



Conference
ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?
PARADIGM REVIEW BY CSOs AS
DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

Prague, Czech Republic, 14th – 16th May 2008

Wednesday 14th May 2008

Exchange on expectations, identification and understanding
of development paradigms

by Jiří Silný, Director of Ecumenical Academy Prague

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues!

My name is Jiří Silný and I work in the Ecumenical Academy Prague, which is one of the organizers of this event. We are in charge of the logistics of the conference.

The Ecumenical Academy as a consortium member of the TRIALOG project follows the idea of this meeting from the very beginning through the rather complicated process of preparation. I am very happy, that finally we can welcome you here in Prague.

Judging from the big interest, it seems that there is a real need to discuss the basic questions of development – they are at the same time the basic questions of the future of humankind and even more of the living nature. The deepening environmental, economic and social crises in many parts of the world show how urgent, how important it is to search for new paradigms.

We wanted to create an opportunity to step out of our daily business of looking for money for development projects and doing the projects and writing reports. Now we have the time and place where we can discuss what is behind, what ideas and what motivations we have, what kind of vision or paradigm we are following and how we can change things together.

I think, the very start of changing paradigms is to start to change the perspective - to look at the poor, at the marginalized people as genuine actors of development and to overcome the disproportion, the asymmetry of power and wealth. If we want to reach just development, speaking about changes does not mean minor changes in the rich countries in comparison with the poor countries. Let us hope that our discussion and sharing of fears and hopes, of our experience and anger will help us to find better tracks. I am sure there is not only one track, there are more.

We started to plan the conference for participation of some 90 people and now we are nearly 140 and we were even forced to refuse many applications because of the lack of space. We now don't have the possibility to introduce each other in the plenary, but we like to offer you at the beginning at least the possibility to get to know your neighbors and at the same time to enter in medias res, into the topic of our conference.

The idea is to build **small buzz groups** with 5 or 6 of your neighbors, you can even mix a bit, if your neighbors are people you know already. In the group please first introduce yourself to each other, tell what you are doing and than **discuss three points**:



- **Point one - Challenges:** What do you see as the most important challenge, the main obstacle for positive development nowadays and what kind of paradigm or thinking is behind it?
- **Point two – Positive Signs:** Where do you see nowadays good practices, signs of positive changes and again what kind of thinking, which concepts are here helpful?
- **Point three - Expectations:** What do you expect from this conference?



At the end of this 20 minutes discussion please note your ideas on paper. Use the papers of three colors: red for challenges, green for positive signs and yellow for expectations of this conference, we will collect them and put them at the pin walls here outside.

I wish you a pleasant stay and hope we will have a good work together.

Minutes: Jana Krajčírřiková, Ecumenical Academy Prague