

GREAT DEBATE

COMMITMENT TO A RESPONSIBLE ECONOMY: THE PEOPLE AND CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE FORE FRONT OF CHANGE

[GE2]

Salle des Arcades
Hôtel de Ville de Paris

Friday, September 21,
2012

MAIN FINDINGS

Participants shared the reasons that encouraged them to get involved and to become stakeholders in change. At one point or another, all of them became aware of the crises that exist, the problems in society, either at a local or global level, including social inequalities and a lack of diversity, economic crises, food insecurity, the absence of citizen empowerment, etc. The participants realised that they could provide a response by personally committing themselves to an association, or by setting up a non-governmental organisation or a media outlet, for example. Deep down, all the participants believe in the need to raise awareness on these problems within society at a local and global level, getting beneficiaries and fellow citizens involved in projects that are part of a fight to empower them.

SPEAKERS

Guy Berger

Director, Division of Freedom of Expression and
Media Development, UNESCO

Sam Daley-Harris

Founder, RESULTS / CEO, Center for Citizen
Empowerment and Transformation

Philippe Frémeaux

Columnist, Alternatives Economiques

Dr. Wolfgang Jamann

Secretary General and Chief Executive of the
Board, Welthungerhilfe

Anneline Vanseymortier

Chairwoman, SIFE Lille Institute of Political
Studies, 2011-2012

MODERATOR

Jean-Pierre Worms

Sociologist

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

The origins of being committed to creating an economy that makes sense

Anneline Koenig, a student at the Lille Institute of Political Studies (IEP), expressed her regret at the lack of social and sociocultural diversity, hoping for an opening up to other communities, allowing for social entrepreneurship to be discovered from within each one. This is the reason why she became Chairwoman of SIFE Lille (today Enactus Lille), an organisation devoted to setting up social entrepreneurship projects. Five teams were set up in order to work on five projects: this led to an incredible experience of discovering the social field, but also of awareness raising with regards to the difficulties it faces.

Philippe Frémeaux prefers to speak about crises, or rather polysemous crises, which have led to one or several changes in the relationships between a person and their work, a person and growth, etc. In his opinion, the economy detests the left and the left detests the economy. This is why he started a cooperative venture in journalism thirty years ago, along with the help of others. It is called Alternatives Economiques and its aim is to provide the reader with the keys for understanding and the elements for analysis in order for the reader to be able to make their own choices and to set down roots in the economy, without staying at a superficial level. As a matter of fact, given that the economy has such a strong influence over politics, anything that gives the citizen the key to greater understanding of the issues at stake is a vital element for democracy. It has been a difficult and demanding mission, but thirty years after its inception, the monthly publication has 110,000 readers.

Sam Daley-Harris points out that the deaths of a high school friend and of senator Robert Kennedy pushed him into questioning why he was alive and what his goal was. He became aware of the need for political will in order to put an end to starvation and, in 1978, he threw himself into a mission for fostering empowerment by encouraging 7,000 high school students to name their own representatives at Congress. However, less than 3% of them actually knew what it was. It was in order to fill this gap that he founded RESULTS in 1980, with the

aim of generating political will to fight against the problem of hunger, and more recently set up the Center for Citizen Empowerment and Transformation with the same aim in 2012.

Wolfgang Jamann spoke about a diagnosis which could be summarised in the following way: "Crisis? What crisis?". Another largely widespread crisis can be very quickly identified: one billion people are in a situation of food insecurity for two reasons. Some of them do not receive incomes high enough to feed themselves, and at the same time, prices of foodstuffs continue to rise. This is why his organisation, Welthungerhilfe, has turned its attention towards the problem of land grabbing. Between 3 and 50 million hectares of land are purchased through land grabbing techniques globally – the equivalent to half of France's landmass. The reasons are many and varied, but it would seem that as a result of poor education for farmers, when money is offered, this quickly buys their resistance. This is why it is important that small-scale farmers have access to education and a minimum right to land among other things, in order to help them resist the unfair selling off of their land. This is also a form of empowerment which is very concrete.

Strategies for building empowerment

Guy Berger explains that there are 195 countries that are members of UNESCO, and therefore, in principle, they are well-prepared to defend freedom of expression and access to the media. Peace and sustainable development are inseparable, since war brings about poverty. Information is a complex ecosystem, which should aim to allow poor people themselves to raise awareness about poverty. This greater awareness will spread through society thanks to an awareness of the consequences of poverty, with the ultimate aim of transforming the whole of society, which will question itself over the causes of poverty and those responsible for it. Information and education programmes set up by UNESCO allow for this greater awareness in society.

Wolfgang Jamann insists on the need for knowledge and education on empowerment in order to develop true citizenship.

This stimulated a response from **Philippe Frémeaux**, who underscored the fact that civil society faces an old

Friday, September 21, 2012

ghost in that it has to change the opinions of citizens through the press, which should objectively enlighten individuals.

Jean-Pierre Worms and **Guy Berger** highlight the need for elites to respect other members of society: as unique individuals, members of the public will shape their own opinions and may or may not develop a desire to struggle for change.

Sam Daley-Harris calls for a structure to be created which provides comprehensive support (national conferences, group leaders, etc.), and which will teach citizens to express themselves, offering them coaching sessions and encouraging them to leave their comfort zone in order to courageously approach their elected representatives, the media and their community leaders.

REPORTER

Antoine Michon
Secretary General, Mezzocredit

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- Alternatives Economiques: www.alternatives-economiques.fr
- Center for Citizen Empowerment and Transformation: www.citizenempowermentandtransformation.org
- ENACTUS: www.enactus.fr
- RESULTS: results.techriver.net
- UNESCO: www.unesco.org
- Welthungerhilfe: www.welthungerhilfe.de