

LEXIS

Intercultural Lexical Tools for Social and Solidarity Economy

Summary

Several national networks have already started to map the key initiatives of social and solidarity economy (SSE) in their towns, regions, countries and sectors. At the 4th Forum for the Globalization of Solidarity organized by the RIPESS (Intercontinental Network of Promoters of Social and Solidarity Economy) the idea of carrying out a global mapping project of SSE was developed. There are technical as well as “political” prerequisites. This project does not aim to address all of these, but rather to contribute to meeting them in qualitative ways.

An intercultural process

This general move toward organising information is immediately confronted by the issues of language diversity, as well as that of the diversity of concepts and vocabulary that are used. This reduces the visibility of the movement as an economic transformational force. This limitation is particularly obvious in Europe. English-speaking countries, as well as those of Northern and Eastern Europe, and vast areas of Africa and Asia, have not identified with the social and solidarity economy as expressed by RIPESS.

Even in countries where SSE is organized, the values and the concepts of the SSE networks (what we call the “frameworks”) are not exactly identical. Subtle variations in different countries and languages play an important part in those realities, perimeters, values and concepts. It is necessary to identify them, to bring them together in a shared vision.

Building a shared framework

LEXIS aims to facilitate exchange and dialogue between existing national and international social and solidarity economy and related networks, through the construction of concrete products, which will provide the necessary complement to current mapping processes. By building an international glossary and thesaurus of SSE, it will contribute to the creation of a common framework. This will in turn help organize information in a more coherent way in the networks and contribute to the quality of international mapping processes for social and solidarity economy. It will reinforce the mutual understanding of actors working in a responsible, plural and solidarity economy (RPSE) at international level.

This project will enable existing responsible and solidarity based socio-economic initiatives to gain improved visibility at international level, through the structuring and sharing of their vocabulary and frameworks, the clarification of their concepts, and organization through a shared intercultural glossary and thesaurus. It will also contribute to opening the international movement to networks and countries that are not currently linked to the movement, although the existing values and practice are similar.

Project beneficiaries and scope

This project is international, although focusing essentially on Europe. It is aimed at national and continental networks of social and solidarity economy, and at similar networks in countries of non-Latin culture, as well as at *opensource* information, communication and mapping systems that exist in this field.

Organization and responsibilities

Responsibilities:

Co-ordination: Pierre Johnson, an ALOE member, is facilitator of networks in multicultural contexts, consultant and researcher. He works with Swiss as well as the Brazilian SEE networks.

Intercultural dialogue, interpreting and translation: Judith Hitchman. Judith has over 35 years experience in the field of intercultural dialogue, as cross-cultural facilitator in the field of solidarity economy, joint editor of the International Newsletter on Sustainable Local Development.

Workgroup:

The project framework includes the organization of a workgroup that will be open to people from national networks (one person per network), operating in co-ordination with the RIPESS Europe “communication” group, of which it can become a work committee. The workgroup is currently restricted to Europe, given the limited resources, but it hopes to exchange with active networks on other continents.

The members of the workgroup commit to participating in the dynamics of the process, in order to contribute to meeting the objectives and developing the LEXIS products. In order to participate fully, they are encouraged to raise complementary funding in their regions, field or country. Their participation will involve exchanging on the frameworks used by SSE actors and networks or similar initiatives in their countries. To optimize synergies and meetings, they are requested to check the consistency of the agenda with those of national and international networks.

Languages: initially English, French and Spanish

The following networks will be contacted (this is not an exclusive list):

MES (France), REAS (Spain), Belgium, INEES (Luxembourg), Zoes / Rete Lilliput (Italy), Kassel and Technet Berlin (Germany), Austria, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

The following networks will also be contacted for wider exchanges:

FBES (Brazil), Chantier d’Economie Sociale (Quebec), Solidarity Economy Network (USA), Asian Alliance for Solidarity Economy, REMESS (Morocco).

Planned activities

- Establish a workgroup at the next European *mapping* group meeting. Its core node will be composed mainly of European actors, but it will be open to actors of other continents.
- The identification of socio-economic actors and contact points/people in countries not already covered by the SSE networks interested in this exchange, and the opening of this working group to those networks.
- A Distance Communication process (DC) within the workgroup in order to launch the process, assimilate the objectives and methods and extend participation to actors in as many countries as possible. This DC will be carefully moderated by one or two people.
- One or several workshops will enable the networks to compare frameworks (values, vocabulary, typology) as well as examine practical issues linked to the translation of these frameworks across national and linguistic borders.

Some suggested products

During the first meetings, several options for the making of lexical intercultural products will be proposed to the workgroup, within the framework of the project. These will include:

A shared international glossary for the field of SSE and RPSE, that includes the most common terms in several languages, their definition, including the cultural differences. In the first stage, three languages will be used (French, English and Spanish). This choice may later be extended, depending on the development of partnerships and co-funding.

This glossary could take the form, or be continued as, a dictionary or an open online encyclopaedia.

The mapping of the values and the concepts of a responsible and solidarity economy, complementing the glossary, in the different cultural and socio-economic contexts including the identification of similarities and differences. The premises of this work are part of the products of the “strategic agenda” of the Workgroup on Solidarity Socio-Economy.

An international thesaurus (keywords for organising information) developed from the above glossary, of which it would be an operational extension, to index the documents related to SSE and RPSE.

The discussion and coherence between typologies (of organisations and fields of SSE) and nomenclatures used by the networks and SSE mapping projects.

Links with other existing projects

This project is complementary to the mapping of SSE companies and actors initiated or planned by the different national or regional networks. The attention dedicated to intercultural dialogue and coherence between the various networks will be one of the keys to guaranteeing qualitative success. The quantitative aspects will be covered essentially by the surveys carried out by the national networks. Existing projects in Europe include: the APEAS and MES (France) BDIS project, the mapping of networks by REAS, the mapping of East Berlin and North Hesse initiatives, and the other projects in Germany and Austria. Outside Europe, Brazil and Canada have also implemented mapping processes.

This project will operate in synergy with the process of social and solidarity network meetings that have already been programmed, particularly those of the RIPESS. The participation of actors from Europe and other countries, will hopefully also contribute to extending the continental networks in Europe and other continents (Canada, Brazil, Asia...).

Budget

Target: at least 50 000 € by June 2010.

A 20 000 € grant as been allocated by ALOE as seed budget, which will make it possible to ensure the coordination and facilitation of the project (DC), mainly in Europe.

In order to minimize costs, we will try to optimize opportunities created by continental meetings organized by the SSE networks.

Co-funding will be sought, in coordination with the designers of the project.