Conceptualizing SSE Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production

Learning across Contexts and Cultures, from Geneva to Manila

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Conceptualizing SSE towards sustainable consumption and production: Learning across contexts and cultures, from Geneva to Manila.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a snapshot of social and solidarity economy (SSE) institutions and activities in two very different regions in order to reflect on how the SSE is being conceptualized and practiced in varying contexts and cultures, towards 'sustainable consumption and production' transitions. We consider the case of Geneva, Switzerland – where the APRES Chamber federates more than 260 SSE enterprises – and that of Metro Manila, the Philippines – where Asia's solidarity economy council will be headquartered. The two regions are at very different stages when it comes to establishing their local SSE network, with actors in Geneva more focused on putting established SSE guiding principles into practice within their organizations, and actors in Metro Manila engaged in a broader vision of achieving solidarity across supply chains. One of our main findings is that greater coherence is needed, not only within organizations, but also between organizations and regions of the world.

BIOS

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1 Introduction

Known under the acronym ESS (*économie sociale et solidaire*) in Spanish, French and Portuguese-speaking countries, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) emerged as a concept in Western Europe, and North and South America in the latter part of the twentieth century. While each region of the world can attest to a different historic tradition, the SSE builds on the social economy, which traces its roots to the early period of industrialization in Europe. SSE escapes any single definition but is generally understood as placing human beings at the centre of economic and social life, towards a new economic paradigm (ISGC, 1997). Interest in the social economy waned in the post-war period, at a time when market economies were the primary vector for regulating labor, property and currencies, while the welfare state was responsible for social action through the redistribution of wealth (Laville, 1994).

One of the main reasons for a renewed interest in the social economy in the 1980s and 1990s – albeit in new forms – was the failure of current forms of 'development', which have proven to be 'un-sustainable'. Widening inequalities and environmental ails, within countries and at a global scale, attest to the weaknesses of the 'sustainable development' paradigm and, more generally, what has been called a "crisis of values" (Laville and Cattani, 2006). In the oft-quoted Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) definition of 'sustainability', economic growth is seen as being compatible with social equity and environmental promotion – what is sometimes referred to as the triple bottom line. Yet in practice economic growth continues to trump social and environmental considerations. The focus of this paper is on how the social and solidarity economy may prove useful, both conceptually and in practice, towards a more 'sustainability' society.

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is a growing area of research and policy-making that is concerned with achieving higher standards of living for more people with a more equitable sharing of the global resource pie, while reducing energy and material consumption, avoiding resource depletion, and curbing local and global pollution. In the past, environmental problems were seen as being the sole responsibility of 'producers' with early pro-environmental efforts focused on cleaning up 'end of pipe' pollution. In the last thirty years, there has been a shift upstream to cleaner production processes and, in the past decade, consumption has been placed in the forefront (Cohen and Murphy, 2001). Our main hypothesis in this paper is that

upholding the values of the social and solidarity economy could lead to more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The social and solidarity economy is increasingly being seen as a social movement (Draperi, 2011), made up of activities world-wide that include product and service offerings, as well as forms of fair trade, social entrepreneurship, community currencies and micro-credit programs, among others. These activities can be organized institutionally in different ways – from non-profits to mutual societies and cooperatives – depending on where they are based and on existing legal and institutional frameworks. What have been primarily local SSE actors have begun to federate into regional and international networks of members, including the *Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de L'Économie Sociale Solidaire* (RIPESS) platform. In English-speaking countries, SSE is being explored as 'new economics' (Seyfang, 2008) or under the banner or the 'people' or 'human economy' (Hart et al., 2010). While the SSE has been very active in Latin America (Hillenkamp, 2011; Arruda, 2004; Singer, 2002), less is known about SSE initiatives in Asia and Africa.

This paper proposes to explore how the social and solidarity economy (SSE) has evolved in two very different cultural contexts – that of Metro Manila, the Philippines, and Geneva, Switzerland[1] – and how this economy may lead to more sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices. The novelty of this approach is to bring together two parallel areas of research, practice and policy-making: the SSE and SCP. We begin with a theoretical exploration of how both SSE and SCP are conceptualized then follow with case studies based on research in each region. Our aim is to provide a snapshot of SSE institutions and activities in two very different parts of the world in order to understand how SSE is conceptualized and practiced in varying contexts and cultures, towards 'sustainable consumption and production' transitions.

2 Conceptual framework

In this section, we further define the terms 'social and solidarity economy' and 'sustainable consumption and production', highlighting certain concepts that we find relevant to analyzing SSE initiatives in Geneva and Metro Manila towards greater sustainability.

[1] We recognize that we are discussing two geographic regions of very different scale; our approach is not to compare, but to look 'elsewhere' in order to reflect back on lessons learned in each context.

2.1. Defining the social and solidarity economy

Polanyi argued that the economy is 'embedded' in the social realm (2001, originally published in 1944); it has a social purpose, and is subordinate to and inseparable from social relations – a framework that is very much at the heart of the SSE movement today. He famously proposed four ideal-type models that have been present in both pre-capitalist and contemporary societies: 1) the market economy; and non-market economies including 2) house-holding (relations between family members), 3) redistribution (usually through government), and 4) reciprocity. Conceptually, the SSE economy is associated with the notion of reciprocity, which is understood as going beyond duality to giving, receiving and the obligation to give in return that crosses through different subgroups, binding people together in solidarity (Polanyi, 1957). Polanyi expert Servet goes beyond this transactional definition: reciprocity also entails complementary relations based on voluntary interdependence (2007: 264), or being "invested with the potential of solidarity, consciously interdependent on others" (2006: 18). SSE activities therefore *foster solidarity* by placing more importance on people than on capital and profit, but also by working towards social benefits for a community or region through *the engagement of voluntarily interdependent people*.

In practice, a solidarity economy includes more than the reciprocity economy. As Laville (2003) has suggested, the different ideal types proposed by Polanyi are interdependent and function together towards greater solidarity, contributing to *a more plural economy*. Fair Trade initiatives, for example, are a form of reciprocity that engage with the market economy and can benefit from 'redistribution' in the form of State support. How the SSE either confronts or indeed bypasses the neoliberal market economy is a matter of some debate. Fraisse (2003) notes that the SSE is being interpreted in different ways around the world: for some, the SSE is about being *complementary to the market economy*; for others, social and political transformation comes about through the *transformation of the economy* as a whole, towards a post-capitalist agenda – a radical reading of SSE for some (Kawano, 2013). In this scenario, the SSE would eventually replace the current form of our increasingly globalized market economy.

For some, the SSE should also aim to promote *democratic processes* within organizations. As neither State actors, nor for-profit entities, SSE entities are self-managed and self-organized, with the exact type of management style dependent on the type of institutional arrangement they

adhere to (ranging from 'one person one vote' in cooperatives, to more participative management systems in non-profits[2]). According to Laville, SSE is also about "the desire to promote democracy on the local level through economic activity" (2003: 396), or the '*democratization' of the economy* based on the participatory engagement of all citizens (Defourny and Develtere, 1999; Fraisse et al., 2007). The vision is to include all types of people in economic life, engaging them to participate as economic actors.

2.2 Defining 'sustainable consumption and production'

The social economy predates the early environmental movement of the 1960s-1980s, in Western Europe and North America. This may explain that while environmental considerations are increasingly being introduced into SSE activities, they are not always central. In the 'sustainable consumption and production' research community, however, there is consensus that our global society is pushing up against biophysical limits. Researchers and practitioners agree that current patterns of resource consumption are leading to negative environmental impacts, such as local/global pollution and loss of biodiversity, and that these patterns are generally unequal, within localities and between regions. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (Georgescu-Roegen, 1966; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971), the father of bio-economics and later ecological economics, can be credited with moving from the solely price valuation of economic activities to quantifying their material and energy flows.

Understanding patterns of consumption and production through this lens is common practice; there is much less consensus, however, on how people or society might actually shift towards more sustainable patterns with a more equal and environmentally sound use of resources. SCP transitions would include *reduced material and energy throughputs,* in order to minimize the flow of resources, such as fossil fuels and raw materials. Driving towards more localized production and consumption systems by shortening supply chains could also be a factor under this criterion[3]. Tied to this would be the goal of *reducing negative impacts*, such as local and global

[2] An analysis of existing practices would still be needed to determine if the type of management style made explicit 'on paper' is actually taking place 'in practice', as this is not always the case. A cooperative requires democratic decision-making, but this may not always be the case.

[3] The environmental benefits of localization would need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, as not all local production systems are necessarily more 'sustainable' than more distant production systems. See Born B and Purcell M. (2006) Avoiding the Local Trap: Scale and Food Systems in Planning Research. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26.

pollution (including carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases), the loss of biodiversity, as well as the depletion of non-renewable resources.

How to conceptualize ‘pro-environmental behavior’ has occupied social and environmental scientists for quite some time, with differing perspectives on where the potential for change is located: at the individual level in cognitive processes, in interactions between people and technologies, or in cultural and institutional contexts (Sahakian, in press). The understanding of social life in ‘sustainable consumption’ research and policies continues to be dominated by the view of individuals as central to change, drawing from behavioral psychology approaches (Stern et al., 1997). While the goal of a more sustainable society, based on strong environmental and social considerations, is acknowledged as necessary, how to actually get there is less clear today, as the ‘individual’ approach based on raising awareness and attempting to affect behavior has not born fruit.

In the past ten years, there has been a revival of interest in social practice theory (Røpke, 2009; Wilhite, 2008; Warde, 2005; Shove, 2003; Reckwitz, 2002) in ‘sustainable consumption’ studies. In deflecting attention away from the individual as central to change, researchers in this area have been increasingly been attracted to the changing nature of practices over time, in relation to people, things and cultural contexts. Increasingly, empirical research is focusing on practices that relate to grassroots innovations, community-driven efforts, and habits and routines (Warde and Southerton, 2012). This is where the social and solidarity economy could prove useful, as potentially economic activities in this area could tangibly illustrate what ‘sustainable consumption and production’ actually looks like in practice.

3 Case studies

In this section, we consider the institutional and historical contexts of the SSE the Philippines and in Western Europe. We then look at examples of SSE activities in both Manila and Geneva – providing a general overview then going into more detail for one example – and analyze them based on our conceptual framework.

3.1 Philippine Case Study[4]

3.1.1 Institutional and historical context of the SSE in the Philippines

The Philippines has a strong civil society tradition that gained impetus after the People's Power Revolution, which culminated in the ousting of the Marcos regime in 1986. Various bills are in place to promote civil society and allow for structures such as cooperatives[5] and non-for-profit organizations. According to World Fair Trade Organization Asia Director, Ramona Ramos, the oldest fair trade organizations in the world are based in the Philippines. For Jeanne Marie Bernardo of On Eagles Wings Foundation, the Philippines secretariat for the newly formed Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), this 'third sector' may be experiencing an 'identity crisis' as of late: profit-seeking entities have taken on a cooperative status to avoid taxation, while small-to-medium social enterprises with the poor as primary stakeholders (SEPPS) are not given sufficient government support. The Social Entrepreneurship Bill (House Bill 6085, *Magna Carta for Social Enterprises*) is currently being proposed before Congress, to further recognize SEPPS and provide fiscal incentives, such as special loans and tax exemptions. While not all social enterprises aim towards solidarity economy goals, this Bill is seen as a window of opportunity for the SSE movement here[6].

Efforts are currently underway to further institutionalize SSE throughout the region, with actors based in the Philippines very much involved in this process. In 2007, the first Asian Solidarity Economy Forum (ASEF) took place in Manila. Dr. Benjamin R. Quiñones from the Philippines currently Chairs the recently founded Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), part of the

[4] Based on in-depth interviews in January and February 2013 with members of four organizations based in Metro Manila: On Eagles Wings Foundation; the Foundation for a Sustainable Society (FSSI); the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) Asia; and the Sambayanang Muling Pagkabuhay (SMP) cooperative. Information was also gathered at a Symposium on Social and Solidarity Economy that took place at the University of the Philippines on March 2, 2013.

[5] The country has a long history in the cooperative movement, based on experiences gleaned from travel in 19th century Europe: national hero José Rizal was said to have been attracted to the cooperative movement of Robert Owen and brought these principles back to the Philippines; Bulacan governor Teodoro Sandiko was allegedly influenced by the Reiffeisen model while in Germany, which he used as an inspiration in designing the first Bill in 1914 to support rural credit associations in the Philippines. See SOEMCO. (2013) *History of Philippine Cooperatives*. Available at: http://www.soemco.coop/history-of-philippine-cooperatives.

[6] There is the risk that 'social entrepreneurship' gains too much popularity in the Philippines, trumping the solidarity economy and becoming yet another way of making profit under the guise of social ambitions.

RIPESS platform and headquartered in Manila. At the first organizational meeting of ASEC Philippines, ten organizations signed on as members, as well as approximately thirty individuals[7]. At a recent symposium on the SSE at the University of the Philippines – host to the 5th RIPESS Global Forum of SSE in October 2013 – members of different Filipino organizations came together to lend their support to what is, to many of them, not new in practice, but new as a concept: the solidarity economy. Indeed, the notion of coming together as a community to achieve a common objective is a time-honored tradition here, as described by the Filipino term *bayanihan*. Literally, this word means people coming together to lift up and transfer a home to another location[8] and is "a way of life for many people", explained Bernardo. Those advocating a social and solidarity economy are using the term "*bayanihan* compassionate economy" to describe SSE efforts in the Philippines.

Conceptually, the solidarity economy builds on the term *bayanihan* and involves what Dr. Quiñones has proposed as an extension to the triple-bottom-line concept that would include a total of five principles: adding the notions of edifying values[9] and good governance, to social, environmental and economic benefits. This interpretation of the SSE is reflected in ASEC's definition:

> An economy that is built on the foundations of ethical core values and socially responsible governance, and it is geared towards achieving the triple-bottom-line goals of social development, sustainability, and ecological conservation. (Jayasooria, 2013: 108).

Rather than focus on specific enterprises or units of production, the SSE is being conceptualized through what is being called a "supply chain approach" that fosters solidarity across all actors involved in a particular economic activity. The fair trade movement is an example of how this plays out in practice, according to Ramos, mentioning their efforts internationally to work with producer groups, world shops and buyers, and more recently, fair trade financial institutions. This approach has a certain appeal: for Jay Bertram Lacsamana of the Foundation for a

[7] ASEC Philippines expects their membership to grow rapidly; individuals often adhere as members to represent their institutions/organizations, as a first step towards the lengthier process of affiliating their institution/organization.

[8] The traditional Filipino nipa hut or *bahay kubo* is built on stilts and constructed in bamboo and nipa materials.

[9] The Philippines is a predominately Catholic country and certain members in the SSE see Catholic values as being at the heart of this movement. At a recent symposium on the SSE, one speaker stated: "The time is coming when Christ will usher in a solidarity economy. There needs to be a change of heart first," in a more religious reading of SSE values.

Sustainable Society (FSSI), the solidarity economy must move towards this goal of uniting efforts across supply chains in specific regions, so that 'niche' markets can gain enough leverage to act as a force to be reckoned with, besides or perhaps countering the dominant market economy. The five targets defined above are seen as overarching goals that organizations should tend towards as part of a solidarity economy, demonstrating progress along the way. What is less clear is whether any of these principles should be given priority over the others.

As the Republic of the Philippines is highly unequal in terms of wealth distribution, it follows that the promotion of a more democratic economy would explicitly focus on involving the under-privileged. For both Lacsamana and Ramos, this is a distinguishing factor for the solidarity economy here. As Lacsamana explained, "We need to create a space in the market where the marginalized can be included in economic activities." The relatively new interest in the SSE is being linked to broader macro-economic trends in the region. For Lacsamana, the current focus on Asia as a new hotspot for economic development opens the real possibility that the region's poorest groups might bear the burden of a future economic bust. For Ramos, her concern is the further strengthening of the private sector, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a small elite population[10]. "We need to come together (in the solidarity economy) to counter-balance this trend and achieve a level of equal wealth distribution in the Philippines," she explained.

For Dr. Quiñones, the poor are an important part of the equation, but the ultimate goal of the solidarity economy is to strive for a transformation of the economy overall through the supply chain approach. As he explained, "It is the cooperative synergy of different institutions, not only individuals within a single institution, working together in solidarity that enables them to create SSE and an 'other' world that is more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable." In practice, existing efforts towards a solidarity economy still interface with private companies and government agencies, in addition to other social enterprises and NGOs that do not embrace solidarity as their *modus operandi*. As Bernardo explained, "We used to have the idea that we need an alternative but actually it's impossible, it's not one or the other. It has to be both working

[10] As was recently reported and for 2011, the 40 richest families in the Philippines accounted for 76 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth; and two of the wealthiest people in the Philippines were worth six per cent of the nation's entire economy. See AFP. (2013) Philippines' elite swallow country's new wealth. *Inquirer: Business.* Manila, The Philippines.

together, interacting with the market economy," at least until viable SSE actors are manifest across supply chains.

3.1.2 Examples of SSE activities in Metro Manila

In the Philippines, one quarter of the country's population falls below the so-called poverty line, with a majority living in rural areas – which justifies the current focus of the SSE on rural programs. Both On Eagles Wings and the FSSI are active in rural areas and in agriculture in particular. On Eagles Wings is in the process of evaluating rural activities that include free-range chicken, goat milk, coco sugar, as well as coffee and onion production. The evaluation criterion includes the triple bottom line along with governance and ethical values, with a central focus on involving the poor as key economic actors. WFTO Asia is already engaged in the supply-chain approach, working to connect fair trade suppliers with buyers in the Philippines and abroad.

The FSSI has a track record for supporting and financing social entrepreneurship across the Philippines. More recently, they have been working to integrate across value chains in specific areas, such as bringing together organic feedstock farming with dairy farms and organic pesticide production in Leyte, a region known as the granary of the Philippines. Taking on this more holistic view is a new approach for the foundation, and one that has yet to be evaluated. The FSSI strategy is also to engage with what are known as secondary cooperatives, whose members are primary cooperatives (involved in raw material production, including rice, corn and coconut), and who provide to their members: loans and financial services; organizational and institutional services; and product integration for market consolidation, such as the setting-up of common service facilities. For Lacsamana, these secondary cooperatives have the greatest potential to contribute to SSE building. There is also a long history of cooperative banking in rural areas, offering services similar to regular banks and regulated by the central bank *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP); many of these have lost their original social missions, however.

Beyond these three examples of organizations engaged in the SSE, there are hundreds of additional organizations in the Philippines that work towards social and environmental benefits, in both rural and urban areas. Food, beauty products and crafts are all being approached through the sustainability lens, for example, but these efforts do not currently see themselves as part of the SSE. They focus on organic farming and reducing environmental impacts, but they tend to cater to the 'upper classes' that can afford these products, not to changing overall food

provisioning systems. Other organizations may work towards environmental and social goals, but may not be on the radar of those involved in the SSE movement here. This is the case for *Sambayanang Muling Pagkabuhay (SMP),* an urban cooperative in the Smokey Mountain community of Tondo, the capital region's poorest district. As with all cooperatives, SMP adheres to participative decision-making processes and is entirely run by people from this underprivileged community. Members participate with a fee and gain annual dividends from this investment, yet several members explained in interviews that they joined the cooperative because of its strong social values. Values, such as "integrity, honesty and independence (from the State)", are explicitly communicated to all new members in a pre-membership seminar. Those who are found to be diverging from the value system are invited to leave the cooperative. Volunteering is encouraged and to date, there are no discussions to limit membership.

The cooperative runs a series of micro-enterprises, with one of its main activities focused on sorting waste in their Material Recovery Facility, a building constructed using green principles that includes rainwater harvesting, to minimize the use of city water in cleaning plastic recyclables. Another activity of SMP is handicrafts, whereby women are engaged in weaving different items, ranging from handbags to baskets, made from recycled paper. The goal here is to provide a means of livelihood for women who mostly stay at home to care for their families. A third and more recent activity is a laundry service: wastewater from a neighboring bottle water center is filtered and used for the washing, and profits from this business are destined towards social and environmental projects in the community. This cooperative seems to be living up to SSE principles, and delivering more sustainable forms of consumption and production.

There is a term in Tagalog, *kami kami*, which means "among ourselves only" or "us first". Those working in civil society here often use this term to deplore the fact that people tend to work in their own corners, focused on their own organization's missions – 'bonding' among themselves, but not 'bridging' between groups, to borrow Putnam's (2000) terminology. ASEC has an important role to play in identify organizations that strive towards socially just and environmentally sound products and services, in both rural and urban areas, and bringing them together under a common goal and more systemic understanding of the economy. While the focus is currently on involving the underprivileged as producers, these SSE products and services should also become accessible to the underprivileged consumer, and not solely the elite consumer that can afford organic produce, for example. Collective action that transcends socio-economic differences would be necessary (Sahakian, 2012). SSE strength could come in

numbers: so many activities are underway in the Philippines but may not recognize themselves as part of the SSE as of yet. As there are currently few product and service categories in the SSE, there's also a need to diversify the offer and move beyond the current rural agriculture focus to include financial institutions, transportation methods, insurance companies, real estate developers, and other offers that could join in the supply chain approach. Organizations could also work to achieve SSE principles internally, particularly towards more sustainable consumption / procurement strategies (type of office paper used, type of energy source for electricity, reduction targets for paper and electricity consumption, travel and transport policy, for example).

3.2 Geneva Case Study[11]

3.2.1 Institutional and historical context for SSE in Geneva[12]

The history of the social economy in Switzerland has followed a very similar path to that of Western Europe. At the end of the nineteenth century, laws were created to formalize the legal status of associations, cooperatives and other social organization types. The social economy then merged with the dominant market economy in the period between the Second World War and the start of the 21st century, during which time a great number of cooperatives were transformed into corporations. Those who were able to maintain their legal status as a social enterprise often had to relinquish much of their social missions in order to remain competitive (Chanial and Laville, 2002). Since the 1970s, there has been renewed interest in the social economy and a broadening of its vision to include ecological considerations.

New organizations emerged to address a series of issues, including: the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the economy; rising unemployment rates in Europe (1980s) and Switzerland (1990s); more women in the workforce and the need for childcare services; an ageing population and the need for socially-oriented medical establishments; and negative

[11] Based on the contribution of co-author Christophe Dunand, with over twenty years experience as director of Réalise, an important social enterprise in Geneva, and as founder of the SSE Chamber. Included in this section is data drawn from exchanges with students in the Geneva Business School (best practice case studies) as well as an in-depth interview with a founder of *Les Mangeurs* in August 2012.

[12] This case study is not representative of all of Switzerland. Geneva is based in Western, French-speaking Switzerland, close culturally to neighbouring France; the SSE in German-speaking or Eastern Switzerland is influenced by German literature, which has lead to a different interpretation.

environmental impacts, such as pollution, resulting from economic development. In that same period, a number of new, not-for-profit organizations emerged as part of a vibrant civil society in Switzerland. The social economy born in the 19th century and dominated by cooperatives and mutual societies in Europe (Gueslin, 1998) thus expanded to include other types of legal entities, such as not-for-profits, associations, foundations and corporations.

The emergence of work integration social enterprises and the creation of new cooperatives (a type of legal status that had long been out of fashion) in the early 2000s, as well as communication campaigns by the first social and solidarity networks, that the SSE came to be recognized as a third economic sector in Switzerland. In 2006, the first 'Chamber of Commerce' for the SSE in Switzerland was founded in Geneva, called APRES-Genève. The establishment of a similar Chamber in the State of Vaud followed in 2009, with Neuchâtel and the Jura founding their own SSE chambers in 2012. Understanding to what extent the SSE contributes to the national economy is still difficult to grasp. Very little national data exists on the SSE in Western Switzerland, with research currently underway (Gonin et al., 2013; Swaton, 2011; Swaton and Baranzini, 2012). In Geneva, an estimated ten per cent of employment is based in the SSE (APRES-GE, 2010), which matches the rates found in neighboring France[13].

Currently, the Geneva SSE Chamber counts 260 member organizations (up from 100 founding members) that are engaged in all forms of economic activity, including: financial services, adult education, cooperative housing, local agriculture, education, work integration, construction, community services and fair trade. Some organizations are small in size, while others count several hundred workers. The process of federating different organizations in Geneva took place around shared values and concrete practices, as well as coherence between the two. The initiative was taken by local actors who participated in the Second World Social Forum in Brazil (2002), where they recognized the importance of networks in supporting SSE organizations towards a new economy. The majority of current APRES-Genève members existed prior to the creation of that chamber, which means that they had already been practicing social and solidarity based economic activities, sometimes for several decades, without necessarily

[13] In many countries, the legal status is what defines a SSE enterprise. In France, for example, all cooperatives are considered to be a part of the SSE, yet not all cooperatives focus on community benefits; some are focused solely on the interest of their membership, which is not aligned with SSE principles. In Geneva, SSE status is based on adherence to certain SSE guiding principles.

knowing this was the case. The value charter[14], developed by a group of APRES-Genève members and approved democratically in its general assembly, mentions seven key points (that are further developed in the charter):

1. Social wellbeing: *to be, not to have*
2. Participative Citizenship and Democracy: *each voice counts*
3. Ecology: *produce to live, don't live to produce*
4. Autonomy: *autonomous but not individualistic*
5. Solidarity: *1 + 1 > 2*
6. Diversity: *rich in our differences*
7. Coherence: *say what we do and do what we say*

To become a member of the APRES Chamber, an entity must sign this charter and agree to adhere to these values. A number of criteria have been established to determine if these values translate into operational procedures, including the mission of the organization (for a common good and not the maximization of profit), democratic or participatory management, the salary difference within an organization (highest salary no more than five times the lowest salary), a limited interest rate on capital, intended us of profits, and the opportunity incorporated company employees to become shareholders. The adherence to certain criteria is obligatory, such as transparency, working towards a social good, autonomy, and limited profit making. For other criteria, including the goal of limiting social and environmental negative impacts across value chains, and participative management systems, or the integration of social and environmental factors in devising a procurement strategy, the member organizations must commit to making progressive improvements in these areas (Dunand, 2013).

3.2.2 Examples of SSE activities in Geneva

As mentioned above, members of the SSE Chamber in Geneva are engaged in a diverse set of activities. Housing cooperatives, such as *Inti, Polygone* and *Equilibre*, are becoming increasingly active in Geneva, which is currently experiencing a housing crisis. These cooperatives aim to build the most socially just and ecologically sound apartment buildings in the country, with future residents involved in the design and construction processes. They seek to minimize the need for energy-intensive heating, thanks to innovative building design and access to renewable energies. They dedicate a part of the built structure to community activities, and are now getting more involved in urban gardening. While for-profit companies are concerned with lowering

[14] Accessible online in English, French, Spanish and German: APRES-GE. (2005) *La Charte de l'économie sociale et solidaire de la région genevoise*. Available at: http://www.apres-ge.ch/node/32136..

building cost to maximize profit margins, the future inhabitants are concerned with building structures that will lower the consumption of energy in the usage phase and ultimately lead to a better quality of life.

Local agriculture, generally organic, is also on the rise around the city. The *Jardins de Cocagne* cooperative pioneered the provision of organic vegetables, from farm to fork, currently delivering hundreds of vegetable baskets to families each week. The focus of their efforts is on favoring high quality, seasonal produce, avoiding intermediary vendors and packaging, and promoting more direct relations between farmers and consumers. Customers also pay in advance for their seasonal vegetables, thus sharing in the risks with farmers in the case of a bad crop or season. A Geneva restaurant, *Les Mangeurs*, proposes not only locally grown vegetable baskets, but also menus based on seasonal products. Their aim is to demonstrate how locally grown food can be prepared, with a focus on vegetables. Small portions are served to reduce waste, with customers invited to request an additional serving. *Les Mangeurs* has strong values when it comes to developing closer social relations with their providers as well as their customers and neighbors. They do buy certain products at the local supermarket, when an ingredient is not available otherwise (either locally or through fair trade), and heat their restaurant with inefficient electrical radiator, as their building has no other type of heating option. They are not able to afford the more expensive, renewable energy offer by the local electricity distributor. As they explained, their focus is on paying good salaries for the moment, not on increasing operational costs. For banking and insurance services, the restaurant inherited accounts from the business that originally had their lease and have not since thought about working with SSE actors.

Work integration social enterprises are important actors in the development of SSE in Geneva, including Réalise. Each year, this enterprise engages with approximately 250 unemployed people with limited qualifications in its different industrial service sectors: dry cleaning, gardening, and electronic-waste recycling. Following several months of internship, these people are encouraged to look for jobs in the market economy. In addition to working towards work integration as a larger social good, Réalise adheres to the SSE values as made explicit in the APRES charter. For banking and insurance services, Réalise works with cooperatives; procurement for the cafeteria privileges local farmers as much as possible, or those engaged in fair trade (for coffee, for example). All waste is recycled and the energy mix chosen for the electricity in the office buildings has the ‘green’ label. The building was also designed to have proper insulation and efficient lighting, to minimize energy consumption. Water runoff from the

laundry facility is not maximized, however: it would have been interesting to find ways to reuse and recycle that water, but it is currently not a priority. In terms of operations, all employees can be members of the organization and elect their board members, who in turn nominate the director. Employees are encouraged to contribute to both important decisions and everyday organizational issues. Part-time work is encourages, as well as working remotely in order to limit transport. Parking is not available on site and management is encouraged to 'walk the talk' by getting around either by bicycle or through Geneva's well-developed public transport system.

What we can conclude from this brief overview is that many organizations in Geneva that are part of the SSE are living up to the guiding principles of APRES-Genève within their own organization, but not necessarily seeing how these principles might apply to the economy as a whole and their role in 'another' economy. While coherence is explicit in the guiding principles, certain organizations may not be entirely coherent when it comes to their own procurement strategies. There seems to be a focused within their sector on improving the food or housing supply chain, but with few linkages between sectors, such as finance and insurance. More efforts could be made to bring existing SSE actors together towards a broader reading of the social and solidarity economy, not only a more plural economy, but the transformation of the overall economy.

5. Conclusion and discussion

While this paper is based on a very preliminary exchange between researchers and practitioners based in Western Switzerland and the Philippines (which would merit further exploration), the value of such an exercise is clear: learnings on one's own situation can come from unexpected places, such as looking 'elsewhere' to then reflect back on one's own position. We have noted how the two regions are in very different stages when it comes to institutionalizing the SSE. Geneva has organized itself into a membership network of SSE organizations, and such efforts are only starting in the Philippines. The approach in Geneva has been to make a value system explicit through guiding principles, and encourage members in the SSE Chamber to put those principles into practice. Certain guiding principles are mandatory, while others are seen as progressive goals. Efforts have been very inclusive in terms of bringing on board a variety of actors from different product and service sectors, as well as raising awareness around the SSE to elected officials and the general public. While Geneva is a small city, SSE actors offer a range

of products and services. All of these learning are valuable to those working towards a strong SSE movement in the Philippines.

The SSE movement in Geneva seems to focus on the practice of individual members, however, and could benefit from a more conceptual approach, where the SSE is seen as having the potential to transform the entire economy – across different sectors. This broader perspective is very much at the heart of the Philippines movement towards the SSE, as made explicit in what is being called the 'supply chain approach'. Here, SSE is being conceptualized as an umbrella concept that looks at the economy as a whole and includes activities such as certain forms of social entrepreneurship, fair trade and other efforts that engage with the poor as primary stakeholders. However, much of the SSE activity in the Philippines is focused on the rural context and on farmers specifically, with little to no actors identified to date as being part of SSE in urban areas, or in service sectors such as insurance, housing, transport, etc. The challenge will be to actually make available SSE services and products across different sectors. This would need strong leadership, which seems to be the case currently, and reaching out to non-traditional actors and other organizations who do not necessarily understand themselves as part of the SSE today.

In terms of relating the SSE to more sustainable forms of consumption and production, social considerations are highly valued in the SSE, with environmental considerations taking a back seat in both Geneva and the Philippines. In Geneva, we have seen how organizations are at different stages when it comes to adhering fully to the guiding principles of the Charter. In the Philippines, organizations involved in the SSE may not have strong targets when it comes to the environmental impact of their own operations. This raises the question of coherence, not only within an organization, in terms of its mission and how this plays out in everyday operations, but also coherence when working with other organizations. Through our case studies, we have gleaned what may be certain pitfalls towards greater coherence: organizations may not be aware of other SSE offers that could be complementary to their own; such offers may not be available (in terms of quality and quantity), nor affordable. Or perhaps being coherent in every possible way is not a priority for an organization that is rather focused on excelling in one aspect of their product or service offering. What may be more important is the possibility of moving progressively towards maximum coherence.

A broader issue is the need for organizations to see themselves as part of a need for wider systemic change across the economy. This can come about through interdisciplinary thinking, which is not always promoted in our educational systems. The SSE movement could also benefit from a systems approach embraced by certain actors in ‘sustainable consumption and production’ research, specifically thinkers from industrial ecology that seek to link different enterprises in industrial systems that mimic ecosystems in their exchanges of materials and energy. In turn, the SCP community could benefit from the conceptualization of an economy that places people and planet first, and in solidarity as a value that is made explicit both conceptually and in practice. The different social forums and SSE networks are certainly paving the way for more collaboration across regions, yet a link remains to be made with environmental forums and SCP networks.

The SSE is operating in very different realities in Western Switzerland and the Philippines: while democratic processes are taken for granted by Swiss citizens, there is a true need to move towards a further democratization of the economy in the Philippines. While in Western contexts certain people continue to press for an overall reduction in consumption and production (also known as the ‘de-growth’ debate), there are many millions of people in the Philippines for whom the consumption of additional resources is not a matter of greed, but of need. The social and solidarity economy certainly seems to be a stepping-stone towards more socially just and environmentally sound world but, in order to get there, greater solidarity is needed not only across supply chains and between SSE actors, not only between the social and solidarity economy movement and those working in the area of sustainable consumption and production, but also greater solidarity between regions in a highly unequal world.

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