Ecosocial Innovations in Europe

How Social and Solidarity Economy Actors Can Promote the Sustainable Development Goals

Ingo Stamm
University of Jyväskylä / Finland
UNTFSSE conference, 25-26 June 2019
Geneva

Coauthors:
Tuuli Hirvilammi (Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius/University of Jyväskylä – Finland)
Aila-Leena Matthies (Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius/University of Jyväskylä – Finland)
Kati Närhi (University of Jyväskylä – Finland)
ECOSOS project

ECOSOS - Contribution of social work and systems of income security to the ecosocial transformation of society

(funded by the Finnish Academy, 2015 – 2019)
New concept: Ecosocial innovations

✓ Small-scale environmental and social organisations
✓ New eco-social practices
✓ Grass-roots, social and solidarity economy actors
✓ New forms of work and employment
Research questions

1. What are their new eco-social practices?
2. What enabling and hindering factors can be found?
3. How can ESIs promote the SDGs?
1. Concept of ESI

Based on theories and concepts of social innovations, sustainability transitions, social and solidarity economy etc.

2. Mapping phase

Collection of ca. 50 ESIs in
- Finland
- Germany
- Belgium
- Italy
- UK

3. In-depth studies on ESIs

Altogether 6 ESIs in 4 countries
Methods

• Field visits
• Document review
• 28 semi-structured individual interviews
• 2 group interviews
Selected ESIs in 4 countries

Kunst-Stoffe, Germany

Lapinlahden lähde, Finland

Hirvitalo, Finland

Vinterra, Italy

Oma maa, Finland

VELO, Belgium
Results of the thematic analysis

1. From informal to formal
2. Creative mix of work, employment, and engagement
3. Innovative due to the great diversity in social practices
4. Balancing all dimensions of sustainability
5. Precarious existence as daily routine
6. Established relationships keep the innovations running
7. Recognition, money, and time as main resources

Results (I) – ESIs and SDGs

- SDG 3 — to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all.
- SDG 4 — to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- SDG 11 — to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- SDG 12 — ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns that establish sustainable communities.

Main focus:

- SDG 8 — to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
Results (II)

• Target 8.4 - improving resource efficiency in consumption and production (Vinterra, Oma maa, Kunst-Stoffe and VELO)

• Target 8.5 - decent work for all women and men, including people with disabilities (Vinterra, Hirvitalo and Lapinlahden Lähde)

• Target 8.6 - training programmes and social support for young unemployed people (VELO, Kunst-Stoffe)

• Target 8.9 - sustainable tourism (Vinterra, VELO)
Results (III)

- The focus on SDG 8 can be directly linked to the theme of creative mix of work, employment, and engagement.
- Further connection to the themes of precarious existence and main resources.
- ESIs as social and solidarity economy actors value inclusive forms of work, and they are creating a socially responsible culture of work which promotes solidarity and a broader notion of sustainable well-being beyond mere job creation.
Summary / Discussion

• All ESIs contribute to the realization of a number of SDGs.
• By definition they incorporate social and environmental goals, just as Agenda 2030 does on a global scale.
• Do they rely too much on the dominant model of economic growth by focusing on jobs, and by mostly depending on public funding — such as unemployment allowances and subsidized work?
Conclusion

Three policy recommendations:

1. **on a sectoral level** (e.g. cooperative sector within social and solidarity economy),
2. **on a organizational level** (e.g. stronger support for ESIs and an obligatory environmental approach for all organizations in the field of labour market and unemployment policies),
3. **on a individual level** (e.g. more individual freedom for unemployed people, concrete programs with an eco-social approach).
References (selection)


