



UNIVERSITÉ EUROPÉENNE DU TRAVAIL
Sous la conduite de
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et de Claude Emmanuel Triomphe

Changes and the local area: The Tarn case

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Executive summary

The aim of this case study is to show how an area which is confronted by economic change is actively working on the thematic of restructuring and it seeks to understand the dynamics which are at work on the local administrative level. The case of Tarn illustrates a specific restructuring configuration – an industrial fabric which has been built on traditional activities which are now in decline and a predominate number of small, medium and very small companies – and it doesn't represent a great wave of restructuring bringing in its wake a major disaster for the area, but is more about changes which have been spread out.

Faced with this situation, the Tarn employed various tactics: an area-wide dialogue between management and labour through a joint local commission to grasp the difficulties faced by craftsmen, support for redundant workers within the framework of a redeployment and retraining platform, or the mobilization of regional agencies to help a textile industry which was particularly threatened.

The local administrative level response to the changes in the Tarn illustrates the innovative approach and methods used in a policy which includes anticipation and support.

Monitoring Innovative Restructuring in Europe

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“CHANGE AND TERRITORY THE CASE OF TARN”

Study conducted on behalf of the UET

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The objective of the study is to demonstrate how a region confronted with economic change has taken action with regard to restructuring and to understand the territorial dynamics which came into play.

From this perspective, the case of Tarn would appear to be interesting as it illustrated an unusual restructuring model. This department is characterised by a local industrial fabric based on traditional activities –primarily the textile industry– whose workforce has been in decline for many years. It is also characterised by the preponderance of small, medium-sized and in particular very small enterprises. Tarn is therefore not representative of a great wave of restructurings leading to a shock or major disaster for the region, but instead a context of ill-defined changes. In addition to this, the 2004 programme to support the economic revitalisation of Castres Mazamet uses the expression “territory which has been injured by economic change” to describe the difficulties in this employment area.

Faced with this situation, the territory has undertaken a number of actions in terms of both anticipating and assisting change. This paper is structured around three themes which have been highlighted owing to the innovative nature of the mechanisms introduced in the regional approach to change.

The first describes the regional social dialogue undertaken by the social partners within a Local Joint Committee to consider the difficulties of Tarn’s traditional craft sector;

The second covers the assistance of employees who have been made redundant through the introduction of a redeployment and retraining platform;

The third analyses the mobilisation of all the regional actors to promote the textile industry which has been affected by changes, the consequences of which constitute a crucial issue for the region, owing to the sector’s economic importance.

PART 1 – REGIONAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE AS A MEANS OF DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE TRADITIONAL CRAFT SECTOR¹

The traditional craft sector is significant in the department's economy, accounting for over 7,000 enterprises in 2004 employing nearly 16,000 people. It is also a real driving force for development, having expanded continuously since 2002 notably in the construction sector, which accounts for one third of the employees in Tarn's traditional craft industries.

This sector is facing specific problems which the social partners tackled at the end of the 1990s and which resulted in the creation of a Local Joint Committee. Rarely used in France, this mechanism² has achieved undeniable results which have made it a preferred, not to say model instrument for regional social dialogue.

1-1 The context

Tarn's craft sector has been affected by the difficulties specific to its sector as well as those of the department in general, which led the social partners to establish social dialogue to discuss these issues.

A- The problems affecting Tarn's traditional craft sector

Largely unattractive terms of employment

Compared with other sectors, traditional crafts are generally characterised by a higher proportion of fixed-term and part-time contracts, lower remuneration for identical qualifications in very small enterprises, longer weekly working hours, less recourse to professional training and a higher number of industrial accidents. Benefits packages such as holiday and luncheon vouchers, are also inexistent.

Informal social dialogue

Tarn's economic fabric is essentially composed of businesses with less than 5 employees, 3 out of 4 working in an enterprise with no Works Council and more than half have no representative organisation. With a very limited union presence, social dialogue is largely informal and dependent upon the director's management method. Most frequently, it is limited to direct relations between employers and employees, with trade union intervention perceived more as questioning the interpersonal arrangements and harmony. Relations between artisans and trade unions are marked by "mistrust and a mutual lack of understanding" in a "context of solid social and psychological barriers and an atmosphere of suspicion".

Changes in employees' behaviour

The disappearance of the "fellow craftsman" behaviour has brought about major changes, such as lower implication of personnel and the calling into question of the "family" or paternalistic enterprise structure, which are perceived as specific features of the sector.

¹ We would like to thank Mr. G. Lairis most sincerely for his dissertation, "Social dialogue and territorial governance", supervised by Jean Pierre Gilly, Master of Engineering in territorial policies, University of Social Sciences, Toulouse 1, June 2005.

² Mechanism listed in article L.132-30 of the French Labour Code which envisages the possibility of establishing professional and interprofessional joint committees through local, departmental and regional level agreements, which are able to draw up local interest agreements d'intérêt notably with regard to employment and ongoing training.

A problem of competition between territories

Tarn is a rural territory influenced by the metropolis of Toulouse, scarcely 60 kilometres away, which has an effect of attracting employees to the large companies in Toulouse.

A question of survival of traditional craft businesses

Owing to the advanced age of the artisans, retirements over the next decade will affect around 30% of company owners. This structure confronts the region with the crucial issue of transmission and acquisition of these businesses, especially since the most highly qualified workers are of a similar age to their employers.

Difficulties related to the application of the reduction in working time

The question in 1997 was to establish how the 7,000 craft businesses in the department could implement the reduced working hours given their size –4 to 5 employees on average– whilst many SMEs and family businesses, could not benefit from the State aid intended for businesses in advance of the application of the law, owing to the lack of sectoral and trade union representatives in companies³.

B- Commitment to a process of social dialogue

It is this context, and in particular the issue of the implementation of the reduction in working hours, which “triggered” a partnership between the employers and trade unions in 1997.

The fear of the Union Professionnelle Artisanale faced with the reduction in working time was the risk of a lack of labour and recruitment difficulties for small businesses in competition with businesses which were introducing the 35-hour week and were able to offer more attractive social rights and terms of employment. The social partners soon agreed on the diagnosis: the need to improve the terms of employment for employees in the traditional craft sector in view of the twofold issue of encouraging young people into craft trades and enabling businesses to develop the loyalty of their most experienced employees who could potentially be lured away by more attractive offers, notably from the large companies in the urban district of Toulouse.

The employers’ organisation first approached the CFDT trade union in June 1998, to propose the introduction of an inter-sectoral agreement on the reduction of working time. The CFDT agreed, on condition that the issue of improving employees’ social rights and working conditions in the craft sector were also addressed, along with the establishment of a permanent structure in the form of a local joint committee. After an initial meeting, the CFDT was in favour of pursuing the approach and including the other representative trade union organisations.

A draft agreement was signed in January 1999 in order to “anticipate and build for the future” by developing a forum for social dialogue which includes employee representatives and companies in the craft sector.

³ Let us not forget the main outline of the mechanism for the reduction of working time introduced by the 1st Aubry Act in 1998. The maximum time was established at 35 hours per week as of 1st January 2000 for companies with over 20 employees and 1st January 2002 for those with less than 20 employees. It granted an incentive payment per employee for companies which signed an agreement with the social partners and in certain cases for sectoral level agreements, on condition that there was a commitment to recruit a certain number of new employees and a 10% reduction in working time.

1-2 The Commission Paritaire Artisanale Tarnaise (CPAT)

The territorial social dialogue which began in 1997 resulted in the creation of an inter-sectoral Joint Committee of traditional craft companies in Tarn through an agreement signed on 21st January 1999 between the CFDT, FO, CGT, CFE-CGC, CFTC trade unions and the employers –USAT and UPA.

The preamble of the agreement stated amongst its motivations the importance of craft businesses in the local economy, the challenges facing them and the contribution of a forum for social dialogue adapted to the labour regulations in companies in Tarn.

The CPAT consists of 10 employers' representatives and 10 employee representatives (10 delegates divided equally between the 5 signatory trade unions) and is essentially financed by contributions from its members, State and Regional subsidies.

The CPAT has a very broad mandate, ranging from the preparation and application of collective labour conventions and agreements, taking part in actions to enable the promotion and definition of jobs and trades in the craft industry, defining a professional training policy, examining how employees can benefit from multi-enterprise guarantees, analysing individual and collective complaints relating to employment contracts, etc.

In the few years that it has been in operation, the CPAT has concluded a number of agreements and has established a number of governing bodies in various fields. Its main achievements are presented, by no means comprehensively, below:

- **A departmental agreement on the reduction of working time** in traditional craft businesses in Tarn in 1999, enabling all companies across the board to adopt the same working hours, resulting in a reduction in working time of at least 10% less than the initial duration with no reduction in remuneration;
- **A prospective agreement** authorising employees in traditional craft companies to benefit from multi-enterprise guarantees;
- **Agreements** in 2001 giving employees in the craft sector the possibility to enjoy **company benefits** similar to those of employees in large companies: holiday and luncheon vouchers and even the offer of computers;
- **A committee for settling labour disputes** to operate in advance of the Industrial Tribunal and avoid litigation;
- **A joint inter-sectoral unit for the health and safety and terms of employment in the craft industries in the department** was created in May 2003 in response to a number of objectives. It first aims to raise employers' and employees' awareness of safety issues in the sector. It then provides technical and legal assistance with regard to the increasingly complex regulations (notably in order to comply with the single document on the prevention of professional risks) and to make companies comply with the law by assessing risks and scheduling investments. This unit includes representatives from the employers' and trade union organisations, consultative partners such as company medical officers and labour inspectors, technicians and reference employees (1 per trade union).
- **A joint inter-professional association for the craft industry sector in Tarn (APIA 81)** was established in November 2004. The association belongs to an inter-enterprise network –the CEZAM network– which provides cultural and leisure type services, along with benefits packages to company owners, employees and retired personnel from companies in the craft sector in Tarn. Each company pays an annual subscription in return for which employees have access to services at preferential rates.

Furthermore, other issues are considered by the CPAT and new projects are currently being defined or implemented, including the prospective management of employment and skills, piloted by the Professional Association in the construction sector. Incentives, save-as-you-earn, the harmonisation of retirements, recruitment and training for young people are all subjects which are dealt with during the CPAT's quarterly meetings.

1-3 The appraisal of territorial social dialogue

The appraisal is difficult to establish for various reasons: firstly, the initial objectives were defined very broadly –providing the department with a regional social dialogue tool, helping companies in the craft sector to respond to the challenge of a reduction in working time, improving the image of the craft sector and promoting local development– and also, the CPAT still has no reliable information in this area.

This appraisal is nevertheless disparate. It can be described as modest if we consider the effectiveness of agreements or encouraging in view of the results achieved by the authoritative bodies that have been established. But it is particularly positive in terms of the social dialogue dynamic which has been initiated in the territory, and which has led to it being described as “exemplary” by the actors.

A – Limited effectiveness of agreements

If the CPAT has produced a number of agreements, we have to admit that except for the agreement on the reduction in working time, they have not been followed up in practice.

The voluntary incentive mechanism to introduce a reduction in working time has been gradually introduced by one third of the companies in the craft sector in the department. Assistance for consultancy funded by the Departmental department of employment was also taken up by 30 companies, 80% of which have effectively introduced a 35-hour week. These figures are highly significant if we take into account that at the end of 2000, whilst the Aubry laws affected nearly half of all employees, only 8% of employees in companies employing less than 20 people worked a 35-hour week.

For this reason, few enterprises introduced agreements regarding holiday and luncheon vouchers (only 1) or offers of computers (4 enterprises).

The CPAT is aware that these results are unsatisfactory and has recently launched a communication campaign amongst companies in the craft sector and their employees to better publicise its range of tools and services. It should also be emphasised that certain agreements, notably the offer of computers, result above all from the actors' determination to show that “what is possible in large companies is also possible in small businesses”.

B – Active, promising governing bodies

The APIA had 240 members in January 2005 with, according to its chairman, an objective of 500 members in 2006. This figure was in fact achieved in July 2005.

The committee for the settlement of labour disputes has in turn made it possible to settle over 60% of disputes submitted to it through mediation, concerning for example unpaid overtime or disagreements over the workload. This result is of interest as experience shows that when a dispute between an employee and their employer is settled by the industrial tribunal, it systematically results in the departure of the company employee whatever the outcome of the judgement.

The joint inter-sectoral unit for health and safety and terms of employment has set up training courses financed by the ESF and the DRTE, given by the CRAM in cooperation with

ergonomists. Thus 7 so-called “reference” people, employees in the craft sector or trade union leaders, were trained in order to set out recommendations to companies and to assist them in preparing the single document for risk evaluation. Of course, these individuals can be considered to be insufficiently prepared at the end of their training session to offer an expert judgement on the situation of their companies in this respect. But it was nevertheless a significant step in the right direction in terms of raising awareness on safety, as well as for structuring the safety procedure. Thus a multi-annual communication plan on the prevention of professional risks has been drawn up.

Lastly, the projects in progress demonstrate the interest of the actions undertaken so far: the introduction of new training courses to increase the number of reference employees and to enable the current reference personnel to increase their skills (practical support, specific courses in response to requirements), the reproduction of this approach in other departments and a project in the Midi Pyrénées to set up a network of “Performance and Prevention” reference employees for the craft sector.

C- An innovative dynamic

The CPAT in Tarn, often pointed to as an example, is an innovative mechanism in various respects.

The Tarn territory is the first in France to adopt a provision dating back to 1982, thereby contributing to the resolution of difficulties faced by businesses in the craft sector at an inter-professional level and on a regional scale.

However, the situation of these 7,000 businesses was somewhat characteristic of the difficulty of introducing collective bargaining in the virtual absence of any trade union representation and the lack of trust between the parties in a sector which has traditionally been on the margins of collective bargaining processes. Of course, social dialogue was undertaken in the department in the 1980s, notably through the creation of a committee for the employment region in South Tarn and a number of joint management bodies for social dialogue in the areas of housing, occupational medicine and professional training. But if this social dialogue succeeded at the end of the 1990s, it is because it provided a response to the shared concerns of a professional organisation and a trade union organisation: the problem of the application of the 35-hour week with the determination to enhance the attractiveness of the traditional crafts sector for the former, and the development of territorial social dialogue and the reduction in working time for the latter. These considerations led to a powerful, long-term mobilisation of both parties (more specifically their representatives who were central personalities in the process) and resulted in social progress.

Another innovative characteristic of this CPAT lies in the field of negotiations. After covering the “traditional” areas for collective bargaining such as the reduction in working time and the prevention of disputes, new subjects were considered such as professional risk prevention, the mutualisation of social rights, the GPEC, etc. Beyond the creation of new rights for employees who had hitherto been excluded, the Committee also initiated a social dialogue dynamic. This resulted in the various partners pursuing their discussions in other fields and the continuity of collective bargaining for a number of companies in Tarn which, in the absence of personnel representatives, were at least partly allowed to slip through the net of sectoral regulation and company negotiations. Some saw in this enlargement of the field of

negotiations the signs of an evolution in territorialised social collective bargaining towards the emergence of territorial governance⁴.

The CPAT has become the privileged forum for discussions and debates. This is demonstrated by the fifty or so meetings which have taken place since 1999 with the constant presence of most members, during which issues relating to safety, social and cultural works and even the operation of the Committee are discussed. These meetings have also provided an opportunity for exchanges with representatives from other departments (social partners and institutions) to relate Tarn's experience and envisage ways of implementing it in other territories.

The development of territorial social dialogue however is restricted by obstacles relating either to functional difficulties or the actors.

The lack of financial resources is an obvious hindrance to the establishment and continuity of a tool such as the CPAT. Current difficulties in Tarn bear witness to this. From the outset, the partners have contributed significant human and financial resources, for example by financing the time spent by employees for the Committee. These resources are insufficient however to undertake structuring actions such as appropriate communication campaigns to inform people of the social rights available to employees in the sector.

Major obstructions also stem from the various actors, their inadequate negotiating skills and limited implication in territorial social dialogue. Trade unions and employers are more willing to resort to sectoral negotiation – the highest negotiation level in France – than local negotiation which has appeared more recently as a new arena for social dialogue. Neither has the establishment of territorial agreements been without its problems in terms of the federations, who saw in it a form of competition for sectors.

In spite of all these difficulties and sometimes modest results of the CPAT, the determination of the actors in the Tarn remains intact. The most active partners –the USAT and the CFDT– still want to share their experience and spread their slogan: “just because employees work for a small businesses doesn't mean they have small social rights”. The aim is to keep the local joint committee going by increasing the number of employees who benefit from it and also by using this tool to implicate craft businesses in social dialogue based on mutualisation.

This ambition is also shared by the Departmental department of employment in Tarn which intends to establish a new local joint committee to cover the other professions, with the CGPME and the UDPME as partners. The trade union and employers' organisations which were at first reticent now appear to have taken the project on board, owing to issues relating to the Act of 4th May 2004 which enables enterprise agreements to depart from legal provisions. This context, which raises fears of additional distortions between large and small businesses, should incite the parties to work together through mutualisation on important issues.

⁴ “Les nouveaux cadres du dialogue social: l'espace européen et les territoires”, Report for the Economic Advisory Committee under the scientific responsibility of Annette Jobert, n°2003/10, September 2005.

PART 2- THE REDEPLOYMENT AND RETRAINING PLATFORM AS A TOOL TO ASSIST EMPLOYEES WHO ARE MADE REDUNDANT

A redeployment and retraining platform was established in December 2005 for the Castres-Mazamet employment area to assist employees who had been made redundant in a particularly depressed local economic context.

This mechanism which was inspired by comparable experiences undertaken in recent years by other regions such as the Pas de Calais (Arrmel), Poitou Charentes (Bressuire), and Choletais, is based in Tarn on an inter-enterprise and inter-professional redeployment unit. Another particular feature of this platform lies in the audience to whom it is addressed: the majority are employees made redundant from small enterprises, sometimes owing to bankruptcy, who, until the adoption of the new personalised redeployment convention mechanism⁵, were not eligible for any specific redeployment assistance.

Whilst the results remain difficult to assess in terms of the redeployment rate owing to the newness of the mechanism (100 entrants at the end of 2005 out of a total of 170 members), the activity and functioning of the platform nevertheless bears witness to a strategy which is concerned to bring about the proper coordination of actors and mechanisms, and generates projects for the territory.

2-1 The context

An employment area facing major difficulties

In less than a decade, the employment area lost around 5,000 jobs in the industry, i.e. nearly 30% of its industrial workforce in a region where the industry accounts for 32% of jobs, compared with 24% nationally. The local industrial fabric is largely based on traditional activities including textiles, for which the workforce in Tarn fell by 40% between 1999 and 2003. The leather and tanning sector has also been affected, with widespread recourse to short-time working and redundancies, as well as numerous restructuring procedures and compulsory liquidations. In the granite sector, which is subject to increasing international competition, many individual redundancies are taking place. Most recently, the prospects were alarming for 2005: some 230 redundancies envisaged for these three sectors.

A precedent: an inter-enterprise textile redeployment unit

This unit was established in 2003 by the South Federation of Textile Industries at the request of the Departmental department of employment. It was then a matter of dealing with the large numbers of redundancies which were taking place in small textile businesses that are not legally obliged to establish an employment safeguard plan. Envisaged for 12 months (March 2003 to April 2004), it concerned 11 enterprises and took charge of 105 employees out of a total of 236 redundancies.

This 45% participation rate is explained by a number of factors: the advanced age of the people made redundant –a high percentage were over 55 years of age– and personal or family considerations as well as scepticism or reticence with regard to advice and training.

The population taken charge of by the unit were characteristic of the general textile population: advanced age and having worked for many years in the company (64% were over 40 years of age, 30% of whom were over 50, whilst 54% of them had been working for over 20 years), a majority of manual workers (80%) with few qualifications.

⁵ This mechanism envisaged by the Social Cohesion Act of 18th January 2005 and entered into force with the decree of 27th May 2005.

The redeployment rate is nearly 70%, redeployment being taken by the DDTE to mean the signing of a permanent contract, a fixed-term contract of more than 6 months, studying on a training course which leads to qualifications or the creation of a business. Of the redeployed employees, we can see that 75% changed activity sector.

Various requests

Given these positive results, the actors all think that the mechanism should continue and therefore called on the DDTE to take into account various requests. The Textile Federation for example wanted a prolongation or renewal of the unit, whilst the CFDT advocated the establishment of a platform on the model tested in Bressuire. The receivers alerted the department of employment to the number of compulsory liquidations affecting small businesses and concerning a limited number of redundancies.

2-2 The introduction of the platform and the redeployment unit

The choice of a platform as an assistance tool for employees resulted from discussions over several months between all the actors concerned by redeployment and a determination to combine the mechanism with the economic revitalisation support programme in the Castres-Mazamet region.

This revitalisation agreement in 2004 whose objective was to federate the economic partners around a regional economic development project included amongst its priority actions measures to support the creation and development of new activities. These cover various areas of assistance to businesses such as support for economic development and investment, but also the “prospective management of employment and training”. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Mazamet was the project manager for this action and as such is associated in the discussions on the methods to assist employees who have been made redundant.

The consultation between the actors resulted in the development of a shared diagnosis based on several main themes and commitments: the need for the strong implication of the public service for employment and in particular the ANPE, the offer of a Regional Council to contribute financially to the redeployment of employees from very small businesses and the need to take a long-term approach in connection with the site contract.

These considerations led to the signature of a convention in December 2004 establishing a redeployment and retraining platform for 12 months on a renewable basis, which was assigned the following objectives:

- To enable employees who have been made redundant from industries, in particular the textile, leather and granite industries, to be redeployed or retrained notably in other professional sectors where there are recruitment difficulties;
- To set up one or several inter-enterprise, inter-professional redeployment units;
- To organise cooperation between all the actors and the site contract.

The platform organised by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry brings together the “enlarged” SPE, i.e. the Prefect, the DDTEFP, the ANPE, the AFPA, the ASSEDIC, the professional trade unions (notably FITS), employees’ trade union organisations, receivers, the Regional Council and the General Council.

It has two committees, the first of which is the Operational Committee (composed of the stakeholders listed above together with the redeployment firms) and a smaller, Technical Monitoring Committee.

The platform is based on an inter-enterprise, inter-professional unit whose implementation is entrusted to a local consultancy firm –Alpha Conseil– whose activity will end in June 2006 after 18 months of activity.

The mechanism which has been established is based on voluntary work. On the one hand, the businesses or receivers who undertake the redundancies can sign an agreement with the CCI so that their employees can benefit from redeployment assistance. On the other hand, employees who have been made redundant undertake through an agreement to actively take part in their redeployment which is planned over 12 months.

The unit was initially designed for 140 members which was subsequently increased to 170. It is funded by the State, the Region, the ESF and a subscription from businesses according to their size (obligatory for companies with over 50 employees) and their financial situation. The unit receives 1,200 euros per member but this amount is increased to 1,400 if the redeployment rate reaches 80%.

The actions undertaken by the redeployment unit are those which are traditionally undertaken for a redeployment activity:

- A study of the personal and professional situation of each employee;
- Registration of each employee who is made redundant in a professional reinsertion procedure for 12 to 18 months, and provision of assistance in finding employment via the redeployment firm;
- Support for the resolution of major or minor social problems as requested by the General Council;
- Support in the definition and achievement of training and enterprise creation or acquisition projects;
- Management and monitoring of individual careers with reports to the Technical Committee every fortnight and the Operational committee every quarter.

The most recent result of the unit's activity dates back to the last Operational Committee meeting of October 2005. Thus at the end of 10 months of operation, the unit took charge of 111 members from 22 enterprises.

These enterprises are essentially small textile companies (85%), which are making less than 10 employees redundant, or are affected by compulsory liquidations.

The members -48% membership rate- include 55% women with an average age of 45, 63% are manual workers and 80% have a training level of 5 or 6.

It is too early to analyse the results in terms of redeployment owing to the progressive and sometimes very recent entry of many members in the mechanism.

If we consider the members who have been assisted for at least 6 months, i.e. 72 employees, the redeployment rate is 33%.

Of the active people, 34% have fixed-term contracts (minimum part-time), 26% have permanent contracts and a similar proportion have temporary work, 12% are working under cheque employ service system and 1% are undertaking training leading to a diploma.

In the last quarter of 2005, 5 new companies joined with 98 redundancies and 2 others are expected, resulting in another 47 people. Membership was possible up until the end of 2005, so that a minimum of 6 months' assistance could be provided by the unit.

As a reminder, the most recent national statistics⁶ indicate that the redeployment rate of employees assisted by redeployment units is 50.6%. Half of the members find fixed-term or permanent posts, temporary work or create their own business.

2-3 A cooperation strategy between actors and structuring perspectives

If it is too early to assess the success of the unit's activity in terms of redeployment, the platform envisaged from the point of view of its current functioning and perspectives reveals a territorial cooperation strategy between the various actors which is achieved in practice by the development of new projects.

A- A cooperative approach

The creation of the platform is accompanied by a determination to establish strong cooperation between the actors and appropriate coordination between all the mechanisms.

Collaboration between actors is achieved principally through relations between the redeployment unit and the public department of employment.

Firstly, the public department of employment requested the redeployment firm selected on the basis of an invitation to tender to subcontract part of its activity to another consultancy firm. There were a number of reasons for this requirement: the determination to make use of a structure specialising in the textile sector, which had an extensive knowledge of the employment region, as it had for example organised the first inter-enterprise textile unit, as well as the decision to combine the networks of both structures to enhance their effectiveness. Although it was rather difficult at first, the cooperation between the two structures is now working well, especially as the number of members has been revised upwards and redeployment times have been significantly reduced for the last members to just 6 months. In practice, the redeployment firms shared the company contracts depending on the location of their head offices, whilst letting the employees decide to register with the firm which was personally most convenient for them.

The relations between the CCI, the redeployment unit and the ANPE were then formalised in a convention. If informal cooperation arose during the functioning of the first textile unit, it was now transcribed within the platform. The actors recognised that such a convention did not necessarily guarantee coordination but nevertheless contributed to the improved visibility of each party's actions. This is true for example in terms of collecting job offers, as local companies do not always understand the successive, repeated requests from redeployment firms, the ANPE or even the Assedic.

Finally, the regular participation of the training financiers (Regional Council and OPCAREG) at the redeployment unit's monitoring committee meetings guaranteed the speed and efficiency required to successfully complete the retraining procedures, which involve for example long or highly specific training courses.

⁶ "Les dispositifs publics d'accompagnement des restructurations depuis 2003", *Premières informations*, N°19.2, May 2005.

The platform also set out to improve the coordination of its intervention with other mechanisms such as the personalised redeployment convention and other procedures leading to the retraining of employees, such as the acquisition of businesses.

With regard to the personalised redeployment convention (CRP), employees who opted for this mechanism during the early stages of the platform's operation (June 2005), were in fact excluded from the redeployment unit mechanism. Since the last Operational Committee meeting in October, the possibility to join the CRP and the redeployment unit has now been established. As such, the respective intervention methods of the actors (Anpe, Assedic, units) are defined to coordinate their actions to these particular members. Assedic informs the CRP beneficiaries that they have 8 days to also join the unit. A coordination sheet is created and retained by the employee, attached to the personalised action plan, to enable each party involved to monitor the beneficiary's progress and facilitate exchanges between institutions. Finally, a breakdown of the work is decided such that a beneficiary does not receive duplicate services. Given the limited number of ANPE agents (2 references for Tarn covering 200 CRP beneficiaries), the unit operates by first making the shared tools available to CRP members (job-seeking assistance, writing a curriculum vitae, etc.) or by initiating retraining projects which are subsequently approved by the technical committee.

As the acquisition of a business is considered as a retraining method, the platform highlights the need to relay the important work of raising awareness begun by the Chamber of Trade in Tarn to facilitate the transmission of companies. The redeployment unit is therefore committed to collecting information from the Chamber of Trades about the businesses to be acquired and to pass it on to their beneficiaries in order to encourage potential candidatures.

B- Structuring projects for the future

At the end of one year of operations, the various actors were wondering what would become of the platform once the redeployment unit's activity stopped as from July 2006, but all of them wanted the mechanism to continue. It was to address another task instead of redeployment, probably involving a prospective employment management objective and territorial competences in order to facilitate retraining in sectors in difficulty for other sectors where jobs are increasing. It was not just about undertaking new GPEC approaches but also coordinating the very high number of existing actions in the department.

This work was initiated under the impetus of the DDTE, which was convinced that the numerous GPEC aids granted to certain businesses, certain sectors –sometimes the same– did not always produce the expected results. The MIDACT was contracted by the DRTE at the regional level to report on all the GPEC procedures.

At a local level, an initial meeting last November made it possible to identify all the GPEC actions initiated by the various operators - UD PME, chamber of trades, CCI, etc.- to establish future directions and decide on new projects, notably in relation to the Castres-Mazamet economic revitalisation convention.

Three of the priority lines of action appeared to be essential:

- Abandoning the undertaking of further awareness missions notably in the textile sector, given the impression that “we are only preaching to the converted”, but instead to focus on interventions which result in plans of action;
- Focusing efforts on multiplication at the sectoral level, and more widely in the region through the financing of individual initiatives in enterprises;

- Working on the transferability of skills which first assumes identifying them and then envisaging which ones are transferable, to which sectors and under what terms.

Projects in progress or under development already demonstrate these objectives.

Thus in the context of the platform, the AFPA is conducting a study on the potential of sectors where employment is increasing, notably in the agricultural industry and mechanics. The objective is twofold: on the one hand, to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the personnel requirements of businesses and on the other, to envisage ways in which the unit's beneficiaries can retrain in these trades.

Another example is a draft agreement with wine growers' trade unions. The wine-growing sector has experienced major difficulties and is confronted with the problem of seasonality and the need for labour. Lengthy, detailed diagnoses (5 days) were conducted in 20 enterprises and resulted in plans of action. The envisaged financing was to come from the State, the Region, the ESF and the profession.

Finally, we would point out the "prospective management of employment and training" action, coordinated by the CCI under the economic revitalisation convention. A representative will be recruited to undertake the data collection and analyse the personnel requirements and establish appropriate initial and ongoing training in the territory.

Therefore, if the actors' intentions have now materialised in the form of projects, there still remain question marks on the future of the platform and the obstacles to its functioning.

The future of the platform

An exceptional authorisation granted by the Ministry for Labour enabled the "inter-enterprise unit" convention to be signed with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, "on an exceptional and experimental basis". Indeed, at the end of the period initially envisaged, i.e. in July 2006, the organisation of the platform will have to be taken from the CCI and handed to another actor. The *Maison Commune de l'Emploi et de la Formation* in Castres, the first to be created in France and referred to as the "Maison de l'emploi Borloo" since last December, has been approached to undertake this function. Such a structure would appear appropriate as it brings together almost all the redeployment actors on the same site. It nevertheless has to succeed in making the "status transition" on the one hand and on the other it will have to demonstrate its capacity to establish genuine coordination between actors in this project, as it has managed to do in the past in other areas.

Potential obstacles

If the long-term future of the platform is an objective shared by the actors, the appointment of a leader may cause controversy. Let us not forget that in 2004, the CFDT supported the project but clearly adopted a position in favour of organisation by the Development Council of the community of the urban area of Castres-Mazamet and not by the CCI.

The extensive mobilisation of the public department of employment is reflected by the establishment of a joint working agreement between the ANPE and the redeployment unit and a strict supervision of the unit's activity. In reality however, groups of actors still remain which bear witness to competition logics and sometimes make it necessary to seek the assistance of an arbiter.

The mobilisation of certain other partners should probably be consolidated. This is the case for training organisations in order to facilitate the somewhat atypical retraining paths or for social partners. If their participation in the various structures in the platform is effective, it

is limited to the presence of two trade union organisations and does not yet appear to play a decisive role in terms of redeployment.

PART 3 - A REGIONAL STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO CHANGES IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR

All of the actors in the Midi-Pyrénées region have taken an active part in recent years in response to changes in the textile industry, the consequences of which are of crucial importance for the territory, owing to the economic significance of the sector. This mobilisation was notably reflected by the establishment of institutional structures and innovative mechanisms. From the existing evaluations of these various interventions, it is now possible to draw conclusion on the scope and results of these actions.

3- 1 The problems of the textile sector

The textile industry has been a historic activity in the Midi-Pyrénées since the 15th century and which expanded rapidly in the 19th century, with a regional speciality, the processing of wool.

Despite the major reduction in the workforce since the 1950s, the region still remains the 4th largest textile centre in France after Rhône-Alpes, Nord-Pas de Calais and Champagne-Ardenne, and is the leading centre in France for the production of carded yarns and woollen type fabrics. Most of the stages of the textile and clothing sector are represented in the Midi Pyrénées: pulling, spinning, knitting, finishing and clothing manufacturing.

The regional textile activity is mainly focused (70% of production units and 90% of the workforce) in 2 territories: South Tarn (Castres-Mazamet employment area) and the Pays d'Olmes (Ariège)⁷ which has a significant impact on local development.

During the 1990s, the textile and clothing sector suffered an industrial crisis as a result of various factors, including the phenomenon of relocation, the progressive dismantling of multi-fibre agreements then the breakdown of customs barriers, the massive import of textile products, etc.

The consequences on regional employment are considerable: some 80 textile businesses in Midi-Pyrénées compared with 130 in 1995 and half of the workforce in the sector has disappeared in 10 years. The workforce in the textile sector was 4,779 employees in 2004.

In spite of the modernisation of the production tool, the economic situation declined greatly in 2005, essentially in the areas of weaving and clothing and prospects are alarming: employment safeguard plans and company closures are occurring one after another and it is thought that there will be around 10% fewer jobs in this sector by the end of the year⁸.

3-2 The institutional framework for the regional strategy

⁷ Some 60% of businesses in Tarn and 30% in Ariège respectively

⁸ “La filière textile tarnaise et ariégeoise subit une nouvelle hémorragie” in Les Echos, 21st October 2005.

In this global context and taking into account its impact on Midi-Pyrénées, the regional actors have over time drawn up a framework for intervention which defines and introduces structuring actions for the entire textile sector. This framework is essentially based on an agreement and an operational technical committee, a local production system and the very recent introduction of a textile piloting committee.

Thus in 2003 a framework agreement, signed by the Prefect of the Region, the Chairman of the Regional Council and the Chairman of the Federation of Textile Industries in the South (FITS), defined the strategic directions of the textile sector for the 2003/2006 period. It forms part of a series of agreements, the first of which was signed in 1997 and a 2002 charter in which the various actors –FITS, Departmental Development Agencies for Tarn and Ariège, Chambers of Commerce and Industry– decided to discuss and act together in the textile sector.

These directions have five principal objectives: building alternative strategies and assisting company directors to adapt better to market evolutions, to undertake innovative approaches, to develop markets particularly for export, to preserve and develop know-how, skills and human resources and promote the sector's image.

An operational technical committee for textiles is responsible for implementing this agreement: it brings together some twenty people (representatives from the State, territorial communities, representatives of social partners, economic development structures and consular establishments) which meet once a quarter.

Furthermore, a Local Productive System (SPL) “Pays d'Olmes - Montagne Noire” was created and labelled by Datar in 2000 in order to assist businesses in the sector to develop and maintain activity. It became a forum for exchange and proposals which notably brings together the companies represented by the FITS –SPL project manager– the textile Technopole (Créalaine, IFTH, Fortex and Forthac), the State and the Regional Council, along with local and regional economic development actors.

Finally, a textile steering committee has just been created. The originators of this initiative are politicians in Ariège who were called on by the social partners concerned about the evolution of the Michel Thierry group (European leader in car seat coverings) and its consequences for local jobs, and asked the Region to organise a round table to discuss changes in the textile sector.

This committee will include around forty people (representatives from the State, territorial communities, members of the Senate and the national assembly, representatives of social partners, economic development structures and consular establishments) along with several competent personalities.

It will be responsible for evaluating actions undertaken in the context of the regional textile agreement of 2003 (“Arrêt sur image”) and making new proposals in order to maintain this industry and its jobs in the region. The principal missions of this committee should be to jointly seek ways of adapting businesses to enable them to manufacture new products, propose assistance measures for enterprises, offer employees training opportunities and redeployment where appropriate. It is also responsible for proposing directions for revitalisation and diversification of activities in the relevant territories when they are affected by redundancies following the closure of textile companies.

3-3 Mechanisms to support the regional strategy

In order to achieve all of these objectives, the regional strategy is based on a number of mechanisms, some of which would appear to be innovative: either these mechanisms are aimed at helping managers to identify strategic choices for their enterprises or they facilitate the introduction of human resources management tools or contribute to enhancing the sector's image.

A- “Competitive Vision”: assistance in the development of alternative strategies

This project, sponsored by Créalaine, the contracting authority, Espace Textile, the programme designer, consultancy firms specialising in strategy and Fortex for its implementation, receives joint funding from the European Union, the Midi-Pyrénées Region and the DRIRE.

The programme's objectives are to improve the competitiveness and performance of textile businesses confronted with the need to develop new activities to face the challenges of global competition. It also aims to contribute to joint discussions for example through sharing experiences among company managers from the same sector and even prospective studies. In practical terms, it involves:

- providing enterprises with analysis and decision-making tools in the context of Executive Seminars;
- undertaking a strategic diagnosis for each business, over a 3-month period involving 6 half-day sessions per company. With the help of a consultant, the managers should highlight the strengths and weaknesses of their business in order to identify and formalise operational action plans;
- assisting them over a 6 to 8 month period (4 half days), in the practical application of these procedures and tools, with a commitment for results;

The 2004 programme benefited 20 enterprises employing 1,200 employees, i.e. 25% of textile workers in the Midi Pyrénées. These interventions were described as highly satisfactory by all the partners and achieved results at two levels.

Firstly, following the diagnosis, companies positioned themselves within new approaches: either diversification and change of business (e.g. development towards new markets or new products, creation of an R&D centre for diversification or a creation studio for the luxury sector), or even repositioning the product/market pair (e.g. refocusing a collection on two brands, prospecting a new market segment, launching a brand or improving the design of a collection), or an aggressive commercial approach on a market segment identified during the diagnosis (e.g. structuring a commercial approach around traditional markets or emerging markets). According to company directors, this programme has made it possible to “assist projects which they had had in mind but had never been able to put into practice”.

The programme then encourages enterprises to make their organisation evolve (e.g. recruiting grey matter in 4 of them) or their management system (e.g. a delegation of tasks making it possible to devote time to strategic reflection).

This positive report led to the “Vision Compétitive” action being renewed for a further 10 companies in 2006.

B- “Tex Ader”: a working group to search for new markets

This approach is part of the “Plan of actions for the development of regional subcontracting companies 2” (ADER plan) which was set up in 2005 following the impetus

from the DRIRE in order to assist the SME subcontracting network in the aeronautics sector to respond to major growth prospects, combined with industrial change in the sector.

This working group is organised by Agate, the economic expansion agency in Tarn, to help textile companies diversify their markets and seek new technical and composite markets. The idea was that many areas and notably the aeronautics sector consume textiles and they could constitute niche markets for textile industries, especially since these markets which use new fibres are expanding globally by 7 to 8% and offer higher margins than traditional products.

The working group is currently completing an initial phase, after which diagnosis will be conducted by all the actors on new areas of use and potential consumers for textile products. The companies which are willing and have the potential for development now have to be convinced by an industrial vision. Thus access to the aeronautics market is not easy: it involves identifying components manufacturers, research offices, studying specifications and probably making major investments.

C- “Territorial management of age”: mobilisation of Committees in the employment area around the European EQUAL programme

This programme was established during the 2002-2004 period in response to specific human resources management problems which the textile industries in the department were facing at that time:

- personnel with many years of service in the company;
- retirements among 10 to 15% of the skilled workforce over the next four years;
- technical profiles which take a long time to acquire: between 5 and 6 years and difficulties in the transmission of know-how.

If these issues have evolved since then –people who have retired have not been replaced, the key point being to increase the skills of the remaining employees– this project is still worth presenting owing to its objectives, the methods by which it was implemented and the results achieved.

The initiative for this project came from five committees in the Midi Pyrénées employment basin which were mobilised around the European EQUAL programme. For the purposes of reminder, this EQUAL community initiative programme is the European Social Fund instrument to combat all forms of discrimination in the area of work and employment.

Two objectives motivated involvement in this project: firstly, to make company managers and socio-economic actors aware of the issue of renewal of the active population, through questions of extending professional life, exclusion, the recognition of skills and subsequently the development of territorial prospective management policies for ages and skills.

Each employment area has chosen to undertake the experiment in an activity sector which has a historic presence in its territory and in which the issue of prospective age management appeared to be crucial. Tarn has undertaken two experiments, one in South Tarn in the textile sector, the other in North Tarn in the construction sector.

The experiment undertaken in the textile sector is innovative in the sense that it combines individual and collective actions but also because of the dynamic which it created in the sector and the results obtained.

Diagnoses were therefore conducted in 5 companies, making it possible to formalise their functioning, identify employees' skills and guarantee the transfer of skills.

Furthermore, the operation has made it possible to undertake reflection on the profession in terms of the tools to be used in the territory and the professional sector in order to resolve common problems. The programme for example alerted the Textile Federation to the demographic problem in this sector: of course, it had expected difficulties but had no objective facts to apprehend and assess their impact. In the context of this programme for example, detailed analysis of the age pyramid per sector and trade was conducted.

Everyone agreed that the project successfully raised the awareness of all the actors to the need for establishing an age management policy. Furthermore, the methods used to develop and implement the project –iterative project development confronting various sources: companies', employees', sectoral and territorial requirements, sound collaboration between actors through numerous working meetings and exchanges which resulted in two European conferences on the subject of “working with age”, numerous publications and communication campaigns– have promoted the development of a strong partnership around this experiment, which has also led to the revitalisation of employees within companies (research and development, training and action).

The action ultimately had a leveraging effect on the territories in terms of human resources management. The Equal programme encouraged the signing of further conventions with the State and the Region, and the DRIRE even introduced actions for the preservation and transmission of the know-how of senior workers.

In this way, the economic context of the textile sector has evolved since the Equal programme. A regional growth context in which it is important to anticipate in order to deal with an increase in activity has replaced a crisis situation. Local businesses are no longer anxious about how they will replace the workforce who are retiring or recruit young people, but are more concerned to develop the skills of their workforce and contribute to the redeployment of employees who are made redundant from the sector.

D – “Travel journal of the textile world”: a communication campaign to promote the sector's image

The textile sector is suffering generally from an inadequate image whilst now being required to introduce the most advanced techniques. Based on this fact, actions were initiated to correct this handicap, to reinforce the identity of the regional textile sector in national and international markets and to promote the recruitment of skills.

Thus at the initiative of the Tarn economic expansion agency, a “travel journal of the textile world” was published, financed by the Ministry for Industry. It was an indirect communication campaign, an innovative way of promoting the know-how of a sector in difficulty.

This communication campaign, which was viewed with scepticism by the Textile Industry Federation when it was launched, was then hailed for its results. The work made it possible to see the textile sector in a new light, not only envisaged as a sector in decline, but also as an activity with a wealth of technical and creative know-how which has prospects for the future. Furthermore, this action was extended through an exhibition proposed by the Departmental Textile Museum.

3-4 A few lessons to learn from this strategy...

This regional textile strategy illustrates how a number of actors, in a sector undergoing change which had crucial implications for the territory, were mobilised around an approach to structure the local development of the sector. Initiated under the impetus of the DRIRE in order to guarantee its permanence and the development of enterprises in the sector, this strategy focusing on all forms of innovation - technological, commercial, organisational and managerial– was given practical expression through the development of a specific institutional framework.

Although this concerted approach met with resistance, it has now achieved success even when the sector experienced a particularly difficult situation in the region in 2005.

The commitment of the actors in this approach focusing on innovation required a lot of time, as a major evolution in mentalities was necessary amongst the managers of local businesses. Strong resistance to change, a certain tendency to deny the structural difficulties in the sector and to only consider the short-term situation, a confident view of the future and an inability to work collectively were all obstacles which had to be overcome in order to apprehend the changes and achieve a shared diagnosis of the situation. The very concept of innovation for example was understood differently by the various parties: for businesses, it meant adapting to simple changes in trends, whilst State representatives envisaged more radical evolutions such as the search for new functionalities and new markets. It is also interesting to point out that this state of mind was more predominant in Tarn than Ariège, probably owing to a different managerial culture in these two territories. Tarn is characterised by the presence of small businesses belonging to local families, infused with a long family tradition and managed by the founders or their descendants. Ariège is structured differently, with the presence of large groups which initiate orders and companies employing a larger average workforce (30 employees on average compared with 17 in Tarn).

Faced with this situation, the regional strategy can be analysed as an approach which structures assistance to change that successfully promotes the training of managers and the establishment of joint actions.

The “*Vision Compétitive*” programme for example which resulted from this choice was seen to have a particularly structuring effect. It not only provided support to managers in defining a development strategy for their businesses, but contributed through joint work to the creation of a group dynamic and a certain shared identity. It is difficult to appreciate the immediate repercussions of these structuring actions but certain results are nevertheless visible.

Thus, under the undeniable influence of an institution (an innovation leadership unit piloted by a representative), a partnership, cooperative logic has been established. The results are practical, such as a recent working meeting between the managers of a research laboratory and four company managers, which enabled the company managers to discover that they were not competitors in the same market and consequently to decide to hold further meetings to share their know-how.

Finally, this regional textile strategy bears witness to a complex association of actors which has been built up over the years. Time is needed to produce results – the approach was initiated by the regional authorities in 1995 – but also to mobilise all the actors. If the mobilisation of companies is sometimes difficult to achieve, so was the diligent presence of trade union representatives within the various committees, which occurred in response to particular events. The recent mobilisation of employee representatives from the Michel Thierry group in Ariège upon the announcement of the outsourcing of two production units

demonstrates this. It has gained the support of local politicians, to the extent that a round table was held to discuss changes in the sector, which resulted in the creation of a steering committee for the textile sector. This new organisation should no doubt be welcomed, owing to its particularly broad composition and evident political awareness, but by the same token it will bring about greater complexity in the interaction of the participants.

The experiences described in this case study illustrate the way in which a territory apprehends the changes confronting it through a logic which involves both anticipation and assistance. In spite of their diversity, the actions implemented in Tarn present similarities in terms of the innovative nature of the approaches taken, the tools deployed and the results obtained as well as the obstacles which obstruct their development.

The broad mobilisation of actors around the restructurings and their consequences for businesses, employees and the territory was the first aspect of the innovative nature of the actions undertaken in Tarn and more broadly in the Midi Pyrénées region. In spite of a sometimes unfavourable context –a traditional craft sector little inclined to undertake collective negotiation, an economic situation which was not favourable for redeployment, a textile sector subject to structural and short-term difficulties– a cooperative territorial strategy developed between the various actors.

This strategy was undeniably facilitated by the determination of certain actors, notably the social partners and State representatives. Their commitment and implication were crucial to the initialisation, continuity and success of their joint work. The fact that they share the same concerns also contributed to the emergence of a joint diagnosis and promoted this cooperation.

The tools introduced in Tarn were also innovative. The local joint committee is a regulatory method which is rarely used to deal with difficulties in a sector at an inter-professional level and on a territorial scale. The redeployment and retraining platform is also an unconventional method to assist employees who have been made redundant. The assistance structures and mechanisms for change in the textile sector including the recent textile piloting committee are approaches which are not widely used.

The effects of this mobilisation of actors and tools also appear to be innovative. Whilst certain results seem relatively modest for various reasons –limited effectiveness of agreements implemented under the CPAT, redeployment rate still poor as well as the alarming situation of textile companies– others are largely positive. For example, social dialogue conducted with the CPAT created new rights for employees in the craft sector but above all triggered a dynamic of exchanges and discussions in companies where negotiation had been totally absent, covering new issues beyond the traditional scope of collective bargaining. Another example is the approach for structuring local development in the textile sector and assistance for change which enabled companies to successfully invest in new markets.

The analysis of these innovative approaches and mechanisms also highlights obstacles to their development. Beyond the inherent difficulties of each mechanism mentioned previously, these obstacles generally result from the diversity of the actors concerned, who have to be mobilised over the long term in spite of the wide range of values and interests they represent. Institutions are often concerned by administration logics, enterprises are reticent to work together owing to a situation of competition and trade union organisations lack staff to guarantee continued representation in the various committees.

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