

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

World Citizens Assembly

Lille - December 2 to 10, 2001

Thematic Group

A Local Development That Appreciates Everyone's Initiatives and Culture

1. The participants presented the conclusions of the 11 socioprofessional groups they had taken part in, as well as those of the Proposals Papers. On the basis of this material, 4 categories of interest were drafted:

a) Economy and society

- Sharing resources equitably
- An alternative economic model
- Calling into question the primacy of the economy
- Facilitating exchanges among territories
- Promoting traditional forms of production
- Guaranteeing the right of all citizens to housing, public services, and work
- Favoring agriculture and nutrition

b) Politics

- Building a participatory democracy
- A culture of responsibility
- Participation of actors
- Reinforcing local authorities
- The necessary independence of local grass-roots organizations in relation to the state
- Consultation
- Promoting people's organizations
- Sharing responsibilities between men and women

c) Education, culture, and values

- Enhancing capacities to promote responsibilities
- Importance of peace for local development
- Respecting cultural diversity
- Developing solidarity among territories
- Generating common values through intercultural debate
- Culture as a totality and not as a partial dimension
- Culture by all but not for all
- Dialogue between artists and local inhabitants
- Sustainable development: changing our way of life -- another approach to producing and consuming
- Interreligious dialogue
- Nutritional culture

- Education to participation
- Training young people in responsibility

d) Global /Local

- Integrated local development
- Coordination among local, national, and regional authorities
- Equitable solidarity among territories: alliances allowing people to transmute local action into global action

2. At this point, the workshop divided into 4 groups to initiate an open debate with the following preliminary ideas as benchmarks.

3. The groups defined the following working axes:

Group 1:

- Integrated local development; respecting diversity; promoting decentralization.
- Participation of local actors: political, cultural, religious associations, informal leaders, women, young people, companies, the media)
- Develop the notion of responsibility in local development
- The significance of art as a way of enhancing the visibility of local cultures and of reinforcing local development.

Group 2:

- Local development: its conditions and possible approaches. Identifying the territory, recognizing the actors and resources, developing links among citizens, developing a culture of responsibility.
- Identifying challenges and constraints. Inventing a new form of governance based on a respectful and transparent relation between elected representatives and citizens, on the participation of local inhabitants, and on decentralization. ("Bottom-up" alliances among territories, active subsidiarity.)

Group 3:

Group 3 based its work on a survey of experiences in Senegal, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Lille, around the organization of inhabitants, and links between citizens and their territories.

Groupe 4:

- Local development, considered as the basis for the development of society
- It is characterized by the self-determination of local inhabitants
- Setting up an economy for the underprivileged
- Guaranteeing social welfare for the majority
- Sharing wealth equitably

4.- First draft of a working plan

- A definition of (integrated)Local Development
- Objectives: the common good, improving living conditions; priorities: the underprivileged
- Conditions and possible approaches (see Group 2): A new form of local governance to meet the challenges of globalization in the best conditions.
- Actors.

On the whole, the debate showed that there was substantial agreement concerning these issues. Recurrent themes were:

- The economy: markets, traditions, local technologies, local economy, public participation, micro-financing
- Partnerships: state/local community, among actors, among local inhabitants
- Local identity

5.- Two axes were chosen because they were considered as essential to the creation of the conditions for Local Development.

* Participation. It is very difficult indeed to get people to take part in local development. People do not have the time, there is sometimes a lack of solidarity, they are marginalized, their leaders are authoritarian, people do not

know how to participate; an influx of economic resources into the community can create divisions, distrust, etc., and other problems. It was also noted that participation can lead to problems: grass-roots leaders move away from their rank-and-file base, organizations become bureaucratic, etc.

* Consultation among different actors: Open and free debates among elected representatives and the populations, companies, authoritarian attitudes of elected representatives, the absence of a democratic municipal culture, the existence of powers that are not visible but have a determining influence.

After having defined the axes of issues, the workshop debated on how to move forward and come up with solutions, starting from examples drawn from each concrete reality. The summary of its findings is the following:

6.- from a) to d): strategies for point 1 et from e) to g) : strategies for point 2.

a) Participation can only take place around processes that are already developing, around initiatives in progress.

b) Such initiatives rarely stem from the state, which tends to submit to market forces. They are generally born inside the population and civil society. Therefore, we must support autonomous action by local populations and training.

c) Governments are seldom sensitized to the issue of participation. In some cases, as in Germany, there are large groups of illegal immigrants or marginalized people, who do not represent an electoral clientele and are left aside by municipalities.

d) Participation is a process that takes time to develop. It requires patience and persistence. This is demonstrated by a collective action conducted in an apartment building in Russia around a small local newspaper.

e) A very positive experience of participation is the participative budget. In Brazil today, over 100 municipalities have adopted this approach.

f) As far as consultation is concerned, different experiences seem to show that it is a difficult process involving negotiations where each actor must give in on some point for the common benefit of all.

g) There have also been experiences in Cameroon, in Senegal, in the Philippines, in Portugal and in Bulgaria around the methods implemented, which have been very significant and will be reported in the DPH Records.