

<EN> General summary of preparatory discussions for Manila'13 Theme no. 2: SSE Initiatives in Territories

Fact: economic and trade globalization is creating new problems.

On the level of daily life, people have lost control over the choices that govern their existence. By choice and necessity, they are rediscovering direct mutual aid and cooperation in a world whose resources are limited.

On the global level, the damage caused by economic globalization is building up, threatening the future for generations to come and the planet itself. Neither States nor multinationals are capable of defining and imposing respect for balanced regulations.

And no independent force has yet emerged from society to supervise and verify respect for democratically validated collective rules.

1. Changing direction by combining two obligations

The first obligation and ultimate goal is still to ensure social and economic justice for all. Understanding global interdependencies is a crucial factor in achieving this goal. The fact is that no one, no matter where they live, can now escape the impact of other people's decisions or inaction in a globalized world. A change of direction requires a deliberate choice to participate in the transformation of major global issues. Taking over state power is not the miracle solution. The state-market duo is part of the problem that needs solving.

Experience tells us that local and global are interdependent, but highly complex and resolutely concrete solutions only become operational when they are anchored in the territorial level.

2. To speed up the change of scale for solutions, it is better to mobilize inventiveness, reality and resources rather than wait for institutions to do everything

By taking back control over their lives, concrete individuals create the collective spaces they need to become organized. The approaches they adopt to make pacts are local and rooted in reality, as illustrated by examples from right across the world. But it is important to point out that they are not simply focused on repairing problematic situations: they are engaged in a dynamic, interlinked and transforming process. These citizen initiatives anticipate modes of organization and institutional mechanisms and are fully committed to sustainable development.

The act of pooling and communicating lessons learnt from practical experience is gradually revitalizing the fundamentals of collective action. Together, these initiatives substantiate the relevance of economic forms that offer alternatives to state and capitalist models.

Yes, alongside management either via individual ownership rights or by the state, a third and competent institutional framework can exist wherein communities and organized groups can collectively manage common goods.

Yes, thanks to their use of concrete examples, these projects breathe new life into the collective perception of what constitutes the desirable – particularly for young people.

Yes, words and action are both vital to changing direction. It will be a long journey...

3. Thinking in terms of interlinked territoriality prepares the ground for democratic governance of the social, economic and ecological

The territory is the geographical basis for organizing relationships

The world economy does not incorporate concern for territories into its exogenous development strategies. When there is no more profit, it moves on, leaving behind industrial wasteland and polluting factories.

Overall, administrative and political territories remain part of a geography of hierarchical and sector-based powers. This explains the strong resistance that the territorial approach to solutions encounters. Our societies are not prepared for what is in fact a cultural change.

Shared definition of the territory within a globalized context: a mutual tool and the fruit of four years of discussions that begun in 2007 to prepare for Lux'09 (4th RIPPSS meeting) and continued until Manila'13 on the subject of “democratic participation and territorial roots of the solidarity economy”.

This term has different meanings depending on different languages and cultures. For us, a territory is a geographically-based action system, where social, cultural and economic relations are organized:

- *at the grassroots level, between inhabitants who share a common heritage, a past and a future in a same area, that they inherited and that has a destiny (whether native born, of adoption, migrants or visitors);*
- *at different levels, between organizations with multiple features (businesses, local authorities, states, networks, mutual aid, sectors of production, etc.);*
- *between these individuals and organizations with a specific bio-geographical environment;*
- *between all these components and larger ones (macro) or smaller ones (micro).*

These systems of territorial relations (whose local roots can vary according to the nature of the interpersonal relationship in question) are necessarily open and connected to the outside. For in today's world, interdependence has increased. Solving concrete problems such as housing, food, development, infrastructure, services, employment, use of natural resources, the allocation of resources, etc. must take into account:

- *constraints and opportunities relating to the production and distribution of globalized goods and services;*
- *the shortcomings of current international governance in the organization of a fair, just and appropriate territorial management of natural and cultural resources (global common goods and shared values) and flows of all kinds that are appropriate to the diversity of different situations (ecosystems, overcrowded metropolitan areas, vulnerable territories, etc.);*
- *new links and forms of organization (institutional, economic, social but also cross-cutting, financial, fiscal, technical, etc.) that territorial governance must create.*

Territorial roots provide a concrete basis for learning how to manage common goods and define shared social responsibilities

The conventional conception of ownership as an individual's right acquires an entirely different dimension when the existence of a collective right to common goods is recognized. What are the consequences of redefining land as common goods? What becomes of the public space if it can no longer be privatized at will? How can access to common goods, humanity's heritage, be guaranteed? How can they be distributed fairly, when territories do not have the same resources? These questions underpin the principles and conditions of exorcizing shared social responsibilities that need to be developed.

Yes, the fundamental debate over common goods, in terms of the theoretical, democratic and territorially operational aspects, is the concrete testing ground for the development of world citizenship.

Institutional support: a decisive external factor

Regional and national governments have a role to play in ensuring that solutions which have been put into practice are long lasting. The tendency to impose uniform rules does not stimulate development in real time.

It is too often the case that business locations are imposed with their approval but without taking into account residents' health and safety conditions.

Under corrupt regimes, setting up institutions is even more problematic since public forums for discussion are non-existent or fragile.

Multiple-level governance is far from being widespread. It does not include civil society beyond the consultation phase and treats it as a weak participant.

Citizen legitimacy, obtained by organized inhabitants on a territorial basis, sometimes conflicts with the institutional legitimacy of public authorities. This is a missing link in the construction of far more cooperative partnerships that take into account each party's public commitments.

Yes, the role of public authorities' representatives needs to be redefined with clear mandates and input from voters. Fundamental debates on the choices affecting the future must be included in decision-making processes. Forms of representation must include citizen initiatives, since these initiatives actually contribute to the real economy and territorial governance. By leaving them out, representation is weakened.

4. Using the real economy as the basis restructures business activity and creates tomorrow's jobs

An economy repositioned to serve the general interest; in other words, working for human beings' well-being, autonomy and freedom as well as to restore ecosystems.

Developing 21st century businesses

"Businesses that cooperate" produce forms of entrepreneurial organization that are appropriate to their goals. They contribute to rebuilding local economic cycles which benefit the communities concerned. As the forum clearly demonstrates, we are currently seeing a reduction in combinations of monetary and non-monetary resources, both public and private, by means of social action, voluntary non-material investment, swapping, mutual aid with or without money, etc. The goals are to obtain more comprehensive and lasting responses to essential needs, or to test out a transition offering a real alternative to state and capitalist models. Seeking to loosen the grip of exogenous development, these initiatives are developing very rapidly in terms volume of activity, turnover and examples recorded. For example, 5,000 complementary and regional currencies have been recorded around the world. The combined influence of these socio-economic inventions can already be seen in an erosion of the complex components that form the macro economy.

Yes, even when severely tested by the increasingly harsh impacts of developments that are increasingly irresponsible, these collective initiatives, projects, tools and organization of alternative markets are now producing real opportunities to "**build a system**" that works for a radical and necessary transformation of the fundamentals.

Taking the path of prosperity founded on quality-based development is possible ...

... once we recognize that the major source of jobs in the future will be the capacity to meet the essential needs of daily life with responses based on quality, durability, solidarity and proximity. Meeting these needs means restructuring employment as a function of these opportunities and the political will to take this direction.

In concrete terms, human activity mobilizes personal and professional values within a territorial context and pre-existing social background. A systemic and interlinked theoretical approach based on concrete situations that create activities supports the adaption of working relations, curbs the erosion of jobs, helps to create new markets and quality territorial sectors of activity, organizes short circuits, creates secure workshare jobs, consolidates the development of international coordinated movements for promoting new solutions, etc.

Yes, a part of human business activity has already been "decommodified".

Yes, the collective project to support, create and link together activities that are useful to our societies in ecological, economic and social terms is taking shape. As it does so, it is building viable and innovative economic models for tomorrow.

5. Joining forces to make sense, grow in number and banish the arbitrary

Make sense: act as the catalysts for a learning method

In a new context, we need to understand what we have learned about working together to develop proposals. It is vital for organizations that share similar viewpoints to exchange views and ideas and take action rooted in solidarity. Comparing practical and theoretical knowledge is a self-transforming process that increases the power to take action and offer concrete answers.

Improving understanding and the definition of the territorial roots of local and interlinked economic ties of solidarity is an ideal strategy for successfully switching from limited prototypes to the conditions needed to bring about a deep-reaching democratization of the economy and obtain political recognition and means of action at all scales of solutions as well as transforming the actual framework for action.

Grow in number: create the conditions for a robust and unifying consensus on taking action together between the greatest possible number of schools of thought and action that identify with each other in the sphere of cooperatives, the social economy and the solidarity economy and movements promoting local development, sustainable communities and transition as well as, more generally, those that consider cooperation as the concrete manifestation of values rooted in solidarity and citizenship that will drive systemic change and find a top-down solution to the current crisis.

Yes, making a pact means learning to become a partner, engage in a mutual encounter governed by legitimacy, and produce together.

Banish the arbitrary: learn lessons from citizen action within the public life of territories, since it underpins all the levels of a complex democracy: management of everyday problems as well as the conditions for finding a dynamic and differentiated way to link to the globalised economy.

Yes, at all scales of solutions, making a pact means realizing that there is strength in numbers, that sharing means growing and that organization creates effectiveness.

Three questions act as the common thread for contributions and discussions at the workshop on How to Make Progress?

1. Strengthen the organization of “companies that cooperate at the local level”; link them together so they can help each other; reach a critical mass capable of influencing frameworks for action and regional, national and global decisions.

2. Organize at different levels, link the horizontal with the vertical to prepare the conditions for democratic territorial governance of the social, economic and ecological; establish and increase the range of solutions; pool and share transferable tools and methods.

3. Make progress over the next four years in introducing the RIPESS intercontinental project to the global agenda and “constructing the social and solidarity economy as an alternative model.”

We must not forget that the workshop’s goal is to produce a number of proposals that will then be given concrete form as a programme of work to be undertaken by the committed organizations from the various continents over a four-year period.

Introductory text prepared by Martine Theveniaut - P’actes Européens, RIPESS Europe, 4 October 2013

Organization team

Yvon Poirier (RIPESS North America), Martine Theveniaut (RIPESS Europe), Françoise Wautiez (Socioeco.org). The other continents (Latin America, Africa and Asia) did not designate representatives to take part in the preparatory Theme 2 discussions. Their viewpoints are therefore less well represented, but are nevertheless present.

60 contributions in total: 15 in 3 languages (EN/ES/FR); 13 in 2 languages (EN/FR); 20 (FR only); 7 (EN only); 1 (ES only) and 3 associated EN or FR.

A summary of all the posts is included in the appendix, with the available language(s) indicated.