

Is Capitalism mandatory?

1. A triumphant Capitalism?

Is Capitalism really mandatory? It's tempting to ask the question as it now occupies a so-called "dominant" position in the world. Especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall. But even more so since working the field thanks to its deep roots and undeniable capacity for renewal. To use a word that makes its advocates cringe, it is "sustainable", but obviously not in the ecological sense of the term! Branko Milanović, Professor at New York University, has published a book entitled *Capitalism, alone*¹ which "dedicates the victory to a model of development with no equal to date, to ensure the prosperity of mankind"². The author goes on to argue that capitalism is not just dominant, but now also unique. In his view, the whole planet is now following the same profit-driven economic principles, with the expected result being the end of the inequalities between countries. The divine surprise is that "the share of capital in national income will increase"³. Above all, the future would be a world "driven by ever improving movements of goods, information and ultimately people", with "the ultimate victory being over the constraints of time and place"⁴. It is therefore impossible to find an alternative to the "hypermarketed capitalism"⁵ that it glorifies. The economist Michel Aglietta, while saying that capitalism would endure, was much more cautious by highlighting its responsibility in the multiple crises it generates, creating a kind of continuum of crises and inequalities. He has been incessantly calling for a transformation and regulation of capitalism. Both, in very different ways - triumphalist for one, critical

¹ *Capitalism, alone, the future of the system that rules the world*, Branko Milanović, Harvard University Press, 2019.

² Zoom : *Comment le capitalisme est devenu maître du monde*, www.lesechos.fr, 08/09/2020.

³ *Capitalism, alone, the future of the system that rules the world*, Branko Milanović, Harvard University Press, 2019.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

and reformer for the other - make us wonder whether capitalism is the only lasting way forward.

The question is all the more pressing given the succession of different types of capitalism that still coexist today.

In my book on Social Economy as an alternative to capitalism (*L'Économie Sociale, une alternative au capitalisme*⁶), I had already mentioned four types. "Family capitalism", that of the big families (Ford in the USA, Carrefour in France, Samsung in South Korea, Bolloré in France, etc.), and small and medium-sized family businesses (of which there are many in the European Union). "Technocratic capitalism" - that of managers - all about the separation of powers between managers and owners, with managers seeking to maximise their salaries and shareholders' profits. Then there is "financial capitalism", where shareholders invest their funds intensively to maximise profits in service, industrial, technological, and agricultural sectors. And originating from the latter, "capitalistic capitalism": via investment or pension funds, the aim is to buy, monetize, resell, or even destroy, in order to reduce competition. This extreme version is the source of new instabilities. It would be too simple if these four categories proved to be the only ones. Sharing some of the characteristics of a chameleon, capitalism adapts and multiplies too. From a different perspective, we can also identify a national capitalism and another without border. The latter is particularly illustrated by the GAFAMs: Google, Amazon, Facebook, Tesla, Uber... A form of capitalism that has no regard for borders, regulations, taxes, or duties. It combines innovation and self-internationalisation with shocking social practices. New forms of capitalism, derived from these, are emerging. They include "cowboy capitalism" exemplified by US President Donald Trump and his friends, their method being "I'll shoot first and see what happens later". As a case in point is the war of tariffs and taxes unleashed by Donald Trump, from which he hopes to reap

⁶ *L'Économie Sociale, une alternative au capitalisme*, Thierry Jeantet, Economica, 2008.

the rewards, including for himself. In a way, capitalism with exacerbated concentration of political and economic power clashes with other forms of western capitalism and those of State capitalism (in China, Russia and elsewhere, under the guise of communism or imperialism). These forms of capitalism follow one another, clash, as well as monitor and consult one another.

This diversity is undoubtedly one of the conditions for its survival. After all, competition is an inherent part of capitalism, so it is only fitting that it should be practised within it. Among the main arguments in favour of maintaining capitalism as a single model, three stand out:

Firstly, capitalism and democracy are inextricably linked. Doubts arise at the mere mention of Russia, China, or even Singapore. The authoritarian origins of these countries (whether or not sheltered by some form of communism or another) do not demonstrate this nor try to hide it. Twice democratically elected President of the United States, Donald Trump keeps harassing elected representatives of States that did not support him. Capitalism is no angelism. Quinn Slobodian, Professor at Boston University, shows how economists Friedman and Hayek created the "Mont-Pèlerin Society" with the "neo-liberal" aim to oppose the Welfare State⁷, admiring Hong Kong (not yet taken over by China), which had "succumbed neither to the repercussions of decolonisation nor those of democracy"⁸. They could equally celebrate "the Singapore solution" with its controlled democracy. These two islands are far from the only ones since capitalists' creativity knows no bounds. In his book, Quinn Slobodian explains the phenomenon of the "Zones"⁹ ("gated communities", "closed spaces", "free trade zones") that are free or freeing themselves from any rules that run counter to a totally free market, even if it means creating rules against the rules. The extreme experience of Somalia, the "stateless economy"¹⁰ that he

⁷ *Crack-Up Capitalism, Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*, Quinn Slobodian, Penguin Books Limited, 2023.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

describes, demonstrates just how far libertarians are prepared to go. Or the Jebel Ali Free Zone, a formal "extra-territorial" area of Dubai. There is no shortage of examples of this kind. Closer to home, a rampant crisis of the notion of democracy is unfortunately developing in Europe, with the duo liberal capitalism/democracy seemingly running out of steam to the benefit of far-right forces. Compromises between capitalism and social and trade union players are becoming increasingly rare, as financial and health crisis mount and States move further away from republican models. Capitalist capitalism and even more so cowboy capitalism aim to move beyond democracy, without measuring the consequences. A fine illustration of what Stephen Moore, close ally of Donald Trump, once declared: "Capitalism is more important than democracy"¹¹.

Secondly, capitalism reduces inequality and poverty. "Humanity is undeniably producing more wealth now than at the advent of capitalism" and "global GDP has risen from 175 billion in 1800 to 96,100 billion today"¹². But, says Simon Verdiere, this does not mean capitalism is the only possible way forward; we need to unravel what is a "collective illusion". Figures show, for example (confirmed by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP), that when global income rises, the wealthiest 10% of the population absorbs 24% of it, while the poorest 10% only 0.07%. The UNDP's Spotlight¹³ of 2024 highlights various findings and warnings: "Global ecosystems are at risk of collapsing decades earlier than expected, and inequality between and within countries has increased since 2020", adding that "current economic growth is increasingly dissociated from human well-being and ecological balance". There are fears of "chronic malnutrition affecting 600 million people by 2030"¹⁴. This is not being said by extreme left-wing organisations or extreme pessimists, but by

¹¹ <https://www.les-crises.fr/le-capitalisme-est-beaucoup-plus-important-que-la-démocratie-declare-le-conseiller-economique-de-donald-trump/>, 04/09/2016

¹² *Non le capitalisme ne lutte pas contre la pauvreté*, Simon Verdiere, 02/05/2023, <https://mrmondialisation.org/capitalisme-lutte-pas-pauvrete/>

¹³ <https://www.undp.org>, Signals Spotlight 2024.

¹⁴ Ibid.

the very serious UNDP. These kinds of observations annoy the well-thinking supporters of the different types of capitalism.

Thirdly, capitalism is said to be the best manager of the planet. We have known for some time this is not the case. Although Cop 21 was a success, raising hopes of a major turning point in favour of the climate aiming to keep global warming to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius, we have since witnessed a succession of setbacks. This is particularly true of the United States withdrawing from the agreement in the name of corporate freedom, despite the open letter from major business leaders calling for the agreement to be respected (Sundar Pichai of Google, Tim Cook of Apple, and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook). It is to be hoped that new Cop agreements will get us back on track... The World Youth Climate Movement has condemned "a system that favours profit at the expense of the people of the planet"¹⁵, a warning issued by people under 30, who represent more than half the world's population. Other voices are making themselves heard, especially from major insurers and reinsurers, who are pointing out that Cops programmes' failure would lead to increasing disasters affecting entire regions, throwing into turmoil the financial system and, more generally, capitalism itself.

2. A self-correcting Capitalism?

Professor Philippe Aghion, author of *The power of creative destruction*¹⁶, believes that "better regulation of capitalism" is both possible and necessary. We need, he says, to hold the reins of this spirited horse better, rather than destroy or overtake it. He calls for better State intervention, citing for example the useful role of carbon taxation, innovation subsidies, stimulation of social mobility, cleaner competition, a more inclusive tax system, and the essential role of civil

¹⁵ www.youthforclimate.be

¹⁶ *The power of creative destruction, economic upheaval and the wealth of nations*, Philippe Aghion with Céline Antonin and Simon Bunel, Harvard University Press, 2021.

society. Michel Aglietta, for his part, developed the theory of Regulation¹⁷, which has had a major impact well beyond Europe. For example, he highlighted what he called patient financiers (pension funds) who could provide medium and long-term support for sustainable projects, already at the time including their green credentials. The profile of a form of capitalism integrating ecological and, of course, social concerns was sketched out. But today, where is the implementation of such regulation of and by capitalism? There are several reasons to doubt the willingness of capitalist forces to move in this direction. Admittedly, there is the Global Compact launched by the UN in 2000, the ISO 26000 standard, the Corporate Sustainability Directive and the European CSRD, all of which reinforce the notion of Social and Environmental Responsibility. And we are fortunately seeing a certain impact on the behaviour of companies large and small. But let's face it, these new rules have taken a long time to converge and are now the subject of new resistance from cowboy capitalism and other political-economic forces. "Corporate Welfare" as it is understood nowadays aims to reduce the role of public social institutions in favour of market logics; it is also having a negative impact on the texts and tools designed to save the climate. It is quite fashionable to advocate postponing their application until later. Regulation is not for tomorrow morning, even if it cannot be said to be impossible. The caution and circumspection of the World Economic Forum (WEF) are significant in this respect; Klaus Schwab, the head of the WEF, himself says that we need to find a path "between statism and neo-liberalism"¹⁸.

3. The Social Market Economy

The Social Market Economy, established in Germany after the Second World War by Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, was already the result of a

¹⁷ *A theory of capitalist regulation, the US experience*, Michel Aglietta, Verso, 1976.

¹⁸ Klaus Schwab, Radio Télévision Suisse, 06/07/2019.

search for a compromise between free market economy and social objectives, between open competition and social policy. In the name of co-management, German legislation also added employee participation to Works Councils (with employees and shareholders being on an equal footing in companies of more than 2,000 employees). These political and economic choices have left their mark as a viable intermediate solution. In turn, the "Swedish model" had shown, even after the war, a compromise between Capitalism, the Welfare State and Mutualism hailed for creating social as well as economic goods. Olof Palme championed it. This equilibrium lasted until it started being undermined in the 1990s. This notion of Social Market Economy, somewhat forgotten if not set aside for several years, has resurfaced since the successive crises of 2008, 2011 and Covid. It remains a relevant foundation.

4. Building a post-capitalist economy?

The collective formed by Audrey Laurin-Lamothe, Frederic Legault and Simon Tremblay-Pepin proposes a post-capitalist path¹⁹. It offers some interesting recipes, though not a complete package: "To put everyone on the same level of knowledge in the workplace...", to set up "participatory models" linked to planning, "to mix Capitalism and common goods", or even to implement "centralised IT planning" taking money out of the equation altogether...²⁰

5. Is it too late to respond, or is it urgent?

In view of the persistence of phenomena and actions of inequality, as described by several international institutions and researchers, it seems logical to respond that there is an urgent need to take other

¹⁹ *Construire l'économie postcapitaliste*, Audrey Laurin-Lamothe, Frédéric Legault and Simon Tremblay-Pepin, Lux Editeur, 2023.

²⁰ Ibid.

paths than those of capitalism. Should this approach be even more driven? Certainly, if, as some people proclaim, "capitalism is war". Economic war through unbridled competition? Certainly. Just war? Wars have multiplied from the Second World War to the present day, returning to the gates of the European Union. The will to conquer, the search for arable land, the search for minerals, the reasons are numerous - rejection of the Western model is not the least of them. Admittedly - or not - the "economy of war" is back on governments' agendas. We would need a long analysis of the capitalism/war duo. Today it is happening before our eyes: what does Vladimir Putin want in Ukraine, to recover part of the lost heritage of the Russian Empire, to get his hands on the minerals coveted by Donald Trump in exchange for support for Ukraine?

In *Good Economics for Hard Times*, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo stress the urgent need to "help the populations left behind by the law of the market"²¹. The authors tackle the highly sensitive subject of immigration by suggesting a policy of support for both natives and immigrants. Reading the *Atlas of the New World Disorder* published by Alternatives Économiques²² would be enough to gauge the urgency - or urgencies - of moving away from the "capitalist" model, or rather models. Some of the titles in this Atlas speak for themselves: *A World of Inequalities*, *Geopolitics of the worst*, *Who will be the victims of the trade war?*²³ Unbridled hyper-globalisation may be nearing the end, but if nationalist forms of capitalism merely replace internationalist ones, desired progress will not happen. Joseph Stiglitz warns that the situation is urgent: "Time is not on our side. The climate crisis won't let us ignore how unfettered capitalism has pushed us beyond our environmental limits; and the democratic crisis of populism (i.e.,

²¹ *Good Economics for Hard Times*, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Allen Lane, 2019.

²² *Atlas of the New World Disorder*, Alternatives Économiques, July-August 2025.

²³ Ibid.

inequalities) won't let us ignore that the ideals of democracy are being torn apart"²⁴.

6. So, what are the alternatives?

The same Joseph Stiglitz believes in a transformation of capitalism into a "progressive capitalism that would maximise citizens' real freedoms» and be a kind of "regenerated social democracy"²⁵, thanks to greater social justice, liberal education, a knowledge-based Society, a decentralised economy, and a readjustment of relations of power. A peaceful, measured transformation based on a break with authoritarian and/or financial capitalism. Gaël Giraud and Cécile Renouard have put forward *20 proposals for reforming capitalism*²⁶. According to the authors, choosing is urgent. They offer, "outside any extreme ideological position", to adapt capitalism to the social, climatic, ethical, and democratic challenges. Their proposals range from "For a finance at the service of the economy" to "For a green economy", dealing as they go with key issues such as fair taxation, regulation of pension funds, social and environmental accounting²⁷ ... A reformist approach indeed.

There are, of course, many other proposals along those lines. Thomas Piketty, in *Capital and Ideology*²⁸, puts forward the notion of participatory Socialism, and in so doing, moving beyond, and abandoning capitalism. His proposals focus on overcoming private property, the triptych of progressive taxation (property, inheritance, income), social and temporary property, progressive taxation of carbon emissions, participatory and egalitarian democracy, shared exercise of power within companies, etc. The aim is to put an end to

²⁴ *The Road to Freedom: Economics and the Good Society*, Joseph Stiglitz, Allen Lane, 2024.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *20 propositions pour réformer le capitalisme*, Gaël Giraud and Cécile Renouard, Collection Champs - Essais number 1031, 01/02/2012.

²⁷ Op. cit.

²⁸ *Capital and Ideology*, Thomas Piketty, Harvard University Press, 2020.

capitalism in favour of an "egalitarian Socialism with a universal vision"²⁹.

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, "responding to the urgency of troubled times"³⁰, put forward useful measures that also form a foundation for profound transformation. These are based, among other things, on a necessary change of attitude and way of listening, in the name of respect, morality and active, concrete humanism. Dismembering the mechanisms of unequal growth, and shedding light on actions aimed at "bringing well-being" (measures on health, education, access to better infrastructures, etc.), actions to combat climate drifts (carbon tax), the introduction of fair tax measures, the fight against corruption, the proposal for a universal income... A whole package very much contrasting with the dominant models.

And how can we fail to mention the Report to the Club of Rome (1972) and Rio 2012, which long before Cop 21 emphasised the urgency (already) of making what were then very new choices. The Report already warned of the risks of growth for growth's sake and called for stabilisation or even zero growth. An "explosive" report at the time, it was praised by some and denounced by others. But for the first time the imperfections and destructive effects of the dominant system were acknowledged.

7. Social and Solidarity Economy

Long discreet - too discreet - Social and Solidarity Economy is increasingly emerging as a viable alternative in the most diverse areas of the world, thanks to its principles, no doubt, which are close to those of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Op. cit.

How does this Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) chart an original course and stand out from the various forms of capitalism? Its principles can answer this question:

- . It stems from Civil Society organising itself: cooperatives, mutual societies and associations, foundations and, in France and a few other countries, social enterprises that respect these values. It's a kind of free collective initiative, particularly for the first three components. They are citizens (employees, members, activists, beneficiaries, but also independent entrepreneurs, etc.) agreeing to work together.

- . Projects are carried out on an equal footing between members: one person (natural or legal), one vote. This principle is the opposite of the one that governs joint-stock companies. The SSE opts for "maximum participation".

- . Fair, supervised distribution of surpluses. When it makes a profit, it must, as with other forms of company, reinvest part of it in the project, but above all it must distribute it fairly between employees and managers. Share ownership (cooperatives) can give rise to remuneration, but this must be capped, again in contrast with the capitalist system.

- . Private but collective ownership thanks to the total (mutuals and associations) or partial (cooperatives, but they have non-shareable reserves) indivisibility of equity capital. This is another key differentiator from capitalist companies.

- . Focus on the search for collective interest and solidarity between members, with a broader perspective on general interest in social, environmental, and economic terms, again breaking with the profit-centred vision of traditional companies.

- . Independence from the State.

These principles are linked. The piecemeal application of one or the other is not enough to make a company or organisation a Social and

Solidarity Economy entity. This contrasts with organisations or companies that apply some but not all the principles.

The Social and Solidarity Economy has now emerged from the shadows and is being recognised. It has become a key player due to its economic weight, its social, ecological, and economic benefits, its progress and alliances.

. Here are a few figures to illustrate its importance:

The number of cooperative members alone represents 12% of humanity, the top 300 major cooperatives generate 2,400 billion US dollars, there are 281 million employees of cooperatives worldwide, the equivalent of 10% of the world's workforce. Mutual insurance companies are on the rise, with a 33% share of the global market, as are health mutuals, which cover 230 million people³¹. To this should be added associations established all over the world (but statistics are lacking in this area). There are 10 million NGOs worldwide, which would make them the 5th largest economic power in the world. The Social and Solidarity Economy is present on every continent and territory, in every sector of economic and social activity, both monetary and non-monetary. It includes both micro-organisations and companies of international dimensions. The SSE has the capacity to be an alternative (though this doesn't mean it wishes to be the only model). According to Abdou Salam Fall³², it contributes "not to traditional growth, but to a quality of growth that helps to raise living standards" and, it should be added, to enabling women and men to imagine and take charge of their own projects. This notion of "quality growth" contrasts with that established by the economy of yesteryear: growth for economic growth and profits.

. Its growing recognition by International Institutions:

³¹ International Cooperative Alliance (www.ica.coop) figures from the International Federation of Mutual Societies, www.icmif.org

³² *L'Économie Sociale et les cadres internationaux de développement*, Abdou Salam Fall, Université du Québec en Outaouais, 2012.

At the Cities Summit - Habitat III in Quito in 2016, the final declaration took into consideration the role of the SSE. At its plenary session in 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the promotion of the SSE in the service of sustainable development. The General Assembly has since adopted a second resolution recognising the importance of the SSE as a key driver of inclusive and sustainable development (it is interesting to note that Argentina abstained, advocating for capitalism and free trade). In addition, other resolutions were adopted by the International Labour Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The growing influence of the SSE, its successive recognition by major international institutions and the adoption of SSE laws in various countries, make the SSE a well-established alternative in a period of great climatic, economic, and political chaos, with wars also affecting the European continent. Well-established, however, doesn't mean sufficiently established in the face of the divisions and conflicts that are multiplying. The very fact that it is recognised should encourage it to be more enterprising than ever. There are negative scenarios that cannot be ignored (possible reflexes of jealousy and discontent of international organisations representative of the capitalist world, phenomena of repentance from spheres hostile to an organised Civil Society, attempts to fraternise with the SSE to better stifle or contain it), but they must above all encourage the SSE not to be content with its new position.

8. Several lines of action are emerging.

SSE-International Forum, which sees itself as the organisation leading the SSE diplomacy around the world, still has a great deal of work to do in this area. Its Mont Blanc Meetings (in Geneva) are an opportunity for a fresh mobilisation of the major SSE players, who provide viable solutions for the implementation of financial, industrial, agricultural, and service strategies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals

(going beyond CSR or the European CRDS). This is a way for the SSE to renew the notion of "multilateralism in the face of the brutalisation of international and social relations"³³.

The links between cities, territories and the SSE are becoming increasingly important. The Global Forum, GSEF, which brings together cities and SSE, plays a key role in this development by highlighting common accomplishments and allowing the exchange of experiences and achievements. These alliances with local (and national) elected representatives are crucial for the future. They are cemented by the general interest, the desire to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the invention of new ways of managing the economy on the ground and responding to social and environmental expectations and emergencies. These alliances are therefore transformative. They are a step towards a useful economy and a shared rather than controlled democracy. They have the merit of reaching out and solving a wide range of problems around access to health, food, ecology, and social inclusion. This is also a way of avoiding the risks of instrumentalisation by a malevolent economic and/or political power that does not look kindly to civil society escaping unacceptable constraints. The role of the UNTFSSSE, the UN Task Force dedicated to the SSE, will remain important in this new era.

9. Going further

Continental SSE Forums are taking off. This is the case with FORA SSE, the African SSE Forum, which has set itself the goal of "a human-centred economy". In its final declaration, the 2024 Forum emphasised that "the mayors of the continent are committed to putting in place local public policies to support the emergence and development of the SSE"³⁴. Along the same lines, the Forum asked African States to create

³³ ESS-FI, July 2025.

³⁴ <https://m.facebook.com/61557355853235/about/>

National Councils or SSE Agencies. It will be relevant to observe what is being prepared in South and Central America as well as in Asia.

The resolutions obtained, the organisation of SSE Forums and platforms, the slow but growing adoption of SSE legislation, the tandem between SSE-FI and GSEF, are all signs of the strengthening of the SSE as a visible and credible alternative - yet with a certain timidity, although it has completely abandoned its deafening silence. It's time for it to take a few more steps forward on its own:

. into new fields of action. By adopting new tools before others - Artificial Intelligence in particular - to accelerate its progress while respecting its values. This is still a new area which the SSE should be addressing at international level.

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"An innovative cooperative group that bases its performance on invention». «Around a hundred technicians and engineers are involved in fundamental research".

"International development".

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Mondragon, World Cooperative Group - Spain, Basque Country

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50 million litres of milk daily

www.amul.com

Ecocitrus Cooperative - Brazil

62 member farms

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www.ethiquable.coop/fiche-producteur/ecocitrus-commerce-equitable-bresil-agrumes/

Chietón Morén Cooperative - Costa Rica

Cooperative of indigenous communities

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www.chietonmoren.org

. while also pursuing its actions in favour of development.

Global Agenda on Financing for Development

July 2025

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www.news.un.org/ www.agenda-2030.fr

FORA-ESS

African SSE Forum

SSE in Africa, "a lever for transformation, resilience and inclusion".

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Wonju Health Cooperative - South Korea

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EURESA

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. by creating new communication models to play a role in informing and influencing, which it lacks sorely to date. Foundations could play a role in that sense. This is an objective that is far from being sufficiently considered, and therefore far from being achieved.

. by being at the forefront of the energy revolution both locally and transnationally, which is already the case in several countries.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association - United States

900 cooperatives

40 million people reached.

Ongoing development of solutions: hydroelectricity, solar, wind.

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RESCOOP - EU

2,500 European cooperatives of renewable energy serving 2 million citizens.

"From energy transition to energy democracy".

. by convincing cooperative banks, mutual societies, and other similar financing bodies to join forces and work together to invest in the useful economy of the future that is the SSE. While many of them are - obviously - historically and significantly committed in this direction, there are few cross-border joint actions.

Cooperative banks worldwide

In the ICA's top 300, 2 cooperative banks top the list.

Crédit Agricole (France) 117 billion US dollars

BPCE (France) 640 billion US dollars

www.ica.coop

. by creating an international platform for the exchange of financial assets representative of the SSE. Everything remains to be done in this area.

. by mobilising more financial backers-actors to achieve the SDGs.

SSE as a pillar of the SDGs

Resolution A178/L.56 of the United Nations General Assembly (29 Nov. 2024) declares SSE a "pillar for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals".

www.agenda-2030.fr

NIPPON MUTUAL Life (Japan)

Turnover of 49 billion US dollars

66,500 employees

An aggressive policy in favour of sustainable development.

Alignment with the Peace Agreement objectives

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. by seeking new applications for the SSE system of private and collective ownership. And by strengthening the alliance between the SSE and the defenders of the Common Goods.

. by inviting national or transnational (EU) elected representatives in favour of the SSE to meet and work together. A transnational democratic agreement for the SSE is essential.

SSE Intergroup

The SSE and Services of General Interest Intergroup was renewed in the European Parliament in December 2024.

www.europarl.europa.eu

. by pollinating traditional companies and organisations in search of participative and ethical solutions. The dialogue between the SSE and traditional companies took place in the 90s around the themes of Social Economy/Co-management/Participation³⁵ and it has reappeared in recent years (i.e., the timid Pacte law in France). It will be even more successful if it takes place in a spirit of mutual respect, far removed from attempts to trivialise the SSE.

The list should certainly be prioritised as much as extended. The role of the International SSE Coalition - SSE-International Forum (SS-FI), Global Forum of SSE Cities (GSEF), International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), International Mutual Benefit Societies (aim-mutual.org),

³⁵ *L'entreprise de demain sera participative*, Thierry Jeantet, Les Échos, 19/01/2007 and *A comparative overview of terms and notions on employee participation*, Georges Arrigo, Giuseppe Casale, 03/2010, www.ilo.org

International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF) - founded in 2021, has never had so much reason to exist. The sheer scale of the challenges is proof enough. The Global SSE Forum Bordeaux GSEF 2025, in October, comes at just the right time, as does the Mont Blanc Meetings in January 2026. Action pacts should also be drawn up with Non-Governmental Organisations, working at international level to promote sustainable development, inclusion, the fight against poverty, women's rights, freedom of expression, etc.

This is all the more relevant given the many signs (attacks, wars, the rise of extremes) of the weakening of democracies and those elements ensuring a minimum of stability in the world. The Social and Solidarity Economy has an additional role to play in this period. By virtue of its very model, it is a vehicle for collective choices between citizens, and therefore fuels the search for initiatives, decisions and organisations that are devised and implemented "together". The SSE is indeed sometimes referred to as the "People's Economy". Its rules, already mentioned, point in the same "peaceful" direction: free initiative, democracy, fair distribution of surpluses, chosen collective ownership, solidarity, individual commitment. These are all factors which support peaceful exchanges and relations, leading to mutual understanding and tolerance. Here again, they represent a break from international relations defined by economic confrontations and limited or truncated agreements, often devoid of sustainable development objectives. This is no naivety, but a shared way to build international relations. On that note, it would seem desirable for the components of the Social and Solidarity Economy to give a new dimension to fair trade exchanges (Fairtrade International, World Fairtrade Organisation, etc.), which was the subject of an international charter on the 3rd anniversary of the adoption of the SDGs. Given that the World Trade Organisation has been paralysed for a long time, this charter could provide an opportunity either to argue for a World Fair Trade Organisation structured accordingly and linked to the UN (and therefore to the United Nations Development Programme in particular), or to organise

itself more closely than it does at present. In the same spirit, links should be established with the World Food Programme. The same applies to the "Coalition for Feeding Humanity Sustainably"³⁶.

10. Accelerate

We know that we are living in an era of accelerating technological, economic, and social changes, and of the brutalisation of international and intra-national relations. There is therefore no time to waste.

The SSE, strengthened by its own development in recent years, by the many recognitions it has obtained, from Quito to Doha via New York and Geneva, and by its growing alliances with cities and regions, is a visible, audible, and active alternative. Enough reasons to give a new impetus to its growth, its reach, and its influence all around the Globe. Capitalisms exist, they clash, they weaken the planet, but they are not mandatory! The Social and Solidarity Economy is taking its place and preparing a more humane, democratic, social, and ecological future.

Thierry Jeantet

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³⁶ www.feedingsustainably.org