

Editorial

History is moving in our favour

Something is stirring. The Ecofin, which brings together the European Union's Finance Ministers and which, quite frankly, is not exactly renowned for its left-wing tendencies, has decided that it wishes to contemplate a better way of distributing wealth so as to avoid a «crisis in the legitimacy of the model of the social market economy». It goes without saying that this model is far removed from the values that we seek to promote through our solidarity-based economy networks (see Editorial, Newsletter 6), but it does signal a real concern for the future of the European Union project. Newspapers that are normally the proponents of liberal ideology are now beginning to ask questions about the purpose of economic growth, pointing out that this always seems to be to the benefit of those who expect a return on their investment, whilst at the same time it consigns to poverty those who are rejected by the system. Fair trade and ethical investments are enjoying immense popularity at the moment. Circumstances are forcing us to become more aware of climate change and of the consequences that this will have. We now have to work and focus very hard on the idea that the sum of individual interests does not necessarily guarantee the general good and that, in the long-term, we are bound to lose out if we only have an individualistic vision. Allow me to offer a schematic example of this: by buying products at the lowest possible price from a discount store, then I am able to buy more goods, but, by the same token, I am also paving the way for my future unemployment, in companies in which working conditions may be poor and in which the labour force is the main adjustable variable used to reward the shareholders. In other words, it is almost as if we are inside a huge machine that is contributing to its own decline, but at the same time has managed to convince us that there are no alternatives.

Well, I have to tell you that we believe that alternatives do exist and we are beginning to have the impression that history is moving in our favour

Eric Lavillunière

approach designed to build a new paradigm by beginning our discussions around four knowledge areas:

- Societal value: to what sort of wealth do communities aspire and how do we measure this?
- Democracy and ecocracy: in other words, how can we (re-)integrate the political and citizens' dimension so that decisions are taken by the people and not by the markets?
- Individual and collective conduct or how to challenge the rationale of our conduct and to arbitrate between our individual desires and aspirations and our acceptance of belonging to a collective, whether this be a group, a nation or humanity.
- The common possible future: we are responsible for our future that we must build together and that must be a reflection of what we want and what is possible.

Are you also working in the area of the social and solidarity-based economy? - Not specifically, although we do integrate these schools of thought in our work, since they stem from the same logic of challenging knowledge in order to build a more fraternal and solidarity based world. Specific social and solidarity-based economy experiences are fed into our reflections and we share the idea that capital should be at the service of the economy that should, in turn, serve to sustain our lives whereas, what often tends to happen in the real world, is that our lives are organised in such a way as to serve the interests of the economy and to make it as competitive as possible in order to ensure that this very economy serves to guarantee the maximum profitability of capital.

And what do you do in concrete terms? - We organise international seminars. We have held events in Santiago in Chile in 2002, in Rennes in 2003, Bangkok in 2004, Rennes in 2005 and Dakar in 2006. We have also organised on-line conferences and we are busy compiling all of this work with a view to publishing it in 2008. A brief summary will be made available before 1 May 2007 in order to set out where we stand today. Further information can be found at the following website: www.pekea.org (Fr + En + Es). We are also striving hard to encourage public authorities to be associated with our work and, to that end, we have set up a club for local governments.

So there is hope that the world can change? - Yes, because change comes first and foremost from a political choice. Our ambition is to make a telling contribution to the economic sciences, through a multi-disciplinary approach and by basing our actions on democratic processes that will enable us to define an ethical knowledge that is free from so-called market constraints.

Interview of the month

Marc Humbert - *Professor at the University of Rennes I (Fr) - Secretary General of the international PEKEA network (Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economical Activities)*

So what is PEKEA exactly? - PEKEA is a worldwide network of researchers who, together with actors from civil society and elected representatives, have set themselves the aim of reflecting upon the construction of Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economical Activities. It is an NGO that holds special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and which wishes to renew economic thinking on the basis of a fairly simple observation, namely that we live on a planet whose resources are sufficient to enable some 10 billion inhabitants to live a decent life. However, a large majority of the 6.5 billion inhabitants of our planet live in poverty and in the so-called rich countries there are glaring inequalities, as a result of the unfair redistribution of wealth and the shortcomings of the redistribution systems. Furthermore, the system we live in is not sustainable, since our fellow human beings are plundering our resources, without giving due consideration to the sustainability of this model.

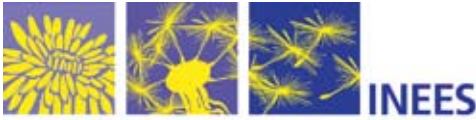
But surely this means that politics are to be blame, rather than economics? - Yes and no, since we feel that, at its very heart, the economy is political. However, today it has been limited solely to its technical or even econometric approach, within an economic system in which everything is determined by the market.

Your approach would appear to be decidedly altermondialist in tone... - If, by your comment, you mean that it challenges the very foundations of the system upon which our economies are based, then I would have to agree. But we are not engaged in a dogmatic discourse, we are merely raising the issue of the relevance of our knowledge and we can see that, from the point of view of the economic sciences, we are still in the stone age. Indeed, that is why we chose a prehistoric tool for our logo.

For many people, this way of seeing things appears to be highly utopian. It is almost as if we are part of a huge machine and that nothing can be done to stop it. - We have adopted a very pragmatic approach. We have constructed a new

Compiled by *Eric LAVILLUNIERE* - INEES





LUX'09 - international Forum on "Globalizing solidarity"

The organisational process has now started!

With support from the Objectif Plein Emploi in Luxembourg, and under the RIPESS banner, INEES has now begun to deploy all of its efforts to ensure that this event, which is due to be held in spring 2009, takes place under the best possible conditions. The European Steering Committee held its first meeting on 5 March 2007 and the next meeting is scheduled for 15 May 2007 in Schifflange, Luxembourg.

Together with representatives from national and European Social and Solidarity-based economy (SSE) networks and the social economy unit of the Belgian Federal government, we have established the working spirit within which we will be putting the forum together.

By setting ourselves the objective of bringing together between 1,200 and 1,500 people for three days, with the participation of large delegations from the South (Africa, Central and Southern America and Asia), our intention is to demonstrate that the SSE is real, permanent laboratory for socio-economic innovations that is able to support social cohesion in these troubled times in which solutions are based on maintaining law and order, rather than on trying to establish greater solidarity.

The SSE is omnipresent in the daily lives of hundreds of million of people across the planet, and yet it only has a low level of recognition. Our first challenge is to increase both its visibility and legitimacy. That is why we intend to appeal to other networks, as well as those that are usually engaged in the SSE, so as to better establish ourselves on the social landscape and within public opinion. We are also required to debate transversal issues which have an influence on people's daily lives. Finally, a further challenge for us is to try to look at ways of ensuring that our initiatives, that far too often fail to get beyond the experimental stage, are perpetuated and become more widespread. At a European level, we must strive to generate interest in the Northern and Eastern countries, since they are not particularly well represented within our networks.

We have already begun to establish contacts with various Ministries in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and we have been well received by the Ministers and services that have agreed to meet us. We will now have to see how this (precious) political support can be transformed into financial support, particularly by the end of this summer, since we have no time to waste if we wish to have everything in place in good time. In the not too distant future, we will also be launching a sponsorship campaign so as to generate private financial support.

We are very busy looking for an appropriate venue and dates for the event and we are also seeking to mobilise actors within the wider region (Germany, Belgium and France).

We will keep you up to date on developments through the forthcoming issues of this Newsletter.

The 10 topics to be discussed at the Forum are:

1. Solidarity-based financing systems
2. Social services of general interest
3. Social inclusion
4. Collective entrepreneurship
5. The environment
6. Food security and sovereignty, responsible production and consumption
7. Fair and ethical trade
8. Local development, SSE and the joint formulation of public policies
9. The contribution of SSE (wealth indicators, evaluation, ...)
10. The SSE in the European Union

If you wish to take part in this process, please contact:

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The 7th International Meeting of the Inter-University Network of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy

The social and solidarity-based economy faced with its responsibilities - 24 and 25 May 2007

At the Faculty for Economic Sciences at the University of Rennes

Faced with today's new challenges and the extension of the concept of social or societal responsibility in both time and space, the organisations that are active in the field of the Social and Solidarity-based economy find themselves in a relatively paradoxical situation, according to their stage of development and/or their project and their values.

Indeed, they are the actors of reference in this field, taking the lead in all forms of experimentation, with their capacity to prepare the ground, to innovate and to stimulate future actions in this field for investment, whilst at the same time they are in a position to help these new social demands to emerge and to provide them with coverage, or even to reformulate or to reject them. How do these organisations face up to these responsibilities?

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REVES, the UNDP and the City of Leghorn
organise a conference

"THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND SOCIAL ECONOMY FOR A FAIR, SUSTAINABLE AND PEACEFUL GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT"

LEGHORN (ITALY), 18TH - 19TH MAY 2007

During the years decentralised cooperation has shown all its potential in terms of development of positive relationships between territories from different sides of the world, thus contributing to the development of a real «local diplomacy», often able to ease the building up of peaceful relations, improvement of quality of life and sharing of fair perspectives.

Even being the decentralised cooperation a prerogative of public authorities, more and more often social economy actors provide an important contribution, by acting on the shape cooperation takes and by improving local social capital together with democracy and participation in economy.

INTERPRETATION IN FR, EN AND IT

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N.B.: the prefix for mobile phone numbers in Luxembourg has changed. Henceforward you need to dial a 6 instead of the first 0.
E.g.: +352 021 23 45 67 is now +352 621 23 45 67

INEES/OPE Reflection Seminar held in Remich on 23 March 2007

On 23 March 2007, approximately 100 people from Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland and, of course, Luxembourg, met in Remich on the banks of the Moselle in order to reflect upon the concept of the solidarity-based economy as a third economic pillar between the public and private economy.

For the purposes of this event, we brought together some of the leading European researchers on these issues, a wide range of nationalities, well established researchers and young PhD students, the President of the OGB-L trade union, an elected representative from the Nantes region, as well as a representative of the Minister for the economy in Luxembourg.

We were able to work in a studious, and at the same time, relaxed atmosphere, exchanging views and opinions with the meeting on theoretical questions so as to really pin-point this solidarity-based economy that we put into practice in many different local or sectoral organisations.

At are currently preparing a booklet on the contributions made by all of the various participants and delegates. Throughout the day, a whole range of speakers did their utmost to remind us and to make it clear that the market economy, with all of its open and fair competition rules, has not always existed and that it is even the product of a historical and social process within which many contradictory power relationships have been at play. Economic science has now become mathematical and has shed a great deal of its political and social function, almost as if it were the result of an inevitable law of nature.

But this is not the case and it is our task to rethink the economy within a corpus of values which returns it to the position it should never have left, namely a position that enables it to be at the service of both men and women, to improve the quality of life and to ensure the maximum well-being of the population in the fairest possible way, across the whole of the planet.

It is important to remind ourselves of this in an unbiased and impartial way. The idea behind this event was to reiterate this through the presentation of various research projects and by appealing to the trade union and elected representatives who are also stakeholders in this process, so as to see how we can ensure that the solidarity-based economy gains better recognition and that it is given greater scientific legitimacy.

This was not a one-off event and indeed, even the participants who were slightly sceptical at the beginning left with the hope that we will continue our reflections. There is no doubt that this is exactly what we shall do...



Henri Kox - 1st alderman of the municipality of Remich

We are very pleased to welcome you to our municipality which is well known for its Moselle wines. We have many solidarity-based economy projects in this area, with the OPE Network's Centre d'Initiatives and Gestion Régional du Réseau OPE, which are complementary to the activities carried out by our conventional enterprises.



A large and studious gathering...



Let us play tribute to all of those who worked so hard to ensure the success of this event



Claude Wehenkel - director of the Henri Tudor Public Research Centre in Luxembourg and **Eric Lavillumière** - INEES Director, led various working sessions



The discussions continued long into the night in a local bar...



Bruno Frère - University of Liège - presents the constellation of the French solidarity-based economy according to four topiques taken from Boltanski: the philia, the professionalism, the situationnisme and the commitment.



Karl Birkhölzer - Technical University of Berlin
The solidarity-based economy is also the economy of our everyday lives and the re-socialisation of the most disadvantaged populations.



Laurent Fraisse - CRIDA/MES
The solidarity-based economy should not be understood purely in sectoral terms, since, first and foremost, it brings about a global approach.



Jean-Louis Laville - Centre national des Arts et Métiers Paris - *we must move away from the binary way of thinking: it is impossible to explain human and economic behaviour through egotism or altruism.*



Luc Decker - Adviser within the Ministry for the Economy
The coalition agreement provides for the recognition of a third economic pillar as a complement to the public and private economy.



Isidor Wallimann - University of Basel
The solidarity-based economy is a sustainable economy



Jean-Claude Reding - President of the OGB-L trade union - *I can see that there are many debates regarding the role of the economy which, driven, as it is, by economic imperatives, far too often leads to the deconstruction of the social fabric and leads to inequalities.*



Romain Biever - Director of d'OPE
It is astonishing to see that although politicians are quick to recognise the virtues of the solidarity-based economy, they find it difficult to translate this into public policies that respond to the real needs of all of the actors



Jean-Philippe Magnen - Elected representative from the Nantes agglomeration, responsible for the solidarity-based economy - *I do not conceive my function as being the organisation of a social policy in favour of the disadvantaged members of society, but rather as that of proving support for the development of socio-economic alternatives*



Eric Dacheux - University of Clermont-Ferrand
There is absolutely no reason why democracy should stop at a company's door.

Ecosol Review - a publication on the aims of the solidarity-based economy

Volume 1: the third pillar

J.-L. Laville (F) reminds us that the last 2 centuries have focussed on the market economy to the detriment of democracy. E. Dacheux (F) analyses the nature of this democratic crisis. R. Biever (L) discusses community development, as does S. Elsen (D), from the point of view of collective self-organisation. Finally, K. Birkhölzer (D) emphasises the role of the solidarity-based economy in the restructuring of local economies. (The texts are in French and German)

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The Review is available from INEES for €15.25 + post and packaging

