

CSR Lab facilitated by:

**World Forum for a
Responsible Economy**

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Speakers:

Francis KURZ, Algae
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Rebecca SALMINEN-WITT,
Greening of Detroit, USA

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22A - Ecosystems and territorial dynamics: innovative approaches!

CONTEXT

Within geographic “territories”, “ecosystems” may appear fostering “local” dynamics of responsible economy. Which aspects make a given territory more suitable than others for implementing a responsible economy? How to create conditions that will foster responsible entrepreneurship?

SYNTHESIS OF DEBATES AND/OR CONCRETE PROPOSALS

1/ ALGAE NATURAL FOOD: a concrete example of the circular economy.

Located in Alsace, the firm cultivates micro-algae using a patented formula which improves productivity while also reducing investment costs.

Goals and stakes of the company: to develop a range of products for human nutrition which are highly concentrated in proteins by using a process which does not reject any CO₂. The territorial integration allows the firm to benefit from a great quantity of locally sourced raw material which naturally contains the required nutrients (water coming from the malting process of local breweries). To this aim, the founder of Algae Natural Food has partnered with Cargill thanks to the mediation of the Idée Alsace. As a project barrier, Francis KURZ points to three success factors:

- the connection with the territories and local stakeholders: the interest of the collectivity gives credibility to this innovative company
- the support from a business partners with similar goals: to create economic, social and environmental value
- the willingness to maintain an open game: to be attentive to new solutions and open to new business partners/opportunities.

2/ SAHARA FOREST PROJECT: a project of « green growth »

SFP is a Norwegian environmental company. It leads important projects in Qatar and Jordania which aim at increasing the global food production while also fighting desertification. The innovative technical process used does not have a negative impact in terms of CO₂ rejection. Three key technologies are combined:

- establishment of glasshouses made of recycled carton to both obtain heat and humidity
- cooling systems using sea water (the residues are then used for salt production)
- solar energy used throughout the process

As a local collaborative project, SFP benefits from the support of the States in which it intervenes. After its launching and experimentation phase in 2011, SFP has modeled in Qatar the process which allowed the replacement of the entire importation of cucumber and tomatoes by the local production. The project is to extend to other African regions hit by desertification.

Key success factors according to Joachim HAUGE:

- a “fabulous” mix of technologies
- a special link between the stakeholders and the human resources of the territory (firms to share the created value with: fertilizer producer in Qatar; political support from Jordania, Qatar, Tunisia)

3/ GREENING OF DETROIT: an example of urban agriculture serving a sustainable growth

Originally founded to lead a policy of reforestation at the border of the city in the 90s, the NGO Greening of Detroit promotes an ambitious project of development and transformation of one of the American cities which was strongly hit by the 2008 crisis. After losing ½ of its population and declared bankrupted in 2013, Detroit has hit a record unemployment rate. Three times the size of Paris, Detroit today has less than 700.000 inhabitants. On such a territory, a sustainable development is a necessity. The entire economy of the city has to be rebuilt by creating opportunities for investments in a green growth. In order to do so, the NGO builds on the two main available resources: large polluted wastelands (in the past used by the automobile industry) and the local population (mostly unemployed). The urban agriculture projects mainly aims at creating a self-sufficient city for food; which means making the most of the numerous wastelands by transforming them. The NGOs has partnered both with innovative firms, farmers who understood the potential of this transformation, schools (educational programs, gardens). Depolluting actions are undergoing at the same time, actions which generates economic opportunities for specialized firms. In 2015, this collective work allowed for the production of 200 tons of food on the lands available around the houses. Unemployment is decreasing, and shops are reopening. The city is slowly repopulating with the return of old inhabitants, and the arrival of people looking at Detroit as a “real life lab” for the city of tomorrow. For Rebecca SALMIEN-WITT, this positive evolution is firstly the result of the efforts made to create synergies on the territory; but also of the common interests of several actors coming together in one project (inhabitants, firms, representatives, investors, creators...). A variety of funding is used: foundations, firms, federal government, citizens...

INTERVENTION of Mr. Bruno LECHEVIN (ADEME)

He summarizes the stakes of firms to better produce, with less and with the need to remain competitive. Solutions emerge nowadays, with for instance, those of ecological industries. To take on the challenge, firms need to get to know each other in order to better cooperate and share creative ideas. It is only an economic project of the firm, but also a societal stake so a desirable stake.

INTERVENTION of Ms. Catherine TRAUTMANN, Former minister, Vice-President and Municipal counselor of Strasbourg – economic strategy

For the former mayor of Strasbourg, the technological mix shows we are in a race of ideas, innovations and challenges formulated by the globalized society. The choice of the tramway in Strasbourg already showed the need to appropriate the economic competence through a strategy elaborated with all the stakeholders. To get the territory into action means to create the conditions for encounters and crossed-fertilization. Thus, the local authorities must remain open to suggestions coming from the economic actors. Firms are indeed generators of wealth, but also vectors which allow citizens to access employment, health and education. To work on eco-innovation is to work on a desirable and sustainable innovation.

INTERVENTION of Mr. Philippe VASSEUR, Former Minister, MP of Pas-de-Calais, President of the World Forum

For Mr. Vasseur, the territory is the appropriate place to build any project for the firms. That is the reason why he rather uses the term "local-system" instead of the word ecosystem, to discuss the territorial dynamics. The "local-systems" follow a red line which relies on three key notions: union (actors), vision (common) and action (collective). They are a call to go beyond the divides (especially political ones).

CONCLUSION of Ms. TRAUTMANN and Mr. VASSEUR

The territory must be compatible with what the firms can invent. It has to be steered together, in an open definition beyond the political parties. We are leaving a predictive society behind us, to enter a society which leaves room for a contribution of the citizens.

THEY SAID IT !

"Innovation faces a lot of incomprehension, difficulties, resistance. There is a need to firmly believe in our projects in order to push other people to engage in them". Francis KURZ, Algae Natural Food

"The food and economic challenges, the environmental and climate ones; they are all related, all connected. To respond, we need an integrated approach tailored to the territory and its specificities". Joachim HAUGE, Sahara Forest Project.

« To be sustainable, a project needs the larger number of financing sources as can be; with as many stakeholders involved as possible to make it a success and maintain it!" Rebecca SALMINEN-WITT, Greening of Detroit

To discover more

- Books
- Websites : <http://www.algae-natural-food.com/> ; <http://saharaforestproject.com/> ; <http://www.greeningofdetroit.com/>