

## LE CARREFOUR DES INNOVATIONS SOCIALES

- CONCEPT NOTE -

### Making social innovation a driving force for changing public policy

#### Our vision

We believe that a vibrant non-profit sector is a vital part of a living democracy; that volunteering is all about being an active citizen, and that the public interest, in all of its facets, needs non-profit organisations to have the power to act. Our core remit is to encourage and help organisations and other civil society stakeholders to develop cooperative strategies.

#### Why a Carrefour des innovations sociales?

The *Carrefour des innovations sociales* (social innovation hub) project was created as a result of two factors: a wealth of socially-innovative projects in the regions, in all domains, developed by a diverse range of stakeholders (organisations, private stakeholders, public stakeholders, hybrid partnerships, and so on); and a wide range of stakeholders helping to showcase them, notably via web platforms. For the general public, as well as for institutional stakeholders and project developers, the issue is raising the regional and national profile of social innovations in order to help them to stimulate, scale up, or inspire other initiatives.

Based on this observation, in 2016 we joined forces with CGET<sup>1</sup> and created a collective of public and non-profit organisations involved in social innovation in order to share their data and develop a new way of accessing their content, which encourages linking up and sharing knowledge/practices, and highlights their complementary nature. The social innovation hub is based on a national website hosting a shared multi-criteria search engine.

#### The challenge

We are being threatened by the collapse of democracy, and this is the consequence of a profound loss of trust in institutions. Citizens are finding that institutions no longer enable them to act, they are no longer levers for collective action but only systems whose shared watchword is to adapt, i.e. give up on what people really are and give in to the constraints of the global economic order. Populism is nothing more than the promise of the restoration of desire and a lost capacity to act, and permanent agitation to make people believe that this promise is being kept. In contrast to this illusion, showcasing and recognizing social innovation is all about demonstrating that the capacity to act is alive and well throughout society.

#### Our stance

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<sup>1</sup> *Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires* (CGET - General Commission on Regional Equality), which became the *Agence nationale pour la cohésion des territoires* (National Agency for Regional Cohesion) in November 2019.

There is a growing gulf between the difficulties being experienced by public institutions and intermediary bodies when trying to foresee and steer social change, and the proliferation of initiatives, projects and businesses aiming to step up the pace or guide these changes/trials, and that fall under the concept of social innovation. This gulf bears witness to the institutional transition that we are experiencing: vertical and hierarchical organisations, legitimised by the production and possession of knowledge inaccessible to common mortals, are declining, as access to knowledge is widening, with this phenomenon beginning at the start of the 20th century and being significantly stepped up by the Digital Age. However, institutions are still needed just as much, in order to devise and apply rules that enable us to take common action, work together, and recognize ourselves as members of the same society. **Public bodies, business and non-profit organisations are seeking a horizontal structure for society in which the capacity to act of individuals and small-scale communities can contribute to large-scale issues, without being subordinate to supervisory institutions.** This quest is reflected in our vocabulary by the proliferation of "co" terms: collaboration, cooperation, co-development, and so on.

Identifying, listing, showcasing and linking up social innovations is part of this approach. Innovative solutions to the challenges of our times are constantly being devised. Could this scattered, fragmented and invisible fermentation be the breeding ground for renewed institutions able to meet society's needs?

### Next steps and upcoming initiatives

The *Carrefour des innovations sociales* search engine has been functioning in beta mode since early 2019. Its technical architecture will be overhauled and it will be officially launched in November 2019. Throughout 2020, we will meet with social innovators in the regions, we will welcome new contributors, and we will foster the emergence of local and themed social innovation action communities.

Learn more: <https://fonda.asso.fr/le-carrefour-des-innovations-sociales>

#### Who we are

La Fonda is the non-profit sector's think tank and was created in 1981. La Fonda has been and remains a forum for meeting and comparing ideas. La Fonda was where the *Coluche* amendment (enabling donors to claim tax relief on charitable donations), and the *Mouvement associatif* (umbrella group for non-profits in France) and the *Haut-conseil à la vie associative* (non-profit sector consultation and decision-making forum) were first conceived. The think tank has developed participatory strategic foresight methods to help non-profit sector stakeholders and their partners to develop a strategic vision. La Fonda conducts studies, runs working groups and strategic foresight workshops, and mobilizes experts with a diverse range of skills to inform the non-profit sector and support its stakeholders.

[www.fonda.asso.fr](http://www.fonda.asso.fr)

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