



U.S. Solidarity Economy Network is Born

Growing the Green Economy

By Jenna Allard and Julie Matthaei

Economics where human needs, human development, and solidarity form the center, instead of unfettered competition and an insatiable drive for profit.

Our country faces systemic problems from increasing inequality and persistent poverty to environmental degradation, a corrupt political system, racism and sexism. The solidarity economy can unite these progressive causes as part of a larger movement that recognizes the necessity of all types of transformative practices. In Atlanta in June, at the first ever Social Forum in the United States, the Solidarity Economy Working Group for USSF 2007 coordinated a track of workshops and convened caucuses to find ways to unite our common causes in systemic economic transformation and strategic cooperation from the grassroots. More of a framework than a model, the solidarity economy has great potential to link our concerns for structural change. It also strategically links organizing groups that are already engaged in transformative practices. Common values, such as cooperation, democracy, equality, justice, ecological sustainability, community, and respect for diversity hold the solidarity economy together. Ultimately, it is economics where human needs, human development, and solidarity form the center, instead of unfettered competition and an insatiable drive for profit.

The Working Group organized a block of 28 workshops, and included 53 associated workshops in a printed program at USSF 2007. On the final day of USSF workshops, the second Solidarity Economy caucus met. Enriched with new faces, and energized by the content of the

workshops, it concretely resolved to found a U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (SEN-US). We want this network to be a broad tent, linking institutions, networks, and individuals who share the values of the Solidarity Economy. SEN-US will be a place to exchange practice and theory, to offer support to one another, and to push together for transformation.

Through SEN-US we will continue the conversations and coalition-building that happened during USSF 2007. As part of the international solidarity economy network, SEN-US can help make the solidarity economy a growing and flourishing reality in the U.S. and across the world. The Solidarity Economy will thrive on building connections; reminding us that, amidst our wonderful diversity, we are all related—as members of a society, as parts of an ecosystem, and as creators of a new paradigm of economic life based on cooperation and solidarity as well as individuality and freedom.

For videos and transcripts of some of the USSF Solidarity Economy sessions, see TransformationCentral.org; to join the SEN-US mailing list, send a message to: ssecaucus-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

Julie Matthaei is an economics Professor at Wellesley College and is co-founder of Transformation Central. Jenna Allard is an editor of Good Economic News and Economic Transformation and the Solidarity Economy at TransformationCentral.org.

Mission, Objectives and Examples of SEN-US

The mission of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network is to connect a diverse array of individuals, organizations, businesses and projects in the shared work of building and strengthening regional, national and international movements for a solidarity economy. Through publications, a website, mailing list, and face-to-face gatherings, the network will facilitate: ongoing communication and dialog relating to the development of solidarity economy ideas, values and practices; the sharing of experiences, models and skills; and the creation of collaborative, movement-building projects between network members.

Objectives for SEN-US include: 1) Join the Global Solidarity Economy movement; 2) Create a common vision and framework that can promote a common identity and agenda among the currently fragmented elements of the U.S. solidarity economy; 3) Investigate and develop ways to build collaborative support systems for solidarity economy development; 4) Raise the visibility, legitimacy and public support for solidarity economy practices through public education and media coverage; 5) Promote public policies and leverage resources for the support of the solidarity economy; 6) Facilitate research on the scope, scale, and impacts of the solidarity economy; best practices; opportunities for cooperation; and the development of training and technical support resources.

Examples of solidarity economy participants include: Coops—worker, producer, consumer, housing; local exchange systems, complementary currencies; social enterprises and 'high road,' locally owned businesses; social investment and worker-controlled pension funds; fair trade and solidarity finance; reclaim the commons movement; land trusts, co-housing, eco-villages; consumer-supported agriculture; green technology and ecological production; participatory budgeting; collective kitchens; collective health programs; community-based services; open source movement (Linux, Wikipedia, YouTube); unpaid care labor.