



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

No. 335 September 2011

Sustainable Growth or Growth vs. Sustainability?

QCEA published a discussion paper in July which examines the relationships between resource use, climate emissions and economic growth. “**Sustainable Growth or Growth vs. Sustainability**” is intended to stimulate discussion and debate - in the varying communities in which people live and work - about how our economic system relates to the many interlinked challenges facing the world today: climate change, energy supply, food sovereignty, water stress, recurring financial crises, growing economic inequality, global poverty, resource scarcity, and conflicts relating to many of these issues. Economic affairs are integral to all of these concerns - from the production and consumption of products and services, their trade and transportation, and the rules which govern these - to financial markets, international development, and the lifestyles and aspirations of a rapidly growing global population characterized by radical inequality.

The discussion paper serves as an introduction to an enormously complex picture. It looks at some of the critiques and debates that are increasingly surrounding issues such as:

- economic growth and its overarching purpose;
- environmental externalities;
- finite resources;
- ecological space and ecological footprints;
- relative and absolute decoupling;
- rates of efficiency increases;
- the role of technology;
- the precautionary principle, and;
- sustainability.

Whether or not we choose to engage with these issues does not alter the fact that they are vital to any serious consideration of a sustainable and peaceful future. These challenges require more than personal commitments to sustainable lifestyles; they necessitate examination of how the economic systems we participate in are implicated in poverty and inequality, environmental degradation and climate change.

Quakers have never been shy of challenging the status quo, from institutionalised slavery to compulsory military service. The assumptions upon which the hegemonic economic paradigm rest are a new frontier.



Sustainable Economic Growth? Examining the relationships between economic growth and resource use.
Image CC BY Images_of_Money, via Flickr

To quote Quaker Faith and Practice, 23.53:

“economic affairs are now so central to our whole existence that no other aspect of personal relationships or individual life-styles can now be looked at without first understanding what it means in terms of our national wealth, incomes, and their distribution.”

- David Eversley, 1976

QCEA’s exploration of the economic issues that relate to sustainability is an inevitable consequence of its work, not only on sustainable energy security, but on economic justice, human rights, peace and democratic governance. If there is any issue more cross-cutting or more inextricable from each of these areas, it is the way our economic system - including the rules in place to govern it, and the assumptions upon which it is predicated - shapes the world we live in and the fortunes of its inhabitants, both now and in the future.

QCEA encourages policy-makers, European citizens, Quakers and non-Quakers, to read this paper, engage in the discussion, and to consider what kind of changes to our systems, and to our lives, would help create a truly sustainable economy.

You can download the discussion paper from our website. We would love to hear your ideas and



feedback, which you can send by email to rtansey@qcea.org.

Rachel Tansey

Why is the EU asking questions about its members' detention systems?

The EU has been taking an increased role in criminal justice policy in recent years. The European Arrest Warrant (EAW), introduced in 2004, was the first of a series of measures intended to allow closer cross-border police and judicial cooperation. Aspects of the EAW have been criticised by civil liberties campaigners, and it is currently in line for a review. However, at an event on the EAW that QCEA attended in May, most of those present seemed to agree that the streamlined and efficient extradition that it created has positive effects too, and that the legislation needs review, not repeal.

However, one particular legal challenge to an extradition request under the EAW system reveals far deeper problems for the EU's justice agenda. Robert Rettinger, a Pole living in Ireland, was arrested under the EAW, at the request of the Polish government, who wanted him to serve the remainder of an uncompleted prison sentence. Mr Rettinger challenged the extradition on the grounds that detention conditions in Poland were such that they would constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment, contrary to his Article 3 rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. In its judgment, the Supreme Court of Ireland ruled in Rettinger's favour, citing repeated criticisms of Polish detention facilities made by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture, as evidence for refusing to extradite Mr Rettinger. The legal ground is now open for other detainees to challenge extradition requests, and some appear to be doing so.

This matters to the European Commission, among whose tasks is the implementation of EU law. If the operation of a measure like the EAW is disrupted, it is the Commission's job to do something about it. The EAW cases worry the Commission, in particular, because other judicial cooperation measures have even more potential to be affected by legal objections based on detention conditions.

The most important of these, Council Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA, creates a framework within which Member States can transfer sentenced prisoners who are nationals of another EU Member State to serve their sentences in their state of nationality. This legislation was passed in 2008. Its stated intention is to ensure that foreign prisoners can receive rehabilitative services without the access barriers posed by linguistic differences, or the psychological problems posed by isolation from family

and social contacts. It will come into operation in December 2011.

There has been some unease over whether Member States will genuinely use the transfer framework as a rehabilitative measure. Another interpretation says that countries may decide to use the legislation (which removes the requirement that prisoners must consent to their transfer) to quickly relieve prison overcrowding by dumping foreign inmates on other states. Time will tell whether that is the case. In any event the Commission understands that different standards of detention in some countries undermine the mutual trust that is meant to underpin judicial cooperation. If a judge in country A is asked to review a transfer and concludes that detention conditions in country B are likely to threaten the prisoner's Article 3 rights, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights suggests that he or she must refuse the transfer.

Yet the European Commission's scope for action is limited. Though Member States tend to like measures that help the police and courts do their jobs, they usually respond half-heartedly to measures from Brussels which are likely to cost them money. The level of investment required to raise detention standards in some countries is enormous.¹ It is against this backdrop that the current European Commission Green Paper on detention has been published. It outlines the problems, makes the case that the EU should take action to raise standards of pre- and post-trial detention, and asks a series of questions intended to 'test the water' and see how civil society groups, Member States, and other interested parties respond.

QCEA has been liaising with other NGOs since early summer, and at the time of writing is preparing a response to the Green Paper. We encourage our supporters to respond as well; if you are interested in doing so, keep an eye on our blog (<http://qceablog.wordpress.org>) during the next few weeks; we will brief readers on the issues, provide a model response for you to use, and give you assistance on how to respond.

Ben Jarman

¹ For example, one expert from Hungary estimated that it would take around four decades of continuous investment to raise that nation's Warsaw Pact-era prisons to the highest standards in Western Europe.



Renovations in Quaker House Completed

Quaker House Brussels was listed in 2006 as a historical monument by the Brussels authorities. After this listing a long process of renovation of the house started. Built in 1899, the house had originally a few amazing pieces of interior decoration and this was partly the reason for the protection. The more interesting parts of this decoration are the woodwork, stained glass and wallpapers. The architect of the house, Georges Hobé, was a cabinet maker and also worked in a wallpaper shop! He was also one of those architects who had new ways of building during the Art Nouveau period. The house contains a few elements of Art Nouveau but is not really considered as part of this architectural tendency. Georges Hobé has also been influenced by other styles (classic, cottage style).



After three years of preparation and due administrative process, the works started in 2009. The works were an interesting challenge because during the whole process of renovation, life was going on as usual in Quaker House: inhabitants on the two upper

floors, Sunday meetings of Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting, lettings of the rooms on the 1st floor, normal work of QCEA on the ground floor. After two years of works, all the woodwork has been renovated, new wallpapers have replaced the old ones which were too damaged and some wallpapers have been kept and restored. The electricity installation of the 1st floor and of the stairs was completely renovated. The decoration was rounded off by new curtains in all the rooms on the first floor and carpets in the stairwell to give the final touch. After a little more than two years of works, Quaker House is now once again nearly as we can imagine it a bit more than 110 years ago!

For those who are interested, Quaker House still offers meetings rooms to let for seminars, trainings, big or small meetings. You will find more information on our website.

Xavier Verhaeghe

The EU's Trade with Palestine - Opportunities and Limitations

On 31 August, the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) unanimously recommended that the Parliament approve a pending trade agreement between the EU and the Palestinian Authority. The agreement covers market liberalisation for agricultural and fishery products, allowing duty-free access for these Palestinian products to EU markets. QCEA notes this development with interest in relation to our work on the economic role of the EU in Palestine/Israel.

The matter will now be taken to the Parliament's Plenary later in the month for approval. If passed, it will add to the range of Palestinian products already granted duty-free access under an association agreement between the parties signed back in 1997.

This proposed agreement raises a number of challenging questions. Its backdrop is a situation on the ground that continues to make Palestinian trade with the EU very difficult. This is acknowledged by the European Commission, amid figures noting that imports from the West Bank and Gaza into the EU amounted to only €7 million in 2009 and €9.3 million in 2010.¹ Agricultural products (predominantly strawberries and cut flowers) made up 71 and 60 per cent of these totals respectively. These stand in stark

contrast to the figures for imports from Israel to the EU of €8.8 billion in 2009 and €11.1 billion in 2010.²

An additional hurdle for the Palestinians in managing their trading relations arises due to the Paris Protocol of 1994, governing economic relations between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel.³ Under the terms of this agreement, Palestinian trade with other countries continues to be handled through Israeli sea and air ports, or through border crossings between the Palestinian Authority and Jordan and Egypt, which are also controlled by Israel. As Palestinians need Israeli approval to conduct their external trade, a substantial economic loss can be experienced if a closure on the Occupied Territories is imposed. This gives the Israeli authorities a huge amount of leverage against the Palestinians and their economy, which it used on numerous occasions for example between 1994 and 1997.

At the same time as this agreement is scheduled to be passed, the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank continues, following the end of an official freeze in September last year. Examples include the approval of 500 new housing units back in March and several thousand new apartments in occupied East Jerusalem in August.⁴ The Israeli organisation Peace



Now has conducted research showing that the pace of settlement construction since the end of the freeze has well-surpassed that of construction within the 1967 borders.⁵

The approval of the new EU-PA trade agreement could provide opportunities for sectors of Palestinian society to improve their livelihoods. However, whilst the underlying issues of independence and freedom of movement remain unresolved, efforts to aid a functioning Palestinian economy will continue to have limited benefits. This is why the EU should link economic support for the Palestinians to a political objective of ending the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and continued blockade of Gaza.

In the midst of ongoing challenges, the Palestinian Authority will soon seek recognition at the United Nations of a Palestinian State incorporating the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Back in April, the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians (comprising the EU, UN, World Bank and International Monetary Fund) met in Brussels with EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in the chair. The reports from this meeting determined that the PA was above the threshold for a functioning state in the key areas that were studied.⁶

It is still unclear what stance many EU Member States will take at the UN in the coming weeks. However, as QCEA's recent briefing paper shows, the EU continues to view settlements as illegal under international law, undermining trust between the parties and constituting an obstacle to peace.⁷ If this opinion is to be translated into concrete action, the EU should implement targeted sanctions to push for the

settlements to be withdrawn, as a step towards the negotiated two-state solution it seeks. The sanctions we propose are laid out in the recommendations of the briefing paper, and include a military embargo and ban on any military and security co-operation with the Government of Israel and Israeli companies, amongst other steps.

QCEA has carried out research into the import of settlement goods into the EU and continues to argue that this should be restricted, in line with the political position stated above. Further information on this matter will appear in next month's edition of *Around Europe*.

John Nicholls

¹ See <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/palestine/> and http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113382.pdf p.10 for 2010 figure

² See <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/israel/> and http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113402.pdf for 2010 figure

³ See: www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/paris_protocol for background information

⁴ See: www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-approves-500-new-homes-in-west-bank-settlements-in-response-to-itamar-attack-1.348864 and www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/11/israel-settlements_n_924107.html

⁵ See settlement construction report: www.peacenow.org.il/eng/ConstructionReport0911Eng

⁶ See Chair's Summary, p.3: www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/121525.pdf

⁷ See positions of the EU, p.2: www.quaker.org/qcea/middle%20east/bp-mideast-eurole-en-jul-2011.pdf

Take out an annual *Around Europe* Subscription! 22€/£16 for hard copies, 15€/£10 for e-mailed copies. For information on how to subscribe to *Around Europe* or to become a QCEA Associate or Supporting Member please visit our website at: www.quaker.org/qcea, ring us on 0032 2 230 4935 or write to us. We look forward to hearing from you.



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs aisbl
Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Editeur responsable : Elizabeth Scurfield
No entreprise 0420.346.728
www.quaker.org/qcea - info@qcea.org