

The Michel Serres system to make society – Natural Contract and one health

In brief, *We depend on what depends on us* (Michel Serres): imagining a partnership, a symbiosis with the Earth. Symbiosis is a shared health. Health is a powerful political idea and tool because it has a triple meaning: a metaphor, a system of values, and a diagnosis. The proposed intellectual construction articulates a narrative, a philosophy of action, a method, simple ideas and actions. The whole constitutes an actionable and unifying political project. Toward a shared decency.

How to make society today? How to make future transformations socially just and environmentally responsible? How to grasp the scope of many initiatives and proposals (the big national debate in France or the puzzle of the Sustainable Development Goals)? First of all, there is the need of putting them in the perspective of a reconstruction utopia.

From the blueprint of the *Natural Contract* argued by Michel Serres, the *Association for the Natural Contract* proposes a narrative, a philosophy of action and a method. The system is supposed to inspire the societal support necessary for the generalization of the ongoing transformation initiatives.

What makes this approach different from others? Starting from simple questions and ideas, we design a system of thought and action centered on resources and health that makes both social and ecological change desirable. First simple idea: ***put the issue of resources, including human resources, at the heart of all agendas.***

The change - radical and peaceful, builds on social justice and ecological responsibility. It calls, second simple idea, for ***a fair redistribution of resources to meet the vital needs of everyone while preserving nature***, our living environment and source of well-being. To do this, third simple idea, our system thrives on the ***knowledge and know-how born through the alliance of open science and local practices and traditions.***

Below we detail the Michel Serres system and explain why the narrative, the philosophy of action, and the method are inextricable in making society change. This implies profound changes in mainstream institutions, practices, technologies, policies, lifestyles, and thinking.

The narrative – symbiosis with the Earth as mutual health

The Natural Contract is the frame of thought for a new coexistence with the Earth and the living: *We depend on what depends on us*, says Michel Serres. The narrative changes our understanding of the relationships to the world and engages to imagine a partnership, a symbiosis with the Earth. The alternative to plundering the planet. Fourth simple idea, this symbiosis ***defines a new conception and practice of health***, consistent with the fact that the social and the environment are intimately related.

A philosophy of action – health for nature, society, and people make one health

The Natural Contract is translated into everyday life in terms of “one health”: a shared health, insofar as the health of the people only makes sense as long as it is part of a healthy nature and a healthy society. Humanity and nature make the pair. Health, the fifth simple idea, is therefore ***a universal value*** and a prerequisite for a social, ecological and solidarity pact. However, inequalities in public health are primarily of political nature. This is why this approach:

- encompasses all socio-environmental issues and concerns all social categories and public institutions;
- mobilizes all the political and legal instruments that the pact of a socio-ecological transition implies in redefining the societal priorities and the corresponding public policies enabling their implementation. Food (public health), agriculture (social health) and nature (ecological health) are becoming the top priorities. In consequence, the issues of climate, energy, biodiversity, etc. lack so far a convincing narrative and the methods behind must be reconsidered. In fact, all these issues are first of all developmental challenges;
- makes it possible to think the long-term and the well-being of future generations through a responsible stewardship of the commons and an equitable allocation of resources for all within the ecological limits of the planet ;
- allows the multitude of alternative initiatives operating at different territorial scales to embrace this framework.

The above / what precedes, sixth simple idea, highlights ***the imperative of a responsible management of the commons with no net degradation of the environment.***

The resources, too discrete geopolitical agendas

Resources, seventh simple idea, a concern and daily stress of each person, are ***the matrix of economic and political power systems***, of history's ups and downs. They now constitute a hidden global challenge of our time and are unsustainably managed at all levels. The inclusive approach of resources (physical, human, digital, institutional, financial, etc.) and their responsible management is the most direct manifestation / expression of one health, both socially and ecologically. Indeed, eighth simple idea, ***the goods and services of nature are the ultimate foundation of life and health.***

To address / tackle these problems, public policies in the service of the public interest must mobilize the rights and duties of individuals and communities in order to ensure a socially fair re-allocation of resources in a spirit of environmental responsibility. To facilitate their implementation, the one health approach is the key to social acceptance.

Natural Contract – one health: the method

Our approach is built on the alliance of sciences (natural sciences, legal and political studies, complex systems) and local and traditional knowledge and know-how. Because health is a whole, ninth idea, we ***dissociate nothing when translating the theory of one health into practice.***

To that end, we offer:

- a simple, non-prescriptive but constraining conceptual frame designed to allow a great deal of latitude and freedom of realization on the ground;
- an accompanying know-how with a charter, diagnostic tools, and protocols;
- for companies, insurances and investors, the opportunity to better know and understand the issues and the socio-ecological environments in which they operate, and to integrate the approach into their actions.

Act for and by the Natural Contract

By associating individual and collective rights and duties, the natural contract - one health system aims at ***enacting the universal social protection floor***, idea number ten. This is a prerequisite to the societal acceptability of the requirements and values that come with the foundation of a new ecological and social pact. This implies moving lines at all levels of the society, with particular attention to the legal aspects. To do this, we chose to act first at local scales to:

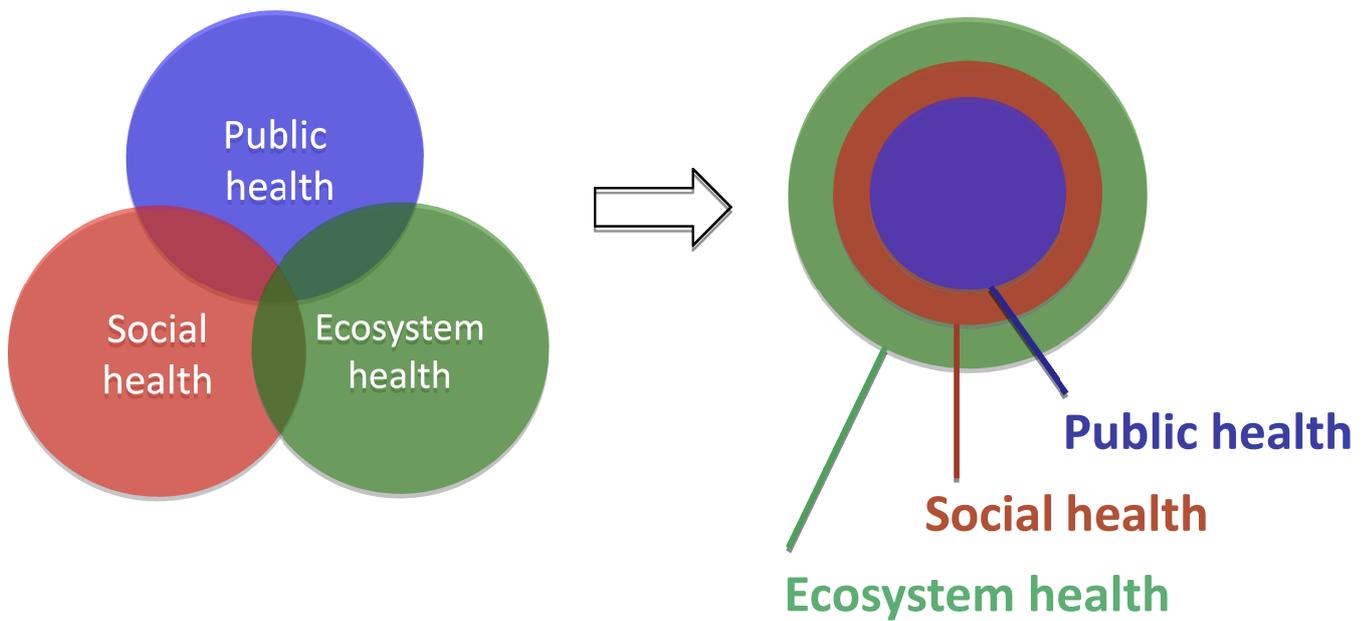
- create synergy between existing initiatives and alternative experiments;
- support initiatives, experiences, projects carried out at the level of communities, such as counties, cities, metropolis or provinces.
- offer an educational model based on a peaceful relationship with the Earth and between humans.

The coordination of the *Association for the natural contract*, supported by Michel Serres: François Collart Dutilleul, Patrick Degeorges, Gérard Escher, Stephane Grumbach, Olivier Hamant, Ioan Negrutiu, Fabrice Riem

To know more:

The « Natural Contract » - (https://www.press.umich.edu/9725/natural_contract)

<http://institutmichelserres.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article598>; <http://institutmichelserres.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article593>; <http://institutmichelserres.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article599>



Note

Ongoing projects (examples)

The universal social protection floor – legal and diplomatic challenges

Natural Contract - one health, the Biovallée territory-lab

Young people - free projects (food democracy, universal civic service, bees, ...)

One health - Diagnostic Tools and Protocols for environmental evaluation / Conference 2020

One health - the Lyon-Geneva axis

One health - Nutrition and the Immune System, Cross-Sector Approach

Model Law for Healthy Eating and Sustainable Agriculture

Model Law to frame the global chemical disruption (impulsing chemical simplification)

Institute of Simple Questions (IQSi)

The school of life