

UTOPIA **What space for private business in our alterdevelopment?**

Society should aim at the blossoming of each of its members within the limits of the development of the community (i.e. the development of social relationships, democratic dynamism with respect of the environment). Our project should allow everyone's autonomy, not only through enough means but also through enabling tools for evaluation, collective choices and decision making.

The following proposals will be the basis for the new Utopia Manifesto

1/ what is included in the private business area?

We are talking here of private entrepreneurship, whether « classical » or, for example, in the form of cooperatives.

Axis 1

We are for the existence of a private business area insofar as it satisfies the demands for goods and services according to each one's preferences. The scope of this area will be deemed to diminish as well as its space within the life of people through drastic decrease of the working time.

Axis 2

A private business area will be restricted mainly to ordinary consumption goods and will not include goods linked one way or the other with basic rights.

A free good is, per se, outside the business area. All goods at no cost within this area are offered under false pretence.

Axis 3

For goods linked to basic rights, the borderline between the private and the public area will be determined branch by branch after democratic consultation, possibly at local level. But, exceptionally, these goods – like housing or food - could be included in the private business area when the consumption of these goods is influenced by each one's preferences.

Beyond the proposals described below, the manifesto will include a chapter defining the steps that will bring us to this new concept of society. In particular, short and middle term proposals – attractive and acceptable by the majority of citizens - must be thought out; these will bring about the social movement and power needed to trigger off the change we hope for.

2/ Democratic rules for the business area

Axis 4

The various economic areas must be democratically and strictly defined by the public authorities in collaboration with the citizens, at the national and European level. They will impose the social and environmental conditions of the production of goods and services and will guarantee their application.

This because a precise framework will limit the freedom of the companies inside which they will be absolutely free; for example a maximum gap between levels of salaries will be the rule...

Axis 5

Some companies will be valued as of great social utility and/or as of important environmental impact. For these companies, strategic decisions must be made with a double quorum of the acting parties, both external and internal. The latter must have at their disposal all the necessary information and be in a position to demand more if needed.

By « acting parties » we mean

- on one hand those belonging to the company : i) the workforce and its representatives ii) the capital owners (public or private)
- on the other , those outside the company : iii) citizens or their representatives (who can be public authorities, local , national or international) or other representatives of civil society (like NGO's, groups of clients and users, neighbours...).
- The relative weight given to these groups will depend in particular on the nature of the activities considered and the type of decision to be made.
- The greater the social usefulness and/or the environmental impact of the company, the greater must be the weight of the external acting parties; it can even exceed the internal ones; this depending on the social and environmental questions arisen from the activities of the company.
- In order to guarantee the democratic process within the company, no acting party will have on its own the majority and thus impose its opinion.

Axis 6

Within the private business area, the salaried workers of large companies will dispose of the veto in relation to strategic decisions.

3/ Limitation of the concentration and ownership of private capital

Axis 7

The size of private companies must be limited. This limitation can – depending on the sectors of activity - bear on capital, the number of workers and/or shares of the market.

Axis 8

With regard to the companies deemed to be with great social and/or environmental impact, their productive capital will be progressively transferred to structures like cooperatives and friendly companies belonging to the social and fair economy.

4/ Financing the business sector

Axis 9

Financing production and financial stability are common goods. They must escape from private control. Financing the economy will be through a totally socialised banking system which should, eventually, be integrated into a public European system.

Political authorities will therefore regain control of the monetary tool.

UTOPIA will launch, amongst other projects, a vast reflection on complementary currencies.

Axis 10

The span and/or the interest rates will depend on the social usefulness and the environmental impact (sustainability) of the projects submitted. These rates will be regulated either at the national or the international level. But access to the loans, for a certain part and within this framework, will be decided at the local level to fit at best with local priorities.

Axis 11

UTOPIA is for questioning the very existence of financial markets and is decidedly for financing the economy through the banking system and, on the other hand, for handing insurance to public actors rather than to the market.

Utopia 2010 – Adopted at the national council in Rennes.