

Just transition

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the International Gathering on Social Innovation (RIIS)

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FOREWORD

The concept of **just transition** is not new. It began to be used in the 1980s by trade unions and environmentalists **to overcome the opposition between protecting the planet and maintaining the economy and jobs**. Faced with the urgency of the changes required, it has gained momentum in recent years, giving rise to different interpretations, more or less radical.

By providing new entrepreneurial responses to social needs that are little or poorly met locally, social innovation is part of the just transition process. It provides an opportunity to lay the foundations for a more egalitarian and democratic economy, and to promote the implementation of new rules for production and trade. Social innovation also makes it possible to experiment with new economic organizations on a local scale, in response to current environmental challenges.

In parallel with the reflections led by Alter'Lab, the think tank launched in May 2023 by the Regional Association of Cooperative Enterprises Occitanie-Mediterranean, the sixth edition of the International Gathering on Social Innovation (RIIS) invited entrepreneurs, academics and consultants to bear witness to the contribution of social innovation projects to the just transition. And in 2023, the year of Franco-Quebec innovation, it gave special prominence to Quebec initiatives in this field. This commitment is also in line with the roadmap being drawn up jointly by the Délégation générale du Québec à Paris and the Région Occitanie, of which social innovation is a flagship theme.

*Launched in 2013 by the Regional Association of Cooperative Enterprises Occitanie-Mediterranean, in partnership with the Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée Region, **the International Gathering on Social Innovation (RIIS) is celebrating its 10th anniversary**. Every two years in Montpellier, it continues to stimulate reflection and the exchange of experience, bringing together nearly two hundred participants.*

PLENARY INTRODUCTION SESSION: WORKING FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Please note that that the entire opening conference is available on our [YouTube channel](#).



Facilitation by *Denis Stokkink*, president of the European think and do tank *Pour la solidarité*. With *Andrea Casamenti*, Jus Transition Policy Officer at the European network *Solidar*, *Marek Hudon*, professor at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, *Imen Ouardani*, former vice-mayor of Sousse (Tunisia) and *Bastien Sibille*, chairman of *Mobicoop*, a French Cooperative, and instigator of the appeal “1 billion for just transition”.

Denis Stokkink began by stressing that the just transition is a matter of solidarity. The Social and solidarity economy (SSE) and social innovation have an important role to play in this respect. Yet the [European Green Deal](#), a set of measures proposed by the European Commission, makes no mention of the SSE. The Commission's Expert Group on Social Economy and social enterprises (GECES) has expressed its concern, and the [European Union Action Plan for the Social Economy](#) has incorporated this dual requirement for environmental and social transition. This shows that there is still work to be done to ensure that the SSE is recognized as a player in the ecological transition.

Marek Hudon recalled the origins of the Just Transition concept, a response from workers in sectors impacted by the ecological transition, who realized that the ecological transition had to be inclusive. Today, the expression is used in different ways by different stakeholders. A study by the Free University of Belgium identified four competing visions: holistic, worker-oriented, socio-ecological and business-oriented. In Belgium, the [High Committee for a Just Transition](#), of which Marek Hudon is co-chair, mobilized 22 experts over a year and a half and

came up with a definition: that of a transition to sustainability, with social-ecological justice as its guiding principle and social and participatory rights at the heart of environmental policy. The data show that, for the moment, the transition is essentially unfair. The most disadvantaged people emit far fewer greenhouse gases than the richest (up to ten times less, depending on the measures used), yet it is they who are most affected by global warming. The SSE is a reference tool for amplifying efforts in favour of a just transition, because its participative governance is conducive to societal change, and its territorial roots are a bulwark against the harmful effects of globalization. However, just because a project has a social purpose doesn't automatically mean that it will support just transition. Many social actions take little or no account of environmental issues, and conversely, many environmental policies fail to take account of their social impact. The multiplicity of objectives calls for new skills.

[Solidar](#), based in Brussels, is a European network of national and progressive civil society organisations, active throughout Europe, which have in common the objective of advancing social justice, in particular by lobbying the European institutions. For the past two years, Solidar has been working hard on the theme of just transition, which it sees as an opportunity to advance social justice and climate action together, and to give impetus to a new model of society. Andrea Casamenti explained that the creation of the [European Alliance for Just Transition](#) stemmed from the realisation that something was missing: there was no space for discussion and meeting between social organisations and environmental organisations. The just transition requires systemic change on such a scale that everyone needs to work together. The Alliance brings together not only civil society organisations, but also think tanks and political groups in the European Parliament. At the request of the [European Economic and Social Committee](#), this has led to the drafting of a recommendation to create a European legislative framework for just transition.

At European level, France is not the first country that springs to mind when you think of just transition. It is Spain that is seen as a pioneer, with the implementation since 2019 of a national strategy for just transition, spearheaded by the Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Teresa Ribera. It aims to support workers affected by the closure of coal mines and fossil fuel power stations. Belgium will be taking over the presidency of the European Union from Spain and is also committed to working towards a just transition (see the High Committee co-chaired by Marek Hudon). It will be organising a European conference on the subject in March 2024.

Andrea Casamenti invited citizens to draw on existing networks ([ENSIE](#), [Cooperatives Europe](#)), funds and texts at European level to wage local or national battles in favour of just transition.

Imen Ouardani resented the context of the African continent, where 2/3 of the population is under 35 and 55% of them are 'inactive'. The demographic explosion, mass unemployment, major regional imbalances and the massive export of natural resources are creating a complicated economic situation. Against this backdrop, the informal economy occupies a central place and is the way of life (and survival) for the majority of the population. The main issue is therefore the transition from an informal to a formal economy, rather than a just transition, and this was one of the topics of the 6th [Global Forum for Social and Solidarity Economy](#) held in Dakar in May 2023. Nevertheless, the SSE is working towards a more inclusive, more social and more environmentally friendly economy.

Bastien Sibille is Chairman of Mobicoop, which is part of [Licoornes](#), an alliance of 13 French cooperatives committed to the transition. It brings together 130,000 members and 4 million consumers, with the ambition of radically transforming society. For 140 years, the cooperative movement has been putting other ways of producing and thinking about work at the heart of its actions: it is fully adapted to the ecological and social crisis that we must face collectively. This crisis requires us to rethink growth and our relationship with capital, because it's a crisis of capitalism, and a just transition cannot happen without a change of business model. This is a historic opportunity to highlight the cooperative model, which is not linked to the profit motive of capital, and whose democratic dimension gives power to individuals who want to transform society. The creation of a €1 billion citizens' fund should help to finance the solutions they propose for a just transition.

The term 'degrowth' remains divisive. It should not be applied to all sectors, but only to those that destroy life, social cohesion and democracy. We also need to look at indicators other than gross domestic product to determine whether the economy is moving in the direction of better living, and therefore in the direction of a just transition.

THE WORKSHOPS

Workshop #1 – Developing a just entrepreneurship from the local level



Facilitation by *Delphine Vallade*, professor at the University Paul Valéry in Montpellier (France).
With *Raphaël Boutin-Kuhlmann*, from Villages vivants (France), *Mamadou Boye Bah*, from Jógjǿf (Senegal), *Barbara Duroselle*, from the “Socio-ecological Transition” project of the TIESS (Quebec, Canada) and *Philippe Rajosefa* from Alter'Incub collectivités (France)

Transversal inputs:

- Interacting with the local territory
- Experimenting The Commons approach
- Scale changing to drive systemic change
- Transforming thinking and postures
- Involving citizens

Introducing the speakers

Raphaël Boutin-Kuhlmann, co-CEO of [Villages vivants](#) (France)

Villages Vivants is a rural real estate cooperative based in France (Drôme), with 800 members and 20 million euros already invested in 20 projects.

Observation: In some rural areas, there are empty premises that are often no longer up to standard. In these same areas, collective projects are reinventing traditional modes of commerce and rural development, succeeding in opening grocery stores, bakeries, community

cafés, bookshops... in places where traditional shops had closed, but they are encountering difficulties in accessing real estate (lack of confidence on the part of local authorities, bankers and investors). The Villages Vivants cooperative was created in response to this paradox, using real estate as a lever to support these projects.

Solution: Villages vivants uses people funds to buy premises and rent them out to these projects.

In order to be supported the project has to:

- be located in a rural area
- be economically viable
- meet a local need
- be associative or cooperative

Villages Vivants wants to be part of a just transformation, by advocating a different model of entrepreneurship. A cooperative or associative business is more sustainable, because it is more firmly rooted in its local area and supported by a collective (85% success rate at n+5, compared with 65% under a traditional status). It also enables to settle the question of the revaluation of shares, and therefore of the business, which is a major problem for the transfer of businesses in rural areas.

Villages Vivants belongs to the field of the commons, with the idea that public players do not have a monopoly on general interest and economic development. Villages Vivants is therefore a collective tool that can intervene in different territories, and brings together beneficiaries, local authorities, citizens and investors to implement its definition of what is fair.

Mamadou Boye Bah, director of [Jógiëf](#) (Senegal)

The incubator was created in Casamance (a Senegal region) in 2021 thanks to the mobilization of the Cheikh Hamidou Kane Digital University, the SOS Pulse Group and the association [Futur au Présent](#). Since then, it has supported 30 projects.

Its particular focus is on young people (aged 18-34) living in rural areas, in very remote villages that are sometimes inaccessible by car. Awareness-raising campaigns are carried out in the villages over periods of one month, in conjunction with local authorities, to explain the possibilities of being supported in Ziguinchor, the capital of Casamance, whereas most support structures are concentrated in the big cities. This information acts as a trigger for these young people, who are often highly motivated, but don't have the information.

The support ranges from the ideation phase through incubation and financing (raising subsidies) to start-up.

The incubation period lasts six months (including 2 or 3 days of training in Ziguinchor and the rest of the time spent experimenting in the region), at the end of which the entrepreneurs have a clear idea of their project and a fairly well-defined business model. An external jury then selects the ones who will benefit from financial support (subsidies and follow-up). The incubator also works to network them so that they can help each other, because their projects are complementary.

At the end, the projects are autonomous, create jobs, manage to raise funds.

Working methods:

- partnership with the ecosystem (local authorities, other incubators such as Terenga tech, supported by the French Embassy, etc.)

- training civil society organizations (CSOs) in social and environmental entrepreneurship, so that they in turn can train other organizations, in order to generate enthusiasm for social and environmental entrepreneurship
- awareness-raising pedagogy through games (with the support of Play International)

Barbara Duroselle, manager of the “Socio-ecological Transition” Project of Innovative Territories for Social and Solidarity Economy ([TIESS](#)) (Quebec)

TIESS is an organization that contributes to territorial development through transfer of knowledge and connection within Social Innovation and Economy stakeholders, based on co-construction between researchers and practitioners. TIESS rather speaks of socio-ecological transition, instead of just transition, because the definition adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) does not mention territory and focuses on development, which is closely linked to the notion of growth, and therefore of not respecting the planet's limits. TIESS claims a transformative, global and holistic approach. It takes as its starting point what companies are doing on the ground to contribute to the transition, and how they are integrating social inclusion and justice. The “Socio-ecological Transition” project follows a number of social economy enterprises that are scaling up and driving systemic change in favor of transition. Five simultaneous mechanisms are required to achieve this, and are therefore studied:

1. Development model (producing less and better and/or consuming less and better)
2. Citizen consultation and democratic capacity-building
3. Interactions with living things
4. New narratives enabling to change thinking
5. Inclusion

Here are a few examples of social economy enterprises, adapted to the local context, that are driving systemic change:

- [Rivra](#): A grouping of five social economy enterprises that seized the opportunity presented by the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for household appliances, under the December 2020 Environment Quality Act, to meet local needs. Between them, the five companies cover the whole of Quebec, and this is how they managed to win the contract for the logistical management of EPR and the dismantling of certain appliances. They employ a total of 500 people. The change they are trying to bring about, their objective, is to create a reuse channel, with decentralized recovery, and the creation of a local deposit for the circular economy. These very diverse companies (from 10 to 125 employees) have an impact on the economic vitality and social capital of their region, and not just on the creation of green jobs. This is very important for collective resilience in the face of climate change.

- [Insertech angus](#): this social economy company set up in an underprivileged district of Montreal helps young people find employment through electronics-related reuse activities (dismantling, repair, reconditioning). It also trains people less accustomed to digital technology to avoid a social divide, and builds civic capacity. It also offers repair workshops and is involved in responsible mobility policies.

- [LocoMotion](#): This social company, which originated in Montreal but is now being rolled out in other regions, is aimed at helping citizens to create ultra-local, shared mobility initiatives on a neighbourhood scale, with a view to the “commons” (sharing tow bikes and electric bikes, accessible free of charge via an app; car sharing between neighbours). The aim is not just to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions or change practices, but to strengthen links between people, and so encourage new projects.

LocoMotion is negotiating with the City of Montreal to change urban planning regulations, and is also thinking about financing and insurance methods, and how to take into account neighbourhoods with disadvantaged mobility.

- [La Ferme Tourne-sol](#) : this well-known Quebec organic cooperative farm has been practicing regenerative agriculture for over twenty years. It builds its development model in collaboration with its employees and has limited the number of vegetable and fruit baskets it produces to 500 per week to enable all employees (15 full-time) to enjoy a balanced lifestyle. The company's democratic management style, both internally and externally, is coupled with a halocratic approach to speed up decision-making.

- [Petit Café de Cantley](#) : A volunteer-based community café near Ottawa, created by seven women, with a view to fostering links that will lead to the emergence of other projects. It strengthens the area's resilience through a whole range of inclusion initiatives (free Internet access, local purchasing, zero waste, etc.).

[Philippe Rajosefa, responsable d'Alter'incub collectivité, en France](#)

Background

This recent project is based on several reports by the Association of French Mayors (AMF), the Network of Local Authorities for a Solidarity-based Economy (Réseau des collectivités territoriales pour une économie solidaire - RTES) and the association Make Sense, which highlighted the need to turn to the social and solidarity economy to provide a satisfactory and comprehensive response to social and environmental needs that are not, or are poorly, covered in local areas. Today, mayors respond to these needs either through direct management (internalized solutions), through the delegation of public services, or by subsidizing associations working in the field of territorial development. The problem is that mandates are limited in duration, and public finances are not bottomless pits. Over 90% of the projects we support have great difficulty sustaining their viability, their economic model, without maintaining or developing their subsidies.

Together with the Occitanie Region, Alter'Incub, the social innovation incubator supported by Regional Association of Cooperative Enterprises Occitanie-Mediterranean, created the YESS Camp operation and went out to meet local players it didn't usually reach: employment and living areas, territorial clusters for economic cooperation (PTCE), local action groups (GAL)... A total of 150 people took part in these exchanges on local needs. At the same time, the Region was developing YESS Pro to raise awareness of social and solidarity economy and social innovation issues among all economic development players.

Against this backdrop, Alter'Incub decided to experiment with a specific scheme to support local authorities, based on the obstacles they had identified. The engineering is currently being developed and adjusted to find solutions that can be duplicated.

Guidelines for the support

- Engineering the “marriage” between the project owner and the community, which means taking into account individual issues (egos of both parties), territorial, financial and political issues, without overlooking any one of them.
- Popularizing SSE entrepreneurship among local authorities.

- Citizen and territorial mobilization using two tools: cooperative non-violent communication and stakeholder inclusion.
- Consideration of just transition indicators (territorial development, citizen involvement, carbon footprint, etc.).
- Hybridization of financing
- Equiterritoriality: experimentation with support is not limited to large local authorities. More than half of France's communes have fewer than 500 inhabitants (representing 6% of the population), and 37% have fewer than 300. Three experiments: Dourbies, Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone, Gard département (Pissevin-Valdegour district in Nîmes)

Questions from the audience

? What is your definition of just transition?

Raphaël Boutin-Kuhlmann : Normally, a transition is a way of getting from point A to point B. We tried to define B, the point we wanted to get to. We all agree on the need for transition, but towards what? What common horizon do we want?

Villages vivants wants to contribute to a different relationship with finance: short-circuiting finance; being able to invest in real estate in rural areas; remunerating work and not capital, in line with the cooperative model. Villages Vivants wants to promote a model of society that comes from the territories, based on their aspirations, their needs and their wealth, as opposed to the mythology of CAME (Competitiveness, Attractiveness, Metropolization and Excellence), from which we need to detoxify.

Villages Vivants believes that the real estate market is a problem, that it systematically runs counter to the public interest, and that local authorities are simply paying for the deficit or mopping up real estate-related problems.

Barbara Duroselle : According to us, social-ecological transition is not just about reviewing our modes of production and consumption, but also about transforming our collective narrative and our relationship with living things. It's not a destination, but a posture, a way of thinking that takes into account all aspects of an activity.

Delphine Vallade : It was the European Trade Union Confederation that proposed the expression "just transition" 20 years ago, to emphasize that the transition had to be both ecological AND social, and that the two aspects should not be detached from each other. To be fair, the transition must be shared by all citizens and must not further disadvantage those who are already in a precarious situation.

? How do you define the Commons?

Raphaël Boutin-Kuhlmann : According to Villages vivants, a common is an asset that is acquired, managed and used (in the sense of usage) collectively. This implies a model of ownership by use, in which users have a say, but are not more important than use itself. The premises provide a sanctuary for use.

? **How can we change scale to bring about systemic change?**

Barbara Duroselle : There are four effective strategies:

- 1) networking (getting together to solidify the business model)
- 2) working with all stakeholders, setting up hybrid networks
- 3) working with public institutions
- 4) staying focused on your project

To change the system, you have to learn to speak in simple words. TIESS has worked on synthetic tools that can be read in 120 seconds. This provides a common base to which everyone can add their own “flavor”.

? **to Jógjëf: Could you give a few examples of the businesses you've created and their survival rates?**

Mamadou Boye Bah : Here are some of the social and environmental impact projects Jógjëf has supported:

- Manufacture of doors and windows from scrap iron
- Recycling plastics to make building blocks, sold to local authorities
- Transformation of rotting surplus mangoes into cakes sold to elementary school
- Production of organic fertilizers

More than a dozen businesses have been created since 2021, and their survival will be reviewed after three years, i.e. by the end of 2024. Networking provides information on their progress, which is quite good, as they continue to grow and recruit.

In Senegal, the impact produced can also be measured by the repercussions that the creation of a business has in the village: raising awareness of entrepreneurship among other people; reducing distances for users thanks to the establishment of a service in the village; helping to improve the standard of living of an entire family (one successful person can feed five other people, or even more).

? **to Alter'Incub collectivités: How do you involve citizens in the process?**

Philippe Rajosefa : First, we learn to use the right semantics. Using simple terms, accessible to all, the lowest common denominator for understanding the collective. We develop non-violent cooperative communication: we take all ideas at face value, without judgment, without interpretation, without criticism, without reproach, without submission, without reward... This makes people feel respected. It's based on the relational triangle: inclusion (getting down to everyone's level), control (rules of the game), openness (goodwill).

The techniques we use in cooperation (collective intelligence and democratic, participative governance) are very helpful.

? **to Villages vivants: Is your company willing to spread its experience to other regions?**

The Occitanie region is already part of our intervention zone, with operations in Lozère and one currently under appraisal in Hérault.

Workshop #2 – Working and producing differently for a better life



Facilitation by *Sarah Rousseau*, director of the Occitanie Regional Chamber for the Social and Solidarity Economy (CRESS).

With *Gabriela Carasco* from 2811 (Chile), *Pierre Minodier* from Artyzen (France) et *Frédéric Thériault* the Cooperative farm Tourne-Sol (Quebec, Canada)

Transversal inputs:

- reorganizing work and its place in life
- developing the skills needed for a just transition
- changing the economic narrative
- collective operating and cooperation

Introducing the speakers

Gabriela Carrasco, co-director of [2811](#), global platform for social change in Chile

The aim of the platform is to promote the acquisition of the skills needed for the ecological transition. It has set itself the goal of training one million “climate change carriers” by 2030, in a multi-stakeholder (universities, organizations, companies...) and multi-dimensional (ecological, social and economic) approach. Its name refers to November 28, 2015, the date on which Chile for the first time exhausted the natural resources the country is capable of renewing in a year, thus placing itself in ecological debt.

Pierre Minodier, president of [Artyzen](#), in France

Artyzen is a social integration company based in Clapiers, offering home comfort services for active individuals (ecological cleaning and ironing), support for people in need of care or at the end of their lives, professional cleaning (offices, nurseries, etc.) and a training center dedicated to its employees. The human services sector is faced with an alarming social reality in France: out of 1.3 million employees, staff turnover is 90%, the poverty rate is 20% and the workplace accident rate is 10% (which puts the sector in 2nd place after the fishing industry, and ahead of the construction industry), and half of them have never benefited from training. Artyzen's aim is to change the way work is organized in order to make the sector more desirable.

Frédéric Thériault, finance director of [Tourne-Sol](#), a cooperative farm in Quebec

The farm is a cooperative of around twenty workers. It produces organic vegetables and seeds on 6.7 hectares of land and distributes 500 baskets a week.

It manages its business holistically, in line with the goals set by its members, which include eating well (local and diverse produce) and living well (having time for the family, personal projects, etc.).

Discussion

Working differently is a necessity, whether to find pleasure and meaning in the activity itself or to ensure that the activity leaves time and space for a fulfilling personal life. This need is expressed differently in different companies. In order to make salaried work attractive, all three companies strive to empower, involve and give responsibility to their teams.

Adjusting working hours

Platform 2811, whose thirty or so employees are all under 35 and spread over geographical areas corresponding to five different time zones, leaves a great deal of flexibility to its teams, who set their own objectives and organise their working hours accordingly.

At the Tourne-Sol farm, work is divided up according to the availability of each permanent employee. To keep the farm running, seven and a half people are needed full-time for four and a half days a week. Based on this figure, the cooperative recruits the number of additional people needed, according to the hours that each permanent employee is prepared to work, in order to achieve the volume of hours required to meet production and delivery targets. Working hours are chosen, not imposed. This organisation is also possible because the farm does not produce livestock, only vegetables, and has automatic irrigation. At certain times of the year, a rota is necessary to ensure a presence, including on weekends, but this is organised collectively.

Artyzen achieves the same reversal by asking employees how much time they have available. The work of the teams is organised on this basis. Social action organisations often talk about their recruitment difficulties, linked to reconciling work and private life for workers in this sector, who are mobilised every day of the week. The problem is not necessarily working on Sundays, but that it's always the same people working on Sundays.

Making work meaningful

Gabriela believes that young people want to contribute to the ecological transition and devote their time to a meaningful mission that matches their interests. She believes that storytelling is the most important social tool at our disposal to really change society, and we need to work on it collectively.

Artyzen is working to break down the isolation associated with home-based jobs by promoting a social system. This involves creating teams by geographical sector and giving people a sense of responsibility. The way we talk to our customers is also changing: we're not selling a service with a single worker, but a team. They too are part of this collective dynamic.

At the Tourne-Sol farm, the way we work is consistent with the values to which the members are attached: environmentally-friendly transport (electric bikes and lorry), mutual aid and group work, moments of sharing and relaxation between employees, but also with the community (open days, activities on the farm, etc.), cultivation of beauty (donations of flowers), biodiversity (seed production).

Remunerating fairly

Agriculture is not a profitable sector. The minimum wage in Quebec is \$15 a day. At Tourne-Sol farm, pay is around \$16 a day, plus an inflation adjustment. The pay scale was decided collectively and is based on seniority alone, to the exclusion of any other modulation such as responsibility or level of training. Salaries are a little lower than in some sectors, but the work is varied, satisfying and rewarding.

Artyzen has chosen to work on skills: people with more responsibility are paid more. This is in line with the company's social project, since its training centre enables employees to develop their professional skills. Transparency on salaries also helps to demystify managerial remuneration.

Workshop #3 – Committing your company to the just transition



Facilitation by *Vincent Aurez*, member of the Guidance board of the Labo de l'ESS (France).
With *Cécile Marsan*, from Co-actions (France), *Rui Mesquita*, from Mozambikes (Mozambique), *David Santelli*, from Esplanade (Quebec, Canada) and *Myriam Tuffery* from Atelier Tuffery (France)

Transversal inputs:

- Entrepreneurial drive
- Strong local roots
- Seeking to have a positive impact
- Importance of partnerships

Introducing the speakers

Cécile Marsan, general manager of [Co-actions](#), in France

Co-actions is a business and employment cooperative (Coopérative d'activité et d'emploi – CAE – in French) that brings together 118 independent entrepreneurs with a wide range of skills. This collective makes it possible to pool the company's administrative functions (accounting, communication, management, etc.). Co-actions is also a training centre.

Rui Mesquita, co-founder and manager director of [Mozambikes](#), in Mozambique

Mozambique is a social enterprise that works to improve the living conditions of rural populations in Mozambique by providing them with free bicycles adapted to their needs. This gives them access to health, education and employment.

David Santelli, head of support at [Esplanade](#) in Quebec

Esplanade supports entrepreneurs who have decided to place social or environmental impact at the heart of their business model, with the aim of accelerating the socio-ecological transition through entrepreneurship.

Myriam Tuffery, manager director of [Atelier Tuffery](#), in France

Atelier Tuffery has been making French jeans in the French department of Lozère since 1892. A family business for four generations, it passes on its expertise by taking into account the challenges of sustainable and responsible fashion.

Discussion

Despite their differing legal status, activities and social and geographical contexts, the four organisations all demonstrate a real entrepreneurial spirit and a strong local presence, combined with a systemic approach.

The innovative solutions they propose respond to local issues and are adapted to the contexts in which the companies develop their activities.

Co-actions, created in a village in the south of Gironde, enables people to set up their own business in a rural environment, without having to work alone, and to perpetuate independent activities thanks to development support. Atelier Tuffery is a family business established in Florac, in Cévennes, for five generations. In taking over the business, Julien and Myriam Tuffery chose to maintain the rural location, despite certain obstacles, particularly logistical (supplies), linked to geographical distance. Mozambikes responds to the need for mobility in rural Mozambique.

Their activities address social, economic and environmental issues, with the aim of achieving sustainability and a positive impact on the entire ecosystem.

Co-actions is leading the Sustainable and Responsible Entrepreneurship (SURE) European cooperation project, with the aim of supporting, training and equipping entrepreneurs to integrate sustainable and responsible practices into the development of their businesses.

Atelier Tuffery has long incorporated just transition into its approach (a principle formalized in a “Common Sense Manifesto”). These denim artisans think differently about fashion to make it more sustainable, favoring an eco-responsible mode of production (slow-fashion): use of local and eco-responsible materials, reduced water consumption (e.g. ecological washing), reduced waste and unsold stock thanks to on-demand production (“less but better”), energy-efficient building. Opting for direct sales (no resellers) offsets the extra cost of production by avoiding the cost of intermediaries, and therefore offers fair remuneration for production work, good working conditions and investment in internal training (transmission of original know-how to future generations).

By making bicycles available in rural areas of Mozambique, Mozambikes is helping to improve living conditions for the population (access to employment, education, health, independence). Esplanade Quebec supports entrepreneurs whose ambition is to accelerate the socio-ecological transition through entrepreneurship. This incubator (“accélérateur” in Canadian terminology) first helps them to define their social and environmental problem, which is the starting point for the search for sustainable solutions with the most positive impact on the ecosystem, over the long term and on a large scale. By catalysing cohorts of entrepreneurs

and working on three innovation clusters with high impact potential (community health, food systems, environment and climate change), the incubator activates a leverage effect. The four companies emphasize the importance of partnerships to build complementary skills, ensure the eco-quality of products (sourcing natural fibres from local producers), mobilize varied sources of financing adapted to projects, and implement a regional development rationale.

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