

WORKGROUP ON A SOLIDARITY SOCIOECONOMY
Workshop on a Global Vision of SSE
WSSE Dakar Meeting – November 2005

EXCHANGING VISIONS
OF A SOLIDARITY SOCIOECONOMY
GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS

This synthesis-document draws the essential definitions related to a SSE from the various texts included in the Work Document on Vision. It is the result of the collective work that went on during the recent years in the electronic forum of the Workshop on Vision (WV). It is meant to serve for consultation and discussion during the WSSE Dakar meeting. All that this document contains is open for discussion. The Workshop participants believe that the conception and definition of a global vision of SSE is an on-going process because it emerges from the praxis of SSE activists and researchers, never to be closed into any doctrinaire theoretical formula.

This document did not take into account the contribution of the SSE practitioners who were interviewed by WV participants. We prepared a separate document summarizing their views and believe that they must be seriously taken into account by the WSSE Dakar Meeting participants.

By decision of the Facilitating Committee of the WV, we also collectively prepared a Matrix in which we cross the main values of a SSE with the most relevant socioeconomic areas. These three materials constitute a whole that we hope will contribute substantially to the advancement of theorization and reflection on what SSE is, intends to be and can become.

SOLIDARITY SOCIOECONOMY – Solidarity-based socioeconomy are the several forms whereby urban and rural people organize themselves to create their own sources of work or to assess basic goods and services at the lowest possible costs and best quality, on the basis of mutual help, uniting the individual and the collective, and informing their practices with the value of solidarity.

A Solidarity-based Socioeconomy recognizes humankind, both the individual and social being, not only as creators and producers of economic wealth but also as co-owners of material wealth, co-users of natural resources and co-responsible for the conservation of Nature. Solidarity Economy strives towards producing and sharing enough material wealth among all in order to generate sustainable conditions for self-managed development of each and every member of society, the peoples and the planet. Solidarity Economy is an economic system centered in human beings and their yearning to solve their individual, family, community and social needs in a harmonic relationship with Nature and Society, as parts of a planetary system in which they are developing and becoming more complex towards integral universalization and fulfillment.

SOME BASIC NOTIONS TO BE CULTIVATED – A global vision of the individual, the group and societies should contemplate three dimensions of their existence: *thinking, feeling and acting* as an individual corresponds to *science, art and the economy* as society, expression of the three areas of the human brain.

- Ethical Consumption and Exchange Systems using Complementary Currencies could integrate the three aspects of Economics: consumption, production, and trade.
- **To make history** is to *listen to the world of meaning* of one’s culture and *make offers* that reveal a new world of meaning, recognized as superior to the former.
- The concept of “**abundance**” provides powerful positive value to the SSE vision. The planet is abundance and has enough resources for the wellbeing of all its inhabitants. *There is enough in the world for everyone's need; there is not enough for everyone's greed.* (Mahatma Gandhi)
- This notion may be combined with the concept of “**voluntarism**” in promoting value-driven (SSE) decision-making by free individuals on the use of available factors/means of production and sharing benefits to meet individual, household and wider community needs.
- We are **responsible for the whole** and not only the part to which we belong.
- The concept of **Fair Trade** means moderation on the part of producers and consumers; this is understood in Asia as being “**considerate**” (which includes both the concept of solidarity and self-restraint as essential base values) as part of the mindset of individuals, leaders in SSE community level decision-making. The concept of **considerate** is a more suitable concept than moderate; it will help more than half a billion really hungry people in Asia understand the key importance of the SSE vision for their own daily lives.
- **Solidarity** simply means that we have a community of destiny among ourselves and with the environment. Thus, dialogue and cooperation is always a better answer than individualism and competition. A first Charter of Socioeconomic Responsibilities has been launched by the Brazilian Network on a SSE, expressing this ethic in concrete principles.

SSE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT – According to SSE, the aim of the economy is not primarily material growth; it is well-being and human development for all. A SSE conceives human development as the endeavor to realize the various qualities, attributes, and potentials of the human being – the individual and the social groups to which she/he belongs. Economic and technical development, in this perspective, is only a means for the broader goal of human and social development.

- A social, economic, political, cultural, and territorial enabling environment for the development work to be viable and to succeed is an indispensable condition.
- In human history, attempts at making private capital/markets and the State the protagonists have failed to fulfill the goals of human development. The SSE paradigm, centered on the human being as a social individual, proposes that Society be the central agent of human development, not the market or the State. Society, made up of discrete and, at the same time, interconnected

individuals must empower itself to become the individual-collective subject of the economy and of its own development.

- A key SSE concept is **self-managed development** and it should be combined with **self-reliance of solidarity inclusive communities**. Self-management at community level is well defined in case studies on alternative local solidarity finance systems now being implemented in many countries. Community level self-management and self-reliance in terms of equitable sharing of resources, knowledge, basic goods and services can be feasible, "competitive" and sustainable.
- Human development needs a limited material base, beyond which it is mainly an expression of immaterial forces, like social links, education, and fulfillment of individual and collective rights knowledge and culture, which can also be seen as a spiritual force (H. Bergson). These forces don't obey the logic of material growth, because immaterial goods get multiplied through sharing.

GENDER AND A SOLIDARITY ECONOMY – ‘Productive work’ refers to activities that generate income, whereas ‘reproductive work’ designates unpaid responsibilities related to the care and development of people. The dominant economic thinking assumes equivalence between economic activity and remunerated activities, and also assumes that only the production of goods and services provided by the market and the State belongs to the economic realm. The care of people in the space of the household or the community remains excluded. This ideology separates the social from the economic and attributes different motivations and behaviors to the household and to the market. The ethos of the household may be altruism and solidarity, but work based on personal interest and greed, and its return in the form of profit, interest or wage belong to the realm of the market. Solidarity socioeconomy is a system in which the human being is the agent, and her/his development – individual and collective - is the means and the end of economic activity. This system in practice reunites the social and the economic. The role of women and the variety of forms of work they perform becomes central, not only to overcome the expressions of existing inequalities, but also to recognize the sphere of production of human capabilities and freedoms, and to establish social retribution for all forms of work on the basis of gender equality of rights and responsibilities.

NATIVE PEOPLE’S SOLIDARITY ECONOMY - Solidarity Economy is the basic form of socio-economic relations of subsistence-based indigenous people. Such socio-economic relations are not exploitative by nature, for they aimed at meeting the needs of every member of the society. The practice of manipulating the market to expropriate a greater share of the social surplus is alien to the natives in a predominantly subsistence economy. When society began to produce economic surplus, the issue of allocating the surplus became a dominant concern. Solidarity Economy in the contemporary society, while remaining true to its fundamental goal of meeting every need of the people, aims not merely at meeting the subsistence needs of the people but the just allocation of surplus to meet their basic requirements for living. The communitarian, reciprocal economy of most native peoples is truly a solidarity economy. This cultural, economic and political heritage is an unlimited source of inspiration for the construction of a solidarity economy beyond the native people’s realm. For the native peoples the concept

of the human being does not exist in the purely individual sense, but only as part of a people and of the cosmos. Thus, the individual in its social and universal dimensions is recognized in higher complexity as the synthesis of the history of life and of humankind.

FREEDOMS, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT - By definition, democracy is governance by the people, of the people, and for the people. **Democracy** is related to the degree of substantial freedoms achieved by the members of society. These include not only political freedoms (of opinion, of vote and other civic expressions) but also economic (guarantee of survival and security, right to own and manage assets in proportion to one's work, effective access to resources, land, credit, purchasing power) social (work, food, health, education, housing, a healthy environment), and cultural freedoms. **Human-social development** is the process of building and expanding those freedoms from the starting point of individual and collective attributes and potentials. Governance is the authority to command the use of resources to meet the needs of society. **Democratic governance** is people's capability to wield power and exercise authority over their own individual and collective development. This power depends on several factors, among which: (1) a common vision shared by various segments of the people and promotes social cohesion; (2) the technical/ technological and managerial capability of the people's organization to meet the needs of individual members and mediate the various interests which may sometimes be conflicting; and (3) the effectiveness of the monitoring and information system of the people's organization. Relevant to true democracy are democratic instruments such as

SOLIDARITY-BASED DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE – If economy is “the art of caring for or managing our common house”, governance can be defined as “the art of managing interdependencies in a peaceful manner”. Our “common house” is a complex living web of relations between people, societies, and ecosystems, which should obey to commonly agreed rules and principles in order to ensure its sustainability. Those rules form a kind of regulatory system for human society, which should be designed and implemented by society itself in order to ensure its dynamic stability and adaptability.

- Solidarity economy differs from corporations, multilateral institutions and other bureaucratic institutions in that it does not consider governance an abstract set of rules that hides economic differences and power relationships, but rather as a set of socially agreed rules and procedures that are discussed and shared by people at different scales, with the objective of regulating the exchanges between people, societies and ecosystems.
- Those regulations rely on a common vision shared by the group concerning the human and social needs of its members, and the limits imposed on them by nature and the biosphere.
- To arrive at this broad consensus, grassroots level assemblies have to be organized to enable the local people to participate in defining their human and social needs over a given period of time.
- SSE considers society, its socioeconomy as well as its rules as a whole, not an aggregation of partial rules, such as corporate governance, political governance, multilateral governance, etc. It aims at building a common vision

of the regulations to implement, and in order to do so, seeks to agree on certain **principles**, among which:

1. Democratic governance is based on a territory-related approach and on the principle of active subsidiarity. Active subsidiarity is a basic principle of SSE and democratic governance. It means that economic and political action should be exerted at the lowest level possible, and that each specific community has the autonomy as well as the responsibility to develop the best responses for its local challenges.
 2. Democratic governance means communities established at different scales ranging from local to global reflecting social, cultural and economic diversity. It suggests organizing the cooperation and synergy between actors.
 3. Democratic governance helps defining rules for the economy and gives a social framework to the market.
 4. Democratic governance is based on a universal ethic of responsibility and solidarity. The destiny of humanity is interwoven with that of the biosphere, and that of our societies with each other. These interdependencies call for a new definition of responsibility and a redefinition of the social contract. Socioeconomy of solidarity simply considers that each individual and human community has a responsibility for its actions, proportionate to its power, and must enact for the protection of society and the environment.
 5. The action of public authorities should be reformed to be more participatory and transparent. The current crisis of public governance is closely linked to the crisis of the “representative democracy” and its incapacity to regain control over the market. Public authorities should gain back the hand over public decisions, and regain independence over private lobbies. The State must be democratized. The cycle of public policies should obey the natural rhythm of social and natural processes, and not to the imperatives of private shareholders. The only way to gain back this power is through the involvement of civil society bodies and the population. The current systems of “checks and balances” should be reviewed to answer effectively to the common goals.
 6. Through democratic governance, societies should regain sustainable relationships between themselves and with the biosphere. Appropriate system of indicators will help human societies monitor and inflect those flows towards sustainable and satisfactory levels. New indicators will also allow societies to measure their “genuine progress”, “social capital” and other aggregates more meaningful of human progress and well being than the current economic and financial aggregates.
 7. Democratic governance also means societies gain control over their evolution through time.
- SSE focuses on local democratic governance as a process leading from domination to autonomy in solidarity. Active subsidiarity, local SSE initiatives, participatory local democracy allows communities to regain control over their destiny. Local currencies, proximity services help maximize

internal flows, while participatory democracy helps communities regain political authority and sovereignty on their human and natural resources. Local communities will exert solidarity between them through balanced exchanges, cooperation and fair trade. They will be organized in solidarity networks.

- The State can regain legitimacy through responsibility, transparency and participation of civil society organizations. Participatory processes and democratic rules and regulations, including taxes, mandatory transparency and accountability, at local, national and international level, can undermine the power of big corporations, reaffirming sovereignty of the people. Stressing active subsidiarity helps regaining sovereignty over TNCs and IFIs.
- New rules of management should include recognition of the existence of public common goods, and new rules of management for them, thus guaranteeing public and social control over natural resources and collective capital while limiting the control of private corporations.
- Public social expenditures should be conceived as long-term investments rather than as liabilities. These are investments for the future of society (art of managing time), and, in a wholistic approach to wealth, will not be viewed as negative “expenses”. The State is the ideal level to implement a new vision of wealth, communicate and operate it precisely through new systems of national accounting, through new indicators and aggregates.

SOLIDARITY-BASED DEMOCRATIC GLOBAL GOVERNANCE - In SSE perspective, it is necessary to define a **balanced system of global democratic governance**, responding to all the main challenges and allowing democratic regulations, including:

- A solidarity-based international finance system. Transition through the international federation and articulation of national and local solidarity finance systems, with institutions such as a World Social Development Bank and an International Solidarity Finance Fund.
- A solidarity-based international trade system democratically managed by a World Fair Trade Organization.
- It is important point to check and balance the power of current financial and trade organizations through other international organizations empowered to survey the implementation of the rights of people, labor (ILO), the environment, etc. It is also urgent to define the major priorities for humanity and set up emergency programmes, based on international mobilization. Then, we will be in measure to build up rules and institutions for the management of **public common goods**.
- Global, democratic public institutions and political bodies must be created. Information and communication technologies will allow the existence of permanent public spaces for exchange and debate, beyond language and cultural barriers.

SSE AND THE MARKET - Economists perceive the self-interest of *homo economicus* through the accumulation of material wealth, which is perceived in our societies dominantly as the aim of individual and collective development.

- A simple answer to this construction is that we can demonstrate for a number of reasons that the self-regulating power of the market is an illusion. The most obvious reasons are the unequal access to information, and above all the fact that the adjustment of production to the market can't be instantaneous, but requires individual or collective planning. In *reality*, the market economy and market *society* (the reduction of all interests to individual and material interest) have created ever growing and powerful monopolies, as well as an extreme concentration of wealth for a few, within each nation and among nations. There is also the fact that natural resources, though abundant, are not unlimited, but are not accounted for in classical economic theory. In many cases the problem of society is not scarcity of goods, but their lack of availability and their unfair distribution.
- In considering all goods on the model of industrial goods, which are scarce because they are the material and elaborate product of aggregated human activity, modern economy expands the market mechanism beyond its natural sphere. Above all, the pervasive tendency of the market to invade all aspects of life tends to have negative effects on human society and the environment.
- SSE considers the economy as the management and care of the home, considering the dweller as the human community, and the hearth as the planet and our societies, which are part of it. Co-responsibility, consciousness and creativity are qualities useful for the management of the home, which is not the case of greed and the pursuit of ego of the *homo economicus*.
- There is no need to fear scarcity, as long as we, as community and collective individuals, work with natural forces, including our own, and not against it. This includes the respect of time cycles, of our social (and not only individual needs), and a consciousness that moderation favors human development.
- Some natural goods, such as the atmosphere or the ocean, can't be divided. They can't be subject to the market, but should be collectively managed as common goods. Other natural resources can be divided when shared (land). Because they are a product of nature, their distribution should be guided by social justice rather than by market forces.
- Knowledge and social capital (the ability of people to cooperate and act together) can't be treated as industrial goods either. These are goods that multiply when shared, building a strong case for an economy of abundance. When you share knowledge, love or the capacity to cooperate, you reinforce them, instead of reducing them. The notion that helps us understand the behavior of those goods is that of mutual benefit. Their abundance is only limited by our capacity of sharing among ourselves (humans) and ultimately with the rest of the biosphere.
- Socio-economic innovations like social money, social finance, or participatory budgeting have an educating power for the building of a new society, as they prove that with different socio-economic mechanisms it is possible to build self-reliant communities with strong social capital and human wealth. These

mechanisms tend to favor social links and cooperation, while capitalism favors competition, greed, the concentration of wealth, and social insecurity.

SOLIDARITY-BASED MANAGEMENT - Management is concerned with the efficient use of resources to achieve the organization's objectives. The overriding objective of enterprises in solidarity economy is to maximize the social benefits and meet the needs of all members of society. The motivation and actions of solidarity economy managers will, therefore, differ qualitatively from the managers of profit-maximizing enterprises. Solidarity economy managers will be very conscious about the compliance on their companies of the ethical business standards. They will be concerned about the direction and magnitude of their contributions to social development and the maintenance of ecological balance. They will be sensitive to cooperative networking and alliances with similar solidarity economy enterprises when sourcing their input requirements. They will strive towards fairness and justice in dealing with primary producers, ever seeing to it that workers earn fair wages, producers get fair prices for their produce, and stakeholders earn fair returns for their investments.

EMANCIPATED WORK – Work is the energy exerted by the person-people that makes possible the transformation of nature. Work starts with the individual, but reaches its maximum expression in communal work, the sharing responsibilities, mutual help and voluntary work-service. It is a creative energy that cannot be confined, for it seeks the restitution of the right to freedom. Through one's work, one is a co-creator, while satisfying one's own needs. Through work the human being recreates her/his relationship with nature, for its transformation necessarily entails one's own transformation, for there is a mutual interaction between the action, the object, and the subject of the action. Emancipated work is the means to free people's time and energy from the tasks related to mere survival. Real wealth of a people is, ultimately, the amount of time and energy available for the development of one's upper qualities, attributes and potentials as a human being or a human collective.

SOLIDARITY-BASED ENTERPRISES - By definition, solidarity economy enterprises are those enterprises which comply with the ethical business standards of solidarity economy. Based on such compliance, it is possible to classify solidarity economy enterprises along a specified range of performance, starting from the bottom performers to the top performers. In solidarity economy, one of the most crucial areas for cooperation among enterprises is the setting up of standards of ethical business practice, the socially determined basis of economic relationships. Solidarity economy enterprises must come to an agreement on: (1) their social responsibility towards their clients, their shareholders, their workers, the environment, their suppliers, and so forth; (2) the democratic processes by which they arrive at a consensus in decisionmaking, especially on the ethical standards; and (3) a system of certifying compliance with these standards. When these ethical standards are set up, competition among solidarity economy enterprises will be geared towards their compliance with these standards. The absence of competition in solidarity economy will render the ethical standards moot and academic. Solidarity economy competition is extremely necessary in order to uphold the ethical business standards on which the social responsibility of enterprises is founded.

SOLIDARITY FINANCE - Financial resources are the ‘fuel’ that energizes the economy. They facilitate the flow of resources from investors to producers, and from producers to consumers. As an alternative economic system, solidarity economy operates on a unique set of standards and principles that unequivocally sets it apart from the dominant system. Empowering the economic actors of this alternative economic system requires the establishment of a unique system of finance that makes viable investments to satisfy needs, thus supporting the ethical standards of solidarity economy. This unique system of finance is a financial system specifically designed to facilitate the production and distribution of goods and services produced by solidarity economy enterprises. Like the dominant financial system, Solidarity Finance should be able to offer a variety of financial instruments to cater to the various needs of solidarity enterprises and clients, including deposits, loans, insurance, and transfer payments. The terms and conditions of Solidarity Finance should also be fair and just, and conforming with the ethical business standards of solidarity economy.

Una economía así es la que postula la primacía del ser humano-pueblo sobre el dinero y las cosas materiales, y cuestiona la concepción de desarrollo económico que tiene la sociedad occidental, en la cual el dinero es el que determina el valor del ser humano-individuo, y de los pueblos- seres humanos- colonizados, así como de la energía transformadora y del trabajo que produce el oro.

SOCIAL CURRENCIES - Complementary and alternative social currencies give the power to increase the exchange of goods and services, starting from the poor and financially excluded from rural villages in the third world, to increasing geographic scales of regions, islands, provinces, countries and internationally and scales of production and trade, to major trading corporations that use internal currencies to facilitate exchange within their enterprise clusters and supply chains in order to gain a number of comparative advantages, those mainly related to increased income through the elimination of the payment of interest. Reducing and eliminating interest reduces prices, increases savings for important purchases and capitalization for the formation of micro, small and medium enterprises.

There is a wide variety of methodologies that have been implemented in order to achieve a range of specific social, cultural, economic and environmental goals. There have been some spectacular successes and equally spectacular failures and many lessons learned along the way. The incorporation of lessons learned into new methodological designs is demonstrating the ability of social currencies to take a major role in reorganizing economic systems according to a new economic paradigm that connects the other elements of SSE together, from gender awareness to solidarity finance and fair trade, ecological production and environmental justice, to corporate social responsibility and international trade regulations.

These advances have led to increased cooperation with the existing economic system and their network of national currencies. This has fostered the development of social currency systems that are capable of generating capital for new enterprises, increased multiplier effects from the circulation of currency in local development and solidarity

finance/micro-finance programs, and for organizing value/supply-chains and enterprise networks and production clusters. As a result, several social currency organizations have developed advanced software for facilitating exchange using a variety of transaction mediums, from highly-secure currency notes to electronic payments by Bar Code, Swipe Card, Smart Card, Mobile Phone and RFID (Radio Frequency) cards. Further, this has led to interactions with formal financial institutions who are interested in implementing these systems to create and capture new markets, increase customer loyalty and find an entry point into the new emerging network economy.

Social currency systems share the common vision of a money system without interest, of a just relationship between the individual and collective between what is given and received, of the inclusion of all people without discrimination but based on their willingness to take initiative and make contribution to the collective, of mutual aid and support for collective advancement which results in individual gains. This vision is based upon a concept of the money system as being the single core human institution that creates the structure in which humans relate to all other activities, in other words that the money system is the core concept behind all other human institutions of governance, production, distribution, warfare, access to environmental resources, human and gender rights, etc.

This concept is based upon the psychological understanding of money by C.G. Jung and Freud, and the Buddhist philosophy of economy that money, unlike other human institutions, is a phenomenon of collective psychology of valuation, generosity and reciprocity which begins from infancy and is constructed through the child's experience in the family. Money is the expression of that experience in society throughout adulthood.

In achieving a new economic paradigm, we work to change the dominant psychological understanding which is based on a mentality of scarcity, dependence, insecurity, fear, dissatisfaction and existential unhappiness that sees only what is lacking and which is supported by the present debt-based monetary system of scarcity. A new socially-oriented monetary system supports a mentality of abundance, allowing us practically to identify, value and develop what we have, and find satisfaction in what we have that leads to happiness.

RELATIONSHIP VALUE – besides the use value and the exchange value (Aristotle), practiced by the system of Capital, SE recreates the relationship value, in order to submit the price of the utilitarian, the individual and the material to other human beings, the social and spiritual.

SOLIDARITY PRODUCTION CHAINS – or circuits:

- involve production (all links of the chain), distribution and consumption.
- In the SE, people incorporate these functions in themselves to form an equation that is systemic and as self-reliant as possible.

- Re-think the production chain **as a community**, in which each participant link wants to maximize one's own satisfaction and the satisfaction of all other links and the chain as a whole.
- Win-win!
- Rethink polarity work-needs.

MESOECONOMY – a new way of orchestrating and articulating the various sectors and social classes towards an organic plural society, in which the State become a true public servant and the private enterprise is socialized (stockholders, executive directors, producers, suppliers, consumers, neighbors, environment, common well being) and generates vital products and values. Vital synergies at various levels are the key to authenticity. Some indicators of this development include:

- Socialized enterprises that broke as a consequence of mismanagement or of the economic crises (1982 and 1994 in Mexico, 2001 in Argentina, 1987 and 1999 in Brazil, etc.), and were taken over by the workers to be collectively owned and managed as cooperatives.
- Credit unions, Credit and Savings cooperatives, solidarity microcredit initiatives, despite the pressure by legislators and governments to submit the most successful ones to the capitalist banking system.
- Consumption, production, housing, health, education and other types of self-managed firms and cooperatives.
- Solidarity Networks and production chains that connect various productive sectors or links, including the consumers, the producers of goods and services and the solidarity finance institutions.

SOLIDARITY EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY – Empowerment means education/self-education to appropriate capabilities and freedoms to control and manage one's own development. The political system that fosters this type of disegregated power is called true democracy or integral democracy. It cannot coexist with patriarchal hierarchies or with any type of rigidity, dogmatism and servilism. There is no true democracy where people do not empower themselves to become the protagonists of their own development. Education is a key factor of empowerment for true democracy.

- Solidarity Education and knowledge should be free for all, free from any dominant political, cultural, religious and economic bias and really provide inclusive, people-oriented life education in which local knowledge is fully integrated with relevance to SSE-adapted modern science.
- Solidarity Education should be oriented to self and mutual empowerment, formal and non-formal, at all levels of schooling and in all sectors of society and government.
- Learning to be critical of the dominant values and paradigms and to promote the SSE values - cooperation, reciprocity, sharing, altruism, respect for diversity, conscious solidarity - should be part of solidarity educational programs.
- Through solidarity education we should redefine the dominant anthropological, economic, political and cultural assumptions.

- Through solidarity education society can move from jobs to emancipated labor. It can also move from the production of things to the communion with culture and protection of the ecosystems.
- Solidarity education promotes participatory action-research to overcome the scholarization paradigm of the past.
- Solidarity education must respond to the need of a ‘pedagogy of the oppressor’!

SOLIDARITY-BASED CONSUMPTION AND FAIR TRADE - For SSE, exchanges between human beings, individuals and society, as well as with nature, are multidimensional, not just material and monetary. The trading of goods on the marketplace is but the tip of an iceberg of exchanges, of symbols (communication and culture), energy and matter flows between human beings, and with the biosphere. Trade is not a value in itself, nor is it the universal answer to human problems, even to material problems only. SSE considers that the reinforcement of human links, social capital, is as important, or more, than the growth and accumulation of material goods and monetary capital. It reclaims the fulfilment of human needs as the essential aim of society, through an updated vision.

- Against standardized and corporate-produced goods, people and social movements are claiming the right to address themselves their needs at local level. For SSE, there is scientific evidence that most of human needs could be better addressed through the building of a framework of integrated local networks of economies, and not the so-called free world market.
- Trade in the market is part of the entire process of social and human development, facilitating linkages between individuals, communities and between them and nature.
- The market is a social relation – the interaction between the subjects of exchange is more important than the material exchange.
- As a movement, Fair Trade promotes “trading partnerships, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, seeking greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South”.
- FT asserts people’s right to food sovereignty against corporate-driven food production and trade, often ecologically and culturally unsustainable.
- FT should be based upon the principle of subsidiarity and re-embedded in the broader framework of social and natural exchanges.
- FT sponsors a balance between the right to trade, ethical consumption and the basic human needs and rights to self-subsistence.
- FT, like democratic governance, should follow the principle of subsidiarity. Human needs and ethical consumption should be addressed at the smallest level possible, reinforcing social and environmental links. As ecosystems, the strongest communities are found at local level, and can only happen at higher level if strong local communities support them.
- Innovations:

- Changes in the form taken by trade and the importance given to trade, are taking place through innovations at a micro (LETS, social currencies, buyers' cooperatives, social finance and local investor groups) and meso (Fair Trade and CSR) level, through the exercise of social responsibility of consumers, companies or local governments, and to a lesser extent as the result of social movements asking for the respect of people's rights.
- Strategies:
 - Actors seeking social change towards a socioeconomy of solidarity should design strategies to induce changes in regulations at national and international levels. Legal changes often follow changes in practices. This is why Fair Trade and Corporate Social Responsibility can play a role, in the absence of strong public regulations, to bring up those changes.
 - More and more public authorities are reorganizing their purchasing to improve compliance with social responsibility. However, it seems necessary to extent campaigns pressuring transnational corporations for social and environmental accountability:
 - adopting mandatory codes of conduct for international capital;
 - developing national and international regulatory cooperation;
 - creating global, democratic UN-related regulatory agencies empowered to survey implementation and to impose sanctions when needed.
 - Trading partnerships should be based on dialogue, transparency and respect, towards greater equity in international trade.
 - SSE stresses the importance of integrating FT with other SSE initiatives: consumer cooperatives, social finance, local-regional currencies, solidarity production chains.

SOCIOECONOMIC SECURITY – SSE envisages to promote security regarding the conditions, capabilities and possibilities of developing one's own life (in a broad sense) and potentials, thus liberating the individuals, families and communities from the urgencies related to the immediate, which enslave them to the elemental and generated subordinate dependence. Thus, socioeconomic security is linked to solidarity and to true freedom. The goal of a solidarity economy ought to be to seek the means to satisfy the needs and the rights of each and every citizen, and cannot rest before they are fulfilled for the whole of society. True freedom is the freedom to maximize individual and group development according to their attributes and potentials and to the conditions of national, regional and broader communities. Thus, a safer, more sustainable life is a freer life, which reverts also on behalf of solidarity.

SSE AND GLOBALIZATION – SSE envisages a global society comprising a wide range of politically, economically and culturally diverse *solidarity inclusive communities* horizontally and vertically connected, through shared values, knowledge, technology and fair trade in a wider network of solidarity and inclusive relationships. This can be called “trickle up” global development or “global development from below”. To be a credible alternative within the current world economic order, SSE communities must be sustainable with sound self-management capacities ensuring independence. This can be

achieved through development of communities with suitable forms of solidarity finance and participatory, gender sensitive, pro-poor local governance. SSE communities will be recognized in their *sharing of values* aimed at enhancing a better quality of life, inclusiveness and solidarity. Activities by members in SSE communities will focus on enhancing their competitiveness in achievement of “value added” socioeconomic and cultural community development outcomes and in building sustainable fair trade networks to guarantee their self reliance.

OBSTACLES TO SOLIDARITY –

- Access of workers to the ownership and management of enterprises is more of an exception. Democracy at the shopfloor is still a key challenge.
- In extreme cases, weak or corrupt trade unions are a strong obstacle to solidarity initiatives.
- Access through control of stocks is a factor as limiting as the low saving and investment capacity of workers.
- Collective management is hindered also by the imposition of technocratic procedures, mergers and frequent bankruptcy that tend to favor privatization and transnationalization.
- Structural unemployment and exclusion from the labor market are major obstacles. They reduce workers to activities of mere daily survival, in the growing space of the informal economy.
- Governments create social programs that, by not being reinforced with macroeconomic policies that effectively redistribute income and wealth, and democratize land, credit and purchasing power, have only a compensatory effect and leave the factors of impoverishment (overindebtedness, unfair terms of trade, protectionism by the rich North, etc.) untouched.
- The same occurs with the global banking system, the World Bank and the regional development banks, which give loans to subsidize the poverty-stricken sectors and for environmental programs with no effective concern for the causes of impoverishment and ecological destruction.
- There are major cooperative development issues such as lack of member education, sharing in efficient services delivery, management/business skills and women’s participation in decision-making.
- Government control in partnership with large national/transnational business is often abusing cooperatives for short-term political purposes (distribution of inputs/collection of votes) or submitting them to external control of internal cooperative management. Today while SME’s are often mentioned as government favorite target groups in economic development most often cooperatives are not included either in support programs for rural enterprise or in technology development, let alone in national and international decision-making on trade liberalization (WTO/FTAs).
- Today legal-administrative and fiscal instruments are hindering sound local/higher level cooperative enterprise development.
- A major obstacle to SSE is the breach between discourse and practice that is visible in most of us, SSE practitioners and researchers.

PATHS TO OVERCOME THOSE OBSTACLES

- The solutions will emerge from the most elemental energies of people, their creative work for the satisfaction of their most legitimate needs and wants. A new paradigm is necessary, that combines global with local, working more with quality (development) than with quantity (growth), in a sort of action-reflection based on a dynamic of “glocalization”.
- Schumacher was right when he asserted that “small is beautiful”. The challenge is to organize the small in the form of self-reliant and self-determined networks, aiming at “another globalization” that is possible. From within the self-evident disorder a higher complexity can emerge, which reintegrates the constituent, interconnected elements in newly concerted expressions of life and conscience.
- Upon the use and exchange values practiced by the economy of capital, SSE is recreating the relational value, one that submits the price of utilities, the individual and the material, to the assessment of the other person, the social and the spiritual. We are challenged to be agents in this historic turning point of the transcendence of an extremely materialistic and lethal world by a higher, vital, equitable and inclusive one in which no one will be diminished in dignity and freedom.
- For a successful and vibrant SSE to develop, we need pro-active, creative young people to lead SSE communities in development of economic, political and social alternatives to monopoly control scarcity, dehumanization and conflict. It is necessary to break down inter-age barriers in innovative ways. The exclusion of women, the elderly, ethnic minorities, disabled and migrants from decision-making/control over food/production resources.
- Self-managed development must have built-in guarantees that the vulnerable are not excluded. In daily work among rural poor women, ethnic minority groups, landless and marginal farmers, disabled persons, we should promote self-management, but it is no general purpose panacea as today only a small number of individuals are really able to self-manage their livelihood. Therefore mentioning **cooperatives** and **trade unions** is extremely important.
- In health services, housing, consumer goods delivery, small-scale producer input supply and employment generation, a growing number of people prefer working together as the best way and cooperative development as the most suitable community enterprise to deliver needed social and productive services. Cooperatives provide a solid base for building of sustainable Socioeconomic Solidarity and Inclusive Communities *as a human value-based concept of abundance, moderation, voluntarism, respect of human dignity and human rights.*
- Another challenge is to revive trade unions in the context of SSE, as without them we would still be working in more exploitative conditions. But we should consider their internal and external constraints to become strong social capital builders for SSE.
- Full attention should be given to strategic partnership among solidarity networks of grassroots groups, local organizations, genuine human development agencies, NGOs universities and relevant government entities.

- Subjective, cultural transformation (including values, attitudes, behaviors, expectations and modes of relation) is as important as objective, social and institutional change. They go hand-in-hand and the SSE project must contemplate education and capacity building for both at the same time.