

What's New?



Newsletter, Alliance For a Responsible, Plural and United World

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the newsletter of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World. This letter, if you received it by regular mail, or this message, if you are sitting in front of your screen, is providing you with the first news of the Alliance in its new stage; henceforth, you will be receiving it once a month in English, French, or Spanish.

We are offering here the latest Alliance news, as well as that of many other actors around the world, so that in our quest for a fairer, more peaceful, and more livable world, we can face up to the social, political, and environmental dilemmas towering before us. We shall also be speaking with persons who are protagonists or careful observers of the changes, and we shall present original proposals and experiences. You will be invited, in fact strongly encouraged (see below) to contribute to writing this newsletter. If you need us to send you further information or the documents mentioned in this newsletter by regular mail, don't hesitate to write to us and request them.

Our warm regards, and have a good read!

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THIS MONTH'S PROPOSAL

The Coexistence Index

The Coexistence Index (CI) is an instrument to measure levels of coexistence within a community, a society, or a country, and serves as a basis for comparison along with other social, political, and economic indices such as the GNP, or illiteracy and poverty indices.

The point is to contribute to including tolerance and communication factors within a community as fundamental elements to determine its social health and plan suitable policies, as well as intervention by the proper actors to improve it. Other concrete aims are to increase public perception of coexistence as a value against conflict or the vested interests leading to conflicts, to prevent future conflicts, and to facilitate self-evaluation among activists and field workers.

The CI was developed by The Coexistence Initiative (TCI), a resource and development center for activities and networks dealing

with conflict resolution, community rebuilding, Human Rights, disarmament, education and tolerance, and other related themes.

The CI project was the result of a number of meetings among a variety of actors involved in conflict resolution, Human Rights, peace building, and other similar themes, on the basis of research, field work, and political decision making. At the moment it is being reviewed in order to determine how to follow up on it.

The IC takes into account a number of elements considered to be critical: defining objectives concisely; striking a balance between common factors and those that are specific to each community; promoting active participation in the communities involved.

There are plans for different types of IC products: a coexistence audit to be conducted in a participatory way aimed at a rapid gathering of simple data in order to promote

and induce a public response, and a comparative index with a variable application depending on the different national or regional levels, which will facilitate comparisons and should include political education, project evaluation, and research.

This proposal was shared and discussed in the e-forum on a World Parliament for the Twenty-first Century. A complete file of the first stage of this forum is being put together by the forum facilitation team. The address of the forum is:

<http://www.alliance21.org/forums/info/world-parl>

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THE ALLIANCE IN BRIEF

A NEW FOUNDATION FOR THE ALLIANCE: WE SHALL WRITE A CALL COLLECTIVELY

In June 2003, a meeting was called by the Socioeconomy of Solidarity Workgroup in Barcelona to discuss the articulation among the different Alliance work groups, the Alliance's relationship with social movements, and the future of the Alliance. At the outcome of the meeting, it was decided to take the next few months to draft a document collectively and have it serve as a new foundation for the Alliance network. You will soon be receiving a letter inviting you to join in this collective task. Nearly ten years after this adventure got off to a start in 1994, we have to ask ourselves what the Alliance is now, to reposition ourselves with respect to present-day imperialism, and to redefine our synergies with the alterglobalization movement, which is something we couldn't have imagined ten years ago. We also have to go beyond internal atomism, invent forms of continuous and visible interaction, and commit ourselves to them. Finally, while doing all of this, we also have to move resolutely toward financial autonomy.

You will find the document on the meeting at:

<http://www.alliance21.org/en/news/2003/06/Hamilton.html>

A 65-page document has been published by FPH, called the 2003-2010 Foundation Project. It includes a chapter on the governance of alliances, which has a few proposals for citizens' alliances. If you would like us send it to you, please request it by writing to info@alliance21.org

FIRST PHASE OF PROPOSAL PAPERS EVALUATION COMPLETED: RESULTS AND IMPRESSIONS

Submit the 60 Proposal Papers, and the enormous work they involved, for reading and collective evaluation beyond the many Workshops and Groups that drafted them in the past few years: such was the terrific challenge that the Nova CIS team in Barcelona took up and solved. To do so, they set up a process that lasted from October 2002 to July 2003 and involved the evaluation by 158 persons of 912 texts covering 35 themes, on the basis of nearly 15,000 contributions in 5 different languages. Given that people are not accustomed to connecting to the Internet for the purpose of using an evaluation tool and may find it difficult to do so, and given, also, the colossal mass of ideas and themes presented for evaluation, this was a necessary first experiment in understanding and evaluating the better possible worlds that we are aspiring to make. A report on the results of this experience is being prepared and soon participants will be able to evaluate the method that was used for the evaluation and the provisional summary of the proposals.

http://www.alliance21.org/en/news/2002/10_forumprop.html

A CALL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOURTH WORLD SOCIAL FORUM IN INDIA

A message was recently sent out through the Alliance e-forums by Philippe Amouroux and John Samuel, calling to participate in the next World Social Forum to be held in Mumbai, India, from January 16 to 21, 2004. Allies have participated increasingly in the last Social Forums. Although the Alliance Workshops have so far organized, alone or jointly, or participated in a large number of events, they have not seized the opportunity of the World Social Forum to improve cross-sectional work among themselves, collective actions, synergies, and the development of a common global vision. This is most likely due to the fact that the overall organization of this very important and growing Forum is proving to be difficult, as well as to the fact that insufficient forethought has been given by the Alliance network to the event. This is why we are taking the initiative today of opening a debate on how we could set up an Alliance 21 coordination in Mumbai. For more information please write to Philippe Amouroux philippe@alliance21.org

SEEKING NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

A News section is open on the Alliance Web site. It features further developments to the briefs you will be reading here. We need correspondents in different parts of the world and for different areas of interest who are willing to commit themselves to sending us news on a regular basis. You will be able to write your news directly on the Web site. Don't hesitate, we're expecting you! Write to Germà Pelayo: germa@alliance21.org The News section on the Web site is at: <http://www.alliance21.org/en/news>

THE CONSCIENCE CLAUSE CONFERENCE OF SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS

The rare scientists who have had the courage to denounce their employers' silence and their lies about the harmfulness of products related, for instance, to food, health, or the environment, have had their life destroyed: disparagement campaigns, threats, all kinds of pressure, and courts have destroyed their career, their family life, or their health. The aim of this international conference was to advocate the institution of legal protection on the international scale for scientists and engineers who come into a conscience conflict with their employer.

Geneva, International Labor Organization, September 25-26, 2003

Organization: Association for the Promotion of Scientific Accountable Behaviour & Fondation Science et Conscience.

http://www.apsab.span.ch/clc/renvoi/indOx_en.html





This section offers news on social actors and movements throughout the world. This month, we are focusing on the WTO meeting in Cancún, Mexico, on civil society's mobilization and their censure of the global neoliberal plan advocated by the meeting, and on the debate on the alternatives in preparation.

CANCÚN: BLOCKING THE NEOLIBERAL PLAN AND A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE ALTERNATIVES

In the course of this past decade, the farmers in the countries of the South have been impoverished dramatically as a result of the liberalization of the world economy. The rich countries subsidize their agricultural products then market them broadly and cheaply in the countries of the South. The result of this agricultural dumping is that millions of small-scale farmers cannot sell what they produce, which condemns them to poverty and emigration.

The WTO set up a meeting in Cancún from September 10 to 14 aiming to take one more step in the direction of the consecration of the neoliberal plan. The freeze, or failure to reach an agreement at the outcome of the meeting, revealed that the countries of the South are increasingly making their presence felt as full-fledged actors on the international stage. A consensus on the alternatives is far from having been obtained, however, and getting all the concerned actors involved will be a long and difficult process.

As individuals and as peoples, we are still acting on the defensive while the rich countries are pushing to implement their plans with the support of the multinational corporations of each sector. We are on the defensive, for instance, with respect to the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), which is a plan for a world-scale privatization of service sectors as important as health and education, which would thus be handed over to multinational corporations and private agents.

Some of the so-called Least Developed Countries proposed a total liberalization of the markets, i.e., with no subsidies for farm products of the North and their own products entering the countries of the North unfettered. This solution, however, is restricted to the logic of free-market competition and therefore takes no account of the socially responsible and democratic perspective of Human Rights, environmental protection, nor of the duties and responsibilities of investors with regard to these aspects.

Hundreds of thousands of Mexican and other Latin American farmers, along with activists from the world over also came to meet in Cancún and demand the suspension of the GATS agenda and a moratorium on the WTO. Other initiatives of the same kind have also been taken, such as that of the network of cities that have declared themselves to be "No GATS Zones."

Alternatives therefore require development to be redesigned according to the logic of environmental balance and people's rights, not to be built upon the accumulation of marketable

production. Trade rules have to be redefined on a world scale to make sure that development takes place in the framework of a fair society and a fair economy. What needs to be guaranteed is the food sovereignty of peoples and the food and nutritional safety of persons, in other words, everyone's right to be able to live from the fruit of their work. Finally, we need an international agenda in the framework of a representative and democratic body instead of the WTO.

States, with the support of civil society, must take the responsibility of implementing emergency programs for food security and policies for structural change and integral development in the areas of socially responsible education, awareness raising, and organization. The private sector and NGOs must apply codes of ethics to working conditions and labor laws. Last, what has to be developed is agriculture that is sustainable with respect to the environment, protects biological diversity, and both guarantees the community's nutritional needs and helps to conserve the ecosystems.

To counter the neoliberal offensive aiming to turn services into marketable products, we need to open a worldwide debate on the definition and non-marketability of public-interest goods. Services cannot not be left blindly to the market; on the contrary, we need to establish systems that will guarantee that everyone, everywhere, will have access to the basic goods that are still lacking in far too many regions.

The world social movement must hold a continuous debate on alternatives to neoliberalism as citizens' rights, seek consensus on them and popularize them, while spreading knowledge of the alternative experiences that are progressively developed. While the governments of the North and the South carry on or halt their negotiations on the importance of their position in the market, thousands of people continue to die every day or remain condemned to poverty because their rights and needs are not respected, nor even taken into account. All of this can change progressively thanks to massive citizens' participation in the North and in the South advocating respect of life and dignity and demanding a legal framework, local and international, that will protect those rights and needs.

Many of the Proposal Papers analyzed these questions and drew up, precisely, alternative proposals. You can consult the Proposal Papers on: Global Governance; The World Trade Organization; The WTO and Agriculture; World Trade; Fair Trade.
<http://www.alliance21.org/en/proposals/>



JULIETTE DECOSTER: THE FPH'S CALL FOR INITIATIVES

The Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation (fph)'s Call for Initiatives is today one of the main financial offers on which the Alliance relies for its development. After ten years of a close relationship between the Alliance and this private foundation, the Call, drawing lessons from the relationship, seeks to offer a better framework to meet the challenges that the network has defined progressively, as well as to achieve its aims of interaction with society. Juliette Decoster, in charge of processing the answers to the Call at the fph Paris office, tells us how the program has developed over the past year and a half, and gives us a few leads for its future development.



Juliette, tell us something about your work and about the Call for Initiatives. What initiatives are you supporting at the moment? What objectives are being encouraged?

At the moment, we are supporting about forty initiatives. We get the applications, follow them up, encourage applicants to find joint financing, decide within a team at the Foundation of the kind of support we shall grant it, and take stock of the project. There is a lot of diversity in the initiatives. In general, we try to share out the efforts among the main Alliance work themes (environment, socioeconomy, governance; ethics and values) as well as among the cross-sectional "branches" (geographical, thematic, socioprofessional) and the proposed scope (local, national, continental, or global).

As for the objectives, we favor those, in particular, that capitalize the experience acquired during the first phase, i.e., the Proposal Papers, the Charter of Responsibilities, opening up to new actors, and synergy among groups of themes, socioprofessional networks, or regions that might have points in common. Other financing criteria are a strategic vision of the changes, work on the proposals, collective management, the capacity of producing social mobilization around the project, and joint financing.

How do you support synergy among the different groups?

We look for linkages among different themes and then we encourage actors with points in common to contact each other. This way, we are better able to set the initiative within the project as a whole. An example of that is the meeting of different Human Rights movements and an international network of jurists that will be held within the framework of the European Social Forum in November. Such interaction among groups is of course fundamental, but it remains a difficult task for everyone involved. The support capacity of our team, which comprises only four persons, is limited and the initiatives

themselves keep the persons in charge of them very busy. One of our first steps is to make all of the information we receive on the initiatives visible by publishing it on the Alliance Web site. Every actor can thus access that information and make their own contacts. This section was updated recently and contains concise and precious information on each initiative. (Later, it will also be possible for the actors themselves to access and change the information on their own initiatives directly on the Web site.)

How does this Call help to fashion the development of the new stage of the Alliance?

For some of the new groups just getting acquainted with the Alliance thanks to the Call, we are working more on the idea of "setting up alliances" more concretely (for instance, among independent filmmakers) as a way of connecting and progressively participating in the project as a whole. To capitalize the experience of the first stage, we have the participation of long-standing groups of Allies in initiatives such as the cross-sectional evaluation of the proposals or the elaboration of Charters of Responsibilities. Little by little, new citizens' alliances and new actors are answering the Call, thus opening the range of alliances. Finally, the Foundation team in charge of the Call for Initiatives provides, in addition to financial backing, follow-up of the initiative and methodological support, backs circulation through printed documents and Website publication, and helps to make connections with other initiatives. The Foundation team is also producing an evaluation of the whole of these experiences to obtain a clearer definition of its main lines of support to the Alliance for the 2003-2010 period.

The fph is already circulating a document presenting its orientations for this new 2003-2010 stage. It is available to anyone interested. It can also be consulted on the fph Web site at: <http://www.fph.ch/bienvenue%20eng.html>

