

SURE Conference, Krakow 20-21 May 2010

Ideas from Göteborg

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Aim : to establish the range of ideas on the SURE theme ...

- **how to connect citizens, organisations and policies to sustainability**

19 participants, from 10 different European countries

Background to the project

Rising public and political concern with :

- sustainability and climate change
- recovery after the current economic crisis
- pressure on the world's resources
- poverty, food security, energy security.

These issues are global in scale, demanding awareness and action both collectively and by individual citizens

: “Be the change that you wish to see”

Mahatma Gandhi



CURE – Convention for a Sustainable Urban and Rural Europe

These issues cross-relate to another key idea - **the inter-dependence of rural and urban areas**

CURE

- has worked closely with DG Regio in a series of workshops focused on urban-rural linkages
- launched FOCUS - Food Chains for Urban-Rural Sustainability with funding from *Fondation de France*
- supports the SURE partners in the present project

An Inconvenient Truth' (Al Gore)

Climate change

- is accelerating
- is largely caused by man-made emissions
- of carbon dioxide and 'green-house gases'
- will have devastating consequences if not slowed down.

We need :

- radical reduction in use of fossil fuels;
- capture and sequestration of carbon on a massive scale;
- reduced deforestation.

Politicians are striving to reach consensus on global action.

But politicians cannot move faster than people will let them.

The challenge

How to connect citizens and organisations to sustainability



An Uncomfortable Reality

People, and the commerce that serves them, are driven, worldwide, by the **aspiration to consume**. This aspiration :

- provokes migration between countries
- reinforces economic disparities between peoples
- blinds people to their impact on others and on the world.

Governments tend to support this popular aspiration, to focus on GDP, rather than gross domestic happiness.

Capitalism tends to focus on internal profit, to disregard externalities such as climate change.

The collective psychology is essentially unsustainable.

We have to address this **Uncomfortable Reality at the same time as the **Inconvenient Truth**.**



Elements in the problem

- Population growth
- Rising aspirations and the 'growth' paradigm
- Poverty, on a global scale
- Food security ... and water security
- Energy issues, reliance on fossil fuels, Peak Oil
- Carbon emissions and their impact on climate change
- Urbanisation, detaching people from the land
- World-scale companies controlling resources, dominating the supply chains
- Governance - c.200 nations, sectors, short-term politics, corruption
- Low levels of public awareness
- Denial, and lack of imagination.

Elements of a solution

- Urgent, radical, worldwide change
- Personal responsibility
- Tackle poverty
- Focus on quality of life
- Bottom-up approach, localisation and innovation
- Education to address the psychology of change
- Cut through the sectoral divides in policy
- Use IT intelligently
- Traditions and skills regained
- Access to land, for allotments, dachas etc
- Local food production
- Support to subsistence farmers



Key entry-points

Food

Energy and transport

Urban-rural relations, spatial planning etc

Telecommunications



Food

Aim - to provide adequate healthy food for all in a sustainable way, with :

- long-term security
- minimum damage to biodiversity
- use of renewable resources
- minimal use of fossil fuels
- control of carbon and greenhouse gas emissions

How?

- ? greater local/national self-sufficiency in food supplies
- ? more focus on local markets and local food chains
- ? support to subsistence and semi-subsistence farms
- ? sensitise conventional agro-food systems
- ? how to make food healthy, sustainable and affordable





Energy and transport

Aim – ensure supply of affordable energy for all in a sustainable way, with long-term security

Challenges

- 'Peak Oil', carbon emissions, nuclear waste
- how to promote energy conservation,
- carbon capture and sequestration
- use of renewable energy – wave, tidal, hydro, solar, wind, biomass

? Promote localness in social and economic activity, in order to

- reduce the need to travel or to transport goods and services
- get bottom-up action to conserve and create energy





Urban-rural relations

Migration – complex processes, multiple impacts

- Bulgaria - from countryside to cities, with loss of **rural** vitality + **urban** crowding
- Czech Republic - from city centres to suburbs with loss of rural character
- Romania –to western Europe, sending money home, then bringing ‘Dallas’ idea for houses.
- Turkey - massive migration from rural areas into Istanbul, with strong links between migrants and their villages of origin
- Western Europe – from cities outwards, urban sprawl, dependence on private transport, loss of productive land

Solutions :

- Regional development, territorial cohesion
- Strengthen local communities, diversify local economies
- ? Green cities, green framework
- ? Mixed land uses, to minimise journeys
- Community involvement in spatial planning
- Tourism – is it really sustainable ?



Information technology

IT can :

- inform citizens about sustainability
- reduce the need to travel
- increase the speed of communication
- improve efficiency in production and commerce
- assist conservation of energy
- reduce waste of paper etc

But beware the digital divide -
a key principle should be equality of access.

Beware fraud and false information

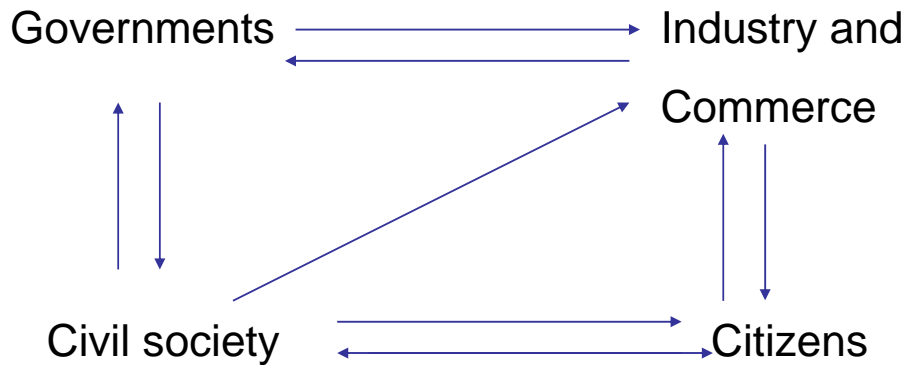


Connecting with the inconvenient truth

- Use our own competence and background
- Learn from the Transition movement
- Adopt change management techniques
- Build on existing organizations and networks
- Encourage creation of village action groups
- Work on sustainability issues at local level
- Promote participatory planning of settlements
- Use Information technology
- Promote widespread use of energy meters and carbon meters
- Disseminate good practice
- Raise awareness, through local campaigning, education, media etc
- Find and liberate the leaders, or 'fiery spirits'
- Use 'signals' from government to provoke change
- Support EU initiatives, such as the Energy Directive.

Who takes the initiative ? (1)

A circle – virtuous or vicious ?



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Who takes the initiative ? (2)

Governments can :

- offer leadership
- use signals of all kinds to move people towards behavioural change and sustainability.

Industry and commerce can take a lead, on their own initiative or if driven by government rules or consumer demand

Citizens can act through what they buy, what they throw away, how they travel, how they insulate and heat their homes etc.

? **A vicious circle** - supine citizens, inactive governments and industry
or a virtuous circle - assertive and responsive citizens, active government, inventive industry

.... and **civil society** ? Its job is to oil the wheel, to prompt movement at each point in the circle.

Networks

What can European networks contribute ?

- European Rural Alliance (ERA)
- European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)
- European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST)
- PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe
- Transition Towns
- Others

