

Editorial

The solidarity-based economy and sustainable development

This edition of the newsletter focuses on sustainable development with a view to establishing the common ground it shares with the solidarity-based economy and, above all, to provide us all with the incentive to consider how our networks can influence the definition of national programmes for sustainable development that are currently being drawn up by governments throughout the European Union.

Far too often, solidarity-based economy networks do not participate in the work of consensus building bodies, even though this would improve our level of recognition, given the expertise we have regarding a whole range of society-related issues.

I would therefore like to invite all of you to get in touch with INEES (hueens@inees.org), so that we can unite our energies in order to construct paradigms of reflections and to explore avenues of potential solutions that may be used to influence the main objectives to be established by the various states as part of their sustainable development policy over the years to come. We have placed the proposals that we intend to make to the government of Luxembourg on line (cf. http://www.ope.lu/fileadmin/INEES/FR/DD-questionnaire_elargi-juillet_2007.doc) in fr., so as to encourage further exchanges regarding an issue that, by its very definition, goes beyond the borders of our individual countries.

Eric Lavillunière

already submitted papers. The 3rd congress is due to take place in Lyon in June 2008.

What do you think of the European strategy in favour of sustainable development (SD)?

We cannot fail to be in agreement with the aims that have been set, but I would have to say that I am somewhat sceptical with regard to the actions that are then really implemented. For example, we can see that only a minimum amount of reflections and especially actions are undertaken in order to reduce transportation by road or by air, even though we are well aware of their damaging impact on the environment (cf. Al Gore's film "An inconvenient truth").

And what about the economy?

Well, to talk about an area that I know best, it is fairly symptomatic of the overall situation to see that, in terms of corporate social responsibility, the Commission has now taken to focussing its efforts on the voluntary measures undertaken by companies in this area with a view to improving their ability to compete. This approach is part of what we call a strategic utilitarianism that turns the logic of SD on its head. Sustainable development is not a tool to be used in order to become more competitive, rather it is a general framework that should be used in order to define the type of development we want for the inhabitants of planet earth.

Is it fair to say that it is the result of the contradiction that exists between the desire to have a competitive economy in a market based on fair and free competition, whilst at the same time trying to respond to the aims of sustainable development?

That is true, but from a more global point of view, the problem is not to overlook the true nature of the economy and the type of growth that we want. Nor should we forget the 3rd pillar, namely social cohesion which also includes the issue of inequality between the North and the South. SD is the search for a compromise between the three economic, social and environmental components, rather than the structuring of an arrangement in which one of these components dominates the others.

But surely the real issue is the pre-eminence of the economic component over the other two?

Not necessarily. The problem is that we tend only to have a restrictive view of the economy which, at its origins, was designed to satisfy the needs of humanity; however, over the last two centuries, the dominant system of production and trade has turned it away from its initial aims to the benefit (a particularly appropriate word to use in this context) of financial gain and the accumulation of capital!

To get back to CSR, do you feel that it truly converges with the interests of SD?

It certainly could do, but in order to do that it would have been necessary to adopt a more binding approach than one which is based on company's voluntary actions. This is a real shame, because the Commission had initially approached the issue in the correct way by creating a multi-stakeholder forum with all of the main actors, but ultimately the position adopted by the European employers (known as UNICE at the time, although they have since changed their name to Business Europe) proved to be the most influential in these discussions and consequently companies are not legally required to do anything in this area.

INEES believes that we should engage in an in-depth reflection on how we can develop an economy that responds to the challenges of SD – which is something that the social and solidarity-based economy does, for example – do you agree?

Yes, and it is strange to see how efforts are made to encourage SD without any link being established with the social and solidarity-based economy; but by the same token, even though these organisations may, a priori, have a vocation to work within the context of SD, this does not exempt them from the need to establish tools to evaluate their own CSR, particularly from an environmental point of view.

In your opinion, what are the main areas to be developed within the national strategies on sustainable development?

The main areas are already being widely discussed, but we will only truly make progress once the Ministries for the Environment are considered to be as powerful as the Ministries for Public Works (Bridges and Highways), for Transport, for Energy, ... and are capable of having a significant influence on policies from a general point of view.

Compiled by Eric LAVILLUNIERE - INEES

Interview of the month

Interview with Michel Capron *President of the Advisory Board of the International Research Network on Organisations and Sustainable Development (RIODD), Professor in Management Sciences at the University of Paris VIII and Paris 12, researcher at the Institute for Management Research.*

Could you tell us about RIODD?

It is an academic, international and multi-disciplinary association that brings together researchers and people who can contribute to the advancement of the themes of our work regarding the ultimate aims and consequences of the management choices made by organisations and their interactions from the point of view of sustainable development.

What sort of activities does it carry out?

We organised our 1st international congress in December 2006 at Créteil (Fr), at which 64 papers were presented. We are currently preparing the second international congress (cf. www.riodd.org), which is due to take place on 27th and 28th September 2007 in Montpellier (Fr) under the banner of "Globalisation and sustainable development: the role of the organisations." The congress is being organised in conjunction with the Universities of Montpellier, Sup Agro and the Pôle Universitaire Européen. This will mean that more than 45 PhD students from the European Union and the Maghreb countries will be involved in this work, with several of them having

Courses of action to be undertaken to make the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg a responsible and solidarity-based territory

How can we satisfy human needs, safeguard the future and well-being of future generations and at the same time protect the environment? "By changing our way of thinking and living together".

A territorial sustainable development project – A vision for the future of the territory that is shared with its inhabitants within a voluntary approach through:

1. Economic policy: seeking out new alternatives for growth that is more sustainable

- Accompanying the emergence of new and alternative economic activities;
- Promotion and encouragement of the development of an economic fabric that is both socially responsible and the creator of quality employment;
- Promotion and encouragement of sustainable agricultural and rural development;
- Promotion and encouragement of the development of sustainable tourism.

2. Innovation, research, forecasting

- Seeking out the conditions for the emergence of a real 3rd economic pillar (the solidarity-based economy or the 3rd sector) between the public and private economy.

3. Social policy and equality

- Access for all to employment, to initial and vocational training and to information technologies;
- Redistribution of social income to promote social cohesion between territories and generations;
- Aid for mobility.

4. Environmental policy, sustainable development and territorial planning

- Development of energy generation using renewable sources of energy;
- Waste reduction;
- Territorial planning that maintains biodiversity, protecting natural environments and resources;

- Policies that provide for environmentally friendly urban planning, territorial planning, social housing and sustainable transport;
- Educating people about the environment.

5. Cultural economy:

- Fostering cultural expression for all;
- Promotion and development of local and traditional cultures and know-how in all of their diversity of form;
- Supporting the creation of alternative and solidarity-based cultural enterprises.

6. Consumption, purchasing, finance

- Integration of qualitative criteria for the awarding of contracts that are weighted in favour of SD in public procurement;
- Promotion of fair and responsible trade;
- Support for solidarity-based savings instruments and ethical investments and the promotion of microcredit, particularly for the most deprived people, with a view to avoiding their exclusion;
- Reorganisation of public finances;
- Promotion of environmentally friendly catering services.

7. Territorial governance and citizenship

- Developing strategies to reconcile public and professional life;
- Strengthening gender equality;
- Fostering local participation-based democracy through the provision of forums for reflection, the provision of information, exchanges, sharing of views, conviviality, debate, consensus building and mediation;
- Developing a sense of safety and security through human fulfilment and social cohesion;
- Taking into account the needs of all of the population, particularly the healthcare needs of the most deprived;
- Submit the attribution of public financing to criteria of local sustainable economic development (criteria that are solidarity-based and take into consideration the local inhabitants and the conditions in which they live);
- Evaluate public policies in a transparent way.

By Paul Huens - INEES' Environmental consultant

Principles of the SOLIDARITY-BASED ECONOMY

- Democracy, participation, representation
- Equal distribution
- Collective property
- Solidarity
- Respect for health and work
- Fulfilment of the individual, well-being
- Autonomy, independence
- Diversity
- Economic risk taking
- Citizenship
- Social responsibility
- Minimum paid employment
- Ecology, environment
- Coherence
- Respect for work

Intersection of the principles of the solidarity-based economy and sustainable development

- Responsibility, collective well-being, general interest
- Solidarity, satisfaction of social need, alternative ways
- Democratic participation, definition of the common good
- Autonomy

Principles of sustainable development

- Responsibility
- Solidarity
- Participation
- Precaution
- Subsidiarity
- Ethics
- Transparency
- Prevention
- Continuous improvement

Intersection of the principles of the solidarity-based economy and sustainable development

(by Diane Rémy from the network Objectif Plein Emploi – Lux, taken from her university dissertation).

One of the specific aspects of the solidarity-based economy is that, from its very origins, it has historically integrated both the internal and external dimensions of the majority of the principles of sustainable development in both its statutes and its practices