



# FRENCH RESISTANCE TO ECOLOGY

## Can ecology positively transform the French model?

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The conception of nature remains characterised by the role embodied by technical progress. The State-centred organisation of social contract limits the function of local authorities and experimentation. The formation of French elites and public decisions' criteria only consider ecological concerns through a sector-specific or secondary aspect. Ecology is still perceived as a constraint and not as an opportunity.

These French characteristics make contradictions even sharper between the transformation of the economic and social model that is carried out by ecology (especially regarding growth, energy, tax authorities, agriculture...), and public policies led by different governments. The weakness of intermediary bodies, the absence of political compromise, French ambivalence towards European institutions and in particular towards globalization, difficulties to constitute enlarged political majorities – which can be seen in the tensions between the Environmentalist and Socialist parties – make it more difficult to establish an ambitious and concrete roadmap for the necessary transitions. Eventually, the possible links between ecology, economy and companies, even though they are more discussed and developed nowadays, remain an issue for which negative opinions generally win over: greenwashing accusations on one side, unrealism on the other.

To go beyond this resistance, two main orientations are presented:

1. **Organize a concrete ecological democracy:** political backing during the whole term, enlarged political majorities, simplification and increase of consultation modes and citizens' decisions locally, debate on the representativeness of NGOs and companies, by learning from the “Grenelle de l'environnement” experience and the national debate on energy transition.
2. **Increase the number of tools to give ecological initiatives the extent they deserve to build a new pattern:** creation of scheduling and ecological forecast tools, encouraging experimentations and local innovations, professional training on the ecological issues at stake, for all sectors and especially those where senior officials are the most represented etc., and associating political vision and economic and social creations.

This working paper, which explores the reasons why French society resists to ecology, underlines the possibility of an ecology “à la française”, relying on the French capacities of social and economic innovation and on a tangible definition of the role of the State, whose strategy and intervention is often called upon but rarely put into action.

### OVERVIEW OF THE WORKING PAPER

The ecological dimension is essential for French economy and society. However, its role in our country shows too many paradoxes.

French society is more and more sensitive to environmental issues. Environmental-friendly projects increase at local scale through citizens' initiatives, programs created by local authorities, innovations launched by companies; public mobilization is developing around COP21, the international conference to fight against global warming with key issues at stake.

But at the same time, French resistance to ecology is considerable.

