

Chapitre 5

The social and solidarity economy

L'économie sociale et solidaire

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a movement that prioritizes social and environmental goals over profit, emphasizing cooperation, democratic governance, and community well-being. It includes various practices and organizations that aim to create sustainable economic systems that serve people and the planet.

What has given rise to this type of economy?

Capitalism is sometimes called into question when it brings about social inequalities. Different issues like global warming, economic crises or poverty have given rise to this business model. The SSE derives from a desire to improve social and economic issues.

Who is involved in the SSE?

What is interesting in the SSE is that ordinary people play an important role, often the young and women. Ordinary people organize cooperatives or associations to further their goals. A lot of these community organizations are rooted in local activity. From the consumers' point of view, the SSE makes it possible to address issues like waste and environmental concerns. They encourage a circular economy where there is less waste and pollution.

d. Why are new communication technologies useful for such an economy?

The SSE greatly depends on NICTs (New Information and Communication Technologies) because they make it easier to connect people in smaller networks, without the intervention of institutional intermediaries.

e. What funding systems have been invented to support small economic projects?

Microcredit is a convenient way to lend money to poor entrepreneurs who want to set up an economic activity and do business. The idea is to grant small loans to those who need help to start off. Moreover, alternative micro currencies are sometimes used in smaller economic circuits. Eventually, one way to fund small-scale, local project is to appeal to donations through crowdfunding platforms.

f. What is the objective of fair trade?

Fair trade is aimed at promoting favourable trading conditions to small producers who work in developing countries. Another objective is to defend sustainable economic approaches, a notion that is backed by richer consumers. It is sometimes viewed as a way to balance economic powers.

g. What characterises workers' cooperatives?

Workers' cooperatives belong to the workers themselves. They also manage them as a group – there is no CEO – and thus do not depend on outside intervention or influence, in particular shareholders. Part of the profits made are shared by the workers.

h. What benefits does CSA provide?

CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) helps farmers and consumers to control the production, distribution and consumption of food. Risks and benefits are shared, making this a model of solidarity.