

The Role of Universities in Developing a Sustainable Economic Model Based on Solidarity

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Abstract: The Methodist University of São Paulo, a confessional institution with three campuses in São Bernardo do Campo, in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region, which has 1,600 employees and 25,000 undergraduate students and postgraduate students, adopted in 2008 Sustainability as a transversal theme in its Institutional Educational Project. In 2009, started the Methodist Sustainable Program with the goal to mainstream sustainability in all undergraduate programs, in a co-creative process that included staff, professors and directors. Theory U and other similar methodologies were used in order to connect with new perspectives and attitudes that could arouse a co-creation field and a process able to reveal the connections of all expertises and knowledge produced with the sustainability area. The expectation is that this methodology continues to expand, involving university sectors and participants and oriented by educational purposes, research and community outreach. The expansion of the program led to the development of Actions Research Projects as reported in the present work, designed to consolidate a network of regional solidarity economy. The experiment enrolled 12 professors and lecturers, 20 students and 11 social enterprises linked with Solidarity Economy Network of the populous neighborhood of Montanhão in São Bernardo do Campo, Brazil. The development of the project and the results accomplished created concrete actions of the University that benefit peripheral areas of the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo and could be used for promoting emergence and organization of individual and collective enterprises in other six nearby cities, that together with São Bernardo do Campo forms the Great ABC region, home to 2,500,000 inhabitants. Collective training of entrepreneurs in technology, human reasoning and political citizenship in the urban world were the axis of project. The results obtained can engage other groups and nearby cities, strengthening the social consciousness and regional identity.

Keywords: Solidarity Economy, Regional Identify, Theory U, Peripheral Areas, Education for Sustainability

1. Introduction

We live in a period of crisis. You can name it: the energy crisis, the water crisis, the food crisis, the security crisis, the leadership crisis, the health care crisis, the educational crisis, the climate crisis (Scharmer, 2010:3). The sustainability agenda of the twenty-first century is a huge example of this. Our major challenges requires that we stabilize climate, become much more efficient in the use of fossil fuels, make a rapid transition to solar-based technologies, stabilize and then reduce population, reverse the loss of forests, protect biodiversity, conserve soil, rebuild rural areas, clean up toxic messes and sharply reduce poverty (Orr, 2004: 39).

What is the role of universities in bringing new solutions and creating a sustainable future? How universities could

help to do that in Metropolitan Areas densely urbanized? Those questions, for sure, need to be addressed as part of universities challenges and possibilities.

During the 20th century Latin America metropolitan areas were inflated by the impact of migrant workers at the service of the unfolding industrial revolution, specially reread in the eighties by a globalizing perspective. Poor urban planned areas, high demographic density and all sort of environmental issues were the consequence. Civic organizations also had to face the socio-economic and environmental restructuring consequences of the globalizing capitalism. Despite its economic and social contradictions, the best translation of the city as a place to live includes the

ability to include, distribute and share, that is, to try being truly the *polis*. All authors quoted by Andrusz, Harloe & Szélenyi (1996), who deal with post-socialist cities in Europe, recognize this phenomenon. Already in its introduction (1996, p. 2) we find

... The cities of capitalism and socialism are conditioned by their respective modes of economic planning, organization of social classes and political structures. The socio-spatial organization of cities, their policies and forms of administration, their dwelling and their markets, their models of social interaction are directly linked to the larger purposes of the socialist and capitalist order.

Considering the development of Brazilian cities Compans (1999, p. 91-113), discusses the paradigms attributed to so-called global cities: a) decentralization, decomposition processes and re-centralization of control functions, b) proclivity for the advanced tertiary sector, especially information processing, c) coordination of the global with the local. To the extent that cities become the *nodes* of the great connection, the solution to the problems is, roughly speaking, the implementation of new forms of social agreement between actors and protagonists of the city, of course in favor of integration in networks. The values of local society, certainly including their cultures, would also compound the globalizing project and at the same time would be a marketing procedure and a training of new human resources. In the analysis of the author, the planners of global cities do not give answers to the socio-cultural sense of the territory, as well as to the peripheral reality of the cities or to the macro-economic movements. The territories and common people, the regulations of markets and the production and distributions processes aiming public good, all remain outside the global showcase. Therefore, planners-sellers, such as the Catalan Jordi Borja, take part in some of opportunistic projects of the cities. Kurz (1993, pp. 07-41) had glimpsed the turning off of the city-market lights, specially the urban illusion of being a lucrative showcase and node, simply because the agglomerations are inserted in world economy chains and their technological and communication supports.

It is possible to infer from this that medium and large cities should be understood as unsustainable, not only by the contradictions of their socio-environmental reality, but also by their lack of definition as to their courses, the meaning of their ground and their history, their management modes and other variables that ask about their past and future as a place for collective life. In the same direction, Sassen (in a TV interview, 2006) moves forward in the reflection on the errors resulting from the exacerbated privatization, under the presumption that the State would be the problem, or that individuals-citizens would be the obstacles to development and progress. What concerns her, after the known studies on global cities, is the loss of rights of the person, and the immediate demand of new and more direct forms of social representation, capable of symbolizing the overcoming of privatization. These lines are also followed by socio-economic thoughts, with communicational and cultural perspectives. Muniz Sodré (2002, p. 257) has a clear proposal to rethink the mediatized society, that is, a society strongly

influenced by media communication, the global city:

... It is a matter of going scientifically against the expansive movement of reduction of the vital experience by the exponential growth of the technological framework of the world, whitewashed by the indifferent commercialism of the organizations that control the media. This implies to include the horizon of revitalization of the democratic experience in the communicational thought starting from the 'ordinary', that is, from the ability of ethico-political articulation of regional and popular organizations.

It is clear therefore that it is in the city that occur the great wrangles, which are denser when symbolic. Although often verging on chaos, such disputes can build solidarity.

The public debate and crisis response we witness nowadays continue to be framed by the same old categories of thought that got us into this whole mess in the first place. The crisis we face is first and foremost one of mind, perception and values; hence, it is a challenge to those institutions presumed to shape minds, perceptions and values, it is an educational challenge. More of the same kind of education can only make things worse. (Orr, 2004: 27). To paraphrase Albert Einstein's famous observation, "The significant problems we have cannot be solved by the same type of thinking that created them." That, however, is exactly what we are busy trying to do (Scharmer, 2010: 2).

As Sterling (2001: 12) states, it is a change of mind on which change towards sustainability depends. It is the difference of thinking that stands between a sustainable or chaotic future. The qualities, depth and extent of learning that take place globally in the next ten to twenty years will determine which path is taken: moving towards or further away from sustainability. Or, according Morin's words:

I would indicate the option of a civilization policy that would revive solidarity, would force the retreat of selfishness and, still more deeply, would reform society and our lives. In fact our society is in crisis. At this point where it and we arrived, the material well-being did not necessarily lead to a mental well-being, as is witnessed by the unbridled consumption of drugs, anxiolytics, antidepressants and sleeping pills. The economic development did not lead to a moral development. The application of the calculation, the use of the chronometer, the hyper-specialization, the compartmentalization in work, in businesses, in the administrations and, finally, in our lives, often has caused the degradation of solidarity, widespread bureaucracy, loss of initiative, fear of responsibility. (Edgar Morin, 25 April 2007 in Le Monde, as cited by Marco Aurelio Weissheimer, Carta Maior).

The aim of this paper is to describe how we are addressing at our university this education challenge, mainstreaming sustainability through the curricula of the all undergraduate programs and to discuss a first community interactive result of this program.

2. The Methodist University Sustainable Program (MUSP)

Colleges and universities are critical loci for the change sustainability requires. They are learning centers for new ideas and for change. They guide other sectors and have the potential to serve as societal models. Although they are unique in many ways, their innovations are largely replicable by other institutions. And their mission and responsibilities for defining educational scope give them a reason to update and reevaluate in a way that invites institutional learning and openness to sustainable thinking (Edelstein 2004: 271). Universities also transcend boundaries in space and time. With their senior professors and junior students, they also connect society's elders with its youth. With their interdisciplinary studies and many learned associations, they connect across intellectual and geographic boundaries and are thus participants across space (McGonigle and Starke 2006: 13).

Sustainability provides universities an opportunity to confront its core values, practices, entrenched pedagogies, the way it uses resources and its relationship with the broader community (Wals and Jickling 2002: 230). It can be a catalyst for institutional change and for a transition towards new ways of knowing, introducing teachers, students and administrators alike to a new pedagogical world that opens up promising avenues for both institutional and individual practice (Wals et al. 2004: 348).

Methodist University of São Paulo is located in São Bernardo do Campo, in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo. It has 26,564 undergraduate students distributed in the knowledge areas of humanities, communication, business, science and technology, totaling 51 undergraduate programs. In addition it runs 43 specialization and six MSc and PhD programs, totaling 1,000 students. The institution has 1,713 employees, 537 professors and lecturers and 94 interns. The university has great regional influence and is recognized as the third-best private university of São Paulo state.

The Methodist University Sustainable Program (MUSP) began to take form at 2008, during the discussions of the new Political-Pedagogic Project (PPP) of the university for the period of 2008 to 2013. This document describes the main policies adopted by the university. Matarazzo-Neuberger, one of the authors, suggested the creation of a Sustainability Axis. The meetings to renew PPP resulted in the adoption of sustainability as a new core value in addition to two others already existent, namely, Christianity and Common Good. The PPP was approved and presented to the academic community by the end of 2008. Sustainability has been recognized since then as a central value in the institution, and has opened a new and strong scenario for change.

The initial plan of MUSP defined two major structuring components: (1) an Educational Program, designed to introduce sustainability in a transversal way through all the undergraduate courses; and (2) Structural Diagnosis of three environmental resources: water, energy and greenhouse gases emissions, in order to offer subsidies to plan the reduction of

the ecological footprint of the university. This initial plan provided enough space for incorporation of other ideas coming from university members. The MUSP was launched in early April 2009.

The structural diagnosis was conducted through June to December 2009. Data for the last three years of water and energy consumption was collected and analyzed. The report was presented to the Sustainability Committee and gave birth to a series of initiatives dedicated to reduce the university footprint.

The elaboration of the educational program began in May and June 2009, when meetings with directors and course coordinators of all faculties happened. The objective was to identify which modules/disciplines in every undergraduate program could begin to introduce sustainability. A fundamental principle of the MUSP was that sustainability should not be treated as one more discipline within current curricula, but should be transversally mainstreamed into curricula in order to really be effective. The mind map methodology was used in these meetings to identify in each faculty themes, areas and ways in which sustainability could be interweaved.

A group of professors and lecturers was identified for implementing sustainability in the curricula of each program and was invited to join the Education for Sustainability Leadership Program in Higher Education (FLESES, in Portuguese).

Opening the door for emerging new leaders was viewed as a *sine quo non* condition for the development of the program. Chase and Rowland (2004: 104) demonstrated that the success of higher education sustainability projects was based on decentralized leadership structure, avoiding a small group becoming 'the' environmental organization on campus and allowing other groups to emerge and play critical roles. Keeping its focus on education for sustainability through faculty development could give rise to a university-wide commitment that was one of the main objectives of MUSP.

FLESES was designed as a modular program. Module I was named 'Sustainable Futures: A collective creation'. FLESES Module II was devoted to developing procedures and techniques to work with sustainability issues with students and Module III was related to the systematization and sharing of the results obtained by each undergraduate program in the implementation of sustainability within its curricula. The objectives were to allow the understanding of the relations between sustainability and future scenarios, to reflect on the relationship of professional practice and planetary sustainability in the context of the careers offered in the university, to delineate the role envisioned for university students in the future, to introduce new forms of learning and teaching and to stimulate the rising of a learning community devoted to sustainability.

While designing the modules, sustainability was considered an emergent quality arising from sets of relationships in a system, whether viewed at the macro or micro scale. As Sterling (2004: 55) states, sustainability is likely to arise depending upon the degree to which our

attention shifts from ‘things’ to relationships, and from a segregated and dualistic view of the world towards an integrative and participative perspective. This involves more than a simple and dualistic environmentalism and indicates, instead, the need for ‘whole system thinking’. The activities, reflections, text readings and videos chosen to be part of the modules immersed the participants in this kind of vision, offering a glimpse of how we can create the opportunity for people to imagine and work towards life-centered forms of development (Clover 2002: 167).

The Earth Charter was adopted as a guideline for FLESES, because it represents an important contribution for a holistic and integrated vision of the social and environmental problems of humanity. 148 professors and lecturers representing all undergraduate courses of the university and 20 administrative managers attended FLESES. The main objective of this initiative was to establish a real sustainability academy—a learning community that will be responsible for introducing sustainability transversally in university curricula, develop research and engage community and stakeholders aiming to improve the local environment. Our goal for the next two years is to offer FLESES to all professors and lecturers of the university.

One of the main objectives of an education for sustainability program should be to create space for social learning that includes spaces for alternative paths of development; for new ways of thinking, valuing and doing; for participation minimally distorted by power relations; for pluralism, diversity and minority perspectives; for deep consensus, but also for respectful disagreement and differences; for autonomous and deviant thinking; for self-determination; and finally, for contextual differences (Wals and Corcoran 2004: 224). The design of the Educational Program of MUSP allowed the creation of these spaces and the program was built bottom-up, considering the points of view and experience already embodied in the academy.

By the first semester of 2010, sustainability was introduced in the curricula of almost all undergraduate courses. Mitigation measures and monitoring plans to reduce the university’s footprint were also implemented.

3. The ABC Region: Social, Economic and Environmental Scenarios

The ABC region represents the southeastern micro-region of the metropolitan region of São Paulo and covers an area of 841 km² occupied by 2,500,000 inhabitants distributed in seven cities. Every square kilometer of the micro-region is occupied by almost 4,000 people. Located on the transit route between the coast and the highlands, the region was discovered as a place to assist the development project of São Paulo, just after the stream of immigrants began in 1877 and the establishment of the railway line by the British, at the same time, connected São Paulo to the seaport of Santos. In 1920 its population was 25,215 inhabitants and today this region is a significant part of the nearly 18,5 million

inhabitants of São Paulo metropolis. Until the thirties the immigrants, especially Italians, Spaniards, Slavs, and later the Japanese, constituted the basis of the professional and cultural basis of its population. The explosion of the industry-based capitalist project in the aftermath of World War II draws thousands of Brazilians from the poorest regions of the country during the fifties when began the industrial pole of companies formed by chemical, petrochemical, automotive parts, electro-mechanical branches, and the automobile industries, with a globalizing trend and a Taylor-Ford style of administration. This pole replaces the old style industries established in early twentieth century, during the first industrial revolution and represented by furniture and textile companies, most based on cooperative ways. The socio-economic development associated with the building of new democratic experiment in the region would be unthinkable without the concurrence of the cultures of work, of renovation of public powers, and learning of the economic and financial forces, which since 1989 have organized themselves in forums, chambers and working groups. Today, the region has about five thousand industries and more than thirty thousand commercial outlets and service providers, while 35.34% of jobs are still available in the large transformation industries. The services sector already employs 40.04%, according to 2008 data (Reis, 2008, pp. 133-135). The ABC region has a strong capacity to rebuild itself, which could be observed during the capitalist restructuring of the end of eighties and nineties, when at least 20% of the workforce of about 1,200,000 citizens, lost their jobs and were unemployed. This number has been reduced to less than a half in the last ten years, although one should not forget the informality and precarious work took the place of the late job positions.

Another characteristic of the region is that 56% of its total area of 841 km² is still covered by Atlantic Rainforest. Conservation International included this rainforest as one of the 25 hotspots of the world, locals with high diversity, high endemism and high degree of threat, that are considered priorities for preservation and conservation of biodiversity all over the world. This organization also ranks this forest among of the top five of these hotspots (Mittermeier *et al.*, 1999). Despite most of this area is protected and should be preserved in order to keep springs, forests and help to regulate the climate, all the area suffers real estate speculation and invasions of people claiming for housing. The total area covered by this forest in the ABC region is under federal, state and local law protection, although this not guarantees its real conservation. State/local parks and natural reserves concentrate environmental studies efforts, but knowledge scarcity is still a major concern. There is a great demand to environmental restoration of disturbed areas and enrichment of secondary forests. This forested area also shelter Billings reservoir and 80% of its watershed. This reservoir, an artificial lake constructed in 1925 with energetic purposes, has strategic interest for water production to the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo. With 127 square kilometers of area and a perimeter of 900 kilometers, it stores

a maximum volume of $1.2 \cdot 10^8$ cubic meters of water. (Matarazzo-Neuberger, 1994) a essential and scares resource at São Paulo Metropolitan Region.

The regional per capita income remains twice the national income. The gross domestic product of the region corresponds to 2.43% of Brazilian GDP and 7.21% of the Sao Paulo State. The illiterate rate of the region does not go above 8%, comparing to the country rate of 17% . Technological and functional illiteracy, however, are more problematic given the demands of the new industries and services, interested in keeping the third consumer market position of the country. The data on the informal economy are similar to those of the state capital: 55% of the persons are engaged in the productive process.

From the perspective of its economic and cultural history, the region crossed three cycles and lives today the fourth historic-cultural period. The first cycle can be understood as being a passage, since it was the road for goods and natural products for the first cycle of commercial exchange of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second cycle embodies the construction of the industrial identity, coupled with the political autonomy of the various cities, completed in the fifties of last century. It is during this cycle that is consolidated the symbolization of the region as a restless, and claimant space and cradle of social and political movements, which would greatly help to ensure the re-democratization of Brazil in the seventies and the eighties. The third cycle was that of an acute conflict between capital and labor, finished in the early '90s, which signaled intense socio-urban losses while helping Brazil to construct meanings for citizenship and social participation, accumulating values for the creation of the new consensus of the micro-regional society, already inserted in the fourth cycle in an accelerated process of globalization and known consequences.

Sader (1988) noted that the projects and practices of these organized people of the periphery, are a signal of victory over the physical and symbolic disintegration, the acquisition of rights amidst critical stress, the inter-communication of segments to produce the condition of being a person within the associativity of workers and the use of the wealth of the cities to promote a better income distribution. It is a project of humanity, in which the gap between knowing and doing diminishes. Thus, these cultures organized around work, present since the beginning of the previous century, proofs and examples of social organization, creation of parties, associativity of residents and neighborhoods to demand public services infrastructures, labor and credit cooperatives (such as the *società di mutuo soccorso*, the old peoples' banks), and union's claims. It can be understood therefore that the social basis historically organized guarantees some regional organity and promotes new managerial ventures. Perhaps it can be of less interest the fact that three of the seven cities in the region are among the best fifty to live in Brazil than discover in these cultures defined by work a process fully favorable to management developed in a direct way by the different sectors of society.

4. Globalize the Regional Intelligence

Santos (1998, pp. 19-20) shows that "the (trans nationalized) territory reaffirms itself by the place. (...) It is wise, however, to remember that thanks to the miracles allowed by science, technology and information, the forces that create fragmentation may in other circumstances, serve their opposite." This micro-region, with large contingents of workers connected by multiple origins, coped with the senses of the periphery and overcame them. This makes it difficult to accept new and crueler forms of living in the economic, political, and cultural periphery. It is not without reason that in this regional social micro-physic, the coordinating institution of the Regional Literacy Movement is the Steelworkers Union. From 1997 to 2008 about 70,000 people overcame illiteracy. Today the municipalities are developing new educational policy for youth and adults from the new forms of technological illiteracy, with promising experiences, specially provided by the proximity of regional universities.

To achieve strategic objectives and deepen themes opened by the breakdown of those supply chains derived from the industrial policy of fifties, the civil society in the region and the public administration of the seven cities created new institutions and new methods of social articulation: strictly speaking, a new policy agenda. Based on European and American experiences, discussed at international seminars held in Brazil and abroad, were created during the period of 1991 to 1998 three institutions that produce, transmit and negotiate information and services: The Consorcio Intermunicipal das Bacias do Tamanduateí e Billings (Inter-cities Consortium of the Tamanduateí and Billings Watersheds), commonly called Regional Consortium, the Câmara Regional do Grande ABC (Great ABC Regional Chamber) and the Agencia de Desenvolvimento Econômico (Economic Development Agency). The Consortium, formed by the seven mayors and their advisers, specialized in regional policies priorities, is the place where the initial studies about programs and policies are generated. Launched in 1991, its major concerns have been sustainable development, final disposal of waste, revitalization of the productive chains, creation of an infrastructure for business tourism and ecological tourism, prioritization of children and adolescents at risk and the combat against several forms of illiteracy. The Regional Chamber, made up of mayors, advisers, state representatives, civil state servants, and representatives of local civil society, began its activities in March 1997. It sought to organize priorities, expand studies by means of ten working groups, approve 31 basic demands of the region and negotiate agreements and processes of implementation of policies and actions, decided by consensus, with the state government and with the Union. The Board was constituted symbolically: in addition to politicians and local managers, the creation agreement (12.03.1997) was endorsed by five members of the Citizens' Forum, five representatives of the productive arrangements and five union officials nominated by their peers. The main agreements, accompanied by representatives of society,

prioritized: the implementation of a local technology hub, production chains increase of the competitiveness, creation of new drainage systems for rain waters and industrial effluents, establishment of a regional hospital, amplify the offer of popular housing, establish a federal university, provide workers qualification for new jobs, revitalization of industrial processes in still productive plants – like furniture companies –, improvement of public transportation, development of opportunities for the first job, and strengthening of the movement in favor of impoverished children and adolescents.

5. Marketing and Engagement

The Economic Development Agency is the product of the previous institutions. It is both a database and tool for regional marketing. It concentrates socio-economic information, develops research, supports and fosters the development of companies with a view to sustainable development. It is a public-private organization (51% private, 49% public), while the Regional Chamber is apolitical instrument of partnership between the powers and the Consortium an official core for the generation of projects and identification of needs in the various public policies. Of fundamental importance for the creation of the Chamber and the Agency was the formation of the Citizenship Forum, an exclusive organ of the civil society that begun in 1994 by dozens of associations, schools, unions and service clubs and groups. It acted as an ombudsman during the whole process, encouraging, criticizing and analyzing the actions of the Consortium, the Chamber, and the Agency.

As it is possible to see, the permitted agenda of the regional microphysics meant a necessary moment of political consciousness, an act of identification with the movement of managing the diversified public good in the region. Following that, international experiences contributed to the discussion of cases and the discovery of new projects. The best working relationships were established with the Ruhr Valley, Detroit, Great Leipzig, Rotterdam, Lombardy, and the German area of Baden-Württemberg, plus the social inclusion projects in Latin America, linked by the Mercocities project. The presence of former Mayor Celso Augusto Daniel was instrumental for the knowledge, debate and presentation of regional proposals. Bulletins of unions and trade associations analyzed continuously the issues of the regional crisis and at least one hundred thesis and dissertations of the major Brazilian universities cataloged by the Laboratory on Regionalism and Management (University of São Caetano do Sul) and by the Celso Daniel Chair on Cities' Management (Methodist University of São Paulo) attested to the importance of the micro-regional debate. In truth, it is necessary to say that two groups of institutions are not yet fully involved in this mode of management: universities and city councils. The first ones, despite the analysis and criticism, only recently began to evaluate the new regional dynamics and the importance of critical mass for the strengthening of projects agreed upon, unlike what occurs, for example, in Lombardy and Baden-Württemberg,

especially in agencies and observatories. For their part, the legislative chambers, with exceptions, still prefer a traditional way, even archaic, of doing politics. The new political actors overcame, then, the traditional social representations, built upon roles and functions sanctioned by the old politics. The representations that are directly created are engendered in the society that best felt the challenges, whether in the emptying of the executive power, whether at the work in the neighborhood or in the production and distribution that were lived on the factory floor. The legislative representations resemble those whom the poet called "farmers of the air"¹, since their domain spaces are unconnected to what the poet also called "sense of world." Contrary to what waited the political history, the popular vote, when transports these people to the legislative palaces, also transvests them. Their look upon the city becomes wrapped up in their own myths of interest, sometimes collective, but really myths of usurped communities. In contrast, what should be highlighted in this new process of dialogue, which creates communication and new social mediations, is that the stigma of exclusion – that is known in immigration and migratory processes, that is combated in movements for the urbanization of slums, that is widely publicized by the strong regional unions – became transparent and was made public in all its breadth what led to projects and practices to overcome them.

6. The Montanhão Community Project: An Example of Sustainable Practice Leading to Results and Community Change

The Montanhão Community Project was designed by professors and students from Management and Services Faculty two years ago and received the official name of Services and Management Network for a Solidarity Community. Solidarity economy is defined as a set of economic activities, like production, distribution, consumption and credit, organized and conducted collectively by workers (SENAES: 11, 2006). Economy solidarity researches as a consensus assert that community of workers that adopt this kind of economy should do it with a collectively, communitarian and solidary character, be their proper managers and not follow the established society rules for labor.

Methodist University of São Paulo already had a partnership with Associação de Resgate Humano e Cidadania Padre Léo Comissari, a local league community that is responsible to promote a Solidarity Economy Network in the Montanhão neighbourhood. At the beginning of the last decade they already supported one hundred informal small enterprises.

The main goals for this Project were:

1. To develop entrepreneurs plans, which values the balance between personal and collective interests, since they

¹ The expression was coined by the Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

belong to a network of Solidarity Economy and must have common goals.

2. To offer technical support for the network enterprises.

3. To develop negotiator skills for the entrepreneurs of the network that are members of the Municipality Forum of Solidarity Economy.

4. To support and participate in meetings and trainings promoted by community league, developing skills linked with sustainability, planning and designing, best practices, human resources management, conflict solutions and solidarity economy.

5. To link other universities areas and programs demanded by the league and the developing enterprises.

A diagnosis of the Montanhão community related to cultural aspects, enterprises profile of the network and their results was conducted in the very beginning. One of the discoveries of this diagnosis was that they didn't have a proper way to share their achievements and experiences. Community meetings named Listener University were suggested introducing deep discussions about solidarity economy and sustainability, and causing reflections on the kind of relationship and practices they already established between them and their suppliers and clients. This process was the basis to shape the future university group interventions at this community.

During the Listener University Meetings they discussed the results they achieved, their hopes and fears, labor laws, human resources conflicts and management, negotiation skills and how the enterprises linked to the network should work and accept the local social coin named "Comissari", how they could support and help each other, in order to attract more entrepreneurs to the network and how they could work collectively and support their needs as a community. All those themes are related to sustainability in the way we developed it at MUSP looking to the social, economic and environmental issues and creating a vision that brings together a systemic view and different way of living.

Those are some of the results already achieved:

1. Developing a methodology to work with the network and the social incubator of the Montanhão league: all the information, methodologies and experiences were summarized and available in seven papers published on our digital magazine REGES - Revista Eletrônica da Faculdade de Gestão e Serviços [link] and at XXXV ENANPAD 2011 meeting: [link].

2. Publishing the book: Work, Solidarity Economy and Social Development: The case of the Montanhão Community Network on Solidarity Economy in press.

3. Three new enterprises were established that hired 8 persons.

4. Promoting the Seminar: Incubation methodology: challenges and paths to students, professors, entrepreneurs, and government representatives of the nearby cities of Diadema, Santo Andre, Osasco e Maua, in September, 2010.

5. Developing skills and practices demanded by the Montanhão community, also related to Padre Leo league.

6. Creating indicators for measuring income and business

into the Network of Montanhao, that has also been adopted by Diadema communities.

7. Future Perspectives

The results enrolled above reassures how university can contribute with solidarity economy, bringing approaches, experiences and knowledge and integrating them in order to build a development model that includes communities at the basis of income of our society and creates real economic alternatives to improve their lives, something that our usual economic model never provides.

The university launched in February, 2014 an interdisciplinary Sustainability Center that enrolled professors, lecturers, administrative employees and students from all faculties, as well as communities and business companies. This initiative had its roots in the MUSP and is expected to enhance and enlarge the sustainability culture in our university, creating the container for discussing new social and scientific technologies to achieve a model of development that has sustainability as a guide principal. This center plans to create a Green Business Incubator and a Biomimicry Lab to develop new technologies based in Atlantic Rainforest and integrate former experiences and projects that were developed with communities like Montanhao, business companies and higher education.

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