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## Concept SOLIKON2015

**We know other ways! Solidarity Economy and Contributions to the Transformation**

*Location: Berlin (Technical University)*

*Time: 5.-13. September 2015*

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### Congress Concept Short-version (*long version below*)

**Aims of the Congress ,Solidarity Economy’**

**10-13 September 2014, at Technical University in Berlin**

*1. Presentation and Visualization of approaches, visions and practice examples for another way of economic activities, as for example:*

- Old marginalized communities trading in a solidarity-based way
- (like indigenous people in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere)
- Old and new co-operatives
- Alternative Economy
- Community supported agriculture, small farmers promoting bio-diversity and good soil, Permaculture, Urban Gardening, common land
- Renewable Energy: technologies, providers, initiatives
- Common Grounds, commons, Reclaim the Commons
- LETSsystems and regional currencies
- Give away rather than exchange, Co-Consuming, Demonetization
- Peer-to-peer-economy
- Common Goods Economy
- Fair Trade
- Degrowth
- Transition Towns
- Economy of Happiness, bien vivre
- Feminist Economy
- Ecology, etc.

*2. To bring together different actors and let know each other*

- at the Congress
- on the Congress Homepage
- in a Congress-catalogue where all speakers, exhibitors, and initiatives will be found also after the Congress.

3. To offer open space for a dialogue between approaches and movements for a convivial economy in an international discourse:

Degrowth, Commons, Occupy, Common Goods Economy, Co-consuming, Care Economy, Demonetization, Social Enterprise, Protection of the environment and climate, Sustainable way of living, Trade unions and many more. Which are common goals, where are the differences? Could we develop a common charter, or common demands towards politicians?

How could a common Transformation Agenda look like?

Some further information: This congress will be accompanied by a so-called Transformation Week (05-09 Sep) where projects can be visited in Berlin and in the Land of Brandenburg. Although a RIPESS AGM with RIPESS members and a RIPESS podium will be included, only parts of the Congress are appropriate for international audience. For those events, interpretation will be provided.

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[1]

The Idea of the congress and the week of change (long version)

We know other ways!

# Solidarity Economy and Contributions to the Transformation

Location: Berlin (Technical University)

Time: 5-13 September 2015

- **Background**

- **The Idea**

- **Key Issues**

- **The Week of Change**

- **Groups the Congress wants to address**

- **Strategies and Goals**

## 1. Background

We are in the midst of the problems of the "Financial Crisis" which also in this country is increasing the social gap between the rich and the poor and decreasing discussions on sustainable development and climate justice. Social security systems are being abolished more and more in Europe because of dwindling state revenues and public spaces as a result of large scale privatization. The crisis manifests itself in high youth unemployment especially in Southern Europe and in the collapse of health care like e.g. in Greece.

In addition, we are in the middle of the period which is decisive to the crisis of climate change and scarcity of resources: decisive for life on earth, for future generations. But all crises have a common denominator: our mode of production.

*However: We know other ways!*

Let us build together an economy which prioritizes *cooperation instead of competition* and is based on the *common good rather than on profit*; an economy of small business cycles and regions which are characterized by their resilience as an alternative to extractive and irresponsible exploitation of the sources of our life.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to valorize human labour in all its forms as well as to valorize nature. The challenge of our time is a great transformation: towards effective climate protection and a socially and globally fair society in which the economy decidedly serves the common good and is a subsystem of ecology.

*Good news: The economy of short circuits and of happiness ... already exists!*

The taz (German newspaper cooperative), the FAZ and many other publications are currently reporting on examples for a sustainable economy. Global movements of Solidarity Economy and related approaches like "Commons", "Economics for the Common Good", "Transition Towns", "Post-Growth", "Sharing Economy" can count on a growing number of supporters. Solidarity Economy (SE) means producing in order to meet the needs of people based on voluntary cooperation, self-management and mutual aid (see as well ripess.org, Peru 1997). Therefore SE is an alternative to the current profit oriented and competition based mode of production. Its roots go back to traditional and indigenous community reproduction, including "commons" and to the cooperative movement that originated in Christian social ethics and in the early socialist movements. This drive emerged again as the Alternative Economy and the solidarity movements of the 1970s and 80s and, more recently, in the movement for organic farming, fair trading and renewable energies.

Alternative ways of production today also provide great practical and cultural potential for the necessary transformation.

Solidarity Economy demands that we bring democracy into the sphere of the economy. This includes cooperation and fair working conditions within enterprises / projects and between them, mostly at the regional level but also through global networks. - A good life for all requires participation in decision-making.

Common ways of economic activities create synergies and are better suitable to cope with economic crisis, as proved by different studies and by existing collective enterprises. A new wave of cooperatives is coming into life, including energy cooperatives, repair cafés, urban gardens and community sustained agriculture. In Italy solidarity purchasing groups ensure the survival of regional small organic farmers,

link up with the antimafia movement and support social cooperatives farming on land seized from mafia bosses. In Greece, Spain and Italy networks of new social and solidarity enterprises emerge und worker buyouts save economic activities in the crisis.

The innovative power of these projects is remarkable: new ways of sharing and bartering, cooperation between producers and consumers are arising. Free Software and other forms of shared knowledge and shared use (media, music, videos, knowledge, accomodation) are acquiring remarkable dimensions. Also time-banks in the field of health care, cooperatives of older people and multiple-generation housing are tackling social problems that are ignored by society at large.

Do-it-yourself and do-it-together are becoming more attractive than passive consumption. Meaningful, self-determined activities and rediscovering almost forgotten skills in a social context of neighbourhood, are enriching life. Self-managed activities invite to appreciate the potential of the local environment, are vehicles of inclusion and promote a new culture of cooperation.

The different forms of SE give hope: they sprout at our feet and bloom in various ways, even though our laws and societal structures are still favoring old monocultures. How can we prepare the soil for a transforming economy that fits life?

## 2. The Idea

The required transformation is only possible through the cooperation of many stakeholders. With an alliance of about 30-40 organizations we invite you to a “Transformation Week” with excursions to discover alternative economy projects in autumn 2015 in Berlin, followed by a conference headed by the slogan "We know other ways! Solidarity Economy and Contributions to the Transformation”.

- The conference intends to show the diversity of practices and encourage practical cooperation: getting to know each other, exchanging experiences and developing forms of networking, especially at regional level, should encourage actors and inspire interested people to get involved.
- Different theoretical approaches will be presented and examined with respect to possible common conceptions of transformation and implementation.
- In an exchange with key stakeholders of the media, trade unions, churches, science, education, politics, foundations, NGOs and social movements we want to reflect and develop together goals, strategies and first steps.

The conference program is intertwined with the annual conference of RIPESS Europe, the European section of the "International Network for the Promotion of Social and Solidarity Economy" ([www.ripest.org](http://www.ripest.org) [2]). Furthermore we are considering entanglement with a "Thematic Meeting of the UN Side Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy" ([www.unsse.org](http://www.unsse.org) [3]), at which RIPESS participates as an observer.

## 3. Key Issues of the Congress

SE means to recall that the sole reason for the existence of economy is to meet human needs. Therefore, the congress asks in a first step: how can we meet our basic needs without jeopardizing our grandchildren?

It is also about the emancipation of the whole society from consumerism and an advertising industry that induces desires to buy more and more commodities suggesting that they will satisfy our immaterial needs.

In order that the economy does not cause starvation but does feed all, a respectful use of (natural) resources such as soil, water, energy and an equal access to them for everyone is paramount.

This will only take place if production will rely essentially on regional production networks and chains. Important is to figure out, which framework conditions alternative actors need and which are the concrete obstacles in achieving them.

Where regional resources are insufficient, international cooperation is necessary. Ecological and socially fair trade has to become standard, in clear opposition to the policy of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and against free trade treaties such as TTIP. New forms of SE between equal partners across borders can be developed and set in motion.

In the face of a repressive European policy, which ignores the knowledge and experience of the affected societies, we want to listen to

speakers of self-managed projects and enterprises and their perspectives of transformation with special attention to Southern Europe, that is currently under extreme pressure. Also in several Latin American countries solidarity practices have been organized in times of crisis. Some of them have, in the meantime, become impressive institutions, e.g. the "Regional Forums" and "Incubadoras" in Brazil, so that we can learn from them a lot for the bottom-up transformation of our societies.

Finally, paths and steps to transformation will be examined and discussed. Until now key actors in society have no interlocutors who can reflect the broad spectrum of alternative practices. Therefore, the conference will bring together theorists and actors from alternative economies and offers spaces in which multipliers, churches, unions, foundations, politicians, media, universities and NGOs can reflect on conceptions for the transformation and the "good life".

***Key themes of the conference are:***

- Meet basic needs (nutrition, shelter, clothing ...) from consumption to cooperation between producers and consumers ("Prosum"); new forms of collaboration
- Access to and responsible use of resources (land, water, energy, ...)
- Getting to know and strengthen regional cooperation (e.g. Berlin Brandenburg and beyond); build up Regional Fora (in order to build solidarity production chains or networks supported by major regional actors) for attaining the re-regionalization of the economy
- International cooperation: promoting ecological and fair solidarity trade structures - also as alternatives to TTIP, CETA etc. Sharing experiences and strategies in building SE: Learning from Latin America and Southern Europe, use the potential of free knowledge.
- Discussion of transformation strategies between key social actors on the one hand and persons involved in the theory and practice of SE and related approaches on the other.

**4. Week of change with excursions**

In the days before the congress, there will be tours to visit existing enterprises and initiatives of the Solidarity and Alternative Economy in Berlin and Brandenburg, which agreed to show visitors their work. This week's excursions can serve actors of alternative economies to network while facilitating a broad public to find easy access to this field. Projects, companies and initiatives - especially in the sectors nutrition, shelter, clothing, but also energy - can be visited for 4-6 days in a row (Saturday 05/09/15-Thu 10/09/15) by groups of different sizes. An occasion to get to know directly examples of sustainable lifestyle and alternative economy.

**5. Groups the congress wants to address:**

Approximately 800-1.000 people from:

Theory and practice of alternatives (Social and Solidarity Economy, "Commons", "Transition Towns", Economy for the common good, Degrowth, Feminist approaches, "Peer2Peer", "Sharing and collaborative Economy", "Community Economy", fair trade etc.)  
People from enterprises and projects, from organizations that support start-ups and networks, young and experienced researchers.  
Multipliers from the media, churches, parties and municipalities, unions, science and educational institutions, foundations, NGOs and social movements.  
Interested individuals, especially young people, students, unemployed people and women (often underrepresented when it comes to economics).

**6. Strategies and goals**

To achieve a transformation of society which promotes sustainable "buen vivir" (good life for all in harmony with nature) a number of activities is needed:

Preventing the worst impacts and irreversible destruction our current system is causing, e.g. climate change, deforestation of tropical rainforests and depletion of resources; nuclear power, genetic technology, free trade treaties; intransparent lobbying, speculation with food,

abolishing or curtailing the welfare state, causing hunger and misery, "landgrabbing" and privatization of public goods & services, subsidies to useless big projects, tax-avoidances and tax havens etc.

Besides this (resistance against symptoms), it is necessary to build up a network of alternatives and develop common transformation strategies and structures (combat the causes).

Therefore, the focus of our event will be on building Regional Forums in order to foster real sustainable regional development and regional resilience.

As steps in that direction we see

- an archive of good practices;
- exchange of knowledge (theory-practice transfer);
- concrete economic cooperation;
- common public relations and campaigning (political networking), whenever possible in coalition with other social actors;
- the region Berlin-Brandenburg should serve as an exemplary field of experience;
- International networking and inclusion in clear opposition to nationalist ideologies.

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**Source URL:** <https://solikon2015.de/en/concept-solikon2015>

**Links**

[1] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/130033842@N04/18421122035/>

[2] <http://www.ripess.org>

[3] <http://www.unsse.org>