The financial crisis which is shaking the world economy is only an evidence of deeper disturbances in the management of our societies at all levels-global, regional, national and local. As indicates the NGO PEKEA since its creation, with many other social actors and associations, the economic paradigms on which most decisions are based have eliminated the central role of individuals, and rely on erroneous and abstract models. The ultraliberal phasis of capitalism in the last decades has made this situation explosive. Consequently, many decision makers which up to now were not ready to listen to this type of criticism become more attentive, and look actively for solutions towards new equilibrium.

There is a high risk that these new solutions only be a patch up of the previous ones. The proposals made at the G20 meeting—a bit more regulation in international finance, new accounting norms, more responsible and accountable financial notation agencies—are a case in point. The study recently given by the Stiglitz Commission to the French Government about a new measurement of progress seems also to limit itself to a review of existing alternative indicators to GDP at national level, with a better integration of wealth distribution and ecological development across generations.

These limited proposals seem to meet difficulties in finding the required political consensuses to be efficiently applied. Moreover, they leave aside the fundamental criticisms addressed to the present functioning of our societies.
The most extreme contradictions between the policy signals sent by capitalism in its present phase and the aspirations of the citizens lie at the local level. Locally elected governments in charge of implementing international and national policy decisions appreciate every day the many contradictions between these measures and the preferences of the citizens they are representing.

The two authors of this contribution relate a research experience going on in Bretagne (France) with the participation of local authorities and associations of citizens on building local indicators for societal progress. They recall the theoretical foundations of this approach, and underline its span and limits.

Key words: social indicators, participative processes, communication, transactions, democracy