needs of the economy (Ademe, 2022).

6. The legacy of these various pacts and current changes in the workplace

Finally, the paradox is that in our modern societies the demand for good jobs, including a certain degree of autonomy (which does not exclude the reality of interdependence in our societies marked by the division of labour),[386] and for fulfilment at work, [387] has never been so strong, and yet only a fraction of workers can today claim that their working conditions satisfy this aspiration (Palier et al., 2023; Gerstenberger, 2023)[388]. We should also highlight the fact that doubts are often raised about unemployment benefit entitlements, making social assistance all the more problematic given that it comes at a time when full employment is not guaranteed. Generally speaking, our Work Pact seems to have been damaged by long-term unemployment and the fact that this issue, which has become structural, prevents us from fully adhering to the rationale of accountability that our social rights require: in a context where the State does not provide the necessary jobs, how can we subscribe to the compromise according to which all individuals must prove themselves (through work) to receive protection?

As for this fear of alienation, it is currently being reinforced by the impact of new technologies on our ways of working, and the "revolutionary" prospects of AI which, in addition to the job destruction it is likely to cause,[389] could well, in certain areas, replace practices of production or direct implementation with professional activities involving simply controlling or maintaining machines – as we are seeing in the management of self-checkouts by former cashiers. If the development of AI in France is not accompanied by proposals for sustainable and even continuous vocational training for workers,[390] as well as tangible prospects for (re)training and reskilling, there is a risk that a large number of employees will be deskilled. This resonates with the rhetoric that grew in the 1990s and 2000s, claiming that many jobs were coming to an end[391] due to the rise in low wages, unemployment and the massive destruction of jobs to come, and calling for a better sharing of the "remaining" work. As for the concept of a universal income, as well as motivating and sparking innovative thought about the way we work, it also sometimes carries the hope of a reduction in the proportion of our lives dedicated to work, proving that the idea of emancipation through work, or even social integration through work, is no longer taken for granted. However, this begs the question: are we overlooking the social importance of work? The answer is not clear, because the question seems to divide the French population.[392]

More recently, the health crisis has shone a spotlight on those who work in professions that provide essential services, and who continued to carry out their duties while running the risk of exposure to Covid (cashiers, nurses, care assistants, delivery workers, etc.), while facing intolerable levels of "wage downgrading" to which they have been subjected for several decades. It is clear, for example, that "second line" workers (apart from medical staff) have worse working conditions than the average private sector employee (Dares, 2021).[393] As for the medical sector, a study based on OECD data reveals that France is one of only two European countries with a particularly wide gap between the average national salary and the salary of nurses – a gap of 9% in 2020, to the detriment of nurses.[394] Yet these are the men and women who have enabled society to function during a pandemic: although they have been lionized in political discourses for their sacrifices and their sense of duty,[395]

386 In De la division du travail social (1893), Émile Durkheim distinguishes between the mechanical solidarity that characterizes traditional societies – made up of multi-skilled and therefore independent workers – and the organic solidarity that characterizes modern societies – made up of highly specialized and therefore interdependent workers. What Durkheim reveals is that the individualism that characterizes modern aspirations and mentalities has no reality in the economic and "working" functioning of modern societies: professional functions are increasingly specialized but, as a result, they require each other.

387 For the French, the purpose of work is more fulfilment than good pay (52%/20%), which is less the case for our German (40%/34%) and British (30%/43%) neighbours. Baromètre de la confiance politique, Cevipof 2023

388 According to Eurofound's job quality index, which balances the resources available to workers against the demands made on them, 30% of the working population are in "strained" jobs at the European level, and even 39% in France, in the sense that demands exceed resources. To this we can add 26% of "poorly resourced" jobs at the European level, where the balance is slightly positive. See Eurofound (2022), Working conditions in the time of COVID-19: Implications for the future, European Working Conditions Telephone Survey 2021 series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. See also https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/job-quality-pivotal-addressing-todays-workplace-and-societal-challenges and https://www.cairn.info/que-sait-on-du-travail--9782724641905-page-34.htm.

389 According to a recent OECD study, 27% of jobs in the OECD area are at high risk of automation: https://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2023/

390 To achieve a meritocracy compatible with social justice, Nathan Cazeneuve talks about "the need for training", which implies "the democratization of education and lifelong learning". See Nathan Cazeneuve, "La méritocratie est-elle un idéal de justice sociale? Les enjeux de la différenciation égalitaire", Germinal, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 202-215.

391 Jeremy Rifkin, La fin du travail, trad. Pierre Rouve, Paris, La Découverte, 1997; Dominique Méda, Le Travail. Une valeur en voie de disparition?, Paris, Flammarion, 2010.

392 See opinion poll conducted by CFDT – Fondation Jean Jaurès: (Ipsos – Fondation Jean Jaurès / CFDT – La société idéale de demain aux yeux des Français – April 2023): in an ideal society, the place of work would be more or less the same as it is today for 41% of respondents, but with more flexibility.

393 "They are twice as likely to be on fixed-term or temporary contracts, work shorter hours, earn 30% less, are more likely to be unemployed and have few career opportunities. They work in difficult conditions, incur more occupational risks and suffer more accidents" https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/8f1d9e08a5956834a666c266fff98056/Dares%20Analyses_m%C3%A9tiers-deuxi%C3%A8me%20ligne_crise%20covid.pdf

394 https://fipeco.fr/commentaire/Les%20d%C3%A9penses%20hospitali%C3%A8res%20en%20France%20et%20en%20Europe%20en%202020#:~:text=Source%20%3A%20OCDE%20%3B%20FIPECO.,%2C5%20%25)%5B4%5D

395 https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/11/03/lheroisation-des-soignants-reflexions-sur-une-entourloupe/

the compensation packages they received were extremely low,[396] and the fundamental problem, that of pay, has not changed. In 2021, a survey revealed that salaries in essential professions were lower than the average for all employees (based on net monthly full-time salary): an average of €1,799 compared with €2,188 for all employees, a difference of 18% in 2021.[397] This extended relegation of a section of workers, even though they contribute to the social functioning of our communities, particularly undermines the duty/benefit rationale, just as it fuels a considerable disappointment among those who expect recognition for their daily commitment, other than rhetorical, honorary or one-off tributes.

This historical journey has provided us with tools for the present, because it sheds light on the expectations that have structured the representations of work in our societies. Until now, work has been the means of accessing all the other pacts (consumption, security, democracy), or at least it has been thought of as such, but a rethinking of the subject now seems necessary. Today, by drawing from the pacts of the past, it is possible to provide a definition of emancipating work (or work conceived as such), which would be: activities governed by protective legislation, where the risks (of all kinds) faced by those who carry out such activities are taken into account; work that enables people to progress in their careers and be able to change their social pathway; work that offers remuneration that guarantees sufficient purchasing power, as well as a social place and function in line with the aspirations and skills of each individual; work in companies that are aligned with democratic ideals; and finally, work that enables workers to be autonomous, without this taking the form of an inadequate social framework or level of protection. Emancipation through work (which presupposes quality conditions, security, opportunities for advancement, recognition, etc.),[398] while a reality for a few, certainly remains an expectation and hope for a large part of the population.

Historical Review – United Kingdom

Democracy Pact

This section summarizes the gradual development of institutionalized representative democracy in Britain, alongside the parallel elaborations of democratic theory. It illustrates how British democracy is founded upon a centuries-old parliamentary system , which has evolved very little aside from steady extensions of franchise. Considering this, the section evaluates whether popular sovereignty is truly encapsulated in the Democratic Pact between the British individual and state, and for what particular reasons the pact could be argued to be failing.

An important caveat to note is that the section is primarily concerned with developments in England, as Britain's Westminster model is a direct descendent of the medieval English parliament. Compared with these strictly British medieval foundations, the influence of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, in terms of institutional and political direction, has been less important.[399]

The early origins of political representation in Britain

It is a common preconception that British democracy is predicated on the Magna Carta, a royal charter granted by King John in 1215 which invoked protections for both the church and barons against exploitation by the monarch. While this is not exactly accurate, such developments in the 13th century did stimulate the intellectual environment from which democracy could later form.[400] The signing of the Magna Carta was instigated by a rebellious, armed faction of barons, who sought to "clarify feudal law in the face of what they saw as [King] John's disregard of royal duties and obligations."[401] The agreement granted more powers to the nobility and compelled the monarch to consult with a Great Council of barons and bishops on tax matters. By the mid-1230s, the word 'parliament' was commonly used to refer to meetings of the Great Council.[402] By the 14th century, this parliament incorporated

396 As promised by the Ségur health minister, in 2023 the fixed allowance for Sundays, public holidays and night work was increased for some hospital staff (in particular by 25% for night work). https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000048658347

397 Thomas Amossé and Christine Erhel, "Des métiers essentiels mais une faible qualité du travail et de l'emploi", in Bruno Palier (éd.), Que sait-on du travail ?, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2023, pp. 484-497.

398 See the Eurofound studies on this subject: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/topic/job-quality#key-messages

399 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. *Representative democracy in Britain today*. Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York.p.18

400 Ibid, p.17

401 Ibid, p.20

402 Maddicott, John. 2009. 'Origins and Beginnings to 1215' in *A Short History of Parliament: England, Great Britain, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scotland* [ed. Jones, Clyve.], The Boydell Press, pp.3-9

successively more members, including the lower clergy, knights, and burgesses. It held meetings to provide advice and consent to the monarch on matters of legislation and tax.

In 1341, a bicameral structure appeared, whereby the knights and burgesses (the Commons) met separately from the nobility and clergy (the Lords). The established House of Commons and House of Lords employed elective and hereditary methods of appointment, respectively. By the mid-15th century it was established that statutes were required to receive the consent of the commons in order to become law.[403] Further, monarchs such as Henry IV actively sought to legitimate their actions by receiving approval from parliament. Therefore, while Medieval England was not a democratic society, ideals of justice under the rule of law, and freedom of the individual from arbitrary tyranny, were evolving and gaining traction. The notion of legitimacy through representation was likewise emerging and embedding itself into the structural fabric of England's embryonic democratic institutions. Even 300 years prior to Locke's seminal treatise, the belief that the people (very narrowly defined) had rights in relation to the ruling power, and that representatives in parliament should exercise that right on their behalf, was an instrumental and prevalent logic among the elites of the day.[404]

In the 17th century, a struggle between King Charles I and his parliament led, in part, to the outbreak of the English Civil Wars. Between 1640 and 1688, Britain experienced significant political upheaval which pacified once King James II was ousted as ruler. The throne was offered instead to Mary II and William III, in return for the concession of a Bill of Rights. This Bill, granted in 1689, established the sovereignty of a freely elected parliament, and thus instituted a constitutionally limited monarchy. The monarchs' powers were inhibited, and while the royal prerogative was still manifest, it was increasingly exercised by elected politicians acting on behalf of the monarch.[405] In contrast to the American Bill of Rights, which was concerned with the rights of individual citizens, the British Bill was preoccupied with the rival powers of the monarch and parliament.[406] Over the subsequent century, a key power shift took influence away from the nobility and towards the wealthy instead. This shift was instigated by the emergence of the Whigs, a democratic and commerce-minded faction in Parliament, who opposed the conservative and aristocratic Tories faction. The Whigs represented an emergent middle class, who increasingly adopted a liberal stance, and espoused the values of the Enlightenment.

The mounting influence of Whig and Tory factions during the 18th century facilitated the gradual but dynamic democratization of the UK. The factions soon developed into formal political parties, allowing for more stringent organization at election time, and the formation of complex administrations.[407] As parliament solidified into bipartite camps, it reached gridlock on a more regular basis. The support of a Whig or Tory leader became increasingly necessary to assemble a majority of votes in the Commons. Under these conditions, the monarch was ultimately compelled to appoint as prime minister the leader of the majority party in the Commons, rather than their own preferred leader. Further, the monarch was obliged to accept the party leader's suggestions for the composition of the government's cabinet[408]. This signified the final transfer of power from the monarch to parliament. It is worth noting, however, that parliaments of the 18th century were still very much in the grip of an oligarchy, as the dominant House of Lords was unelected, while the House of Commons was elected by patronage and corruption. Geographical representation had hardly changed since the 14th century, as each county elected two members, regardless of fluctuated size. Concepts of universal representation and proportionality were correspondingly foreign to political discourse of the time[409].

It is over the 17th and 18th centuries, against the backdrop of these institutional developments, that the social contract tradition arose and gained influence among intellectual circles. The tradition is most commonly associated with English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, as well as French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but it more broadly reflected the rich intellectual context of the 'Age of Reason'. The work of René Descartes was notably instrumental in nurturing this philosophical movement. His challenge to the arbitrary acceptance of 'God's will' catalyzed a rebirth of individuality and the conviction that "humans had the right and ability to work out their own salvation through rational thought"[410]. Such theories of rationality laid the groundwork for social contract models, in addition to a wider liberal democratic tradition that greatly shaped the political system Britain employs today.

Particularly influential to the evolution of British democracy was John Locke, who published his *Two Treatises on Government* in 1690, during the aftermath of the 'Great Revolution' which saw King James II dethroned. Locke asserted that society is the product of a contract between ruler and ruled and should exist for the mutual satisfaction and security of all. Thereby, rulers and subjects have designated rights and duties in relation to each other, and sovereigns who violate their obligations can be

403 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.26
404 Pilkington, Colin. 1997, p.23
405 Ibid. pp.28-29
406 Ibid, p.258
407 Ibid, p.29
408 Britannica, 'Factions and parties', https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy/Factions-and-parties
409 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. pp.29-30
410 Ibid, p.9

justifiably overthrown. This vitally implies that legitimacy derives from consent of the governed. The emphasis at this stage was on limiting the powers of tyrannical rulers, rather than on the concept of popular participation or universal enfranchisement. However, Locke and his intellectual legacy represented a key turning point in British political thought, whereby the prerogatives of political self-determination were articulated and conceded.[411]

Extension of the franchise

Demands for extended voting rights did not materialize until the 19th century, when industrialisation catalyzed the growth of a wealthy and entrepreneurial middle class. This class increasingly perceived themselves as "a source of national prosperity", integral to the necessary modernisation and renewal of Britain. Correspondingly, it became a source of contention that they had no say in government, and that burgeoning industrial cities were entirely without representation.[412] In a way, the Democratic Pact was not being fulfilled: the middle classes felt that they were contributing to the country's growth and productive effort, yet in exchange they were not getting full citizenship and access to anything other than economic participation. Political reform became the objective of Whig Prime Minister Lord Grey (1830-1834), who sought to broaden the right to vote and address the unbalanced distribution of house seats and 'rotten boroughs' with very small electorates. These developments triggered apprehension among the upper class, who embraced classical fears of a 'rule by the masses' or 'tyranny of the majority'–fears rooted in Aristotelian philosophy. The notion of democracy was treated with dismay, fuelled by worries that the lower classes would dominate and strip elites of their property and influence. The working classes, who were mobilizing steadily and increasingly laying claim to a reform of the British electoral system, comprised about three-quarters of the population, and for this reason there was significant resistance to extending the franchise. Perhaps as a manufactured rationalization for adopting a self-interested, anti-democratic stance, it was often suggested that the lower classes were too uneducated, immoral, and easily manipulated to be afforded the responsibility of voting.[413]

It is notable that this kind of elitist thinking was reflected in the works of influential liberal and socialist philosophers as well. John Stuart Mill, for example, was a prominent utilitarian thinker and politician who called for a more representative parliament. While he favoured universal suffrage for both men and women–a radical position at the time–he advocated for plural voting, meaning that the better-educated or 'worthier' constituents are allotted more votes. In this way, he linked franchise to competency. This revealed his instrumentalist standpoint, justifying democracy not in terms of intrinsic ideals of equality and justice, but in the positive externalities of democratic processes. Early socialists such as Saint-Simon similarly counseled against the extension of equal voting rights, claiming that the poor "could not participate in a governmental process they were incapable of understanding".[414] These examples point to a form of intellectual elitism that was pervasive even among advocates of democracy in the early 19th century: access to political citizenship was largely conditional, and required the possession of strong economic and cultural capital in order to benefit from it.

In 1832 the Great Reform Act was passed under Lord Grey's premiership. This was a historic threshold in the development of parliamentary democracy in Britain, partially because it signified the first major change in parliamentary representation for centuries. Rotten boroughs were eliminated and representation in the shires was adjusted to relate to population size and distribution. Parliamentary seats were also afforded to large, up-and-coming urban areas.[415] However, voter suffrage only increased from about 5 to 7% of the adult population. Property qualifications were widened to incorporate the owners of property worth £10 a year, including small landowners, tenant farmers and shopkeepers.[416] This enfranchised the male members of wealthier middle classes, but still excluded portions of the middle class, all of the working class and all women.

The working class and their supporters felt entirely let down by the Reform Act. This resentment fuelled the instrumental Chartist movement of the 1830s and 1840s. After the Act was passed, working class groups set up clubs, known as Hampden Clubs, designed to address issues of social and political reform. Through these clubs petitions were devised and signed by millions. Further, *The People's Charter* was composed, which demanded a parliamentary voice for the working class. The Charter was rejected by parliament in 1839, after which the Chartist Movement became more violent, manifesting through various strikes and riots.[417] The Charter still served as a guiding document, and after Chartism died out, the state did adopt the majority of the Charter's demands. These included the request for secret voting, with the intention to make bribery or intimidation redundant, which was granted in 1872. The abolition of property qualifications for MPs was also demanded, in order to aid members without private sources of income. This was released in 1858. The Charter further

411 Ibid. p.9, 11

412 Ibid, p.30

413 Cunningham, Hugh. 2001. *The Challenge of Democracy: Britain 1832-1918*, Pearson Education, p.3

414 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.12

415 Ibid, p.30

416 UK Parliament, 'The Reform Act 1832'. https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/

417 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.31

emphasized the importance of financially compensating MPs, to ensure working-class members could stand. A salary was eventually granted to MPs in 1912.[418]

The central reform proposed by the Chartist Movement was suffrage for every man aged twenty-one years and over. This request was partially fulfilled through the Second Reform Act of 1867, which granted the vote to one in three men, meaning the electorate consisted of an urban working-class majority for the first time.[419] This Act was particularly influential in shaping Britain's political institutions because of the effect it had on the growth of political parties. The effective doubling of the electorate size meant that stronger organization was needed in order to guarantee the election of favoured candidates. In light of this, parliamentary groups merged, and the Conservative and Liberal parties were established, cementing confrontational bi-partisanship at the core of British politics.[420]

It required further acts of Parliament in 1867, 1884 and 1918 to secure universal male suffrage for those over 21, and one more law yet to achieve the right to vote for all women over 21. Prior to 1918, no women except a minute few who met the property qualification could vote in parliamentary elections. In 1918, Parliament passed an act granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who were householders, wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5 and/or graduates of British universities. Women had profoundly challenged gender norms through their contributions to the war effort, and this greatly helped in prompting the extension. Ten years later, the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act passed, granting women the vote on the same terms as men.

This outcome was the result of tireless activism by suffragette groups in the early 20th century. While suffragist groups existed from the mid-19th century, their peaceful activism approach centred around education and debate ultimately failed to make an impact.[421] In light of this, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), was founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia. Promoting their renowned motto, 'Deeds not Words', this organization took a much more militant approach compared to its predecessors. Members employed more violent tactics, including smashing up shop fronts, planting bombs, committing arson, and purchasing gun licences. Frequent hunger strikes led to the passing of a law known as the 'Cat and Mouse Act', which attempted to prevent suffragettes becoming martyred in prison by allowing for their release and subsequent re-arrest once they had recovered.[422] It was the perseverance and sacrifice of suffragette members, in addition to shifting cultural perceptions of gender, that secured an indiscriminate right to franchise in Britain.

Vitally implicated in the question of indiscriminate enfranchisement, however, is the shifting boundaries of citizenship itself. To bolster the imperial promise of a strong and cohesive post-war Commonwealth, the 1948 British Nationality Act established the British Empire as a single territory, and bestowed non-national citizenship throughout the British territories and colonies. This granted a consequent right of entry and settlement to millions around the world on the basis of their association to existing colonies or independent Commonwealth states.[423] This act and encouragement from governmental campaigns in Caribbean countries, launched with the aim to fill post-war labour shortages, led to a wave of immigration. Once that immigration had served state purposes, and became instead a perceived detriment, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed. This Act essentially revoked the right of entry to the United Kingdom of those granted legal citizenship by the 1948 Act. This left them subject to immigration control with the 'husk of citizenship', as the then home secretary expressed it in a key Cabinet meeting.[424] This left many people stateless in reality. According to historian Matthew Grant, there is a broad historiographical consensus that buttressing the restrictions was the discriminatory conviction that 'colonial' citizens did not really belong, or were not 'British enough'.[425] To be able to vote, Commonwealth citizens now have to be 'qualifying', meaning granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom by immigration authorities.

Britain's representative model and its deficiencies

It is worth considering exactly what citizens gained through universal suffrage. This development conferred political sovereignty to the general public for the first time and inaugurated formal political equality in the notion of 'one person, one vote'. Voting is the prime principle here, with democratic entitlements and duties essentially bottled down to this one civic action. As stated by Colin Pilkington, universal suffrage was in effect 'bolted on' to a pre-existing, antique model of representative democracy.[426] The legal right to exercise power remained with elected MPs, in a system which gave significant weight to the

418 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.32

419 UK Parliament, 'Second Reform Act 1867'. https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/furtherreformacts/

420 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.33

421 The History Press, 'Suffragettes'. https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/women-s-history/suffragettes

422 Tickner, Lisa. 1988. *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14*, University of Chicago Press. p.27

423 Patel, Ian Sanjay. 2021. 'How imperial hopes for the Commonwealth led to British citizenship being *redefined* along racial lines'. LSE British Politics and Policy. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/commonwealth-hostile-environment/

424 Ibid

425 Grant, Matthew. 2016. 'Historicizing citizenship in post-war Britain. The Historical Journal 59[4]. 1187-1206. p.1192

426 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.37

expertise of bureaucrats, judges and legislations.[427] The citizen's role was to provide a mandate, or a legitimate authority to govern, for entrusted representatives to act upon, thus identifying the sovereignty of the people with state power in an indirect fashion. Electoral mechanisms aimed to ensure a measure of responsiveness or accountability among representatives, allowing constituents to punish or reward MPs for their parliamentary actions. Universal freedoms of expression, assembly, and association were additional democratic privileges conceived to bolster political equality and indirect popular control.

Sceptical evaluations of such representative models of democracy are frequent in the democratic theory canon and can be traced back to Rousseauian thought traditions. Jean-Jacques Rousseau notoriously claimed that the English people are free only in the moment of their vote, after which they return to 'slavery', governed by the will of another.[428] Rousseau accordingly equated representative government with aristocratic forms of power and opposed it against more direct forms of self-governance. While he did concede that representative democracy can be instrumentally necessary, it was still conceived as an inferior substitute for stronger forms of democracy.[429] In general, contemporary democratic theory has assimilated this assumption. However, some strands of 'elitist' democratic thought perceive the fundamentally aristocratic basis of representative governance to be a positive attribute. Thinkers such as Joseph Schumpeter viewed popular participation in political decision-making as utopian, considering the complexity and scale of modern states.[430] Schumpeter maintained that citizens should remain passive due to their collective ignorance and become mobilized only periodically during elections.[431]

There are inherent contradictions and complexities to democratic systems conceived around the selection and organization of political elites. For example, the translation of votes into representation is arbitrated by imperfect electoral systems which distort political judgement. Representatives are additionally subject to the influences of party interests and corporate organizations, which can impede their constituent-oriented duties. Further, constituencies are delineated by territory, which indicates only "one set of ways in which individuals are involved in, or affected by, collective structures and decisions".[432] Issues such as environmental degradation, for example, are not bounded by borders. Representative democracy is also founded upon a 'thin' understanding of political will formation.[433] It treats political judgements as aggregated, individualized preferences, and does not facilitate for more direct collective and deliberative participation through which wiser and more enlightened decisions can arise.

Such concerns are reflected in the specific shortcomings, as identified by academics and civic activists, of the Westminster model–a shorthand term used to define the distinctive institutional arrangement of representative governance in Britain.[434] In the post-war era, this model was perceived through rose-tinted lenses, and the 'Britain is best' view filtered public attitudes to the political system.[435] It was commonly believed that governments were suitably held accountable to public opinion through the House of Commons, whilst beneficially capitalizing on the expertise of various elites and stakeholders through the House of Lords and other networks. A pervasive self-assurance in the supremacy of the Westminster model prevented system reform from entering the national agenda. It also led to the heedless exportation of the model to former colonies.[436] More recently however, the 'patriot's view' of Britain's democracy has been in decline. A growing mass of public disillusionment and academic evaluation has brought into question the viability of Britain's representative model in delivering on a Democratic Pact between individual and state .

The Westminster model has been criticized on numerous key fronts within the political science literature. Firstly, it has been highlighted that Britain has no codified constitution and therefore no written assurance of individual rights. In the absence of such a document, the original unaccountable power of the monarch has remained as the cornerstone of legal relations.[437] The people are not formally sovereign, which marks a striking difference from the French and American constitutions, which bestow popular sovereignty and invulnerable individual rights. The British approach to rights is a liberal or laissez-faire one whereby rights are negatively expressed. There are many laws stating what one cannot do, but none which offer guidelines as to what one can do.[438] This negative take is based on the libertarian philosophies of the 19th century, and in particular reflects John Stuart Mill's 'harm principle'. Recent suspensions of civil rights through anti-strike and anti-protest

427 Cole, Matt. 2000. *Democracy in Britain: Theory and Practice*, Sheffield Hallam University Press, p. 50, 55

428 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1978 (1762). *The Social Contract* [trans. Masters, J. Masters, R.]. St Martins: New York. p. 198

429 Urbinati, Nadia. Warren, Mark. E. 2008. 'The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory', *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 11, 387-412, p.391, 388

430 Schumpeter, Joseph. 1976. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. Allen & Unwin: London

431 Urbinati, Nadia. Warren, Mark. E. 2008. p.392

432 Urbinati, Nadia. Warren, Mark. E. 2008. pp.389-390

433 Ibid, p.393

434 Judge, David. 2014. *Democratic Incongruities: Representative Democracy in Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan. p.107

435 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.47

436 Ibid

437 Clarke, Paul Barry. Foweraker, Joe. 2001. *Encyclopaedia of Democratic Thought*, Routledge: London and New York. p.882

438 Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.259

legislation have alerted people to the destructive implications of a negative definition of individual freedom–there is little to prevent the government from issuing legislation to curtail that freedom.[439]

Secondly, it has been argued by numerous social scientists that the Westminster model legitimates an obscure, centralized and executive-led system of governance which negates the political sovereignty of the public. MPs, who are the supposed trustees of popular sovereignty, are often sidelined and rendered ineffective by Downing Street and the Cabinet executives, who hoard influence and power. As lamented by academic and Conservative peer Philip Norton, "control of a party majority in the House of Commons is all that is needed to ride roughshod over the rights of the individual".[440] For example, it is observable how the agenda and outcome of parliamentary discussions are steered by the government. As academic Matt Cole emphasizes, around 50% of the timetable of the House of Commons is taken up with government legislation, the content and urgency of which is established in Cabinet.[441] MPs thus have very little capacity to make an individual input to national legislation. To make matters worse, the Cabinet itself does not necessarily convene regularly, or decide on government policy collectively. Further, party leaders essentially pressure MPs to vote along party lines, even if it goes against what the MP deems is in their constituent's interests.[442] As expounded by Stein Ringen, Britain is a "top-heavy democracy", in which "the distance from ruled to rulers is immense" and "the chain of command linking citizenry and decision-making…[is practically] non-existent".[443]

Beyond party or executive control, corporate interests yield significant political power in Britain. Corporations and wealthy individuals can purchase political influence in a myriad of ways, including donations to political parties, lobbying or corporate hospitality.[444] In 2019, *The Guardian* reported that oil companies and climate-denier businessmen had given at least £5 million to MPs over the previous decade in the form of donations, expense-paid trips and salaries.[445] In the same year, 46% of the top 50 public corporations had connections with a serving MP.[446] According to Professor Abby Innes, among established democracies "the degree to which the British state is porous to business interests is exceptional". MPs and Ministers function with "uniquely close ties to business" and for such reasons Innes concludes that corruption, or 'corporate state capture' is "a feature, not a bug" of the British state.[447]

Recent erosion of the party system of the 1950s and 1960s has exacerbated concerns over British democracy and rendered a fallible electoral system even more ineffectual. The party system previously offered voters a definitive choice between two main contenders, who shared enough common ground to maintain societal stability, but offered distinct values, policies, and social character.[448] However, since the 1990s the main parties have converged significantly, becoming almost indistinguishable on key policy issues. This has meant that many traditional supporters of the main parties no longer feel represented by them, and membership numbers have nosedived accordingly. For example, in the 1950s there were 2.8 million Conservative members, but there were only 300,000 at the turn of the millennium.[449] The decline in party membership has augmented the reliance of political parties on large corporate donors, alienating them even further from the public and its political will.[450] The ideological assimilation of political parties has triggered very valid trepidation over the elaboration of a 'one doctrine' state, in which the public is offered no choice, and the 'independent' institutions of the state, such as the courts or the civil service, become indistinct[451].

Compounding this problem is an outdated and unconventional electoral system which artificially conserves the domination of two main parties and, vitally, allows a single party to rule unconstrained with only a minority of votes.[452] The whole promise of rationalization, discussion and peaceful confrontation between contradictory ideas (with the ultimate aim of developing a consensus that wins the assent of the majority) is unfulfilled. The First-Past-the-Post system has proved incapable of translating the political judgements of the public into legitimate modes of governance. As outlined by Matt Cole, governments have been

439 Ibid

440 Norton, Philip. 1994. 'The constitution in question'. *Politics Review*, 6-11, quoted in Pilkington, Colin. 1997. p.260

441 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.66

442 Ibid, pp.67-68

443 Ringen, Stein. 2007. *What Democracy Is For: On Freedom and Moral Government*, Princeton University Press. p.227

444 Wilks-Heeg, Stuart. 2014. 'Tackling the power gap: A new constitutional reform agenda' in *Democracy in Britain: Essays in Honour of James Cornford*. IPPR. 41-54. p.46

445 Watts, Jonathon. Duncan, Pamela. 2019. 'MPs and the oil industry: who gave what to whom?', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/11/mps-and-the-oil-industry-who-gave-what-to-whom

446 Green, Colin. Homroy, Swarnodeep. 2020. 'MPs and outside business interests: the value of political-corporate connections', *LSE British Politics and Policy*, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/mps-and-outside-business-interests/

447 Innes, Abby. 2021. 'Corporate state capture: the degree to which the British state is porous to business interests is exceptional among established democracies'.*LSE British Politics and Policy.* https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/corporate-state-capture/

448 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.61

449 Ibid, p.62, 73

450 Wilks-Heeg, Stuart. 2014. pp.47-48

451 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.63

452 Wilks-Heeg, Stuart. 2014. p.47

formed on less than 40% of the vote, and parties with 25% of the vote have won only 3.5% of the seats.[453] Under such conditions, it is extremely questionable that a government could claim a legitimate mandate. This critique has been expounded particularly by academics and researchers, but also by independent civic organizations such as the Electoral Reform Society. This group campaigns to convert Britain's electoral system to a proportional representation model.

It is hardly surprising, then, that apathy and disillusionment are growing rife among the contemporary electorate. The Power Commission has reported that "the level of alienation felt towards politicians, the main political parties and the key institutions of the political system is extremely high and widespread" across the whole population.[454] A vast loss of faith in the ability of British democracy to serve the interests of UK voters was revealed in a recent IPPR study entitled 'Road to Renewal'. It found that only 6% of British voters believe that their views are the main influences behind policy decisions made by the government.[455] This sentiment is notably reflected in the falling turnout rates at elections. While the average turnout rate between 1945 and 1970 was 77.5%, the average turnout rate in the 21st century is under 65%.[456,457] The problem of disillusionment is particularly severe among the young. Only around half of eligible voters aged between 18 and 24 voted in the last three elections (2015, 2017 & 2019).[458]

Still, that a significant majority of young people do not engage in formal political activities such as voting does not necessarily mean that they are disengaged from politics in a broader sense. 'Cause' issue or pressure groups have attracted many young members in recent years. It has been proposed by some pluralist democratic theorists that democracy can still thrive without strong forms of 'traditional' participation, as long as constituents are utilizing such secondary channels of representation to push their interests.[459] In this sense, young British people believe in the democratic pact in itself, but only if its counterparts are actually fulfilled: they can invest and mobilize themselves in civic life, but only if this commitment has a tangible effect and recognition.

However, idealistic visions of 'porous' liberal democracies no longer match the reality of Britain today. Up until the 1980s, democracy was considered by elites to be bolstered by corporatism, or the "direct negotiation of government policies with sizeable and strategically important pressure groups".[460] However, the Thatcher governments abandoned such formal arrangements, establishing instead a more *ad hoc* association with pressure groups, who from then on had to rally and compete for the attention of the government.[461] This arrangement has bred an exclusionary and disparaging attitude towards public campaigners and representatives of civil society, stripping them of their influence. Those actors meant to co-construct the political agenda and provide vital checks and balances have increasingly been portrayed as a problem, "blocking the government's plans and the will of the people".[462] Considering this context, there is a significant limit to how effectively young people can translate their political will into action through secondary, non-traditional means of participation.

Furthermore, such channels of participation are unrepresentative, in that they are upheld and executed by those with the most resources. Particularly for more activist and non-traditional engagement, participation is dependent on class, income, educational attainment, regional location, and age.[463] It is therefore not available to all as a means to contribute to political decision-making. However, it is worth noting that this is also the case for the traditional, 'core' means of exercising popular sovereignty. Social class differentials have been widening across all forms of political participation in Britain,[464] illustrating that the Democratic Pact, which also promises a form of equality of conditions between individuals, has not been fulfilled in its social aspect either. Moreover, the two mechanisms (wealth differential, political capacity differential) are mutually reinforcing: while formal political equality exists through the 'one vote for all' condition, some members of society possess resources, including money, connections, and knowledge, to exercise disproportionate political influence and undermine any notion of formal equality.[465] These well-off members are more likely to want and be able to vote than those of lesser means. For example, a recent study by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that the bottom third of earners

453 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.60

454 Power Commission, 2006, *Power to the People: Executive Summary and Recommendations*, www.powerinquiry.org/report/documents/ii.pdf, p.7

455 Patel, Parth. Quilter-Pinner, Harry. 2022. *Road to renewal: Elections, parties and the case for democratic reform*, IPPR, https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/road-to-renewal

456 Uberoi, Elise. 2023. 'Turnout at elections'. Commons Library Research Briefing. Number 8060. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8060/

457

458 British Election Study, 2021, 'Age and voting behaviour at the 2019 General Election', https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-findings/age-and-voting-behaviour-at-the-2019-general-election/

459 Urbinati, Nadia. Warren, Mark E. 2008. p.392

460 Cole, Matt. 2000. p.74

461 Ibid

462 Civil Exchange. Sheila McKechnie Foundation. 2023. *Defending our democratic space: A call to action*. https://smk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Defending-our-democratic-space_August-2023.pdf. p.24

463 Sloam, James. 2007. 'Rebooting Democracy: Youth Participation in Politics in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs* 60[4], 548-567. p.552

464 Wilks-Heeg, Stuart. 2014. p.41

465 Ibid, p.44

were roughly three times more likely to say it is not worth voting compared to the top third.[466] Vitally, they are also more likely to run for office, and be voted into power. Institutional influence is still largely the preserve and prerogative of white men in 2023, revealing that political exercise is a counterpart offered only to those who belong to the ruling class and correspond to a very narrow and discriminatory vision of British identity.

On the subject of political equality, recent debates in democratic theory have also been challenging the boundaries of formal representation. Democracy is notably conceived in the literature as "any set of arrangements that instantiates the principle that all affected by collective decisions should have an opportunity to influence the outcome"[467,468]. On this logic, the extended presence of immigrants in Britain since World War Two, for example, raises normative and political quandaries regarding the confines of inclusion.[469] The all-affected principle also raises more radical temporal and spatial considerations. If the ecological destruction caused by the British state is harming those in other countries, or even members of future generations, should they receive some kind of formal representation too? The same argument can be made for non-human animals or environmental systems. On the common understanding of democracy, it can be claimed that these other groups, and/or their proxies, should also be entitled to enter into a Democratic Pact with the British state.

Security Pact

Within the liberal tradition, security has historically been heralded as the fundamental justification for the existence and power of the state. The influential social contract theory, given its first full exposition by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1651), maintains that the origins of the state itself lie in the search for security by susceptible persons existing in the State of Nature. In Hobbes' view, the State of Nature was a domain of utter distrust, in which every person lives in constant fear of violence. To escape this actuality, the collective creates civil society, surrendering their rights to the private use of force in exchange for protection by the state.[470] The state thus ascertains a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, which is the ultimate perceived condition for peace and security.[471]

The security of individuals, especially from the prospect and fear of personal violation, has therefore been of paramount significance to liberal political thought.[472] This value has been correspondingly instrumental in directing the exploits and evolutions of the modern British state. However, over time, the meaning and remit of security has evolved both theoretically and tangibly within real-world governance. The genealogy of the modern state's protective operations reveals an extension from physical security from violence to social insurance and protection from natural disasters. This section will outline brief histories of the varying dimensions of security, as they have manifested in modern Britain. It will also address some key contemporary developments in the security domain. Formulated as a promise and a right of growing importance, security sometimes appears to be in tension with democracy and freedom, revealing the difficult cohabitation of expectations in our modern societies.

Security from external and internal threats: the military and the police

The military

The early modern British state is commonly understood by historians as the product of 'imposed protection' and extraction.[473] Violent threats were often embellished or fabricated to justify the existence of the state and reinforce its power. Military expansion, through conquests and the eradication of rivals, hinged on "the business of selling protection...whether people [wanted] it or not".[474] It is for this reason that political sociologist Daniel Béland presents state-making in medieval and early modern times as analogous with 'legitimate extortion'. Protecting the population against threat (real or contrived) represented the best means to validate taxation, which in turn was necessary for the reproduction and extension of state institutions.[475]

466 Mason, Rowena. 2023. 'Next UK election set to be most unequal in 60 years, study finds'. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/dec/11/next-uk-election-set-to-be-most-unequal-in-60-years-study-finds

467 Urbinati, Nadia. Warren, Mark E. 2008. p.395

468 Democracy may be more colloquially understood according to the phrase 'for the people, by the people', but the delimitation of 'people' is still subject to contention.

469 Pedroza, Luicy. 2019. *Citizenship Beyond Nationality: Immigrants' Right to Vote Across the World*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, p.17

470 Krahmann, Elke. 2010. *States, Citizens and the Privatization of Security*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. p.11

471 Hobbes, Thomas. 1651 (1991). *Leviathan* [ed. Tuck, R.]. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

472 Rothschild, Emma. 1995. 'What is Security?', *Daedalus* 124[3], The Quest for World Order (Summer, 1995). 53-98. p.63

473 Béland, Daniel. 2005. 'Insecurity, Citizenship and Globalization: The Multiple Faces of State Protection'. *Sociological Theory* 23[1], 25-41. p.28

474 Tilly, Charles. 1985. 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime' in *Bringing the State Back In* [eds. Evans, P.B.,Rueschmeyer, D., Skocpol, T.]. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 169-191. p.175

475 Béland, Daniel. 2005. pp.27-28

In medieval England, the feudal system worked to organize military (and political) force around a hierarchical formal structure based on land tenure. Different forms of land tenure existed, attached to varying rights and duties, including military service. Knights served alongside their auxiliaries, infantry, and military artisans. Occasionally, mercenaries were employed to supplement the militia, for example during the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485).[476]

The British army grew out of the aftermath of the Civil War (1642-1651) and was intended to foster political security for the Restoration monarchs, Charles II and James II.[477] In 1661, Charles II issued the warrant establishing the English Army, which would stand for the first time through peacetime and be paid for through new taxes. In light of this, concerns were raised that a permanent army under royal command would allow future monarchs to ignore the requests of Parliament.[478] Such fears came to fruition when James II attempted to use the army to push through unpopular reforms and cultivate a more absolutist form of government. The army was used to enforce religious conformity and influence election results, showing that a body originally dedicated to protecting the population can ultimately prove to be a body of control and pressure, subverting its initial promise. Already breaking at the seams, James' army fell apart during the Glorious Revolution (1688), when William of Orange and Mary II usurped the throne.[479] At this point, the Bill of Rights (1689) was introduced, which stated that a standing army was illegal without Parliament's consent. Ensuring parliamentary oversight of national armed forces promised to prevent the abuse of military power by the state.[480]

While the British army was initially heavily involved in internal police duties and infrastructure management, the establishment of police forces and the proliferation of government agencies meant that it could focus more on its growing overseas role.[481] During the 18th and 19th centuries, as Britain amalgamated its colonial empire, the army grew in size and capability. It distinguished itself as a great military power particularly during the Napoleonic Wars (1800-1815). The army was greatly augmented in size by conscription during World War I and II, based on the idea that guaranteeing safety now requires a more massive–and compulsory–mobilization of civil society. Numbers then began to decline when an all-volunteer army was restored in 1960.[482]

The police

In modern Britain, the state was increasingly called upon to guard the law-abiding population against internal threats to public safety. Security would no longer be seen simply as an issue of geopolitics or international relations, but as an internal issue that governments must address to protect their citizens. Prior to the industrial revolution, a more direct involvement of all people in the preservation of law and order transpired. It was considered the duty of all to apprehend offenders and turn them in to the authorities:[483] Safety depends on everyone's vigilance. Volunteer constables were unpaid, reflecting an implicit principle that the police ought to represent the 'citizen in uniform'.[484] By the 18th century, policing was progressively characterized by community engagement in street patrols, self-policing, and private sector provisions.[485]

The establishment of a public policing service can be best understood as a response to the burgeoning demands of industrial capitalism and the accompanying shift in social circumstances. The dual processes of industrialisation and urbanization served to exacerbate the problem of crime and erode the prevailing social controls and policing protocols.[486] Additionally, public trust in the military to secure public order through effective and legitimate means was dwindling. Violent responses to political unrest and demonstrations had significantly soured the public's perception of the institution.[487]

Following a proposal by the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel, the (London) Metropolitan Police Service was established in 1829. At the time, London had a population of almost 1.5 million people, but was only policed by 450 volunteer constables.[488] Criminologist Michael Rowe finds that the activities assigned to the new police force reflected the role of 'domestic missionaries', "charged with tackling behaviour regarded as an affront to the moral and ethical sensibilities of the middle classes."[489] The force was directed to suppress emerging working-class activism, and

476 Britannica. 2024. 'British army'. https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-Army

477 Ertman, Thomas. 1999. 'Explaining Variation in Early Modern State Structure: The Cases of England and the German Territorial States' in *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* [eds. Brewer, John., Hellmuth, Eckhart.]. Oxford University Press: Oxford. p.57

478 National Army Museum. 'The Restoration and the birth of the British Army'. https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/restoration-and-birth-british-army

479 National Army Museum. 'The Glorious Revolution'. https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/army-and-glorious-revolution

480 Krahmann, Elke. 2010. p.1

481 Ertman, Thomas. 1999. p.59

482 Britannica. 2024. 'British army'.

483 Rowe, Michael. 2018. *Introduction to Policing* [3rd ed.]. Sage: London. p.25

484 Ibid, p.26

485 Mawby, R.I. 1999. *Policing Across the World: Issues for the Twenty-First Century*. UCL Press: London. p.30

486 Rowe, Michael. 2018. p.27

487 Ibid

488 Nine Grp. 'The History of Emergency Services in the UK'. https://ninegrp.com/pages/the-history-of-emergency-services-in-the-uk

489 Rowe, Michael. 2018. p.29

later on, to regulate or quash the leisure pursuits of working-class communities[490] illustrating, once again, a deviation from the original role of security (at least for certain social groups, who suddenly find themselves under close scrutiny) and a point of tension between democracy and security. The security that the police offered was therefore prejudiced and conditional. Public reaction to the police service was initially very resistant, even among middle and upper classes, and incidents of anti-police violence occurred on a steady basis. However, this antagonism largely diminished during the latter half of the 19th century, as the police became cemented as a "central feature of the landscape of the state".[491] Their improved success at reducing domestic disorder led to calls to extend the service outside of the capital, which resulted in a gradual increase in the number of national police forces. Since the 1940s, all police forces in Britain have been merged and modernized.[492] In the 1980s, under the Thatcher administration, the police acquired greater powers and were made an unambiguous instrument of government to achieve political goals, evidenced most notably during the miner's strike of 1984-85. Despite public expenditure cuts in other areas, the police saw a real increase in spending of 68%.[493] It was at this point that a strong disjuncture between police 'effectiveness' and public opinion of the police could be observed. Even though there was a significant reduction in rates of recorded crime in the 1980s and early 1990s, survey evidence showed that the public had lost confidence in the police, were increasingly afraid of victimisation, and believed crime to be on the rise.[494] Whereas in 1959, 83% of people had a great deal of respect for the police, by 1989 only 43% felt that way.[495] While the greatly bolstered and target-led police force promised to cultivate peace and provide a sense of safety for the public, many experienced an opposite, disillusioning effect. Police forces were accused of institutionalized racism, particularly in the wake of several race riots, as well as faking evidence, using violence to force confessions and intimidating the public in their cars instead of working to help them. They were therefore seen as increasingly out of touch with the people, serving their own ends rather than the public good. The police's once positive public reputation has eluded them since this political and cultural shift.

Civil liberties and social security

While the state's monopoly on the use of legitimate violence was deemed necessary to ensure the physical security of the population, citizens also needed assurance that the state would not abuse that power against them ; security is therefore both a promise and a matter of concessions and negotiations Thus, mechanisms were needed to curtail the state, and set in stone its limits. It is on this basis that civil liberties were granted by the state, and the ideal of modern citizenship was first realized. English sociologist T.H. Marshall's influential vision of citizenship interpreted the extension of state protection through the recognition and differentiation of rights–civil, political, and social, emerging chronologically.[496] Civil rights were a foundational first articulation of the protections expected of the state beyond immediate security from violence. Civil liberties were composed of, "the rights necessary for individual freedom–liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice".[497] These emerged during the 18th century but had roots in the 1689 Bill of Rights. This landmark moment limited the powers of the monarch and ensured the freedom to petition the monarch, freedom from cruel punishment, and freedom from being fined without trial.

It is worth noting that the generalization of civil liberties catalyzed the emergence of a market society. The protection of individual rights, in particular private property, stimulated the establishment of a new system of economic regulation, which in turn shifted the priorities and status of the state.[498] The state more and more functioned to uphold and accommodate for the evolving capitalist system, retreating into a secondary role. Paradoxically, the egalitarian logic of civil rights thus favoured a system of economic regulation which generated detrimental forms of socioeconomic inequality and state apathy.[499] It was in response to this inequality, and the conditions it cultivated, that the guarantee of security was ultimately protracted to incorporate protection against sudden or extreme deterioration in the standard of living of individuals.[500] While many liberal thinkers initially opposed the development of social rights in the name of freedom and respect for private property, the modern welfare state can ultimately be understood as an extension of the rights-giving liberal state.[501]

490 Ibid

491 Ibid, p.34

492 Nine Grp. 'The History of Emergency Services in the UK'

493 Sturm, Roland. 1994. '"Subject" or "Citizen"? The Freedom of the Individual under the British Constitution' in *Changing Conceptions of Constitutional Government* [eds. Kastendiek, H., Stinshoff, R.]. Brockmeyer: Bochum. 69-92. p.78

494 Sindall, Katy. Sturgis, Patrick. Jennings, Will. 2012. 'Public Confidence in the Police: A Time-Series Analysis'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 52[4]. 744-764. p.744

495 Sturm, Roland. 1994. p.78

496 Béland, Daniel. 2005. p.29; Marshall, T.H. 1964. 'Citizenship and Social Class' in *Class, Citizenship and Development* [ed. Marshall, T.H.]. Doubleday: New York. 65-122.

497 Marshall, T.H. 1964. p.71

498 Béland, Danie. 2005. p.29

499 Ibid

500 Rothschild, Emma. 1995. p.63

501 Béland, Daniel. 2005. p.30

Social services and income-related programs, aimed at sheltering individuals against economic risks, began to emerge during the 20th century. However, state intervention to aid social ills dates back to the Poor Laws, passed in 1563, which aimed to ease the conditions of the 'deserving' poor. From 1572, taxes were collected from local communities to fund the assistance.[502] While this was primarily an attempt to douse unrest, it represented a significant step in transferring responsibility to help those in need to the state, based on the idea that it is part of its prerogatives, but also part of its duties, to ensure the protection of the most disadvantaged. Britain's contemporary social security system is predominantly founded upon the legacy of the 1942 Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services, which proposed a national, compulsory, flat-rate insurance scheme. The ensuing welfare system has proved instrumental in reducing insecurity against economic risks, such as unemployment, sickness, or poverty related to old age, which are no longer seen simply as the vagaries of life.

Public safety and emergency services

During the early 18th century, natural disasters began to alert the British state to the notion that society is not merely an aggregate of alienated individuals, but an interdependent collective in need of communal protection and regulation. Large scale epidemics and environmental hazards developing within industrialized cities encouraged a particular type of state protection which had "little to do with the liberal logic of individual protection and citizenship rights".[503] The public health state was instead founded on a more modern concept of social solidarity, which linked the health of populations to political and economic security.

In 1831, a new horrific cholera epidemic advanced in London, causing great panic and a sense of urgency regarding the city's sanitation issues. Additional epidemics of influenza and typhoid in 1837-38 prompted the government to employ the barrister and social reformer Edwin Chadwick to lead an enquiry into sanitation. His investigation propagated an economic argument for controlling disease among the poor and led to the passing of the Public Health Act in 1848. The Act advanced the view that since health problems related to water or sewerage affected the entire population, then health improvement was the responsibility of national and local governments.[504] The Act appointed 'inspectors of nuisances' to confront the problems and ensured more effective public provisions for improving sanitary conditions. Hazardous environmental crises prompted similar regulatory action. By the mid-19th century, toxic combinations of smoke and fog caused by the burning of coal (known as 'smog') were frequently blanketing Britain's industrial cities, leading to numerous public health issues and environmental destruction. Acts of 1845 and 1847 represented the first attempts to regulate the production of smoke from factories. From this point onwards, policies for the controlling of harmful emissions began to evolve.[505]

The advent of emergency services corresponded with such other developments in public health. The British government decided to establish the publicly funded Metropolitan Fire Brigade in 1866, from which the current Fire & Rescue Service originated. Prior to this, only a few municipal fire services existed. Firefighting had generally been considered the responsibility of parish volunteers and private insurance companies, who would only save privately insured residences.[506] The modern ambulance service in use today was not established until much later. The development of publicly funded medical transport was a slow and uncertain one. It was generally left up to the firefighters and police to transport patients to hospital, which had many limitations. For example, prior to 1925, they were not given mandatory first aid training, so medical support was limited en route. A fully fledged ambulance service was finally introduced in 1948, conjoined with the decision to provide free healthcare to all in need.[507]

Contemporary security developments

Proliferation of security threats

The publication of Britain's first National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2008 saw the culmination of a gradual shift towards a highly protective state and broadened realm of security.[508] The Strategy outlined an "expansive and heterogenous" list of security threats, including terrorism, nuclear weapons, organized crime, global instability, failed states, and civil emergencies (pandemics, extreme weather events etc.).[509] Corresponding to the proliferation of formally acknowledged security threats, expansive security practices are becoming more and more a part of daily life in Britain. Permanent and extensive surveillance, alongside other biopolitical mechanisms, serve to blur the boundaries between private and public, external and internal. This phenomenon has been termed the 'everyday banality of security' or the 'insecurity of everyday life' within critical security literature.[510]

502 Eves, DavidI. 'Two steps forward, one step back': A brief history of the origins, development and implementation of health and safety law in the United Kingdom, 1802-2014'. History of Occupational Safety and Health. https://www.historyofosh.org.uk/brief/

503 Béland, Daniel. 2005. p.31

504 Calman, Kenneth. 1998. 'The 1848 Public Health Act and its relevance to improving public health in England now', *BMJ* 317[7158]. 596-598. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1113799/

505 Eves, David. 'Two steps forward, one step back'

506 Nine Grp. 'The History of Emergency Services in the UK'

507 Ibid

508 McCormack, Tara. 2014. 'The British National Security Strategy: Security after Representation'. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 17. 494-511. p.494

509 Ibid, p.501

510 Ibid, pp.503-504

Notably, it was the NSS which first identified climate change as both a threat and a risk. In general, Britain's environmental protection and regulation has followed a similar logic to the development of public health during the late 19th century. Grounded in an even broader notion of interdependence, environmental protection similarly transcends the liberal logic of individual rights and requires a more biopolitical, collectivist strategy.[511] Climate change in particular has posed problems to the state's security apparatus and framework, on account of its supranational and elusive nature. However, the security framing of climate change has become more prominent over time, taking into consideration its multifaceted manifestations. For example, the NSS links climate change to the increased severity of extreme hazards, pressure on food and water supply, cross-border movement, territorial disputes, and spread of infectious disease.[512]

Inequitable protection against state power

On national security grounds, rights intended to protect individuals from excessive state power have become more fragile, especially for minority populations. Tensions between the promises of freedom and security have been aggravated by the bolstered mechanisms of control and surveillance implemented by the British state in recent decades. These mechanisms have undeniably been employed to target and police those "at the margins of the political community", as the securitisation of immigration has developed,[513] illustrating a discriminatory security pact, and presupposing less civic integration among certain social groups. As outlined by legal scholar Lucia Zedner, citizenship itself has become "a core motif in contemporary debates about the protection of individual freedom from interference by others and by the state".[514] Citizenship has become increasingly conditional and exclusive under a new 'architecture of citizenship', while the government has expanded its power to denaturalise certain categories of citizens, including those born within Britain.[515]

In 2006, then Prime Minister Tony Blair gave a high-profile speech on 'the duty to integrate', in which he argued that "integrating… isn't about what defines us as people, but as citizens, the rights and duties that go with being a member of our society".[516] The ideal of the social contract is thus being explicitly rejuvenated, as the state denies civil liberties and rights of protection to those who do not meet certain standards, or violate contractual terms, through disloyalty or crime. Such policy directions have sharpened the distinction between citizen and non-citizen, guaranteeing amplified vulnerability for those without citizenship. To offer an example, foreign nationals sent to prison can face automatic consideration for deportation, despite the "statistical evidence that ethnic minority suspects and defendants in the criminal justice system are subject to unequal treatment".[517] The logic of immigration policy seeps into domestic crime control, as 'irregular citizens' are criminalized and singled out among the body politic.[518] For example, mass CCTV in public and private spaces is used to identify and target 'undesirable' persons who fit predetermined offender profiles.[519] Exacerbating and hardening a territorial grounding of citizenship is a choice wholly contradicted by the scale of globalization, and one which renders a significant portion of the population vulnerable against the arbitrary power of the state.

Privatization of security

In recent years, the British state has outsourced large sections of national and international security provision to the private sector.[520] State-controlled police officers have been contracted out, transfiguring the public police into a largely private resource.[521] Private military contractors (PMCs) now conduct the majority of military training and maintenance, and further manage all navy ports and main army garrisons.[522] They also increasingly provide operational support in combat. Considering the foundational role security has played in the evolution and rationalization of the state, this development threatens to entirely destabilize the role and legitimacy of the state. Criminologist Clive Walker warns how the British state is slowly conforming to a neoliberal, ultra-minimal model, which enables "even the provision of force to be assumed by private enterprise on a contractual model in which the rich or the desperate may choose to avail themselves of fortifications at the going rate while the rest take their chances in life".[523]

511 Béland, Daniel. 2005. p.32

512 HM Government. 2008. 'National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World'. The Stationery Office: London; Harris, Katie. 2012. 'Climate change in UK security policy: implications for development assistance?'. Overseas Development Institute. *Working Paper 342*

513 Zedner, Lucia. 2010. 'Security, the State, and the citizen: The changing architecture of crime control'. *New Criminal Law Review* 13[2], 379-403. p.382

514 Ibid

515 Ibid, p.381; Gibney, Matthew. J. 2013. 'A Very Transcendental Power': Denaturalisation and the Liberalisation of Citizenship in the United Kingdom'. *Political Studies* 61, 637-655. p.637

516 Tony Blair, The Duty to Integrate: Shared British Values, Speech on Multiculturalism and Integration, Delivered at Number 10 Downing Street, London, for the "Our Nation's Future" Lecture (Dec. 8, 2006), quoted in Zedner, Lucia. 2010. p.383

517 Zedner, Lucia. 2010. p.385

518 Ibid, p.381

519 Zedner, Lucia. 2003. 'Too much security?', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 31, 155-184. pp.167-168

520 Krahmann, Elke. 2010. p.2

521 Crawford, Adam. 2006. 'Policing and security as 'club goods': the new enclosures?' in *Democracy, Society and the Governance of Security* [eds. Wood, Jennifer. Dupont, Benoît.], Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 111-138. p.116

522 Krahmann, Elke. 2010. p.2

523 Walker, Clive. Whyte, Dave. 2005. 'Contracting out war? Private military companies, law and regulation in the United Kingdom'. *ICLQ* 54, 651-690. p.651

Beyond the discriminatory nature of market-based security provisions, it has been posited within criminologist literature that the lack of transparency and liability critically undermines public democratic accountability and human rights safeguarding.[524] Private contractors are a largely unregulated force and are backed by private rather than public law. PMCs, for example, have been known to establish subsidiary firms, in obscure offshore locations, for particular operations. The firms are then dissolved once the operation is over, allowing the contractors to easily brush off any accountability for what occurred during the military action.[525] Controversies have particularly centred around the killing of unarmed civilians by men working for PMCs such as Blackwater, and how to hold such companies responsible. As Clive Walker notes, the doctrines of human rights law were not designed with such private agents in mind. This neglect has enabled a potentially threatening 'law-accountability vacuum' to form as PMCs become increasingly constitutive to military combat operations.

A proliferation of private security technologies and agents has also fuelled particularly isolated and individualist day-to-day security practices. As stated by Lucia Zedner, "the presumption of safety as a public good is being replaced by security as a private commodity".[526] The growing presence of security guards, surveillance, data mining, and physical security hardware has counterintuitively fostered a lack of trust which bankrupts social relations.[527] Private security feeds off and exacerbates fear, institutionalizing distrust and anxiety, and fulfilling the opposite of its promise. As a means to provide protection and reassurance, this is entirely contradictory. Security is inherently correlated with social cohesion and the quality of inter-subjective relations. It is founded on trust and therefore private attempts to purchase security, to the detriment of human association, are bound to cause more harm than good,[528] for many, since it creates relationships of mutual surveillance between citizens, and shows the presupposition of a non-respect of the social pact of mutual protection between individuals and groups.

Consumption Pact

This section outlines the shifting meanings and modes of consumption in Britain since the 19th century. It further gauges the implicit 'consumption consensus' that variably developed between the state and the people, setting the entitlements and parameters of consumption. Whether through stringent regulation or permissive *laissez-faire* policy, the state repeatedly sought to direct consumption in a way that reinforced national prosperity. The forms of consumption that the British public expected to be guaranteed by the consensus changed considerably, marking an emerging concern with affluence as opposed to sustenance. This reflected paralleled political and technological developments and had extensive implications along social and environmental dimensions.

The citizen-consumer: Free Trade and co-operative culture

Consumption in the early 19th century was, for most, largely stipulated by the Corn Laws, a set of tariffs and other trade restrictions on imported foods and corn, including wheats, oats, and barley, which were enforced between 1815 and 1846. The laws essentially hindered the import of cheap corn, originally by banning importation below a set price, and then by imposing severe import duties, making it too costly to import from abroad even when national food supplies were low. These laws raised food prices and the cost of living for the British public, while augmenting the profits and political power accompanying land ownership. By 1845, anti-Corn Law agitation and food riots were rife, with 'cheap bread' serving as a unifying cry of social solidarity among the British people.[529] John Bright, an MP for Durham and leading anti-Corn Law voice, declared the high price of bread a "great robbery" which extorted from consumers a greater price than it is worth.[530] In the face of aggregating agitation, cogent lobbying by the Anti-Corn Law League, and influential evangelical ideas about trade as 'God's design', Prime Minister Robert Peel repealed the protectionist Corn Laws in 1846, and instigated a decisive shift towards Free Trade in Britain.[531] Free trade, while leading to a relative loss of food sovereignty and self-sufficiency, has the desirable counterpart of lowering the cost of living for the least well-off, particularly concerning the most basic needs such as food.

524 Ibid, p.689

525 Walker, Clive. 2005. p.687

526 Zedner, Lucia. 2003. p.156

527 Ibid, p.172

528 Loader, Ian. 1997. 'Private security and the demand for protection in contemporary Britain'. *Policing and Society* 7. 143-162. pp.155-156

529 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. *Consumerism in 20th-Century Britain*. Cambridge University Press, p.34

530 Ibid; Bright, J. 'Free Trade', Covent Garden Theatre (19 December 1845), in *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy by the Right Honourable John Bright* [ed.Rogers, J.E.T.], London, 1869, pp.417-418

531 Trentmann, Frank. 2008. *Free Trade Nation: commerce, consumption, and civil society in modern Britain.* Oxford University Press, pp.5-6

Over the successive course of the 19th century, Free Trade manifested as a particular sort of national ideology, as significant and idealized as parliamentary liberty. It developed into a sincere democratic culture, cutting across party political, class and gendered divides. The promotion of open markets and cheap food became associated with a national narrative of freedom, fairness, and a dynamic civil society.[532] The vision was a moral one, with the economic argument for free trade blossoming into a full-hearted equalizing and civilizing project. An unhindered exchange of goods was expected to raise the level of wealth for all by encouraging specialization and the most effective use of resources.[533] Vitally, it was also envisaged by 'new liberal' thinkers, such as J.A. Hobson, as a backdrop to the positive growth of civic participation, instilling a social conscience and sense of reciprocity into individuals, and thereby making them active, responsible 'citizen-consumers'. For the first time, consumers were idealized by intellectuals as essential contributors to democratic vitality, dutifully considering and supporting the rest of the community through their consumption. However, historian Frank Trentmann emphasizes that the citizen-consumer ideal was not simply an intellectual abstraction. Rather, members of the public acted and consumed with a conscious sense of duty to their local community.[534]

Free Trade was further forecast to counteract the "evils of materialism and prejudice" by stopping the influence of organized interest, aristocratic rule, and monopoly.[535] Perhaps dissimilar to contemporary presumptions, the justification for Free Trade at the time was to guarantee cheap necessities for all. It was not aimed at bolstering the demand for new commodities, or to fuel materialism, as this was broadly associated with a selfish and elitist culture of protectionism. A focus on subsistence, operating through a social justice lens, diverted attention from more acquisitive ideas of consumption.[536] Civic consumerism even saw commercial forms of communication, such as advertising, hijacked for the purposes of democratic politics.[537] Despite the ongoing consolidation of industrial capitalism, competition and individualized consumption practices were not the defining characteristics of this time period.

The 'citizen consumerism' ethic was embodied most strongly in the Co-operative Movement which prospered throughout and beyond the latter half of the 19th century. Early co-operatives, owned and run democratically by members, focused on the provision of essential goods, such as food. Members of the co-ops would be customers of the society's store, and the co-op in turn would reward members with a proportion of profits, based on that member's spending within the store. Citizens thus find themselves drawing up their own Consumption Pact (investing time and effort in the management of their food and supplies, in order to control the quality of and access to their goods) insofar as the pact proposed by the State itself is deemed insufficient. Besides, co-ops promoted equality in the ownership, control, and divisions of profit from business. They sought to equate producer with consumer, and trader with customer, and thus establish non-hierarchical societal relations.[538] Thus the Consumption Pact they promoted was not a commercial one, but a social one, reflecting the division of labour at the time, and conveying a broader vision of democracy. Equality was hereby introduced into the practice of supplying and purchasing.

While members were not necessarily immune to evolving consumerism, and the accompanied desire to acquire more and more, co-operative ventures rested on an inherent belief in the power of association and collectivism amongst consumers. It thus also rested on a vision of consumption which differs to the dominant contemporary understanding, which is predicated on the atomised, self-interested, and competitive individual. On this understanding, there is no basis of solidarity or collective consciousness among consumers. Co-operative ideologists, on the other hand, comprehended consumption as the one true classless experience that all individuals share, and consequently the one with the ability to unite the people to take collective action in advancing their economic, political, or social positions. In other words, consumption was deemed a moralized and interconnected enterprise. In contrast, notions of 'unity of class' stemming from labour exploits were increasingly challenged, perceived now as destabilized by the rising fragmentation of tasks in the workplace.[539]

In particular, the co-operative movement raised consumer awareness of the ethical and material consequences of spending. The narrative of the "responsible consumer" originated at this time: cooperatives charge the consumers to moralize their act of purchasing, but perhaps in a less individualistic version than at present, as consumers get together and organize themselves. Gradually, this vision of consumption would become the dominant narrative, reappropriated by the institutions themselves.

In the late 19th century, major campaigns such as the 'White List' were launched, which intended to educate consumers on the working conditions of producers and implore them to consider such factors when purchasing goods. Such campaigns targeted

532 Trentmann, Frank, 2008. p.2

533 Ibid, p.5

534 Ibid. pp.2-3

535 Trentmann, Frank. 2008. p.2, p.5

536 Ibid, pp.16-17

537 Ibid, p. 21

538 Purvis, Martin. 1998. 'Societies of consumers and consumer societies: co-operation, consumption and politics in Britain and continental Europe c.1850-1920', *Journal of Historical Geography* 24[2], 147-169, pp.155-156

539 Purvis, Martin. 1998. p.156

women in particular, as their practical day-to-day realities revolved on average around buying and spending, rather than producing.[540] Through training programmes offered by Co-operative guilds and stores, the political power of 'ordinary' female shoppers was mobilized. Co-operatives acted as training grounds in democratic citizenship and community solidarity through education and leisure initiatives, management committees and topical discussion groups.[541] The notion that "the power of the basket is a greater one than the power of the loom or of the vote" was a commanding one in co-operative circles and stirred housewives to effect political change through their consumption habits. Female-led boycott and buycott[542] campaigns successfully challenged the high price of everyday commodities, and reinforced trade union claims.[543]

It is worth considering the effects on types of consumption that arose from the escalation of industrial capitalism (and free trade) in Britain. Analogous to the socialist and necessitous consumption narratives of the original Free Trade movement, by the late 19th century the population was turning from a subsistence into a mass-consumption society. By the late 19th century, a variety of foods were becoming accessible to the average person, who would have previously survived on bread and potatoes. Improvements in food variety did not extend to durable items for the majority of people, however. While poorer families might have acquired some household items, such as a skillet or iron pot, the lavish clothing, furniture, and pottery of the era were only accessible to the wealthy. Proliferating shops and department stores served only a restricted section of the urban middle-class population but displays of products in public view were greatly amplified, fostering envy and greater materialism.[544] By the end of the 19th century, ideas of luxury and materiality were correspondingly changing. Whereas previously materiality had generally been perceived as evil, sinful, or vulgar, it was increasingly regarded as a civilizing force. Beautiful objects and possessions were deemed intrinsically valuable and enriching on both an individual and societal level. We begin here to see an expression of selfhood through personal possessions.[545]

The Great War, protectionism, and imperial consumerism

The First World War had a vast and long-lasting impact on consumption in Britain. The war, and the scarcities, exploitation, and profiteering it instigated or exposed, led to a rebellion against the free trade policies that were once so central to Britain's democratic and civic culture, revitalizing popular demand for state controls.[546] Egalitarianism was now more associated with the control of consumption in line with the overarching war effort, as opposed to laissez-faire policy.[547] Food shortages and soaring costs, triggered by market fluctuations and German naval blockades, provoked a series of disturbances, often foregrounded by the women of lesser means who bore the brunt of the increased cost of living. The increase was stark: by 1916, retail food prices were 59% above the levels of 1914.[548] Beyond the cost, the amount of time that had to be dedicated to queuing for goods was equivalently onerous. Queues, often for essentials such as bread, potatoes, or coal, became a 'national institution', provoking further disorder and food hoarding.[549]

For the first two years of the War, the government was hesitant to get involved in matters of consumption or disturb market processes. However, trepidation over unrest eventually led to the establishment of Britain's first national compulsory rationing scheme and the mass mobilization of the state apparatus in order to direct and regulate ordinary, necessitous consumption.[550] In 1917, a Food Controller was appointed, and a Ministry of Food established in order to maintain food supplies and promote the economy. Over time, regulation and rationing became stricter, particularly in regard to non-essential items. By January 1918, sugar, meat, butter, and cheese were rationed.[551] State intervention in the marketplace regulated the prices of core necessities and equalized their distribution in a radical way. This meant that the poor received a more sufficient share of food than they could have afforded previously. Calorie-intake differentials between income groups narrowed, and a healthier diet was secured for both working-class families and the well-off.[552] Food allocation was safeguarded, so long queues and food hoarding were

540 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.29

541 Trentmann, Frank. 2001. 'Bread, Milk and Democracy: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain' in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* [eds. Dauton, Martin. Hilton, Matthew.], Bloomsbury Publishing. p.134; ibid, p.41

542 The opposite of boycott – deliberately purchasing a company's products in support of their policies

543 Ibid, pp.44-45

544 Kerryn Higgs, 2021, 'How the world embraced consumerism', BBC Future, https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210120-how-the-world-became-consumerist

545 Trentmann, Frank. 2016. 'Private comfort, public spirit: Victorian consumer culture in a global context', paper delivered at *Consuming (the) Victorians*, BAVS annual conference, Cardiff University, 31 August-2 September

546 Trentmann, Frank. 2001. p.130, 135

547 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.72

548 Ibid, p.55

549 Ball, Christine. Hudson, Nicky. 'The Effects of Rationing on the Home Front 1914-1918', *West Sussex & The Great War Project*, West Sussex County Council, p.7

550 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.55

551 Ball, Christine. Hudson, Nicky. p.8

552 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.140

rendered obsolete. This rationing system continued until 1920, from which point individuals could once again obtain food from more distant sources.

The return to an open market after post-war reconstruction was met with hostility from labour and co-operative groups who had shifted their assumptions regarding state interventionism and civil society over the course of the war. Rather than idealizing the pre-war Free Trade system, such agents emphasized the "complete chaos" that had characterized the public's food supply, through which "the consumer was practically at the mercy of profit-making enterprises".[553] Calls were made for the Ministry of Food to become a permanent department exercising "full powers over production, distribution, and prices of food", to assure fairness and sufficiency.[554] Thus, social movements on the left now associated the interests of the consumer with subsidies, trade regulation and price controls, as opposed to free trade.[555]

However, it was not just leftist voices who advocated for interventionism–much pressure on the government to institute formal protectionism came from within the Conservative Party. Nonetheless, fearing trade retaliations and higher food prices, the government was reluctant to adopt protectionism.[556] While not formally interfering in the politics of consumption, the government did at this stage implore the British public to implement an informal preference for Empire goods to boost national prosperity. Thus, instead of instituting tariffs or other forms of protection, the government worked to promote imperial shopping habits through advertising and propaganda.[557] A government-funded agency named the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) was established in 1926 to create a "national movement" with the view that Empire purchasing "stimulates employment at home".[558]

Through this a more conservative vision of the 'citizen-consumer' surfaced, whereby consumers had a primary duty or responsibility to shop for the country as a political act. An extensive 'Buy British' campaign was launched in 1931 by the EMB which unassumingly encouraged people to buy British Empire goods and think about the nation every time they make a purchase.[559] As with the co-operative movement, women were primary targets of such campaigns. Historian Erika Rappaport notes how the British Empire Producers' Organisation, which represented various domestic and imperial industries, *"targeted women and employed a great deal of propaganda to teach the average housewife that her shopping basket and her kitchen were imperial spaces"*.[560] This was a perpetuation of a similar empowerment narrative to that espoused by the Co-operative movement and allied voices, but promoted now by the state with patriotic, as opposed to social justice, aims. Amongst other developments, this period was a creative one where diverse ideals of the consumer were contrasted and debated across public discourse. While the Co-operative and Labour movements promoted a more social-democratic consumer-citizen, Conservatives fashioned an imperial consumer-citizen. Meanwhile, business was well underway in instructing individuals to shop for pleasure and as a form of self-expression.[561]

Protectionism was ultimately adopted at the end of 1932, signaled through the passage of the Import Duties Act. This law placed a 10% tariff on imports but gave preferential treatment to goods from within the Empire. This significant shift was largely a consequence of escalating protectionist pressures from the Conservative Party, organized labour, and financial bodies. It was also a direct response to the economic and fiscal crises generated by the world depression, and thus the government could capitalize upon a mutually reinforcing blend of "political impetus and economic rationale".[562]

The interwar period was marked by a substantial increase in consumption and an overall improvement in living standards. By the 1930s, the average diet was healthier than before the war, both in terms of caloric and nutritional value.[563] Beyond sustenance, rising real incomes and improved social protection provision, such as the introduction of national health, old age, and unemployment insurance schemes, enabled greater access to a new range of goods and services.[564] Consumer durables, including electrical appliances and radios, were more widely attainable, and a proportion of the skilled working class were even able to afford motor cars. There was a meaningful rise in expenditure on leisure activities, including travel, trips to the cinema, dancing, and betting. At this stage, then, material affluence and leisure were no longer the sole prerogatives of the upper and middle classes.[565]

553 Trentmann, Frank. 2001. p.148; MLH, CC/PP/52, Report Adopted by the Consumers ' Council on the Future of the Food Ministry, 14 May 1919, p. 3.

554 Ibid

555 Trentmann, Frank. 2001. p.148, 153

556 Rappaport, Erika. 2015. 'Drink Empire Tea: Gender, Conservative Politics and Imperial Consumerism in Inter-war Britain' in *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth Century Britain* [eds. Rappaport, Erika. Dawson, Sandra. Crowley, Mark.], Bloomsbury Academic, p.140

557 Ibid, pp.140-141

558 Ibid, p.141; Havinden, Michael. Meredith, David.1993. *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies*. Routledge. p.150

559 Ibid, pp.142-143

560 Ibid, p.143

561 Ibid, p.151

562 Garside, W.R. 1998. 'Party Politics, Political Economy and British Protectionism, 1919-1932', *The Historical Association*, Blackwell Publishers, p.47

563 Aldcroft, D.H. 1970. *The Inter-War British Economy, 1919-39*, Batsford, p.368

564 Thompson, Noel. 2015. *Social opulence and private restraint: the consumer in British socialist thought since 1800*, Oxford University Press, p.76

565 Ibid

The possibilities and implications of such amplified consumption precipitated ideological dilemmas within socialist and working-class circles. Heretofore, the daily lives of working-class families had "hinged on personal pride in managing well on little", and consisted of contempt, rather than admiration, for the materialistic bourgeoisie.[566] In this sense, the prospects of affluent consumption challenged working-class identities and value-systems. While some socialist voices continued to regard materialism as a 'parasite' which "eroded moral autonomy and stunted the development of character", many began to acknowledge the "creative and life-enhancing opportunities" presented through broadened consumer choice.[567] Percy Redfern, a co-operative activist, celebrated the 'liberated consumer': free to spend, to choose, and to enjoy the pleasures of contemporary abundance.[568] Sidney Webb, a prominent socialist and economist, similarly praised the self-expressive and emancipating potentialities of consumption. He wrote that consumption was integral to self-realization, social inclusion, and personal freedom, defined as "the possession of opportunity to develop our faculties and satisfy our desires".[569]

Importantly, the caveat to liberation and individuality in consumption was liberation and individuality in production.[570] Socialists of the time expressed a general optimism regarding the rewards and potential of consumption, and its capacity to promote social progress and aid in the emancipation of workers. Affluent, 'good' consumption was perceived to "give wider scope to work which embodies conscious human skill and deserves the name of art", ultimately ensuring that "machinery will be dethroned from industry".[571] As consumption and leisure became increasingly mechanized, through mass production and standardization, the socialist optimism began to fade, and concerns were raised over the "mechanical control of the consumer".[572]

World War Two and post-war affluence

The outbreak of the Second World War thrust Britain back into an era of strict, state-regulated consumption. All citizens from across the social hierarchy were once again registered into the state apparatus and subject to the state's control of supplies.[573] Having learnt lessons from the Great War, the Ministry of Food had begun to make plans for the supply, control, and distribution of food as early as 1936. The first commodity to be rationed by the state was petrol in 1939, followed by bacon, ham, butter, and sugar in 1940. Other staple products soon followed, including cheese, eggs, rice, and milk. By mid-1942, most foodstuffs were rationed, in addition to other commodities such as clothing and soap.[574] The rationing system was, as before, designed to ensure a fair distribution of essentials at a time of national shortage. Adhering to rationing was depicted as a patriotic duty, vital to Britain's war effort, and was largely embraced by the general public. Government broadcasts aired to help women devise 'experimental' dishes out of limited ingredients, and initiatives such as 'Dig for Victory' were launched to encourage citizens to grow their own food and raise their own livestock.[575] Despite the war ending in 1945, it was not until 1954 that rationing fully ended, due to continuing food scarcities.

As with rationing during the First World War, diets were, on average, enriched throughout the war. The fact that luxury foods were difficult to acquire improved the health of the well-off, and for many poorer people, regular access to fresh meat, eggs and milk was an enhancement to their standard diet. More equal relations were also established through the restrictions on the production of luxury goods, such as jewelry, clothing, toys, and ornaments, which served to subtract the status symbols of the rich and privileged from society.[576]

While Britons had, during the inter-war years, become accustomed to a degree of material abundance, and begun to conceive of consumption as important to identity formation and psychological fulfilment, the affluence of the 1950s was unparalleled. The need for post-war economic reconstruction altered the state's approach to consumer politics. Public policy began to target consumers in attempts to boost demand and overcome economic recession.[577] For example, the government reduced hire purchase controls in 1954, making it easier to get credit from banks and companies. Reductions of income and purchase tax led to increased expenditure, and a reduction in working hours enabled greater spending on leisure activities.[578] The US played an influential role at this time by advertising and disseminating a consumption model

566 Ibid, p.81

567 Ibid, p.81, 85

568 Ibid, p.86

569 Webb, S. 1923. *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation,* Benn, pp.45-46; ibid, p.87

570 Ibid, p.90

571 Hobson, J.A..1926. *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* [4th ed.], Allen and Unwin, pp.425-426

572 Thompson, Noel. 2015. p.91

573 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.140

574 Faculty of History: University of Oxford, 2020, 'Rationing in Britain during World War II'

575 Find my past, 'A fair share for all': rationing in wartime Britain, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1939register/rationing-in-britain-ww2

576 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.140

577 Trentmann, Frank. 2005. 'Knowing consumers – histories, identities, practices: an introduction' in *The making of the consumer: knowledge, power and identity in the modern world* [ed. Trentmann, Frank.], Berg Pblishers, p.12

578 Eduqas, '"Never had it so good" – What factors contributed to the economic recovery in the 1950s and 1960s?', Austerity, Affluence and Discontent: Britain, 1951-1979, p.4

based on mass production, and a quality-of-life metric based on material abundance, to European states rebuilding themselves after the war.[579]

Britain was transformed into a nation of shoppers. Consumer spending increased by 115% in the 1950s, and by 1965, necessities such as food and clothing constituted only 31% of overall spending.[580] An expanding multitude of advertisers, marketing experts, and psychologists helped stimulate the acquisition of non-essential commodities, by bestowing them with meaning and value, and equating them with notions of autonomy and individual expression.[581] Four times as much was spent on advertising in 1960 compared to 1947. People were presented with a vast assortment of different goods, and as demand for more items grew, prices fell, enabling more people to purchase these items.[582] New durable, mass-produced and technical commodities, such as refrigerators, cookers, and motor cars, were becoming accessible to an increasingly affluent working and middle class. National expenditure on such durable household goods grew from £189 million in 1945 to £1268 million ten years later.[583] Between 1957 and 1959, the number of televisions rose by 32%, and car ownership increased by 250% between 1951 and 1961.[584] Durables transformed from semi-luxuries or decencies to ordinary consumer items, de-politicised in their newfound normality.[585]

With this rise of affluence, consumer protection became a more pressing issue. Consumers increasingly sought guidance and security in a context of proliferation and mounting choice; illustrating the porosity between consumer expectations and safety expectations. The complexity of modern commerce and pace of change was undermining the consumer's capacity to stay informed, rendering them "vulnerable to exploitation and deception".[586] This was especially true for women, who were often the targets, and primary buyers, of an ever-expanding range of consumer durables. They were made to cope with shifts in retailing methods, namely the establishment of high-pressure sales techniques and manipulative advertising.[587] Consumers additionally had to navigate themselves amongst a proliferation of unsafe and inferior products, attempting to assess quality and value for money based on little information.

In the face of such predicaments, consumers rallied together in search of advice. Particularly influential in this collective pursuit was the Consumers Association (CA), established as a non-profit private company in 1957. The organization offered the comparative testing of commercial products, with results published in its monthly member's magazine, *Which?*. At the end of its first year, the CA had 85,000 members, and by 1967 it had 470,000, indicating a strong demand for independent judgements of commercial products.[588] The core motivation of the CA was to secure value-for-money for its members. It accentuated "the rights of individual consumers to be able to choose from a range of fairly priced, quality products".[589] Its mission was therefore substantially different from those of easier consumer-oriented organizations, such as co-operatives, which emphasized the social duties of citizen-consumers to aid in the fair production and provision of essentials. As stated by historian Matthew Hilton, this was a consumer protection agenda of choice and competition, not of collective action or the transformation of the means of distribution.[590] CA members were not bound by any particular political leanings, commitments, or interests. Instead, individualism was the overarching ideology among subscribers.[591]

The upsurge in mass consumption inevitably forced the state to intervene as well. Modern consumer-protection legislation, aiming to regulate commerce and safeguard consumers against unfair trade or commercial practices, originated in the Molony Committee on Consumer Protection in 1962.[592] This Committee was a key milestone in state involvement in consumer affairs and resulted in the creation of the Consumer Council in 1963, and the passing of the Trades Description Act in 1968. This was tailed by a bout of legislation in the 1970s, which included the 1975 Fair Trading Act, the 1974 Consumer Credit Act, and the 1978

579 Mouré, Kenneth. 2015. 'Prosperity for All? Britain and Mass Consumption in Western Europe after World War II' in *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain* [eds. Rappaport, Erika. Dawson, Sandra. Crowley, Mark. J.], Bloomsbury Academic, p.220

580 Eduqas, p.4

581 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.184

582 Eduqas, pp.4-5

583 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.168

584 Eduqas, p.5

585 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.169

586 *Final Report*. Public Record Office, Kew (hereafter PRO) BT 258/879, Committee on Consumer Protection, *Committee Papers*: 'CCP5: Alleged inadequacies in present arrangements for consumer protection and guidance'. P.16; Hilton, Matthew. 2001. 'Consumer Politics in Post-war Britain' in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* [eds. Daunton, Martin. Hilton, Matthew.], Bloomsbury Publishing, p.243

587 Hilton, Matthew. 2001. pp.247-248

588 Hilton, Matthew. 2001. p.248; Eduqas, p.5

589 Hilton, Matthew. 2001. p.249

590 Ibid, pp.249-250

591 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.213

592 Hilton, Matthew. 2001. p.241

Consumer Safety Act.[593] The knock-on impacts of the Molony Committee's recommendations better protected consumers within the marketplace, enabling them to make wiser, risk-averse choices.

At this stage, connections to the older politics of consumption were dwindling. State-led organizations such as the Consumer Council (CC) located consumption as a purely economic act and consequently promoted a notion of consumer which was synonymous with 'shopper'. For example, through educational initiatives and publicity, the CC promoted a "consumer philosophy of empowered individualism", aiming to perfect the marketplace and improve competition. Schoolchildren were taught how to make "wise and informed shopping choices", not to think about the wider social consequences of their purchasing decisions or to think critically about the necessity of certain forms of consumption.[594] Consumption was thus constructed as a private phenomenon, existing beyond the domain of morality and politics. Despite this, the circulated vision of the consumer was inherently value laden. Consumer protection advocates such as the CC were aiming to 'empower' and transform consumers into a particular type of efficient, scientific, objective, and rational agent.[595] They were thereby promoting a particular mode and meaning of consumption, and in extension, human life.

Britain's strong cooperative movement, which espoused a contrasting, moralized consumer citizenship model, lost momentum after World War Two as consumer organizations and political parties marginalized co-operative visions.[596] The collectivist axis of co-operative consumerism did not offer solutions to a new assortment of consumers who were concerned with affluence and abundance as opposed to shortage and adulteration.[597] Hilton notes how the Co-operative Movement did attempt to reformulate their consumer politics but struggled due to the long-held ideological disdain of 'wants' as opposed to 'needs'.[598]

Consumption and counter-consumption: Neoliberalism and ethical consumerism

At that time, it became extremely easy to incur debt as credit was simpler to access, and goods and services were becoming even more representative of status and image.[599] A common phrase, 'keeping up with the Joneses', encapsulated the growing pressure on individuals to possess everything their neighbours had, to avoid social stigma.[600] Consumption was becoming a means of social integration and participation, in a context where possession was an even stronger signal of belonging, and materialistic values were gaining ground. These mechanisms clearly illustrate the extent to which the aspiration to consume can be reversed into a form of pressure to consume–the two feeding off each other and crystallizing ever-higher expectations, particularly among the middle classes.

Throughout the 1970s though, Britain was hit by skyrocketing inflation, vast unemployment, frequent economic crises and heightened industrial tension. This in effect eroded the post-war 'golden age' of progress and instigated a permeating sense of national despair and pessimism. It was on these grounds that Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government attained victory in 1979 and was able to initiate a radical shift in British post-war society and culture. An avid individualist, Thatcher maintained that poverty was caused by personal, not societal, failings. Accordingly, she attacked welfare provisioning and pursued adamant privatization and neo-liberal market reform, scaling back the remit of the state.

Thatcher's neo-liberal policy measures neatly complemented the mode of empowered individualism and consumerism that had become dominant over the previous decades. Self-interested competition, free choice, and consumer rights were professed to offer liberation for the individual. Emancipation through spending was framed as a sort of remuneration in exchange for boosting the economy, in a consumption consensus implicitly manufactured by the state. Choice was defined narrowly as a range of options provided by the free market from which individuals could select in the most utility-maximizing manner. In this sense, consumers were conceived as the end-product of increased choice, instead of setting the parameters of choice, or having any sway over market reforms themselves.[601] No effective networks were established for collectives of consumers to participate in government activity, as trade unions or agents of commerce had done.[602] In other words, the choice to choose was not a presented option. Consumerism has, by this point, been reduced to acquisitive materialism, far removed from the citizen-consumer model that was commonly promoted at the beginning of the century.[603]

593 Ibid

594 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. pp.235-236

595 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.210

596 Mouré, Kenneth. 2015. p.224

597 Hilton, Matthew. 2001. p.247

598 Ibid, p. 244, 254

599 Khan, Muhammad Akbar. 'The Origin and Development of Consumer Protection Laws in United Kingdom', https://www.aarcentre.com/ojs3/index.php/jaash/article/view/127/342

600 Eduqas, p.5

601 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.244, 266

602 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.244

603 Ibid, p.266

Thatcher did, however, reformulate the relationship between citizenship and consumerism, according to the accumulation of goods and capital (210). The possession of these assets was asserted as a condition for the social inclusion and participation correlated with citizenship.[604] Historian Amy Edwards denotes how this logic particularly pertained to home-ownership. She describes how council tenants were posited as failing to satisfy their social obligation to own a home, and were consequently excluded from "a conventional and fully-expressed form of citizenship".[605] In this sense, a particular degree of material abundance, achieved on an individualist, competitive basis, became an expected pre-requisite of modern citizenship. To facilitate this accumulation, however, the state was expected and configured to foster the relevant conditions necessary for consumption.[606] In the neoliberal framework offered by the Thatcher premiership, the enabling of mass consumption superseded the state's prior duty to provide social security, as public needs were understood to be most effectively fulfilled through private enterprise. The application of free market values to public life thus presented both the duties and rewards of citizenship in consumerist denominations.[607]

Poverty and wealth inequality increased dramatically during Thatcher's period of leadership. Top incomes rose to previously inconceivable levels, while a combination of unemployment, low pay and benefits cuts raised poverty to heights thought to have been eradicated since 1945.[608] Despite the rise in poverty and inequality, a consumption culture continued to thrive and grow. The social imperative to 'keep up' with others, as well as the onslaught of new consumer goods, was fierce. Personal debt soared from £7 million in 1979 to £52.5 million in 1990, with a significant proportion owed by low-income families to new payday loan companies setting very high interest rates. Debt-fuelled consumption had been enabled by the use of credit cards after the abolishment of hire purchase controls and the reduction of bank charges for loans.[609] Convenience became a key term of the period and was linked to the rise of plastic packaging. 'Throwaway' culture had its origins here, as a discernible decline in voluntarist activities such as mending clothes or preserving food occurred. By 1999, 88% of all food was purchased from big shopping chains, which were a prime cause of pollution.[610] Holidaying abroad increased dramatically, as did home ownership and renovation.[611] The shopping centre played a greater role in individual and family leisure time, gradually establishing itself as the cultural hub of local communities.[612]

In response to the rigid form of state-ordained consumerism, a counter-consumption culture did emerge. It has since evolved into a form of social movement known as 'ethical consumerism'. Through this countermovement, the ethical and social motivations expressed earlier by the co-operative movement, for example, have made a circular resurgence. For adherents, a focus on the economic rather than the political or moral aspects of consumerism was an "artificial separation".[613] Consumers are understood to have duties to consume responsibly in ways that limit social and environmental harm.

The term 'ethical consumer' was popularized by the UK magazine *Ethical Consumer*, first published in 1989. The magazine's innovation was a 'ratings table' which awarded companies marks across a range of ethical and environmental categories, thus enabling consumers to make ethically informed choices. It thereby resembles the *Which?* magazine, but with a focus on morality as opposed to value-for-money, denoting a shift in how individuals conceptualize consumption. The movement has certainly been influential. According to a recent study by Co-op, a convenience retailer, total 'ethical spending' has quadrupled over the past twenty years and outgrown all UK household expenditure. Ethical expenditure is understood within the study as shopping which reflects the consumer's concern regarding the environment, animal welfare, social justice, and human rights.[614]

As this statistic perhaps highlights, there is a limit to how far mass consumption is actually challenged by the ethical consumption movement. It does little to confront the domination of the commodity in crafting and guiding our self-expression and political sensibilities. Members are still "defining themselves and their relations to the world through the symbolic expression afforded by goods".[615] This can have self-contradictory implications, for instance when an individual consumes more than they would otherwise, due to the 'ethical' credentials and symbolism of the product. It could be argued that the focus on individual consumer behaviour serves to distract from systematic change that requires more cohesive action and policy reform. Further, companies

604 Edwards, Amy. 2017. 'Financial Consumerism': citizenship, consumerism and capital ownership in the 1980s'. Contemporary British History 31[2]. 210-229. p.210, 212

605 Ibid, p.213

606 Kuehn, Kathleen. 2015. 'Citizenship and Consumption' in The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Consumption and Consumer Studies [1st ed.] [eds. Cook, Thomas Daniel. Ryan, J.Michael]. John Wiley & Sons. 1-6. p.3

607 Ibid

608 Thane, Pat. 2018. *Divided Britain: A History of Britain, 1900 to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, p.346

609 Ibid, p.371

610 Black, Jeremy. 2004. *Britain Since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age*, Reaktion Books, p.14

611 Ibid, pp.23-24

612 Ibid, p.11

613 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.267

614 Co-op, 'Ethical Consumerism Report 2021', https://www.co-operative.coop/ethical-consumerism-report-2021

615 Hilton, Matthew. 2003. p.314

are conspicuously sabotaging the movement's objectives, utilizing green marketing tactics, or endorsing corporate social responsibility practices in order to acquire new customers.

Work Pact

This section traces the evolution and decline of an implicit labour agreement between the individual and the state in the United Kingdom. Beginning its evaluation in Victorian Britain, it traces the shifts in modes, conditions and meanings of work over time, as catalyzed by the interaction between material context, political agency, and intellectual discourse.

Work in the wake of industrial capitalism

In Britain, the Victorian era (1837-1901) was characterized by an overwhelmingly work-centred existence for the majority of the population. Adults and children worked harshly long hours, surrendering the majority of their time to paid or unpaid labour. Beyond this severe abdication of time, Victorian life was work-oriented in nature due to the direct dependency between one's employment and the fulfilment of life's necessities: according to a sometimes very survivalist conception of work (particularly among the working classes), people work to guarantee, sometimes even minimally, financial or food subsistence for oneself or one's family–at a time when individuals are no longer producing their own food as they did in the pre-industrial era. This explicit connection between work and survival stands in contrast to the social protection provisions of the 20th century, through which the basic needs of the unemployed were accommodated. Health and well-being were strongly influenced by labour conditions, due to the abundant dangers and hazards, including fatigue, traumatic injury, and occupational disease, that plagued a far-reaching range of jobs. Occupational health occupied a low priority status within Britain, despite the physically grueling and increasingly arduous effects of work. In the 1880's, 60-80 working hour weeks were common, in working environments with appalling ventilation, temperature and sanitation standards.[616] Implicit acceptance of high risk was expected, while many thousands of workers were killed at work each year, and many tens of thousands more injured and disabled.[617] Between 1880 and 1884, almost eleven thousand people were killed in industrial accidents across the UK.[618] It would be an understatement to say that the Labour Pact offers only a (meagre) financial reward for productive investment, not a guarantee of security.

Psychological need satisfaction was likewise linked with labour, as the workplace represented the site in which friendships and social ties were formed. Work thereby existed as a source of socialization and politicization, nurturing collective activity and solidarity among producers. For skilled craft workers in particular, work also cultivated identity, purpose, and pride. Such work was deemed a creative activity which required practiced application and agency. In this way, it was a vital source of autonomy and individuation.[619]

In the wake of the second industrial revolution, a period of rapid industrial development and mass production, the world of work changed dramatically. What occurred was the enduring establishment of the scientific organization of work, which brought about an augmented deskilling, intensification, and alienation of work. Prior to 1880, there was a heavy premium placed on skilled labour, since demand for quality, tailor-made British manufactured products remained high. Skilled labour was characterized by handicraft skills, manual dexterity, knowledge of material and skills, and long training periods. Workers in this category, such as craftsmen, smiths, and printers, could earn double the wages of labourers.[620] However, as Britain's relative economic position worsened, consumer markets expanded and external competitive pressures intensified, employers responded with attempts to cut production costs and increase efficiency. They did this by establishing the modern form of business enterprise (large-scale limited liability companies), rationalizing work processes and expanding managerial control more directly over production.[621] As skilled work was the costliest form of labour, it was inevitably marginalized.

Within factories, skilled labour was largely exchanged with standardized and automated work, utilizing new manufacturing machinery and technology. This resulted in monotonous,

616 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p.128

617 Ibid, p.130

618 Dept of Employment, *British Labour Statistics: Historical Abstract* (1971, Table 200)

619 In the social sciences, individuation refers to the process by which an individual acquires specific characteristics that make him or her 'unique'–a uniqueness which, it must be emphasized, is created and conditioned by the individual's social integration. Individuation therefore refers to a process at the crossroads between conformation and singularisation. See Émile Durkheim, *De la division sociale du travail* (1892).

620 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. pp.47-48

621 Ibid, p53

depersonalized, and simplified labour. Workers lacked any control and were subject to strict managerial oversight. Inspired by the pioneering Taylorist ideology of scientific management, managers introduced stopwatch monitoring of the shopfloor and detailed division of labour, where tasks previously performed by a single professional were divided up. They also introduced new wage systems through which they paid workers according to results as an incentivisation for efficient labour.[622] This caused a severe intensification of work and led to aggravated problems of fatigue and illness.

As working-class and previously skilled labour adopted this form, it ceased to be the affirming source of emancipation, agency, and community it once was. Workers not only had limited resources, free time, and energy leftover for the enjoyment of any leisure, education, or family life, but the positive social and psychological dimensions of work were increasingly elusive. Furthermore, the proportion of workers' lives devoted to work was all the greater that they moved to the cities with their families, in order to be closer to the factories and guarantee their access to work. In this sense, industrialism, demographic change and urbanization go hand in hand.

The steady elaboration of social protection

The changing nature of work catalyzed the radicalisation and heightened political consciousness among certain types of affected workers. Shifts towards scientific management of labour intensified the homogeneity of a male, native, and blue-collar working class. This newfound politicization was crucial in the development of a militant trade union movement. Workers were compelled to act collectively to protect their joint interests in an increasingly hostile and alienating working environment. Mass unionization achieved a gradual but great transformation in labour's power relative to capital. Unions were often able to secure better regulation of wages and working conditions from employers, albeit unable to protest the shift in the new fundamental working structure.[623]

Towards the end of the 19th century, trade unions and other pressure groups began to demand greater intervention from the state to improve overall working conditions. Workers were thus persuading the state to enter into an agreeable 'Work Pact', protecting their needs in exchange for vital productivity. Until the 1870s, employment-related legislation only regulated the engagement of children and women in the labour market. Working hours of children had been restricted, and both women and children had been banned from particular sites of employment, including mines and factories.[624]

In response to heightened demand, the quite limited and poorly enforced Factory Acts were extended in 1878 and 1894, imposing legally binding code of safety regulations upon employers. A supplementary Workmen's Compensation Act was further passed in 1897 to give employees in certain industries the right to compensation for any accident received at work. However, the extended laws were likewise difficult to enforce, and courts frequently failed to compensate workers for injuries.[625]

In the first half of the 20th century, state intervention and regulation amplified in crucial areas. This was in part a response to sustained pressure from organized labour, but also reflected a mounting acceptance of the welfarist maxim that the morale, health, and wellbeing of workers is conducive to high productivity and profit maximization.[626] This maxim was increasingly adopted by both employers and the state, contributing to the development Marxists have coined as 'manufacturing consent' to capitalism. Regulating the worst stresses and strains of the competitive, free market system was increasingly comprehended as the state's responsibility.[627] This welfarist ideology thus grounded an implicit social pact, which in turn instigated momentous shifts in social and public policy.

It is important to note that state intervention in the labour market was also provoked by the extreme demands of war. The First World War forced the state into unprecedented levels of involvement in economic and social affairs, with significant implications for occupational health and safety. Faced with an increasingly fatigued and sick workforce, the government chose to establish the Health of Munitions Committee (HMWC), mandated to investigate the conditions most beneficial to industrial efficiency. Over time, various 'special regulations' by the Home Office were implemented to regulate specific dangerous working practices.[628] By 1950, the chances of a worker sustaining a fatal injury at work had fallen by more than 50% compared to 1914.[629]

As guarantor of a new promise, the State gradually ensured that certain "decent standard of living" standards were met for all, thanks to more regulated and monitored remuneration practices. Work and poverty should henceforth be incompatible. But these guarantees of protection did not only concern work: more generally, the State illustrated its commitment, through specific aid, to protect the weakest–according to the idea that it was

622 Ibid, p.66
623 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. pp.238-239, 200
624 Ibid, p.152
625 Ibid, p.128
626 Ibid, pp.144-145
627 Ibid, p14
628 Ibid, p.133
629 Dept of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract* (1971, Table 200)

necessary to compensate for a lack of redistribution promised by a certain economic credo. Social service provision increased meaningfully over the first half of the 20th century, also with an ameliorative target. The minimum wage was introduced in 1909 for particular low-wage industries and expanded to numerous more by the 1920s. By 1912, school children had gained the social right to free meals and medical inspection without fear that their parents would lose their right to vote.[630] The Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 granted a weekly state pension to those of seventy years and over. The National Insurance Act of 1911 introduced the standard of compulsory insurance and meant that small health insurance or unemployment benefits could be claimed.[631] Social service expenditure further grew during the inter-war years, particularly when unemployment benefits were extended through the Unemployment Act of 1920.[632] Such provisions served to manufacture cooperation and consent within the workplace, while simultaneously safeguarding greater industrial productivity. In other words, the promise and mechanisms of collective solidarity (between workers, between generations, between citizens, etc.) were gradually being developed.

The two World Wars crucially prompted a transformation in women's participation in the formal economy. The demands of war required extensive female labour, and consequently a wide array of vocational opportunities were extended to women for the first time. Women were documented expressing a huge sense of pride and identity in their wartime work".[633] Despite this, the state actively endeavoured to curtail married women's paid employment in the inter-war years, retracting the roles offered out of wartime necessity. Wartime creches and nurseries were closed down and an onslaught of propaganda was released after 1918 which aimed to remind women of their 'primary responsibilities' as mothers and homemakers.[634] After the Second World War, the state supported two separate minimum wages based on gender for the same work, legitimizing the undervaluation of female labour and preserving the view that the formal economy was not the 'proper domain' for women.[635] Such action reveals the gendered dimension of the evolving Work Pact.

While female workers were increasingly subject to a 'dual burden'–managing the labour-intensive tasks within the home while balancing formal employment–male workers across an array of industries were no longer completely absorbed or constrained by work. As regulation of the workplace and social service provision improved, male workers could cultivate hobbies and engage in more leisurely activities. The sense of autonomy and identity which previously was sourced from work began to be realized instead in such leisurely pursuits. Workers reported feeling 'freedom' when participating in hobbies that "counteract the effects of an over-mechanised life".[636] Employment was increasingly perceived as a mere provider of funds for the external pleasures and comforts of life, rather than an intrinsically valuable 'human' activity in and of itself. From this point of view, not only are workers increasingly at odds with the promises and expectations of emancipatory work once formulated by the left-wing parties, but work and leisure are becoming two sides of the same coin–the latter trying to compensate for the excesses and hardships of the former.

The rise of the Welfare State

An experience of near total state control during the Second World War fostered a common acceptance of interventionist principles. Additionally, workers anticipated and expected political reward for their sacrifices during the war. The state was, in a sense, understood to be indebted to workers and lagging in its side of the collective social agreement. Greater responsibility and duty was implicitly assigned to the state, with its remit extended to alleviate social and moral issues across widespread realms of national life.

A government report entitled *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, colloquially known as the Beveridge Report, was drafted by the Liberal economist William Beveridge in 1942. It reflected a reformed national understanding of 'welfare' which stretched beyond the pre-war delineation of caring for the most vulnerable. The Beveridge Report recommended a new holistic system of social security–a national and compulsory insurance scheme which would pool unemployment, childcare, retirement, and widows' benefits into one central governmental support scheme.

When the Labour Party took power in 1945, they implemented Beveridge's recommendations through a series of Acts of Parliament–namely the National Insurance Act of 1946, the National Assistance Act of 1948, and the National Health Service Act of 1946. Through these Acts they promised to provide for the people "from the cradle to the grave". This marked the beginning of the modern British welfare state which secured social rights to the citizen.In exchange for these rights, citizens had to commit to a large increase in taxation, although inter-war welfare reforms had already required steady tax rises.[637] Since social assistance was no longer conditional on giving up personal freedoms or the right to

630 Woodroofe, Kathleen. 1968. 'The Making of the Welfare State in England: A Summary of Its Origin and Development', *Journal of Social History* 1[4], 303-324, p.318

631 Ibid, p.313

632 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. pp.164-165

633 Mass Observation. 1942. *People in Production.* p.106

634 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. p.190

635 Ibid, p.170

636 Friedmann, Georges. 1961. *Anatomy of Work* [Rawson, Wyatt. trans.], Heinemann Educational Books, p.107.

637 IFS. 2023. 'The Welfare State and Inequality: were the UK reforms of the 1940s a success?'. https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/the-welfare-state-and-inequality/; UK Parliament. 2024. 'Key dates'. https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/taxation/keydates/

vote, as had been the case in the period of the Poor Laws, social rights were no longer substitute for political and civil rights.[638] Within the state's remit, from this point onwards, was the provision of social services, including social security, health, social welfare, education, training, and housing. Correspondingly, the state was required to regulate private activities, through taxation policies, consumer protection and social legislation.[639]

This transition marked a vital extension of the terms of the 'social pact' between citizen and state. It was not only the right to vote being claimed, but the right to work well and live well. The new universal system of social protection was fuelled by the egalitarian and social democratic values which permeated the British post-war culture. Emphasis was placed on equitable distribution and social organization–on collective benefits in addition to individual rights.[640] The rise of the Welfare State similarly denoted the de-individualisation of responsibility. Poverty was no longer a case of individual failure, but societal failure.

Although the previous paragraphs might suggest that the post-war period was one where the social pact around work was renegotiated heavily in favour of citizens, and working classes in particular, the state did perceive benefits itself from the new pact. Far from a solely moral enterprise, the welfare project, grounded in the previously mentioned welfarist maxim, was intended as a tool for social and economic progress, designed to make capitalism and industrialisation function better. In this sense, it was not conceived as a system of handouts, but a mutually beneficial partnership between the state, individuals, and private businesses.[641]

As the Welfare State rolled out, most of the exploitative working conditions that characterized previous work were dismantled. Working time was reduced, and income levels rose significantly. With much uncertainty and insecurity removed from the workplace, blue-collar workers began to express a newfound optimism and confidence for the future.[642] While the actual mechanics and fundamental structures of labour were persistent, male working-class members could enjoy leisurely activities, consumption, and free time to a much larger extent.

It is critical to note that the Beveridge Report undoubtedly served to reinforce patriarchal ideas about the family and notions of womanhood. Men's responsibilities and claims within the social security scheme were defined by their relationship to the labour market, whereas women's were primarily defined by their marital status. The breadwinner was explicitly male and expected to take on full-time paid employment, while the dependent wife was considered responsible for providing care, domestic and sexual services.[643] Despite this, women's formal labour was increasingly required (again) to aid the reconstruction of a war-stricken economy. Constrained by an explicitly gendered and restrictive social protection scheme, in addition to harsh cultural norms which both demanded and shamed women's formal work, women were increasingly saddled with more than their fair share of toil.

It is lastly pertinent to briefly consider the intellectual antagonisms fuelled by the rise of social protection norms. Liberal ideologies and narratives proclaimed the emancipatory potential of universal rights, which were now more explicitly recognised and assigned through the welfare structure. Despite the egalitarian post-war culture in Britain, what evolved was fundamentally a rights-based notional contract between state and individual, based on a particular view of human selfhood. Sceptics, most notably working within the Marxist tradition, treated the Rights discourse with caution, staunchly critical of the ideal of the self-interested and rationally calculating individual it embodied.[644] To Marxists, human emancipation was necessarily contingent on a collective transformation of human relationships. Full emancipation was not possible under a system where workers could no longer identify with their work, and only worked as a means to ends extrinsic to their labour. Autonomy could not be bestowed through rights, but is instead an acquired capability, reliant on the establishment of enabling social and emotional conditions.[645]

An economy in decline and the rise of neoliberalism

By the early 1970s, dreams of welfare-fuelled productivity and profit-maximization were dwindling. In fact, the scale of state expenditure on social services was increasingly perceived as a constraint on the process of capital accumulation and economic growth.[646] The British economy was performing badly, with Keynesian economic policies seemingly unable to produce full employment and a stable level of prices.[647] The general optimism and complacency of the 1950s was superseded by a palpable sense that things were 'not quite right'.[648] The Conservative Party in particular began to make significant attacks on the post-war social consensus. For example, their 1966 General Election

638 Woodroofe, Kathleen. 1968. p.320

639 Gough, Ian. 1979. *The political economy of the welfare state*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. p.4

640 Woodroofe, Kathleen. 1968. p.304

641 Renwick, Chris. 2017. *Bread for All: The Origins of the Welfare State*, Penguin Random House. p.8

642 McIvor, Arthur. 2001. P.170, 150

643 Land, Hilary. 2014. 'Beveridge's ideas on a woman's place', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/21/beveridge-ideas-women-place

644 Clarke, Paul Barry. Foweraker, Joe. 2001. *Encyclopaedia of Democratic Thought*, Routledge, London and New York, p.333

645 ibid

646 Gough, Ian. 1979. p.14

647 Dutton, David. 1997. *British Politics since 1945: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Consensus* [2nd ed.], Blackwell Publishers, Oxford. p.86

648 Dorey, Peter. 1995. *British Politics since 1945.* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford. p.67

Manifesto stressed ideas of competition, shifts from direct to indirect taxation, and greater selectivity in the provision of social services.[649]

During the 1970s, numerous attempts to reduce welfare expenditure were initiated. The Labour government of 1975 instigated unparalleled cuts to public expenditure and abandoned its commitment to full employment.[650] Thatcher's subsequent Conservative government of 1979 sought a complete overthrow of the post-war consensus, a shift in keeping with the social and intellectual mood of the time. Hayek's political philosophy, premised on the centrality of the market and the threats to freedom imposed by government interference, exercised particular dominance.

Thatcher sought a complete cessation to the social democratic assumptions grounding policy since World War Two, and a shift towards the market as a means to allocate resources. Under her leadership, industrial regulation was scaled back, privatization measures boosted, and trade unions slowly stripped of their powers and influence over policy-making processes. Consequently, unions were increasingly incapable of launching any effective opposition against the government's proposals. This became unmistakably evident when the year-long miners' strike of 1984-1985 was effectively resisted.[651] Industries such as mining fell apart and the know-how that workers carried expired with the industries. Traditional apprenticeships fell by around 80% between 1963 and 1990, and in their place formal education began to accrue rapidly.[652]

Producer collective action was irreversibly weakened and de-legitimised through the political attacks on industry and trade unionism. Also contributing to this decline was the simultaneous cultural shift which translated workers into consumers. Until the 1970s, life was framed for most by a mode of production, and workers possessed real bargaining power, both as producers and citizens.[653] Utilizing this collective power, workers would fight for uniform entitlements of benefits and collective goods. However, as incomes rose and workers gained more free time, they increasingly pursued and consumed private goods. This shift occurred against the backdrop of a blossoming materialist and individualistic culture which served to undermine collective ideals. The subjective preferences of consumers became the ultimate value driving societal and market forces. As producers were converted into consumers, they were increasingly alienated from each other, losing their solidarity and even their sense of citizenship. As stated by Offer, "where the consumer is sovereign, what counts is money, not votes".[654] Not only were industries dismantled and skills rendered obsolete, but workers had lost their influence in the political proceedings of the country. Citizenship was less and less an equal status for all, becoming instead irrevocably tied to market power.

A workforce in flux

Since the 1980s, the domain of work has undergone a vast and rapid upheaval. Subject to the influences of globalization and technological innovation, work has taken on new meanings, patterns, and forms. For example, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more flexible and self-regulated workforce. Workers have been compelled to respond to employers' demands for greater variation in work scheduling. As a consequence, there is less societal uniformity in working patterns, contributing to a collapse of collectivism in employment. This trend has also enabled a slow but steady increase in average working hours.[655] Furthermore, the surge of zero-hour contracts and rise of the gig economy has once again amplified the insecurity and unpredictability of work. While flexibility can be beneficial to workers, especially those with care responsibilities, freelance or zero-hour work often leaves them unprotected and lacking in access to the same benefits as traditional employees.

Self-employment has however offered workers greater control and autonomy over their own work, ushering in a forgotten sense of fulfilment, purpose, and emancipation in work. Employed workers by contrast have been subject to a detrimental loss of control over their work lives and careers.[656] This entails a lack of input over the accomplishment of daily tasks, excessive supervision and irregular or unpredictable scheduling demands. Furthermore, as automation and AI become more pervasive and increasing numbers of jobs or careers are made redundant, workers are being held responsible to develop new skills and thereby remain relevant in the workforce. This once more destroys the solidarity and individuation sourced through work.

There is an overarching sense that work has become increasingly exploitative, while worker protection in the form of high-quality social service provision and private regulation, has dwindled. While important social protection initiatives have more recently been introduced, such as the Equality Act (2010), the National Minimum Wage (1998) and the National Living Wage (2016), they have not done enough to tackle the country's foundational and chronic labour problems. Public services across the board are

649 Dutton, David. 1997. pp.89-90

650 Ibid, p.108

651 Ibid, pp.118-119, 129

652 Offer, Avner. 2008. 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, c.1950-2000', *Contemporary British History* 22[4], 538-571. p.544

653 Offer, Avner. 2008. p.537

654 Offer, Avner. 2008. p.546

655 Sparks, Kate. Faragher, Brian. Cooper, Cary.L. 2001. 'Well-being and occupational health in the 21st century workplace, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 74[4], 489-509, p.493

656 Ibid, p.498

in 'a bad state' according to the majority of Britons today.[657] The Institute for Government has comparably stated that "decades of capital underinvestment, combined with funding cuts and strike disruption" are having severe impacts on the productivity of public services.[658] With fewer means to (influential) collective action available among an increasingly atomised workforce, feelings of hopelessness and apathy are pervasive. Considering this regression, the state can be conceived as letting down its side of the social consensus, which has evolved then de-evolved over the last century.

The place of Nature in social contracts

A social contract without nature?

While our Western and modern social contract was defined in the 17th and 18th centuries as a transition from the state of nature to civilisation, and therefore mechanically excluded nature from human society,[659] it now seems necessary to revisit this distinction (or this "ontology", to use a term from anthropology),[660] and to question our very strict division between nature and culture, between human and non-human. Such questioning is all the more urgent in the age of the Anthropocene–that is, at a time when humanity is recognized as a force for geological change and the destruction of resources. In this perspective, some works seek to draw inspiration from communitarian imaginaries that propose other relations between nature and society to rethink an eco-social contract (UNRISD, 2022; IPBES, 2022).

Personifying nature

In 1990, the philosopher Michel Serres[661] wrote *Le contrat naturel* (The Natural Contract) to propose not only changing our philosophical perception of nature, but also our rights and duties towards it. In the same vein, H. Jonas develops the idea that the right to take from our environment should require a commitment to its sustainability, particularly for future generations.[662] For some, the whole point is to finally include nature in our social contract, no longer just as an invisible background,[663] but as a legal person–as it (has) been the case for Te Urewera National Park in New Zealand, Lake Erie in the United States and the Ganges in India–[664] to whom we would have obligations.[665]

657 Smith, Matthew. 2023. 'Public services are in bad shape across the board, say Britons', *YouGov*, https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/47473-public-services-are-in-bad-shape-across-the-board-say-britons

658 Hall, Rachel. 2023. 'UK public services in 'doom loop' due to short-term policies, thinktank warns', *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/30/uk-public-services-policy-institute-for-government-report

659 Although animal rights exist.

660 Philippe Descola, Par-delà nature et culture, Paris, Gallimard, 2005.

661 See also the Michel Serres Institute, which is developing a "One health" approach based on the ideas of the "natural contract". https://institutmichelserres.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article684

662 Hans Jonas, Le Principe responsabilité, Paris, Flammarion, 1995.

663 An invisible, or rather invisibilized, but determining background, since most of our advances in social justice, as well as our political systems, are conditioned by specific natural environments. See Pierre Charbonnier, Abondance et liberté. Pour une histoire environnementale des idées politiques, Paris, La Découverte, 2020.

664 In India, the decision was finally overturned four months later.

665 Olivia Richard, "Attribuer la personnalité juridique à des entités naturelles: une nouvelle voie leur permettant de faire entendre enfin leur 'voix'", Open Diplomacy, 4 November 2021. Online [accessed on 12 February 2024]: https://www.open-diplomacy.eu/blog/droit-nature-uicn

The challenges and promises of legal personification

Such an approach is eminently interesting but not without difficulties:[666] who should demand compensation (the State, associations, citizens?) and take cases to court in the event of ecological damage to a natural entity? How can land be purchased if it is considered to be a person or a compound of persons? And how do we define nature's *obligations*, in addition to its rights? Added to this is the problem of transnational natural areas, such as the Amazon rainforest, which may be recognized as subjects of law by only one of several countries: in which case, its protection falls to the goodwill of other States.[667] Current events also regularly demonstrate that a river or a mountain, however personified by the law, nevertheless suffers a great deal of ecological damage–suggesting that legal conversion is insufficient if we do not equip ourselves with authorities responsible for enforcing the application of standards and acting as keepers.[668] As is often the case, the problem lies in the actual realization of legal decisions, and the human and material resources allocated to this practical translation.

The state in relation to citizens and the environment

These reflections, which may seem very philosophical, are nevertheless in line with very concrete initiatives. Indeed, legal reflection on the environment is also encouraged by approaches such as the *Affaire du Siècle* in France, which combines climate justice, security and the rights of nature to bring issues of climate inaction before the courts. The presupposition is that states, bound by ecological promises, also have a duty to protect their citizens as a whole, and that they can therefore be sued when they fail to meet their obligations and threaten the "fundamental rights" of citizens. So far, the results of these lawsuits have been limited: the courts often claim that the arguments put forward by citizens are not solid enough, and each state "retains a margin for manoeuvre and can choose the policy it considers most appropriate"[669] to protect the fundamental rights of citizens. Nonetheless, these actions make it possible to influence public policies, and to promote the idea that the state is accountable for its environmental (in)action and to exert pressure on states.

Redefining our Democracy Pact

Moreover, they do have the virtue of reconfiguring our Democracy Pact by showing that the mobilization of citizens can challenge the state and take it to court when it fails in its duties and promises to provide security–the physical integrity of populations implying rigorous protection of the environments in which we live. These demands of the state often go hand in hand with aspirations to transform our frameworks of governance, and to regenerate environmental democracy by involving citizens, local communities and associations more closely in the protection of the ecosystems to which they are linked–a participation that has in theory been provided for by the Aarhus Convention since 1998, but which has been constantly hampered in recent years. As well as revealing the failings of our Security Pact, the ecological crisis is also a revival of our Democracy Pact, calling into question the way it works and its limits, and urging it to reinvent itself.

This reflection about the role of nature in our social contract is all the more urgent given that the subjection of nature and its strict assimilation to a transformable resource is more generally part of an "asymmetrical" political thinking which, over the course of history, has often combined the exploitation of women, colonized countries and the environment.[670]

666 Marie-Angèle Hermitte, "La nature, sujet de droit ?", Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales, vol. 66, no. 1, 2011, p. 173-212.

667 Olivia Richard, "Attribuer la personnalité juridique à des entités naturelles: une nouvelle voie leur permettant de faire entendre enfin leur 'voix'", Open Diplomacy, 4 November 2021. Online [accessed on 12 February 2024]: https://www.open-diplomacy.eu/blog/droit-nature-uicn

668 Marie Delcas, "En Colombie, les droits bafoués du fleuve Atrato", Le Monde, 20 November 2022. Online [accessed on 12 February 2024]: https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2022/11/20/en-colombie-les-droits-bafoues-du-fleuve-atrato_6150741_3244.html

669 Judith Rochfeld, "Chapitre 1. Des procès entre échecs et audaces", Justice pour le climat! Les nouvelles formes de mobilisation citoyenne, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2019, pp. 43-62, p. 44. Online [accessed on 13 February 2024]: https://www.cairn.info/justice-pour-le-climat--9782738148612-page-43.htm

670 For a comparison of these three exploitations (or asymmetries), see Pierre Charbonnier, "La fin de l'exception moderne et l'écologie politique" in Abondance et liberté. Une histoire environnementale des idées politiques, Paris, La Découverte, 2020, p. 353-390.

Key lessons / Summary

What is the merit of a "social contract approach"

This first phase of exploration through our social contract framework has highlighted some general lessons and some common threads and angles of analysis resulting from the application of a social contract approach.

→ Firstly, this exploration has shown the relevance of seeing the social contract as a set of promises, i.e. as something dynamic that is never attained. This leads us to propose several ways of questioning our current social contract.

Do the Consumption and Security Pacts constitute a never-ending race?

This overview allows us to perceive and question the imbalances and hierarchies between pacts, also seen as spheres of life and diverse social roles: the consumer, the citizen, the worker, the individual.

The Consumption Pact has gradually become central to our collective promises (Trentmann, 2016;[671] Dubuisson-Quellier, 2022):[672] we have a highly developed material life and are defined more as consumers than as citizens; we are "customers", even of public services, and the functioning of our economic systems depends on our spending. What we consume increasingly defines us socially, rather than our role in production, as was the case in the past. This pact has led to significant progress in living conditions, and consumption has become an invaluable economic driver for governments, which carefully organize and maintain mass consumption and consumerism. Consumption has thus become the social activity par excellence, in the sense that it is now expected to fulfil the promises that were once strictly associated with emancipation through work or a deepening of democracy (contribution to common good via ethical consumption; sovereignty of individuals in a market equated with a democracy; social status in society). For all, it is a never-ending race, in which you always have to buy more, and where new services and objects constantly renew and raise consumer standards. As for low-income households, the limits on their income, combined with pervasive consumption, puts them in an untenable situation. In other words, a pact based on achieving a standard of consumption, which is constantly being increased by the functioning of a consumption-based economy, cannot be maintained in an unequal society.

The Security Pact has also seen the creation of numerous institutions and rights to reinforce security in various areas of life (health, work, food, civil protection etc.) and this was an important path for social progress. But this has gone hand in hand with the ever-increasing sensitivity of society to risk, which can both be seen as a good thing and as something that constantly seeks to raise the bar in terms of security, i.e. what sets the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable risks. In other words, in our "risk societies" (Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens),[673] where we are constantly projecting ourselves into the future, the question of security is omnipresent. This pact will now be increasingly confronted with the challenges of climate security.

Are the Democratic and Work Pacts in standby mode?

The Democracy Pact faces the constant challenge of making this radical project of popular sovereignty possible but it is riven by power struggles, and the perpetual tension between representation and the ideal of direct participation. The Work Pact has also enabled significant progress to be made in the recognition of workers, but is caught up in the classic struggle between labour and capital to share value, and the consequences of economic competition, especially in this neoliberal globalization era. In a way, we can wonder whether the Work and Democracy Pacts suffer from a lack of renewed promises. Have we really renewed the Fordist compromise around the promises of work and its purpose, and what is now the project behind it? These issues are all the more worrying now that 30% of the working population is experiencing poor job quality at the European level (39% in France),[674] in the sense that the demands of a job exceed its resources. Concerning our duties as citizens, what changes in democratic life could give rise to new collective involvement and contentment? How can we combat the remoteness of decision-making centres, the perceived complexity of legal and political issues, and the weakening of

671 Frank Trentmann, Empire of Things. How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first, Londres, Allen Lane, 2016.

672 Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, "How does affluent consumption come to consumers?", Consumption and society, Vol 1 Issue 1 https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/consoc/1/1/article-p31.xml

673 Ulrich Beck, Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity, London, SAGE Publications, 1992; Anthony Giddens, "Risk and Responsibility", Modern Law Review, Volume 62, No 1, 1999.

674 https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/job-quality-pivotal-addressing-todays-workplace-and-societal-challenges

intermediary bodies? Here too, the context counts, in this case the context that determines the politicization of citizens: the number of members of political parties and trade unions has fallen 5 to 10 fold over the last half-century in France and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, a lot of expectations in terms of emancipation have been placed historically on work, but this has come up against limits in the implementation of meritocracy, the valuing of key workers, the quality of working conditions, and the ability to fulfil oneself in one's work. Similarly, much is expected today of the Consumption Pact in terms of emancipation and integration in an affluent society, with the limits mentioned above. Overall, is the rationale underlying the promises of these four pacts no longer relevant?

→ Secondly, this analysis also leads us to these four lessons, which are politically important because they sometimes run counter to preconceived ideas.

A sense of belonging to society is about experiencing and having access to the fruits of the enduring promises of our social contract.

These pacts have become institutions, rules and expectations because they have gone hand in hand with the emergence of new concepts for thinking about society (e.g. the themes of exclusion and precariousness have now been added to the subject of poverty; while the concept of the middle class took hold after the Second World War).

The discrepancies between past and present promises and reality are politically very sensitive, because promises have become social norms and shared narratives that define what is fair and equitable, but also what is perceived as 'normal' or standard. For example, if an individual life course fails to conform to middle-class norms in terms of job quality and consumption standards, or if that life course is undermined by the economic situation, social resentment can be strong. Small variations in pay, purchasing power or symbolic recognition, seemingly minor, can in reality have major consequences for the feelings and social self-perception of individuals, and lead to the development of a sense of downgrading or social insecurity – the effects of which on individual politicization are powerful, and can motivate support for authoritarian populist parties (Duvoux, 2023).

To understand the importance of unfulfilled promises, we must emphasize that an approach based on the social contract, and therefore on dominant norms, enables us to perceive two forms of inequality that combine. The first, material inequality, is linked to poor living conditions that are very concretely reflected on a day-to-day basis (a low level of consumption, the impossibility of accessing housing due to the lack of a permanent contract, etc.). The second inequality is symbolic, which consists of the inability to conform to the dominant promise of the social contract. For example, not being able to consume like "everyone else" is a real deprivation of goods, but it also generates a feeling of not being part of "normal" society. In short, for many people, a social contract that is not respected means losing twice.[675]

More individual autonomy and more solidarity can go together.

Our historical analysis essentially examines the modern era, a period distinguished by the pre-eminence it accords to the individual. It is therefore logical that our analysis, through its examination of the four pacts, also highlights the centrality of the 'quest' for autonomy among the Moderns – autonomy understood as the capacity/ability to manage one's own life. The demand for autonomy has mutated over time, and the realization of this aspiration is never complete, in particular because it is a self-perpetuating phenomenon (Honneth, 2020).

This demand for autonomy has taken various forms, depending on the pact and the period. For example, it went hand in hand with a lasting and growing demand for security, in all its forms. In the 19th century, given the level of development, the demand for security (at work, in daily life *via* material goods and good food) was central. Put another way, achieving a certain level of security was a prerequisite for being able to live one's life with dignity, and with a minimum of autonomy. And what is true for autonomy is also true for security: "the aspiration to be protected moves like a cursor, making new demands as its previous objectives are achieved" (Castel, 2003). As a result, expectations in terms of security feed a growing and continuous demand.

Historical analysis clearly shows that the quest for autonomy and solidarity are not mutually exclusive, quite the contrary. In fact, it is through collective and solidarity-based struggles, rather than selfish ones, that gains in autonomy have been achieved. Think, for example, of the consumer movement to promote consumer protection; the women's Suffragette movement to have the right to vote and count as citizens; the creation of social security (and then of contributory benefits) by the ordinances of 4 and 19 October 1945. All these movements clearly show that the aim was to make individuals autonomous (and less dependent on the vagaries of life or on charity) and demonstrate at the same time an increase in solidarity.[676] The emergence of salaried employment, by giving individuals financial independence while guaranteeing intergenerational solidarity, also attests to the complementary nature of autonomy and solidarity. It is also through solidarity-

675 This ties in with Nicolas Duvoux's analysis in L'avenir confisqué. The ability to project oneself into the future is an essential condition for having a sense of control over one's life, of being autonomous. The ability to project oneself positively into the future is a reflection of inequalities, since it is so closely linked to one's position in society, to the assets at one's disposal and to the family and financial support on which one can rely.

676 And this is true in both directions: social security is a testimony to solidarity in its own right (the aim is to protect individuals and provide for their needs in specific cases), but as a complex system of contribution/reversion, it closely links together a multitude of social players, institutions and citizens. Solidarity is both social and functional.

based institutions that we see this link between autonomy and solidarity, for example, the welfare state provides guarantees enabling individuals to lead their lives more freely.

Moreover, from the point of view of how society works, the more individuals become singularized and specialized in their professional roles (which is the trend in modern societies), the more they need each other. The link between autonomy and solidarity is twofold, because it is visible both politically and functionally. Individual autonomy is acquired through collective struggles, and increasing professional autonomy develops interdependencies between professional positions – a phenomenon first described by Durkheim, and then highlighted by studies of cultural values. Indeed, this translates into the fact that solidarity and autonomy are linked at the level of mentalities: the more individualistic we become, the more value we place on the individual (this is the real meaning of individualism).[677] If we place more value on the individual, it becomes intolerable to us that he or she is being abused, discredited or having their rights curtailed. We see it clearly: society's growing individualism has gone hand in hand with the development of rights for minorities, protective institutions and moral rules that provide greater protection for the individual (social benefits for disabled adults, abolition of the death penalty, respect for prisoners' rights, etc.).

Yet, this should not be seen as a quiet, consensual process of gradual autonomy. Increased autonomy is not a natural movement that imposes itself: it is always something to build. And the "quest" for autonomy is not without its political opponents: Polanyi reminds us that fascism is the rejection of the possibility of freedom in 20th-century societies,[678] and autonomy is associated with power issues. Nor is it without downsides or potential social insecurity when it is not supported by the resources that make it truly profitable. For example, in the context of the workplace, the authors of the Eurofound study[679] speak of an autonomy paradox, with autonomy turning from being an asset into a liability, for jobs that demand a great deal of autonomy, but do not provide the resources to cope with it. Another illustration is the reduction of traditional social ties that can make people feel insecure or left behind if the public services put in place by the state seem distant or dysfunctional. More generally, the paradigm of neoliberalism, with its emphasis on the individual, their natural freedom, and on limiting the involvement of public players while promoting competition, particularly in the economic sphere, is creating a set of problems linked to the impoverishment of collective ties, which are the basis of virtuous/positive autonomy. The individualization of employees, when it amounts to removing the protections of the collective, has major impacts in terms of insecurity and the ability to project oneself positively into the future (Duvoux, 2023). The inability to project oneself into the future constitutes a very serious democratic problem in our contemporary societies.

To sum up, the social contract approach, which involves revisiting the pacts that have historically structured society and contributed in part to fulfilling the promise of individual development, offers a common thread: the quest for autonomy, i.e. the social conditions enabling the greatest number of people to feel in control of their lives (via civil rights and equity, via their role at work, via their lifestyle, via guaranteed security). Certainly autonomy is not the only value that matters for individuals and social groups, but its capacity to synthesize, explain and encompass a multitude of modern issues makes it a cornerstone of any reflection about the social contract.

Security as a result of fulfilling the four pacts

The sense of security is a prerequisite for being able to live one's life with dignity, and with a minimum of autonomy. In other words, the demand for autonomy can take the form of a demand for more security, as our historical review points it out. And our framework underlines the fact that the sense of security has to be thought through all of the four pacts, as it is clear that the social insecurities created by job conditions, the state of public services and inequalities in consumption have an impact on individuals. At a time when ecological crises are an important threat to our security, it is crucial to consider employment, the organization of consumption and democratic practices in the search for a greater sense of security.

A broken social contract for some is a broken social contract for everyone

Comparing the promises of the past with the current situation in the various pacts reveals a (partially) broken social contract for parts of the population; and a broken social contract for some is a broken social contract for everyone. It is crucial to take these elements into account because the ecological transition and climate policies come in a context structured by promises of the past. In other words, this constitutes the beginning of the pathway toward a sustainable future. The ecological project calls for a re-examination of these pacts, their promises, limits and the balance between them. This is an essential preliminary step to being able to formulate new, attractive and achievable promises.

677 Based on the data of the European values studies, Bréchon et al., 2021 and 2023 show that, contrary to popular belief, individualization and altruism go hand in hand. Gonthier (2019), based on the same kind of data for France, shows a progression in solidarity among the younger generations (based on answers to questions on how much they feel concerned by the living conditions of different social groups). Of course, these studies measure declared values and this does not necessarily translate into concrete actions (Gonthier, 2019). Nevertheless, changes over time do tell us something about values and aspirations, that can then be turned into practices through collective institutions. In the same field, Inglehart's modernization theory (2019) predicts that considering our material and biological survival as a basic security and a matter of course in modern societies has an impact on a generation's worldviews and dominant values. He observes that economic development has therefore been accompanied by a shift towards post-materialistic values, with its focus on autonomy and self-expression, which is linked to the values of solidarity and altruism.

678 K. Polanyi, The Great transformation, Paris, Gallimard, 1944, p. 343-350.

679 Eurofound (2021), Working conditions and sustainable work: An analysis using the job quality framework, Challenges and prospects in the EU series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

The current limits of the Consumption Pact, questions about the future of work, the new security issues posed by ecological shocks, and the development of participatory democracy initiatives all constitute opportunities in their own way to formulate these promises.

Representing things in terms of pacts, i.e. expectations and compromises, also enables us to better understand the threshold effects that can exist in terms of feelings of poverty, social insecurity or of being downgraded. Indeed, while economic measures based on the definition of a threshold on a continuous distribution, such as poverty (60% of median income), are useful, they do not always enable us to understand the full social reality. There are thresholds at which people feel they are falling into poverty[680], because they signal the onset of new economic insecurity or a growing gap between the practices of certain households/individuals and consumption norms. These thresholds provide a better understanding of what is happening in some sections of the middle and working classes (Duvoux, 2023). In France, for example, there seems to be a threshold in terms of subjective well-being around 80% of median income (Richard, 2022, quoted in Duvoux). This threshold can be interpreted as the social conditions that make it no longer possible to live in a way that is consistent with the dominant norms stemming from the Work and Consumption Pacts in particular.

Our social contract can change

The review of our arrangements and the historical retrospective that we are proposing illustrate that no social pact is natural or inevitable (in the sense that it could not have been formulated otherwise): it always constitutes a choice made from among a diversity of possible projects for society, which is why it has varied considerably over time, and has undergone inflections according to the social groups that have appropriated it. This contingency of the social contract, as well as the constant possibility of its obsolescence, is a powerful political lever: it shows how much any social contract can change, and how much we can change it. None of our pacts are immutable or given in a final form, which is why they need to be constantly challenged to bring them into line with collective expectations. This is also how we gradually gain autonomy.

What are the benefits of a "social contract approach"?: Taking a step back and finding solutions for the present

Our four pacts evolve around central issues that have endured over the centuries–starting with access to a good life, defined as the ability to control one's own life, and the translation of this ability into the pacts of security, democracy, consumption and work. However, these questions have been formulated differently throughout history, and express the expectations of citizens and social promises that are specific to each era. This is particularly visible in the area of work, for example. While the demand was initially for security (to be protected in the event of an accident at work), expectations have diversified as jobs have become more protective. The demand was then for autonomy, fairer pay, more secure contracts, firm guarantees from the employer, then, after May 68 in France, the inclusion of democracy in the company, and then the possibility of finding meaning in one's work.

Benefits and compromises

The tables below are both brief historical summaries of developments in the various pacts and an illustration of the lexicon underlying our social contract approach. It seems to us that any discussion on the evolution of our model of society should be preceded by this kind of clarification of the structural deals of our society, for which these tables form a first basis. It is important to stress here that the idea of a pact or social contract should not lead us to believe that everyone is a winner, nor that the pact is a form of satisfying compromise in which there are simply gains and losses for everyone. These tables provide a simplified summary of how the benefits associated with pacts that can be identified at different periods are implicitly or explicitly linked to obligations or costs. These obligations or costs may be linked to the destruction of the previous pact (e.g. traditional systems of protection); to new responsibilities (e.g. worker productivity); to the effects of social or political feedback (e.g. ubiquitous consumption); or to the acceptance of a very partial implementation of values (e.g. limited access to voting).

Pacts as results of conflicts and struggles

This goes hand in hand with the fact that history is not a long, quiet river of peaceful negotiation between social groups: compromises and compensations are also the fruit of social conflict, or even just conflict (both world wars had many repercussions on the way we define social pacts), and the introduction of a pact, far from generating mechanically unanimous consent, may satisfy one class to the detriment of another, or may favour one group over another. The social contract is a story of struggles, so much so that the wars of the 20th century played a role in precipitating gains in social protection, as demonstrated by the French Resistance's post-war

680 In the case of France, the feeling of poverty has risen from 13% in 2015 to 20% in 2022, while the fear of finding oneself in a situation of poverty in the near future has fallen from 25% to 17%. DRESS, 2023 https://drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-09/MS2023-Fiche%2005%20-%20L%E2%80%99opinion%20des%20Fran%C3%A7ais%20sur%20la%20pauvret%C3%A9%20et%20l%E2%80%99exclusion.pdf

programme *Les jours heureux*. Each chapter is a testimony to this and of the forces at work. There have been political struggles for equality and the extension of civil rights, bringing us closer to the ideal of the promises that underpin modernity. It is the organization of civil society and its actions which, in line with changes in society, have triggered changes in the pacts. There have been social struggles for recognition of the failure of the Work Pact and progress in the social protection framework, by setting up powerful workers' organizations. There has been a demand for ever greater access to dignified and equal living conditions (e.g. combating exclusion) in the field of consumption. While sanitary crises, various news events and the demands of civil society have all played a part in the evolution of the Security Pact. To this picture we must of course add technical change and economic development, which have shaped the evolution of society over the last two centuries, changing occupations, the size of different social groups, as well as world views and values. The balance of power inherent in the functioning of society, and reflected in the pacts of the different eras, has evolved under the influence of all these factors (crises, social struggles, organization of civil society, technical, demographic and economic developments).

Benefits / compromises per pact

Democracy Pact	Benefits	Compromises
17th-18th	Sovereignty and political equality for every citizen (transition to a democratic regime) in theory	A representative democracy (rather than direct), with a major role for elites
19th	(Idem) – intermittent universal suffrage	(Idem) + Unequal and exclusionary "universal" suffrage
20th	Institutions that guarantee our equality = social citizenship	Increasing state control over decisions and social institutions
1980-today	Participation rights (e.g. Aarhus Convention)	Decision-makers less able to act
	Decentralization	Complexity linked to multiple levels of decision-making
	Europe: peace, economic prosperity	Economic policies partly outside the democratic sphere – democratic distancing

Work Pact	Benefits	Compromises
19th	Progressive protection of labour	Destruction of existing traditional pacts
	Increased productivity (industrial era)	Alienation due to Taylorism (development of the production line)
1920-30	Improved pay and leisure time	Acceptance of alienating work
	Union representations	
Trente Glorieuses	State-provided social security / employer responsibility, increased purchasing power	Highly hierarchical model
	Wider access to cheaper goods	
1980-today	Neoliberal promise of greater entrepreneurial freedom and capacity for innovation	Unemployment
		Relocation
		Loss of meaning in work
		Flexibility and competitiveness in the service of the economy
		Weakening of employee protection

Consumption Pact	Benefits	Compromises
19th	No pact exists	No pact exists
1920-30	Emerging concept of leisure	Alienating work
Trente Glorieuses	Improved living standards	Need to conform to a middle-class model – Keeping up with the Joneses
	Democratization of consumption	
	Recognition of consumer rights	Increasing work intensity and demands
	Increasing possibilities for consumption	
1980-today	Promises linked to consumption such as individuation	Acceptance of inequality and social insecurity, linked to the never-ending race to increase consumption
		Despite productivity gains, pressure on working time
	Politicization: political empowerment of the "consumer-actor"	Acceptance of omnipresent consumer pressure (advertising, mental space, time)
		Responsibility and moral injunctions

Security Pact	Benefits	Compromises
Medieval times / absolutist period	Founding pact: protection	Obedience
Mid-19th	Progressive recognition of industrial risks for workers + legal protection	Workers accept industrial risks (in exchange for the possibility of receiving compensation in the event of an accident)
	Gradual emergence of health safety, hygiene	Injunction/regulation of hygiene practices
20th	Emergence of food safety	Citizens accept the role of the agri-food industry
	Emergence of an insurance-based society/increasing rejection of all forms of insecurity	Loss of autonomy in food self-production
		Inflation of administrative obligations
Trente Glorieuses	Emergence of social security/welfare state	Emergence of a "risk society"
		"Government of conduct" to limit risks
20th	New social benefits to fight exclusion and poverty	Accountability of those eceiving social benefits in a context of long-term/ persistent unemployment

The long-term context and recent trends

History is made up of crises, progress and setbacks, and of disparities between social groups. However, it can be said that the last two centuries have brought greater autonomy in the countries studied. In other words, they have strengthened the ability of individuals to choose their work and their role in society, to develop their lifestyle and improve their living conditions through consumption. Individuals have benefited from institutions providing various forms of security, greater accountability of public decision-makers and better voting conditions. Promises and disappointments must be understood in the light of this overall movement towards greater autonomy and the expectations of greater autonomy.

A diversion into the field of cultural studies and modernization theory is useful here to add a dynamic dimension to the analysis, especially as these cultural studies draw on databases that include a large number of countries around the world and have a good historical perspective (World Values Survey). This field is interested in the evolution of values and worldviews. According to this modernization theory and the associated empirical observations, the history described through our pacts has been accompanied by a shift in cultural values: once "survival is secure", there is a gradual rise in "self-expression" values to the detriment of traditional values[681] (Inglehart, 2018). Self expression means an emphasis on "individual freedom to choose how to live one's life", an emphasis on equality, tolerance and participation in decision-making. Alongside the effects of democratization and economic development, this contributes to a sense of free choice and subjective well-being (Inglehart, 2018). This gradual movement does not rule out a degree of heterogeneity between countries, and even within the same society, notably because of the effect of generational cleavages (the experience of a certain historical past having lasting effects in terms of socialization), but also because of differences in cultural evolution from one social group to another, depending on income and education levels (Inglehart, 2018).

The rise of authoritarian politics in the last two decades suggests that there may be a "reversal" of this modernizing trend (Inglehart, 2019). Indeed the vote share for far-right, nationalist and extremely authoritarian parties in Europe has increased over recent decades[682,683]. Evidence suggests that this is the result of a combination of growing economic insecurities (for example the financial crisis of 2008, the impact of globalization, technological change) and a deterioration of the economic situation for many segments of the population[684], together with rising cultural insecurities, associated for example with immigration and shifting gender status[685]. Indeed it appears that there is an interaction between these two sets of insecurities leading to a decline in perceived relative social status for many[686] (Gidron & Hall, 2017; Engler & Weisstanner, 2021). These phenomena can be understood as unfulfilled expectations in relation to the Work, Consumption and Security Pacts. The sense of perceived decline in relative social status makes it hard for many segments of the population to project themselves into the future–a central promise of our social contract.

681 The priority for individuals moves from "economic and physical safety and conformity to group norms" and a strong deference to traditional authorities, towards more emphasis on the individual freedom to choose how to live one's life and the tolerance of others. Online: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=Findings

682 Ronald Inglehart, Pippa Norris. "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash" HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP16-026, August 2016.

683 Saamah Abdallah, Does commercial advertising influence xenophobia? A personal values-mediated model [Doctoral dissertation, University of Erfurt, 2024], Digitale Bibliothek Thüringen. Online: https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt_mods_00059215?q=abdallah%20commercial%20advertising

684 I. Colantone, & P. Stanig, "Global Competition and Brexit" in American Political Science Review, 112(2), 2018, 201–218. Online: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055417000685; C. E. De Vries, M. Tavits, & H. Solaz, Economic Hardship & the Demand for Socially Conservative Policies, 2018; M. Funke, M. Schularick, & C. Trebesch, "Going to extremes: Politics after financial crises, 1870–2014", in European Economic Review, 88, 2016, 227–260. Online: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2016.03.006; T. Kurer & B. Palier, "Shrinking and shouting: the political revolt of the declining middle in times of employment polarization" in Research & Politics, 6(1), 2019. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168019831164

685 Y. Margalit, "Economic Insecurity and the Causes of Populism, Reconsidered" in Journal of Economic Perspectives, 33(4), 2019, 152–170. Online: https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.152; Ronald Inglehart, Pippa Norris. "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash" HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP16-026, August 2016.

686 N. Gidron, & P. A. Hall, " The politics of social status: Economic and cultural roots of the populist right" British Journal of Sociology, 2017, 28; S. Engler, & D. Weisstanner, "The threat of social decline: Income inequality and radical right support" in Journal of European Public Policy, 28(2), 2021, 153–173. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1733636

A key question for the Consumption Pact

As a never ending race, how can we change a crucial pact that is leading us to a social and political impasse? It is not an issue of questioning consumption per se, since it is central to people's lives, but of questioning the form and place it has taken since the post-war period (including the link with inequalities).

Promises of the current social contract

Individuals consume to increase their standing in society, to match the dominant social norms (i.e. there is a standard of consumption with a basket of goods and services that have social importance), which would be a way, in theory, to achieve a form of equality (high consumption for all). Consumers have been increasingly empowered as responsible consumers (*conso'acteur)* to change the economy.

Progress

Improved living conditions, better recognition of consumer rights, consumption contributes to collective prosperity.

Disappointments

Consumers are constrained by the race to consume because the standard level is constantly rising and they face a consumerist pressure that they question but from which it is very difficult to escape. This is particularly true for groups excluded from the middle class, or who have difficulty staying within this class. To maintain consumption patterns, consumers and workers are locked into working long hours or face getting into debt, both of which have implications for mental health and subjective well-being[687] (Afonso et al., 2017; Jeffrey et al., 2014; Jenkins et al., 2008; Tay et al., 2016). Moreover, even when reaching positions of responsibility, consumers have only limited power to reorient the economy.

Ecological transition challenges

Our over-consumption of resources and the simultaneous need to consume less is confronting a society dominated by consumption, from which no one can easily extricate themselves,[688] either because it impacts populations whose access to standard middle-class consumption is key to feeling part of society, or because it requires a change in group identity.

A key question for the Democracy Pact

How can we revive the promise of democracy via a reinforcement of sovereignty without closing ourselves off (*e.g. Brexit*)? How can we revive the democratic ideal and combine the reform of the system of representation, the strategic use of participatory initiatives, and the promotion of the exercise of democracy in all spheres of society?

Promises of the *current social contract*

Sovereignty and equality for every citizen.

Progress

More universal access to voting, partial equalization of conditions, greater accountability of public decision-makers and better voting conditions

Disappointments

The gap between the formal promise of political participation and actual popular sovereignty, and the feeling of not being heard for part of the population;[689] ever more remote power in increasingly complex societies and globalized economies,[690] where corporate influence is not always part of the democratic process. Although it is probably not a general feeling, the situation of the media and public debate as pillars of democracy can be seen as a disappointment in relation to the democratic project of continuous, emancipating and shared discussion–an ideal developed in the 18th century by the Enlightenment. The traditional informational challenges (independence, robustness of information) are amplified by the phenomenon of concentration in the hands of an

687 P. Afonso, M. Fonseca and J. F. Pires, "Impact of working hours on sleep and mental health" in Occupational Medicine, 67(5), 2017, 377-382. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqx054; R. Jenkins, D. Bhugra, P. Bebbington, T. Brugha, M. Farrell, J. Coid, T. Fryers, S. Weich, N. Singleton, H. Meltzer, "Debt, income and mental disorder in the general population", Psychological Medicine, 38(10), 2008, 1485-1493. Online: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291707002516; L. Tay, C. Batz, S. Parrigon, L. Kuykendall "Debt and Subjective Well-being: The Other Side of the Income-Happiness Coin", Journal of Happiness Studies, 18(3), 2017, 903-937. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9758-5; K. Jeffrey, S. Mahony, Michaelson, J. & S. Abdallah, Well-being at work: A review of the literature, London, New Economics Foundation, 2014. Online: https://neweconomics.org/2014/03/wellbeing-at-work

688 See for example, the barometer of the French Agency for Ecological Transition (Ademe, 2024) that shows the ambiguous relationship with consumption: many respondents consider that consumption takes up too much space in our lives, that we consume too much, partly because of advertising pressure, but the responses to their own consumption practices tend to show that everyone is caught up in the social constraint to consume, which makes it difficult to question one's own consumption. https://librairie.ademe.fr/changement-climatique-et-energie/6630-barometre-sobrietes-et-modes-de-vie.html

689 https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/fr/content/les-resultats-par-vague.html Vague 13b, p40, 78% of French respondents consider that decision-makers are not concerned about their opinions.

690 See for example the political trilemma of D. Rodrik (2000): "democracy, national sovereignty and global economic integration are mutually incompatible: we can combine any two of the three, but never have all three simultaneously and in full".

ever smaller number of players and the role of social networks, which play a part in the very rapid spread of fake news but also in destabilizing economic models.

Ecological transition challenges

The ecological emergency, the need to plan ahead and far-reaching changes in essential services (housing, transport, food) can lead to decisions perceived as anti-democratic. Particularly in today's highly polarized political context, the controversies associated with ecological transition make democratic debates difficult. Another question appears, concerning the way civil society can force transition: how do democracies deal with civil disobedience that breaks current laws but is done in the interest of protecting the future?

A key question for the Work Pact

What is the social project expressed through our work pact (it's no longer a question of rebuilding or achieving abundance) and what contribution should work make to individual well-being, emancipation and justice?

Promises of the current social contract

Meritocracy and social mobility; better protection; fulfilment and recognition.

Progress

The post-war period, in particular, saw significant progress on these various promises, with the consolidation of a welfare state, mass education and the strengthening of legal frameworks organizing work.

Disappointments

Economic change and the development of neoliberalism have called into question the Fordist compromise linking consumption and production and underpinned by a strong welfare state. Inequalities have not been reduced, or have even increased, depending on the context; social mobility has slowed and the meritocratic narrative is under debate. This may concern not only the base of the social structure, but also all those forced to take up so-called "bullshit jobs". As was the case a century and a half ago, perceiving and organizing work as a commodity, as a source of cost to be reduced, produces negative social effects on the quality of work and the life of workers. This particularly affects jobs at the bottom of the social ladder, and those most under pressure from competition and technological change. Promises of corporate democratization have not really been kept.

Ecological transition challenges

The transition project implies changes in employment in a number of sectors, notably industrial and agri-food, which are already under pressure. There is an unresolved tension between the imperative of sufficiency in consumption and production and the financing of a welfare state built on the model of economic growth.

A key question for the Security Pact

How can we refocus debate and action onto the major security issues: economic security and ecological crises, alongside traditional geopolitical issues, which have been revived by the return of war to Europe?

Promises of the current social contract

A high level of safety in all areas of life (health, food, social, geopolitical, etc.)

Progress

The last two centuries have brought security gains in most areas of life.

Disappointments

Recent changes in the economy and the pressure on work have created economic insecurity for part of the population, which is also turning into social insecurity. Technological and industrial responses arouse mistrust and fear. There are trade-offs between security dimensions (e.g. pesticides contribute to food security but impact on health safety; economic competition and globalization bring security through abundant consumption but negatively impact economic security through work). Moreover, the demand for security is growing in our modern societies, to the point where it can generate a form of security frustration. This is a good thing if it consists of a more demanding protection of rights and individuals, but if it turns into the omnipresence of services to ensure physical security (e.g. CCTV) or the abandonment of fundamental freedoms (e.g. state of emergency in France), security can become a threat, or becomes less democratic.

Ecological transition challenges

Ecological crises are an additional and important threat to our security, which is also mobilized by civil society in legal actions against governments.

The division into four major pacts is useful because each one has had its own historical dynamic, different social drivers, and because each refers to different major spheres of our lives in society (citizen, consumer, worker, individual). Distinguishing between these four pacts is a concrete way of disentangling the complex issues at stake in our society, to better understand what is at stake in our history and current debates. In a certain way, it is the first step.

Our social contract approach is also a way of **bringing together different types of knowledge and communities** that do not always communicate with each other (this is the case, for example, with communities interested in democracy and those interested in consumption). And this is where a close look at interactions is very useful. It allows us to understand what might change in one pact to resolve a tension in another (e.g. changes in working conditions can reinforce democratic practices). It helps us understand how the relative weights and relationships between pacts have evolved over time (e.g. emancipation was first expected from work, then more from consumption). In short, **thinking about a future social contract will necessarily involve reflecting on the relative influence and relationships between these spheres of life**, between these four great pacts (e.g. what are we prepared to change in the Consumption Pact to gain security in the face of the ecological crisis?). The history of these interactions can help us on this path.

An interesting example of interactions can be found in the diverse roles played by companies, which can be seen in all the pacts: spreading and organizing mass consumption; security through salaried employment; contribution to the welfare state via social contributions and through intermediary bodies (employers' and workers' unions); embodying a space in which collective decision-making processes can exist, etc. In a way, companies are also caught up in the arrangements that constitute pacts, while contributing to shaping them. Moreover, their contribution to fulfilling the promises of each of these pacts can be seen as ambiguous: they have contributed to the phenomenon of the never-ending race to consume; they have played a part in the use of precarious forms of employment; and their level of internal democracy is unequal from one to another.

Based on this observation, the question of the status, rights and duties of these players, which did not exist in this form at the origins of our social contract, may arise. This relates in particular to their role in democracy. While businesses and the economic world are key to work, consumption and security, we might wonder whether their role in democracy is clear enough and their place well defined. A number of factors need to be taken into account. Firstly, of course, there is the diversity in the size, power and status of companies, and therefore in their links with the rest of society. For example, in the French context, there are differences between traditional companies, companies with a mission and companies from the "économie sociale et solidaire" (social and solidarity economy). Moreover, the social and environmental accountability framework is evolving, particularly in Europe (e.g. CSRD[691]), to strengthen the responsibilities of companies. At the same time, it seems that large globalized companies are sometimes seeking to extract themselves from the Democracy Pact. In the speeches made by these major actors, there are elements that point in this direction: economic laws presented as a natural law; market mechanisms presented as needing to be protected from public intervention; emphasis on the private sphere, including private court rulings; globalization of players beyond national jurisdiction; and business concentration.[692] All these elements paint a complex picture, in which there is definitely a place for the question of the role of companies in a new social contract.

691 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

692 Regarding antitrust and wealth concentration and their link with a social contract approach: "As Senator John Sherman, appealing to his Senate colleagues in 1890, put it, "if we will not endure a king as a political power, we should not endure a king over the production, transportation, and sale of the necessities of life." Hewlett Foundation, Economy and Society Initiative, Grantmaking strategy, 2020.

Our historical reviews have revealed an intercrossing between the pacts, which we briefly summarize here. This figure aims to summarize some key bridges and tensions between pacts:

Interactions between pacts to show how they help to understand key social issues

Democracy Pact	Democracy brings security to citizens against xenophobia, inequalities, concentration of political power.	Security Pact
	An absolute demand for security can undermine democracy by threatening the fundamental rights of citizens (notably freedom).	
Consumption Pact	Leisure and free time as compensation for alienating work and as a possible vector of emancipation.	Work Pact
	A middle class that is squeezed between work and economic constraints and the pressure from consumerism.	
	A trade-off in the context of globalization: a greater availability of cheap goods but more competition and pressure for work.	
Security Pact	The welfare state and the rights of the worker bring social and economic security.	Work Pact
	A rising feeling of job insecurity for a part of the population.	
Security Pact	Consumption brings good material conditions for life (preventing the suffering from cold, hunger...), which is a basic form of security.	Consumption Pact
	The economic growth of the Trente Glorieuses period was largely based on the virtuous interaction between the production of standardized goods, the rise of mass consumption and the spread of social protection.	
	An inability to consume in line with the dominant model of society and its social groups can create a feeling of social insecurity.	

How we can use it to think about the burning political questions we face and the future of the transition

The growing prominence of debates on the ecological crisis and how to tackle it, and the gradual implementation of significant public policies, reveal ever more clearly the social and political tensions facing the transition project. Put another way, while we are making progress on the WHAT, burning questions are emerging about the HOW. How can we interpret and understand these tensions? What kind of answers can be found? If the prospect of a new social contract is a medium to long-term one, confronting these short-term questions is a necessity, and the sense of our work aims above all to provide an approach, methods and materials for progressing along this path.

In this section, we take a series of these burning political questions and show their translation into our framework and the perspective opened by our historical review. The aim here is not, of course, to provide ready-made solutions to these major challenges, but to illustrate what a discussion template based on our social contract approach can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena at work and the avenues to be investigated.

Burning political question	Translation within our framework	Historical perspective	Possible ways forward
Fear among workers of "déclassement"/being downgraded in sectors affected by transition, which feeds new authoritarian populist parties.	"Déclassement/Downgrading" is not only a deterioration in salary conditions, it is a weakening of one's ability to belong to society (recognition, fear of the future, insecurity). Link between the Work Pact → Security Pact → Democracy Pact.	The promise of the post-war Work Pact, linking solidarity, recognition and progress, is still alive, even if it has been impacted by neoliberal logic. The question of the future of work is all too absent from visions of transition.	Promoters of the ecological transition need to be active on the work debates, including job quality and going beyond the sole quantitative question To improve economic security and also to offer "symbolic reassurance"[693]: to provide retraining and support to get into jobs that maintain dignity and social status.
The strengthening of the far right and its themes such as insecurity is a complicated trap for promoters of the ecological transition and social progress.	Insecurity is also linked to the Work Pact and the Consumption Pact.	Two centuries where collective answers to security issues have grown and diversified (food security, health security, work security...).	The ecological project needs to present itself as the answer to our insecurities, including to the deterioration of the biosphere. We need to create narratives that are not just based on catastrophism, but that build on the historical progress made in various fields.

693 Symbolic reassurance refers to the process by which we ensure that parts of the population do not feel culturally marginalized. N. Duvoux, 2023, p189

Burning political question	Translation within our framework	Historical perspective	Possible ways forward
Far-right parties have a strong and attractive narrative of taking back control (from European powers, on the issue of migration, from political elites). While the ecological narrative, given the urgency of the changes required, may be perceived as the imposition of new constraints.	Autonomy and emancipation are long-standing promises that are key to our social contracts: we cannot stand in opposition to this social demand. The ecological project must explain how it can meet this demand. Taking back control involves all four pacts.	In recent times, society has mainly responded to this demand through consumption: to consume to feel in control of one's life.	This empowerment discourse works in part for a narrow segment of the population: the well-off and educated classes, who can see the development of quality food, cycling, etc. as a way of developing their autonomy. This is much less true for other, less-favoured social classes: it requires a strong change of outlook and new initiatives. An ecological narrative must explain how the evolution of each of the four pacts can restore margins of autonomy, as has been the case historically.
Promoting the idea of sufficiency for consumption in unequal societies creates anti-transition backlash.	Promise of abundance is central to our social contract. Ubiquitous mass consumption organized to meet the needs of the economy and the welfare state systems built up after WWII.	Exercising autonomy to constrain oneself is accessible only to those with a high degree of autonomy and social recognition; The middle classes in many OECD countries are being squeezed: the promise is increasingly poorly kept and tensions are created.	It is key to differentiate between social groups in terms of responsibility for the transition and the associated political discourses. Close attention must be paid to the situation of the middle classes – how can we provide services for a new middle class consumption standard that remains within planetary boundaries?
A tension emerges between ecological urgency and the need for ecological planning and the risk of an undemocratic transition, which generates rejection.	A Democracy Pact in crisis The need to debate changes and compromises between pacts: citizens can see that climate policies are profoundly changing their ways of life/society. Strong interactions between the Democracy Pact and the other pacts.	Historical tension between participatory and representative democracy is resurfacing. The concrete implementation of democracy is to be found in all pacts: democracy at work and between unions, employers and the state; democracy through collective consumer action; democratic control of the use of force in the Security pact.	Do not oppose participative and representative democracy. Identifying the initiatives that can help us move forward means listening to the difficulties and frustrations of both citizens and elected representatives. It is possible to organize complementarity between experts, citizens and decision makers by clarifying the role of each.

Burning political question	Translation within our framework	Historical perspective	Possible ways forward
Consumer-citizen gap: "Individuals are irrational, they claim to be responsible consumers concerned about the planet, but do not put it into practice."	Consumption is not just a "choice", it is part of our social contract, and so there are strong limits to the responsible consumer approach.	Powerful logic of conformity: access to a middle-class lifestyle is key to sticking to the dominant narrative. The Consumption Pact takes up too much space in social activity, and the responsible consumer approach increases it even more.	Support any initiative that reduces the role of the Consumption Pact, support collective forms of consuming. Differentiation of discourses (see above). Change the narrative and, rather than just making citizens responsible, organize a political response that enables changes in practices (e.g. to change food environments to change diets).[694]
Agriculture is both a key transition sector and a critical social node that can destabilize the political situation	Work Pact – a double problem for farmers: lack of recognition and social support for their work; a profession that paradoxically combines strong autonomy with a highly constrained technical-economic system. Consumption Pact: the limits of the responsible consumer approach to changing practices prevent the joint planning of an agricultural and food transition..	A long-standing agricultural pact on food security is being modified at the margins, without renegotiating the whole package (what price, what quality, what supply system), which is adding ever more pressure on producers. Contradictory signals from the Consumption Pact, making it difficult to support the transition (translating societal concerns into purchasing actions, budget and time dedicated to food).	Negotiating a new pact[695] for the agri-food system, based on the fact that the "business as usual" approach is not possible in this new ecological era. New compromises need to be found and new services created to reconcile food prices, farmers' incomes and household budgets.[696] Changing lifestyles: to plan food demand evolution in accordance to agricultural strategy.

694 STUDY IDDRI, April 2023; Environment, inequalities, health: what strategy for French food policies? https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Etude/202309-ST0123-SNANC%20EN_0.pdf

695 See for example: https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/getting-out-business-usual-four-conditions-building-new-agreement

696 https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/getting-out-business-usual-four-conditions-building-new-agreement

Conclusion: how can we make progress towards a new social contract?

Which conditions for a new social contract?

The historical review showed how pacts have evolved, and the conflicts, aspirations and negotiations that have played a part in these developments. And while the concept of the social contract refers to a fictitious situation, over the course of history it has taken concrete form in institutions, promises, concepts and demands that are well established in our societies. The changes in the pacts have sometimes also been explained through landmark events and reports: the strikes occurring after the victory of the "Front Populaire" (1936), in France, which led to the introduction of paid holidays and the forty-hours-week (and, more broadly, to the creation of a pact linking work and leisure); the Beveridge Report in 1942 in the United Kingdom and the resistance programme "Les Jours Heureux" in France, which established the welfare state; the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944, which redefined the aims and objectives of the International Labour Organization, as well as the principles that should guide labour policies. Neoliberal reform also had its moments of explicitness, with the Mont-Pélerin society (1947) and the speeches of Reagan and Thatcher. What could these new founding moments be? In what conditions can they bring profound change?

Let us dare to identify a few conditions that seemingly have to be met. What the progressive examples have in common, of course, is that they came after a world war, when there was a clear and urgent need for social progress as a protection against future war, and which, at least in the case of France, reconfigured social and political forces through the organization of the Resistance. Concerning the election of the "*Front populaire*", it came at a moment where social security and European democracy were under threat (in a context of rising fascism), and the formulation of new pacts was perceived as an emergency. In addition, a good example to inspire us could indeed be the advent of neoliberalism, due to its historical proximity. Kramer (2019),[697] reflecting on the role of philanthropy and research in supporting the emergence of an alternative to neoliberalism, points out that the advent of neoliberalism stems both from circumstance and from an intentional effort by a community. The circumstances of the 1970s were those of a series of economic crises (oil crisis, unemployment, inflation, etc.); a considerable role for central governments in the various spheres of life, as a legacy of the war and reconstruction; and social and cultural tensions as well as aspiration for more freedom (Kramer, 2019). Neoliberalism arrived with an economic, political and social diagnosis and a solution based on three simple principles: 1) reduce the role of government; 2) give more freedom to the market and individuals; and 3) focus on individuals as consumers (Berry et al., 2015).[698] This was made possible by the long-term construction of a movement of ideas, from the Lippmann colloquium in 1938 and the Mont Pélerin society in 1947, organizing the joint efforts of universities, think tanks and philanthropic foundations, even if the movement remained largely decentralized.

Under what circumstances can new ideas be developed, and what is being done to bring about these conditions?

While it is difficult to answer this question here, it is clear that the issue resonates with our pacts in terms of their histories and current situations. This can be inspirational. Numerous studies and phenomena at work tend to show that the current model, based on neoliberalism, is running out of steam.[699] The financial crises, COVID 19 and the geopolitical context have severely disrupted economies, and it is worth asking the question of whether the current crisis level is comparable to that experienced in the 1970s.[700] Growing inequalities in income and wealth[701] are a source of tension, and the competition brought about by globalization, as well as technological innovation, is a source of anxiety for workers.

697 L. Kramer, Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking Political Economy, Hewlett Foundation, 2018.

698 C. Berry, T. Jenkins, & S. Abdallah, Principles for a new economy, London, New Economics Foundation, 2015. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312601530_Principles_for_a_new_economy

699 See for example Fleurbaey et al., 2019, based on the collective work of the International Panel on Social Progress https://www.ipsp.org/resources

700 See Brookings' analysis of the similarities and differences concerning the economic crisis. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/todays-global-economy-is-eerily-similar-to-the-1970s-but-governments-can-still-escape-a-stagflation-episode/. Many analysts are pointing to the risk of a lasting return to stagflation.

701 In France, it is clear that the social model has made it possible to overcome the crises and avoid the explosion in inequalities in recent decades. However, inequalities are still on the rise. See Insee, "En 2021, les inégalités et la pauvreté augmentent", 14/11/2023, n°1973. See for Europe: https://wid.world/document/whats-new-about-income-inequality-in-europe-1980-2019/: the share of income captured by the richest 10% has been rising since the 1980s, while that of the poorest 50% has been falling. In France as well, the income share going to the top 10% has increased since 1980 and decreased for the other 90%. https://wid.world/document/world-inequality-report-2018-english/

These problems have no answer in the current paradigm. The ecological crisis has been added to this picture, but even though it is already the cause of an increasing number of extreme events, it is certainly seen by many as more of a medium/long-term problem than a short term risk. On the political front, the level of confidence in governments is often low, and the abstention rate as well as the rise of far-right parties are major causes for concern (see France and Germany, see Friends of Europe, 2024). On the social front, gender inequalities, violence against women and several types of racial inequalities remain highly concerning, which fuels struggles and discussions in the public debate. On top of which there is a worrying trend towards the polarization of values and ideologies (Inglehart, 2019; FT, 2024), which runs the risk of affecting cultural minorities. It is not therefore unreasonable to think that the context, which some even compare to the 1930s, is conducive to profound change. Drawing a parallel with the crisis of the 1970s, some fear that the political outcome will be more radical than the advent of neoliberalism, and will take repressive and authoritarian forms.[702]

The advent of a new social contract requires a critical mass of new ideas, organized to form an alternative, based on a clear set of principles (Berry et al., 2015).[703] A new political economy paradigm requires a combination of economics, social sciences and philosophy. We are in a context where the academic field is much broader and more specialized than at the time of the founders of neoliberalism, and where debates are more fragmented (Kramer, 2019). Nevertheless, forces are at work to organize the consideration of, among other issues, the concepts of sustainable well-being, post-growth and sufficiency, which combine a diversity of disciplines. This project, along with others, aims to contribute to the field by highlighting the dimensions of political economy and political philosophy. As analyses of neoliberal proposals can show, the question remains regarding the mix of radicalism and continuity between the new and the existing paradigm that should be built (Kramer, 2019). And it is also a challenge – and a necessity – to identify what social coalitions could be generated by the crisis and be able, through their common contestation and ideals, to impose a political change.[704] Historically, the strength of the Left was that the social class it defended was the future of society as a result of economic change.[705] Finally, if social change has often been the result of serious crises and conflicts throughout history, including wars, we need to find a way to advocate for change without going through these traumatic events.

Characteristics of a new social contract

While the challenges we face oblige us to invent new solutions, this historical review suggests that we should not be too quick to wipe the slate clean, because promises and expectations from the past have a long life. One way of proceeding is to see a new social contract as an extension of the great promises that have structured the debates and struggles of the last two centuries, going beyond the limits of the current social contract and adapting to the new ecological situation. Because the big questions remain: how can we ensure that everyone feels secure and in control of their lives? How can we improve our social contract and continue social progress? This involves protection in several forms, the satisfaction of material needs, the ability to participate in decision-making, the ability to contribute through their work to collective progress and their own autonomy. We need to find new responses that are better adapted to the present and future situation. The experiences of the past, brought together in these four pacts, are a source of inspiration.

Once again, let us take the risk of identifying some of the requirements of a new social contract. Overall, one way is to seek to renew the promise of autonomy and security and adapt it to current and future challenges.

Consumption Pact

The challenge lies in the central place acquired by this pact. As said, consumption is both a social duty (to conform to a standard of living) and a promise to belong to society and to rise within it through consumption (status). We probably need to reduce the range of promises associated with consumption: for example, perhaps it would be more beneficial to associate social status with work or democracy? At the same time, we need to design new collective forms of consumption, of which history gives us some examples, that can continue to play a social role (for example, contributing to a sense of identity) but without perpetuating harmful inequalities, in addition to providing a decent standard of living for all. This is in line with the thinking on new ways of designing consumption in the major areas of life (housing, transport, food, energy, etc.) through the concepts of provisioning systems[706] or universal basic services[707], to reconcile social and ecological objectives.

702 See for example the commentary of W. Münchau https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2023/03/wolfgang-munchau-global-economy-look-1970-crises-worse

703 These principles need to be: intellectually robust; fundamental (i.e. apply to a broad range of policy areas); actionable; effective; and distinctive. An alternative also needs to be clear about what it is fighting for and what the problem is.

704 Pierre Charbonnier, "Mon principal espoir est que le zadiste, le jacobin écolo et le technocrate radicalisé pactisent", Le Vent se lève, 22 mars 2020. Online [accessed 5th March 2024] https://lvsl.fr/pierre-charbonnier-mon-principal-espoir-est-que-le-zadiste-le-jacobin-ecolo-et-le-technocrate-radicalise-pactisent/

705 Marion Fontaine, Cyril Lemieux, "Les classes populaires représentent l'avenir de la gauche" in Marianne, 22/11/2021. Online: https://www.marianne.net/agora/entretiens-et-debats/les-classes-populaires-representent-lavenir-de-la-gauche

706 See for example Fanning, AL, O'Neill, DW and Buchs, M (2020), Provisioning systems for a good life within planetary boundaries. Global Environmental Change. https://sustainable-prosperity.eu/media/documents/Fanning_et_al_2020-ProvisioningSystems_AuthorAccepted.pdf

707 See for example the work of I. Gough https://en.unesco.org/inclusivepolicylab/analytics/move-debate-universal-basic-income-universal-basic-services

Democracy Pact

Where can we rebuild interest in renewing the social contract through democratic activity? One approach is to seek to strengthen opportunities for genuine democratic activity and experience in all spheres of life (work, consumption, local activities). This links to the previous point, as in France some actors are proposing solutions on the issue of food: organizing food services via local democracy can empower citizen-consumers, and build a productive bridge between these two pacts. Workplace democracy is certainly a key issue, with significant transformational potential. Strengthening opportunities for tangible democratic activity could also mean better organizing democratic processes around the economic dimension of our lives.[708] And while the wave of participatory democracy initiatives has raised new enthusiasm for the ability to reinvigorate democracy, the question remains as to how to combine the different ideas (tools of direct and participatory democracy, improving representative democracy, new rights such as extending the franchise to 16-year-olds)[709] into an overall strategy. We certainly need to accept a phase of institutional reconfiguration, which will involve experimentation and trial and error. The specific situation in each country will certainly require different solutions.

Security Pact

One way of looking at the issue is to recognize the fact that (in) security is linked to all the pacts, so the responses we propose with must be multiform (i.e. security of income, of status, health and housing security...). Another way of looking at the issue is to reformulate the promise of security in the era of the Anthropocene: organizing adaptation in a changing climate for individuals and economic activities is a major challenge and will probably be a growing demand. It must lead to a restructuring of the pact.[710] This extension of security will perhaps go hand in hand with the development of new regulations and norms: it will have to be socially negotiated and acceptable. Alongside this, the Security Pact needs to address the growing sense of cultural insecurity felt by many people in Europe, who believe that immigration and changing gender roles are undermining traditional cultural norms: to those who, as a reaction, tend to turn to extreme or identity-based parties, we need to restore confidence in social progress and justice.

Work Pact

One approach to this pact would be to seek to reconcile job quality with the needs and impacts of transition: the "Green Deal" proposals in Europe and the United States have recognized this need, but are far from making the necessary progress. At a time when many Europeans have a poor quality job, when the crisis has highlighted the poor working conditions of many key workers, and when the caring economy[711] is becoming even more central as a result of demographic change, it is not enough to seek to provide new good industrial jobs for a minority. What kind of work sharing, what kind of collective project behind the work of each individual, and what conditions should be guaranteed to all (autonomy, recognition, etc.)? There is also an urgency to fully reward (in terms of remuneration, type of contracts and status) the commitment of those who guarantee the day-to-day functioning of the country, even in contexts of crisis (essential professions, or "second line professions"), and thus to accept a modification of our liberal meritocratic narrative (where high salaries and/or prestige are reserved solely for those in decision-making positions). Once again, it is not only a question of looking at the economic conditions of work, but at what enables work to play its social role, i.e. to feel fully part of society. It is worth pointing out that work is certainly a social activity that can offer genuine rewards in terms of socializing, dignity, and democratic practices. The way in which work is organized and the status of the company, which we have discussed in the historical chapters (see France – Work and Democracy Pacts), have a key role to play.

As recalled throughout this study, the social contract has historically taken the form of institutions, i.e. forms of collective organization and regulation that firmly implement the contract and allow it to play out symbolically in people's minds and through social norms (e.g. unemployment insurance, parliament, public services, etc.). Thinking about changes to our social contract and these different pacts therefore means thinking about new or alternative institutions.

708 The case for economic democracy, 2020, Andrew Cumbers, Wiley https://www.wiley.com/en-us/The+Case+for+Economic+Democracy-p-9781509533855

709 As proposed by Friends of Europe in its 10 policy choices for a renewed social contract, 2024.

710 See this kind of attempt in France: "doctrine to regain our ecological safety zone" https://interetgeneral.net/publications/pdf/30.pdf

711 See the "Caring societies" project by HotorCool, https://hotorcool.org/hc-projects/care-centred-transition/

Next steps of our exploration

This is the first part of our journey towards a new social contract. A forthcoming study will draw conclusions from a series of interviews and focus groups with citizens in France and the UK. A dashboard of indicators will be constructed to show the state of our social contract using quantitative indicators representing the promises and achievements of the four pacts. Specific thought will also be given to the narratives needed to accompany this phase of rebuilding our social contract.

It will be undoubtedly useful to replicate this methodology in various European countries–as a large number of European countries, particularly in the aftermath of the two World Wars and during the reconstruction phase, have shared a common model (even if they have embodied it in different ways) of the nation-state that is protective, social and democratic. They have had, and may have, for this reason, the same socio-historical trajectory,[712] albeit with nuances and specific features that need to be taken into account in the perspective of the European project.

712 Bruno Karsenti, "Classes populaires, Nation et Europe: le piège de la gauche", Germinal, vol. 3, no. 2, 2021, pp. 242-255.

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