

Research for Social Change



United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

UNRISD

Rethinking Development

The role of Social and Solidarity Economy

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Meeting of the Social Economy Category
1 October 2014, EESC



The 21st century development problem

- **Underemployment**, indecent work & informal economy
- Growing **inequalities**: income, gender, regional
- Environmental costs of industrialization, high-input agriculture & consumption patterns; **climate change**
- Recurring **crises** (finance, food, fuel)
- **Women's** empowerment and the care burden
- **Food** and rural livelihood insecurity



The need to rethink development & liberalization

➤ International policy:

- Rio+20 call for integrated approaches
- Post-2015 process to integrate poverty reduction and sustainability agendas

➤ At the grassroots:

- Workers, producers & communities are responding in their own ways, individually and collectively



The need for another approach

- Beyond fragmentation:
 - Simultaneously addressing economic, social and environmental objectives
- Beyond trickle down:
 - Needs provisioning, economic & political empowerment & comprehensive social policy
- Beyond the individual:
 - Cooperation & Solidarity



Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

- Forms of production, exchange and consumption with...
 - 1) explicit social (and often environmental) objectives (e.g. basic needs provisioning; care services, employing the unemployed, food security)
 - 2) values and practices of cooperation and solidarity
 - 3) democratic self-management and decision-making process



Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

An expanding field

- Cooperatives, mutual associations, foundations and associations
- But also,
 - rise of social enterprise in Europe and Asia
 - 2.5 million women self-help groups in India
 - rapid growth of fair trade markets
 - unionization of urban own account workers
 - multiplication of solidarity finance schemes
 - globally networked: e.g. RIPESS, Via Campesina, Global Alliance Wastepickers, Homenet, Streetnet



Can SSE consolidate and expand?

Tensions

- Weak initial conditions
- Commodity sectors with low added-value
- Finance (access, instability)
- Commercialization
- Elite capture
- Regulatory mechanisms
- Enabling policies and co-construction
- Dependency and top down policies
- Women's participation



Enabling SSE

What should governments do?

- **Rethink development** : enable communities vs conventional enterprises and individual entrepreneurship
- Recognize the **potential** of SSE
- Tackle the **disabling policy and legal environment**
- Safeguard the **autonomy** of SSE from the State
- Favour **co-construction** of policies
- Match SSE support with **redistribution** through the state via social, fiscal, credit, investment, procurement, industrial, training policies
- Adopt **multi-scalar** policy support: local, state, national and international
- Favour inter-governmental and multi-stakeholders **dialogue**
- Generate and disseminate **knowledge** about SSE



Enabling SSE at the UN

- UNRISD enquiry:
 - Can SSE be scaled-up?
 - Overcome romanticization
 - Invisibility of debates about SSE in the UN system and post-2015 agenda
- Publications: Briefs, Occasional paper series, Think pieces & forthcoming Book: “Social & Solidarity economy: Beyond the Fringe?” edited by Peter Utting
- UN Inter-agency Task Force on SSE (TFSSE)



UN Task Force on SSE (TFSSE)

- Founding meeting on 30 September 2013 convened by ILO, UN-NGLS, UNDP and UNRISD
- Members (19): ECLAC, ESCWA, FAO, ILO, OECD, TDR, UN-NGLS, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNRISD, UN Women, WHO, WFP.
- Observers (4): RIPESS, Mont-Blanc Meetings (MBM), International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) and MedESS.



Roles of TFSSE

- Enhance the recognition of the role of SSE enterprises and organizations in sustainable development;
- Promote knowledge of SSE and consolidate SSE networks;
- Support the establishment of an enabling institutional and policy environment for SSE;
- Ensure coordination of international efforts, and create and strengthen partnerships.



Selected activities and publications

- Side-event at the 8th Open Working Group on the SDGs (February 2014)
- Side-event at the 41st Committee on Food Security of the FAO (October 2014)
- Position paper: «SSE and the challenge of Sustainable Development»
- www.unsse.org (repository of UN publications related to SSE)

