

Cooperating to renovate concept and practical application

Before we dive in, let's share a story...

The Traveller and the Stonemasons

A traveller walks along a path. Along the way, she meets a stonemason. He hammers the stone with his chisel and mallet mechanically, **looking tired**, with a somber gaze. When the traveller asks what he's doing, he replies, "***I'm shaping a stone***".

Continuing her journey, she encounters another stonemason doing the same work with the same tools. However, this one wears a small smile, **occasionally whistling**. He executes the task with more joy, less mechanically. When asked, he replies, "***I'm shaping a stone to build a great wall***".

Approaching a third stonemason, she finds him **incredibly happy**, radiant, singing while shaping stones with the same tools. When she asks what he's doing, he responds with a radiant smile, "***I'm building a cathedral***".

** In this tale of 2024, the cathedral is secular, celebrating the beauty and magic of the untouched nature of the Provencal region of France. .*

The moral of the story is that to cooperate is **to be a co-author of a common work, to participate in something greater than oneself**.

At Ressorts, our secular cathedral is striving for a habitat with zero negative impact and zero struggles with bill payments. To achieve this, **we deeply believe in cooperation among building stakeholders**.

But **what does cooperation entail?** Does it mean having a shared account? Forming partnerships? Sharing our machinery? How far do we push cooperation in a competitive entrepreneurial environment? We found ourselves pondering these questions, so we decided to step back and explore the concept of cooperation in our sector.

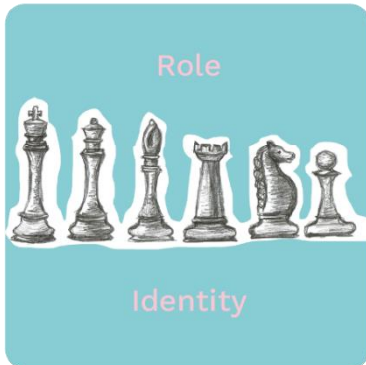
In this document, we share our conclusions: 7 action principles organized around the prism created by the action research centre [Institut des Territoires Coopératifs](#).

Each action principle contains two different, sometimes complementary, sometimes opposing logics.

Cooperation arises between these two logics, and, **spoiler alert, dialogue and time are always necessary**.

7 dialogues of cooperation in the building renovation sector

Source : Institut des Territoires Coopératifs (InsTerCoop)



Role and Identity

The principle

Cooperation is about more than just knowing your role in a company, structure, or project – it's about understanding who you are as a person, rich in humanity, values, and beliefs. As InsTerCoop wisely puts it, *“it is not the roles that have things to say, but the people.”*

Beyond this, sharing our emotions is crucial. Let's return to the essence of the word 'emotion' – **what moves us**. It's about identifying what drives us, what gets us out of bed in the morning. Sharing these motivations can only strengthen and deepen the bonds of trust among those working together.

Applied to renovation

In the building sector, we recognise the importance of human relationships and the trust that emerges during the construction of a project. So, before diving in, why not take the time to share the project's common identity among all stakeholders? Link what each person wishes to contribute, both through their identity and their role.

Imagine a conversation that brings together identity and role:

I participate in this project because...

... I am energised by the idea of leading an innovative project.

... I enjoy working with the participating organisations, which I trust.

... I want to tackle the challenges of decarbonising the industry.

By **sharing what motivates us** and **understanding each other's roles**, we create a stronger, more united team ready to transform the future of renovation together.

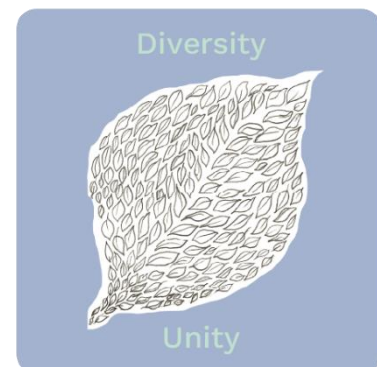
Diversity and Unity

The principle

Building a common project involves various goals and objectives, and it should celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. While we aim for large-scale renovation, achieving this requires a multitude of skills.

Applied to renovation

Business consortiums exemplify unity through diverse, complementary expertise to deliver high-quality renovations. **Each entity contributes to a robust whole.**



Consider a prefabricated façade panel : a complex, high-performance unit made from diverse expertise and materials. **The strength of off-site construction lies in this collaborative diversity.**

By embracing both diversity and unity, **we advance innovative, large-scale renovations**, benefiting from each participant’s unique contributions, driving us towards sustainable, energy-efficient homes.

Objectives and Constraints



The principle

“The ability to imagine solutions depends on the ability not to be trapped by problems.” (InsterCoop).

Often, a project will be disrupted by obstacles and uncertainties that can become overwhelming. These operational challenges should not overshadow the objectives we aim to achieve. **Cooperation relies heavily on a constant dialogue between operational constraints and the set goals.**

Applied to renovation

We know that the constraints linked to housing renovation are inherent to the project. **The key is to make these visible to other consortium members:** *“I can’t meet the quoted prices”, “I’m behind on this production”, “I need help with this issue”*. Sharing these challenges unlocks obstacles and builds trust. Through discussion, partners working together can gain perspective, overcome constraints, and stay focused on the performance goals of the renovation.

By maintaining open communication, we can tackle obstacles effectively and ensure that our projects stay aligned with their intended objectives, ultimately leading to successful and efficient renovations.

Resists against and Move towards

ALERT. Stop everything. Read this carefully : **it’s our most crucial point.**

Defining your intention in any project greatly simplifies the cooperation process with your peers.

Navigating together and building a common goal requires aligning in the same direction, engaging in dialogue, and finding consensus. **Cooperation itself is a project that demands time and collective effort.** Resisting proposals or improvements only slows the process.



Four cooperative postures towards a project (thanks to [Fertiles](#), French school of cooperation):

I engage with : we co-create and work together.

I support : I back the project, give energy, and promote it.

I oppose : I block, refuse, and cause failure.

I disengage : I let it pass and withhold my energy.

Applied to renovation

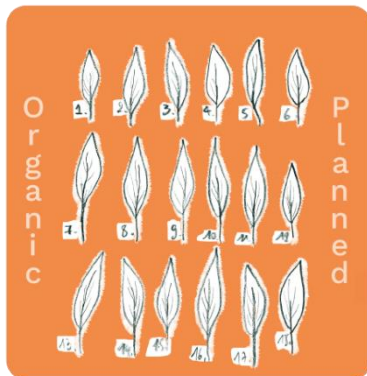
The building sector faces the challenge of working together towards effective renovations, with all parties (owners, consultants, contractors, manufacturers) on board. We work together, we co-labour.

Conversely, collaborating on a project but **rejecting proposals without improvement**, or not supporting peers, despite having the same goals, **wastes time and complicates projects**.

Cooperation means aligning in the same direction, making constraints visible, and co-operate towards a zero-carbon society where paying bills isn't a struggle.

Practically, it means shifting from the habitual "yes, but..." – **which blocks progress** – to "yes, and..." – **which supports and improves the work**. However, resistance and blockages are sometimes necessary to drive change.

Organic and planned



The principle

Here, "organic" means working with **instinct and trust**, while acknowledging that every cooperative project also requires planning.

Applied to Renovation

Consider the **long-term performance guarantees** that require clear frameworks for cooperation and decision-making. These guarantees span years, making it impossible to predict all contextual changes (political, economic...). Thus, adaptation is

necessary, **a blend of organic cooperation and rigorous planning**.

Could this adaptability to global and unprecedented challenges be the very definition of **resilience**?

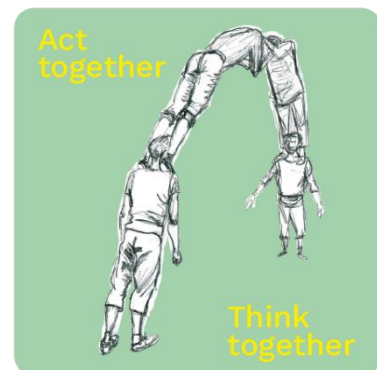
Act together and thinking together

The principle

Thinking together enables us to act together differently. It involves sharing updates and doubts, shifting from "**I do for**" to "**I do with**" and blending reflection with concrete actions daily.

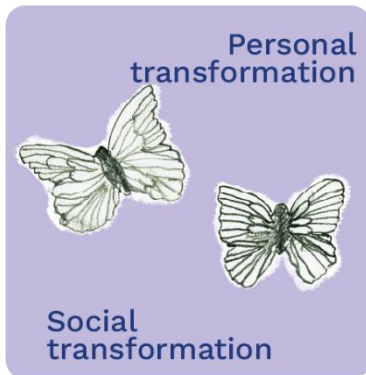
Applied to renovation

An energy renovation project unites companies that execute and technical entities that design the project. To collaborate effectively, **they must bridge their activities throughout the**



renovation process — from the initial diagnosis to the airtightness tests, and even through the performance guarantee phase post-delivery. This connection ensures that each trade's challenges and expertise are considered from the design stage. Renovation is a significant challenge that requires the constant cooperation of all trades, from drawing sketches to completing the construction.

Personal Transformation and Social Transformation



Cooperation, especially constant dialogue, initiates personal, structural, and even collective transformation within companies or partnerships.

Expanding this view, individuals across various sectors, from tertiary to industrial and communal, come together on a territorial scale to act and build collectively. Beyond personal ambitions, **housing pioneers consistently practice decentring and stepping back, akin to a hot air balloon flight gaining altitude to change perspective and identify transformation pathways in their territory.**

What skills are necessary? What raw materials are available? What existing solutions exist? With which structures could I cooperate to progress together?

At Ressorts, from our hot air balloon, through European projects, we hope to contribute to transforming the construction sector towards a desirable future for all. This transformation involves collective efforts to combat energy poverty and climate change.

How do you organize cooperation in your projects?

This article was written by the Ressorts teams as part of the Energiesprong approach deployment in Europe, specifically through the [LIFE Cosme Reno](#) project, which aims to develop cooperation among SMEs in the construction sector for Zero Net Energy Housing.

Special thanks to Anne and Patrick for their approval and to Sandrine Abayou for the self-explanatory illustrations. We reference their work here: [\[link to the website\]](#).

Written by the Ressorts team