

The European Green Deal: What's in it for community-led initiatives?

10 Theses Towards Transformative Community-Led Local Development Policies

November 2022

Main policy event 28 November: [Community-led initiatives and the European Green Deal](#)

partners of the event:



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A. Introduction

We at ECOLISE - the European network for [community-led initiatives](#) on climate and sustainability - think it is time to bring a stronger voice of [community-led initiatives](#) (CLIs) into EU policy. Together with partners, we aim to make a call for truly transformative regional and local development policies, which enable a widespread community-led response to the ecological crisis.

ECOLISE has done a lot of advocacy work in recent years – from the 2019 Status Report to the policy papers presented in 2021. We want to use this strong basis in order to position ECOLISE towards the European Green Deal – the EU's main policy to transition towards a society that remains within the planetary boundaries. We aim for a joint policy positioning with partners, to make our voices even stronger.

Our aim is to trigger conversations about the role of communities and policies/politics when it comes to transformative systemic change. The conversations will help to provide a better understanding of the potential and needs of community-led initiatives as change agents, showcasing pathways towards a regenerative society.

Through these conversations, we will try to answer the key question:

What is our shared vision of transformative community-led local development policies?

Goals:

- Create a basis for a consultation process with members, partners and policy stakeholders
- Trigger conversations ideally leading to a shared vision of transformative local development policies and collective action
- Create a basis for co-creation of policy positions in specific fields such as food systems, energy, renovation etc., where community-led initiatives can have the most impact (planned for 2023)

1. How to take part in the consultation process

ECOLISE extends the *10 theses towards transformative community-led local development policies* as an offer for conversation towards its members (and their networks), as well as towards partners (existing and future ones - be they civil society organisations or change-makers working within EU politics/institutions).

If you would like to take part in the conversation process, and maybe even become a partner* with your institution/organisation, you can do so by:

1. Read the 10 theses in this document
2. Comment on the 10 theses by inserting comments [into the Google document](#), giving your name and organisation (anonymous comments will not be taken into account). Your input is especially important regarding:
 - What is missing?
 - Can you think of good practice examples? This could be either existing projects and practices by community-led initiatives and/or transformative local development policies already in place
 - Are there scientific resources that you know of which corroborate the thesis?
 - Which concrete political demands linked to the European Green Deal do you have?
3. AND by filling in [this short survey](#) (which gives us your contact details, so we can be in touch). Here are our contact details: Nina Klein, nina.klein@ecolise.eu

The leading questions for this conversation and consultation process are highlighted in the [survey](#).

*For more information on partnerships please see this [concept note](#).

2. Timeline of events

1. Ongoing consultation process September 2022 – Spring 2023

[Consultation process](#) leading to a refined version of the 10 thesis by 28 November 2022:

- 28 September 2022: Kick-off [event](#); 5 weekly online calls in small groups) – please see the [harvesting documents](#).
- 19 October 2022: follow-up event (online) – [harvesting document](#), [recording](#).
- 8 November 2022: Policy – ECOLISE Members' Hour – [harvesting document](#).
- Ongoing consultation until spring 2023 (planned: validation during the ECOLISE General Assembly, TBC)

You can find a summary of the inputs gathered during the first consultation phase (28 Sept – 28 Nov 2022) [here](#).

2. ECOLISE's main policy stakeholder event

Main [stakeholder event](#) 28 November 2022, 2:30 - 5:30 pm CET online, co-hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and partners. [Here](#) is a harvesting document of the event, recording and slides can be found [here](#).

3. Goals of the 10 theses

- To trigger conversations between ECOLISE members, partners and policy stakeholders
- To be used as the starting point for further co-creation in policy positioning, i.e. positioning of ECOLISE members & partners with a specific focus and with a systemic/holistic approach (climate change and biodiversity as transversal topics). This could be:
 - in specific policy fields of the European Green Deal in 2023-2024 (such as food and energy systems, circular economy/circularity, etc.)
 - on specific parts of the 10 theses (bioregional approach, localisation, diverse economies, etc.) → TBD at the start of the co-creation phase beginning of 2023
- To form the basis for an advocacy campaign (2023 - 2024)

Use cases for the 10 theses:

- For community-led initiatives/local action groups (LAGs) as a manual for triggering conversations with policy stakeholders to find a shared vision
- For EU policy stakeholders in the form of concrete policy recommendations

4. Format of the 10 theses

Format for the 10 theses overall: Spelling out suggestions for a shared vision of **transformative community-led local development policies** - by focussing on each of the concepts in 1 - 3 theses each:

What is transformation?

Why collective?

Why local?

Why development?

Why policy?

Format for each of the 10 theses:

- Question & background explanation of the problem
- Thesis = solutions offered by community-led initiatives (CLIs)
- Link to European Green Deal (EGD)
- Concrete political demand or call (focus on EU level: transformative local development policies)

- Good practice examples (to be delivered throughout 2023)
- Similar demands by partners whom we support
- Links to scientific works/books

Length of the final outcome of the 10 theses:

- Short version (10 theses, 2-3 pages)
- Full version (10 theses extended, with scientific/experimental background, 20-25 pages)
- Format: layout PDF with visuals, 10 theses also in social media format

Style: simple language, science-based and nourished by experience; ideally using creative language/ artistically inspired.

B. 10 theses towards transformative community-led local development policies

1. Why do we need transformative change with communities at the heart?

The challenge:

Transformation is a word often used but rarely understood and thus can be prone to greenwashing. The IPCC's [Sixth Assessment Report](#) stresses the need for fundamental external and internal transformation, including changes to policies and legislation but also to culture, values, and attitudes. The report [defines](#) transformative change as "a system-wide change that requires more than technological change through consideration of social and economic factors that, with technology, can bring about rapid change at scale." Evidence is growing for collective action at community scale as a key ingredient of the rapid and wide-scale socio-ecological transformation that is so urgently needed.

The proposition: *How community-led initiatives can bring transformative change*

Collective action at community scale is rooted in deep cultural change and the emergence of new ecologically-informed worldviews. This implies social and cultural innovation - putting the role of communities at the heart of transformative change (see also theses 4, 5 and 6): Many community-led initiatives (CLIs) such as the Transition movement and ecovillages, together with approaches such as permaculture, have been living transformative change for decades, showing that a good life within planetary boundaries is possible¹.

Holistically-oriented processes of socio-ecological innovation in fields such as regenerative food systems, collective renewable energy, housing, transport and many others are enabling a high quality of life with ecological and carbon footprints that are far lower than national averages² (Figure 1). A growing body of evidence attests to the critical role and mainstreaming potential of existing niches of socio-ecological innovation and practice to help bring about the necessary systemic transformation of society as a whole³. CLIs bring something crucial - a systemic view of the planetary crisis, which sees the interconnectedness of different symptoms such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and their root causes in an extractive economy (see thesis 2). This crisis can be viewed as a "game-changer": a shift in systemic conditions that makes the type of transformative change advocated

for and practised by CLIs⁴ more visible and pressing, given the increasing likelihood and dangerous ramifications of widespread ecological and social collapse (Figure 2).

Domain	Activity	Service/product provided
Transport	Transportation of goods	Sustainable transport of lightweight goods
	Provision of transport to people	Sustainable personal transport
Food	Provision of food	Provision of locally-grown organic produce
	Provision of infrastructure for local food markets	Provision of locally-grown organic produce
	Redistribution of food	Saving food from businesses and avoiding food waste at home
	Provision of meals	Provision of vegetarian and/or vegan meals
Goods and materials	Repairing, reusing, upcycling	Repair, reuse or upcycle of goods and materials
	Recycling	Recycling of materials
Energy	Provision of heat	Provision of heat from more sustainable energy sources
	Provision of electricity	Provision of electricity from more sustainable energy sources

Figure 1: Emission reduction potential of CLIs: A selection of activities of community-based initiatives reported in the TESS FP7 Project.

Source: Penha-Lopes, G. & T. Henfrey, 2019. [Reshaping the Future: how local communities are catalysing social, economic and ecological transformation in Europe](#). The first Status Report on Community-led Action on Sustainability and Climate Change in Europe. Brussels: ECOLISE. Adapted from data reported in Landholm, D.M., Holsten, A., Martellozzo, F., Reusser, D.E., Kropp, J.P., 2019. Climate change mitigation potential of community-based initiatives in Europe. *Regional Environmental Change* 19, 927–938. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-018-1428-1>

Link to the European Green Deal

The European Green Deal (EGD) stands for a potential paradigm shift at European policy making levels, indicating that the time is ripe for fruitful connections between pioneering CLIs and forward-thinking civil servants and policy makers. The [systemic ambition](#) of the EGD is palpable especially in policy packages which stand for binding targets in legislation such as the [EU Climate Law](#) and the proposed [EU Nature Restoration Law](#), but also overall strategic approaches such as [Farm to Fork](#) or the [circular economy action plan](#).

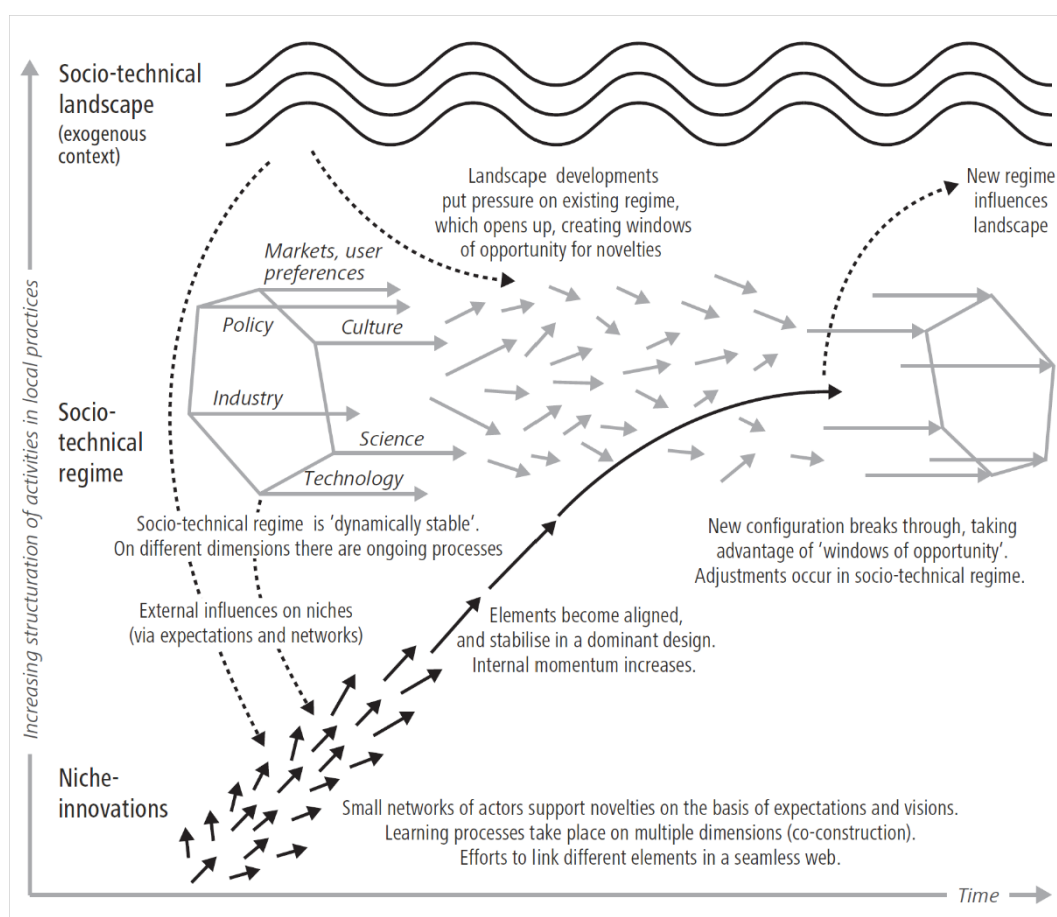


Figure 2: A dynamic multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions, indicating potential roles of CLIs as sources of niche innovations. Source: Geels, F.W., Schot, J., 2007. Typology of sociotechnical transition pathways. *Research Policy* 36, 399–417. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2007.01.003>

Policy recommendations

We call for community-led initiatives to be recognised as key actors within the European Green Deal and to be heard and strengthened in order to mainstream community-led transformative change within European societies.

We call for:

- A structured stakeholder dialogue to be established between the EU and community-led initiatives, with a focus on community-led transformation and taking the European Green Deal to the local level.
- Obligatory inclusion of CLIs within consultation bodies at all levels of policy-making and funding, in accordance with the partnership principle¹.

¹ The EU Partnership principle means that EU funds under shared management need to include partners in all stages of funding, also from civil society organisations (CSOs). The Common Provision Regulation (CPR) makes it compulsory for each ESI Fund programme to organise a partnership at all

- Communication from the EU acknowledging the relevance of collective citizen action in the needed systemic change, and the role of CLIs in this.
- A new integrated EU policy on community-led transformation and resilience, integrating and updating existing EU local development funding instruments, such as Community-Led Local Development (LEADER/CLLD), and also including horizontal measures to ensure that community-led approaches are mainstreamed across other relevant policy areas (e.g., climate, energy, food, mobility, healthcare).

Good practice examples

- [Solutions Library](#) by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)
- [Tools for the Future](#)
- [52 Climate Actions](#) (Permaculture Association of Britain)
- [Permaculture Knowledge Base](#)
- [Communities for Future Knowledge Commons](#)
- [Seeds of Good Anthropocene](#)
- [TRANSIT case studies database](#)

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3. Pel, B., Haxeltine, A., Avelino, F., Dumitru, A., Kemp, R., Bauler, T., Kunze, I., Dorland, J., Wittmayer, J., Jørgensen, M.S., 2020. Towards a theory of transformative social innovation: A relational framework and 12 propositions. *Research Policy* 49, 104080. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2020.104080>

programming stages and at all levels. A European Code of Conduct on Partnership (CoC) has been set up to support Member States to ensure that all partners are involved at all stages in the implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmePlease [see here](#) for more information

4. Loorbach, D., Avelino, F., Haxeltine, A., Wittmayer, J.M., O’Riordan, T., Weaver, P., Kemp, R., 2016. The economic crisis as a game changer? Exploring the role of social construction in sustainability transitions. *Ecology and Society* 21. <https://doi.org/10.5751/es-08761-210415>

2. Why are changed human-nature relationships the basis for transformative change?

The challenge

A basic precondition to transformative change is a recognition that we as humans are not separate from nature, but part of it, and that a healthy web of life – the biosphere - is the basis for all human activities. This demands a paradigm shift in our culture and values, so that instead of disregarding the Earth's carrying capacity, we recognize that a healthy planet is a prerequisite for a good life for all humans. This means living within planetary boundaries and acknowledging that protecting and restoring nature is the same as protecting human societies.

An example of this is the "[wedding cake](#)" representation of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by Jan Rockström and Pavan Sukhdev of the Stockholm Resilience Centre (see Figure 3 below). It illustrates how societal and economic health is reliant upon the biosphere. Nature is also a necessary basis for transformative local development policies capable of successfully delivering the SDGs. Failing to recognise that planetary health is a precondition for all human activities leads to artificial trade-offs and false dichotomies between ecological and social goals. This, in turn, distracts from the root causes of the current crisis in the global extractive economic system (see below).

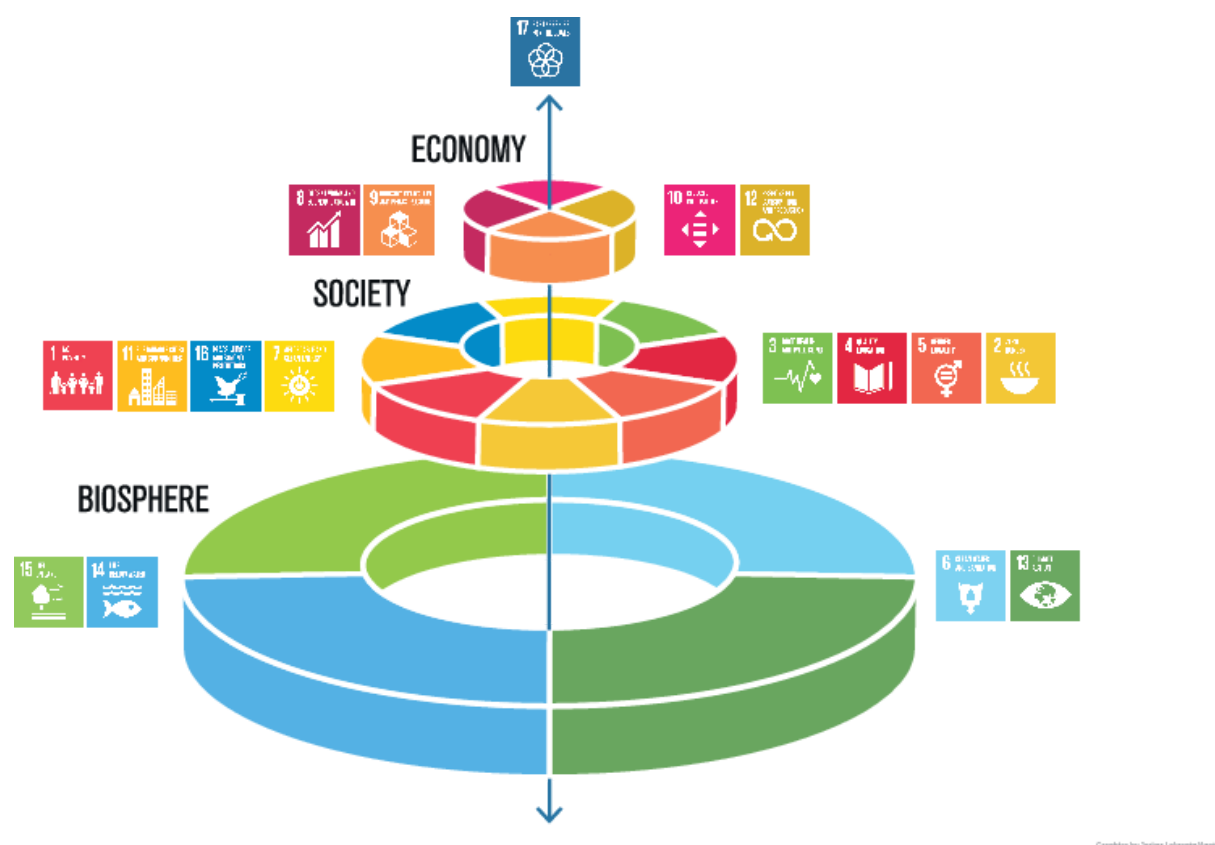


Figure 3: The “SDGs wedding cake” represents economies and societies as embedded within the biosphere. Credit: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University ([CC BY-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/))

The proposition: How CLIs can transform human-nature relationships

CLIs as laboratories for transformative change express and enact holistic views of sustainability and generate social, cultural and economic benefits, including a significant contribution towards the SDGs¹. Many CLIs see themselves as stewards of the Earth, caring for, living and working with nature². Tools such as permaculture, regenerative design³ and transition design⁴ emphasise local knowledge and practices rooted in the ecological, social and cultural specificities of place. The resulting actions both prefigure and go far beyond the important and fast-growing field of nature-based solutions⁵. An example of a systemic approach to protecting nature includes giving nature legal rights, and hence a voice in legal and political systems⁶.

Link to the European Green Deal

The EGD acknowledges the prioritisation of a healthy biosphere by aiming for a “good life within planetary boundaries”, and a [Nature Restoration Law](#) within the

framework of its [Biodiversity Strategy](#). The EGD calls for nature to be prioritised across all policy fields, which still needs to be followed up with strong practical implementation.

The proposed [EU Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law](#) is currently under discussion between the Council and the European Parliament. It is globally one of the most ambitious policy packages, but it does not include ecocide as a criminal offence internationally, limiting the scope of the directive to EU member states.

Initiatives such as the [New European Bauhaus](#) (which brings the role of culture, design and aesthetics in transforming architecture and buildings to the fore) or the [EU Climate Pact](#) (which aims to involve citizens in the European Green Deal) acknowledge the need for shifting mindsets and worldviews, yet lack adequate budgets and strategies.

The [Rural Pact](#) acknowledges a wider view of sustainable development, in which rural areas can become flourishing sources of nature. However, rural development policies and funding are still part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which prioritises agricultural competition and competitiveness over everything else. Although the CAP constitutes the [biggest expense](#) of the EU budget, it fails to contribute to climate goals, as shown in a recent [OECD report](#), and does not align with the European Green Deal overall, as [leading NGOs](#) have pointed out. Biodiversity restoration and protection are not yet central aspects of the [Rural Pact](#) and the [EU's long term rural strategy](#). For example, the initiative for ["rural proofing"](#) all legislation in view of its potential impact on rural areas does not yet include the impact of all legislation on local natural wealth/biodiversity.

The overall narrative of the European Green Deal calls to "care" for nature, yet its implementation mechanisms, such as via the EU Climate Pact, still separate different symptoms of the planetary crisis, i.e. a focus on the climate crisis rather than a holistic view of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as interconnected symptoms of the planetary crisis.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- The prioritisation of nature protection and restoration across all EU, national and local policies, including in funding, implementation, mapping,

monitoring and reinforcement. We support the European Commission's initiative for a [Nature Restoration Law](#) and we demand strong binding implementation guidelines on local/bioregional levels, including rural proofing and a vision of local communities as stewards of the Earth.

- “Prioritisation” of nature means going far beyond the “[do no harm](#)” and the “[polluter pays](#)” principles. We argue that the prioritisation of nature means to aim for “nature positive⁷” policies that protect and restore nature, acknowledge the co-benefits of a healthy biosphere for human life, give nature legal rights and [acknowledge ecocide as a criminal offence](#) internationally. This holistic approach includes prioritising transformative socio-ecological innovation including nature-based solutions (see thesis 6).
- The EU to adopt a systemic approach to valuing nature, taking into account non-economic values and following the latest [IPBES Values Assessment](#). A systemic approach includes acknowledging the co-evolution of humans and their natural environment, the interdependence of cultural and biological diversity, and adopting a narrative of planetary health, which includes the wellbeing of ALL humans and the biosphere. Initiatives such as the [New European Bauhaus](#) should be extended to include substantial funding and to support new narratives arising from an alliance between the cultural and creative sectors, together with grassroots initiatives. Using transformative socio-ecological innovation such as community-based design (see theses 5 and 6), such alliances can deliver high impact to society, e.g. through a European festival of socio-ecological transformative innovation.
- Bioregional communities to be strengthened in their role as stewards of the land, which also entails facilitating access to land in the form of commons, strengthening the authority of communities and local authorities over land-use and land-use change, and fighting land grabbing (e.g. by large investment funds). A bioregional approach includes focussing on the links between urban and rural areas, taking into account natural and biocultural characteristics. For example, rural development must be seen not from the perspective of agriculture only, as it is currently the case. Rather, rural development must encompass a holistic approach to sustainability, putting nature first, as rural areas [hold most](#) of Europe’s natural wealth. A holistic approach to land use and management needs to be adopted, which goes beyond the current dichotomies of land saving vs. land sharing and argues for biodiversity-rich places and planetary health for all (humans and ecosystems), in all functional areas/bioregions - not only in rural areas but also within highly built-up urban spaces.

- The [digital transformation](#) as the second main pillar of EU policies (next to the EGD) must serve a holistic notion of sustainability (see also thesis 8) in order to avoid trade-offs between technology & digitalisation and the environment/ biodiversity. The precautionary principle needs to be strengthened (for example, in the introduction of 5G and drones in the [Rural Pact Action Plan](#), as mentioned in the annex on “[connected rural areas](#)”).

Good practice examples

- Nature-based solutions such as [permaculture](#)
- [Network Nature](#) (EU funded project, ICLEI, on nature based solutions)
- “[Working with nature](#)” (ECOLISE Policy Pathways 2021)
- [Tamera Ecovillage](#) (Portugal): [Defend the Sacred](#) (Tamera): Global Alliance for Sacred Activism
- [Veerhuis](#) (Netherlands)
- [Ecovillage Schloss Tempelhof](#) and their [Grund-Stiftung](#) initiative
- [Rewilding Europe](#)
- [Findhorn Ecovillage](#) (UK) (alive, compassionate relationship to nature beings) and their [Trees for Life](#) initiative to reforest the Caledonian Highlands.
- Joanna Macy: [The Council Of All Beings](#)
- Amazon (biocultural diversity/stewardship): “[The Amazon We Want](#)”
- [Ecosystem Restoration Camps](#) doing very practical land regeneration and relating to nature.

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<https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/rq6z2>

Similar demands by partners and other organisations

UNEP - Making Peace with Nature:

<https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

International Resource Panel (UN): IRP (2021). Building Biodiversity: The Natural Resource Management Approach. Potočník, J., Teixeira, I. An opinion piece of the International Resource Panel Co-Chairs.

[Stop ecocide foundation](#)

Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E): [Offsetting position](#) (October 2022)

3. Why is it important to acknowledge extractive economic systems - and the prioritisation of growth and GDP - as the root cause of the planetary crisis?

The challenge

The root cause of the planetary crisis is a deeply embedded cultural view that there are no limits to resources, be they natural or human, and that endless economic growth is possible and desirable. This view has its roots in the assumption that everything is separated (humans from each other and from their natural environment - see thesis 2) and finds its expression in many Western paradigms such as colonialism, patriarchy and sexism, and industrialism. This worldview is now embodied in an extractive economic system that values money over life, and is based on the exploitation of nature and humans alike. The scientifically unfounded focus on economic growth - and the current focus on one metric, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the central focus of economic policy - in mainstream Western societies is a reflection of this culture. The "[great acceleration](#)" of human activities and with it the destruction of the human environment (climate/nature) since the 1950s, but especially since the 1990s, testifies to the disastrous effects of a neoliberal ideology that puts financial markets and profits over people and the planet and causes rising social inequality for current and future generations.

The proposition: *Move from extractive economies to diverse wellbeing economies*

Many CLIs were founded in opposition to extractive economies, also recognising their shortcomings in providing a sense of meaning¹. The systemic analyses and holistic perspectives that inform the action of many CLIs support the emergence of diverse economic alternatives that prioritise ecological and social goals². These alternatives employ diverse methods to make social capital, and to a lesser degree natural capital, the major source of human welfare, independent of access to financial capital³. Rather than attempting to decouple economic growth from the depletion of natural resources, which all evidence suggests is impossible⁴, CLIs instead decouple wellbeing from economic growth as the basis for regenerative economies, in which human and ecological flourishing are mutually interdependent⁵. Examples of such alternative economies are already being developed, for example in wellbeing, solidarity, circular, common good and care economies of a human scale within planetary boundaries (see the good practice examples below).

In this way, many CLIs are dedicated to the relocalisation of economic activity, cultivating natural, social, cultural and other forms of capital and extending access to public goods and services, often in the form of commons, in an equitable and just manner while also nurturing the biosphere.

Link to the European Green Deal

The EGD's position on the root cause of the planetary crisis is ambivalent. On the one hand, it explicitly acknowledges extractive economic systems as the root cause of the planetary crisis (cf. [EGD communication, p. 7](#)) and has a potentially systemic ambition, referencing the ["limits to growth"](#) (as the 2020 report ["A system change compass"](#) by Systemiq and the Club of Rome points out). On the other hand, it states that green growth is possible and calls itself the "new industrial agenda". Yet, as the [European Environmental Agency states](#), "it is unlikely that a long-lasting, absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental pressures and impacts can be achieved at the global scale; therefore, societies need to rethink what is meant by growth and progress and their meaning for global sustainability." The [Beyond GDP](#) initiative of the European Commission shows an ongoing search for alternative indicators, and increased monitoring efforts (e.g. for EU progress towards the 2030 Agenda and SDGs), yet without legal ramifications. The [8th Environment Action Programme](#) published by the EU in July 2022 puts forward, for the first time, concrete indicators for a wellbeing economy.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- The abandonment of the economic growth ideology in policies and funding programmes, and instead a focus on concepts which are conducive to a better quality of life for humans and non-humans. These alternatives already exist, and need to be scaled and prioritised. Examples include the wellbeing economy, care economy, economy for the common good, solidarity economy and planetary health which includes a focus on sufficiency and sobriety (see also the [glossary](#) for an explanation of these concepts).
- A change of indicators and metrics from GDP as the current main political measure of "success" to defining and implementing complementary measures of wellbeing and planetary health as primary metrics. In order to move beyond GDP, governments need to establish a general welfare perspective in their budgeting and accountability systems.

- Public interest to be prioritised over private interest, policies to incentivise sustainable production, further measures to help enterprises integrate sustainability, and stricter regulation of unsustainable practices.
- CLIs to be recognised by EU policymakers as examples of what multiple versions of a good life within planetary boundaries can look like, offering diverse and localised economies.
- The EGD overall to adopt a strong narrative around wellbeing, planetary health and the good life for all, supporting diverse and nature-positive socio-ecological economies.
- Support for collective, community-led action in general, and the corresponding legal frameworks.

Good practice examples

- [REconomy](#) (Transition Network UK project)
- [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#)
- [Economy for the Common Good](#)
- [Doughnut Economy Action Lab](#) (e.g. "[Brussels Donut](#)")
- [Next Economy Lab](#) (Germany)
- [Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie](#) (Germany, association)
- [Social Solidarity Economy](#) (RIPESS)
- Energy cooperatives (e.g. [REScoop](#))
- Other concrete projects by ECOLISE members with a focus on diverse economies, such as local currencies, food systems including Community supported agriculture (CSA) such as the "Liège Food Belt" ([Ceinture Aliment Terre Liégeoise](#)), cooperatively owned banks, [Local Purchase Groups](#) (IT), time banks....)
- [8 forms of Capital of Permaculture](#)
- [Research & Degrowth](#) (academic collective)
- ECOLISE policy pathway 2021 on [Economic diversity](#)

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

- [Degrowth](#) movements
- [EESC](#) "Beyond growth"
- RIPESS
- [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#): (WEA): [From competition to collaboration](#); *The Commons briefing* (2021)
- Women's Budget Group & Women's Environmental Network (UK) (2022): [Policy Briefing](#): Sustainable lifestyle changes for a green and caring economy
- [Community Economies Collective](#)
- [Planetary Health Alliance](#)

4. Why is collective action led by communities so important?

The challenge

Hyper-individualisation has become one characteristic of mainstream extractive economic systems (see also theses 3 and 5), along with targeting *individual lifestyles* as a strategy of deflection from systemic issues on the part of governments and corporations alike. As climatologist Michael E. Mann [points out](#), the concept of the individual “carbon footprint” was invented by the oil company BP in order to divert attention from structural challenges such as the vested interests of fossil fuel industries and the responsibilities of rich countries and wealthy individuals (see also Oxfam's [report on “carbon inequality”](#)).

While the latest [IPCC report](#) stresses the need for radical lifestyle changes in order to keep climate change at bay, it also states that the crucial prerequisite for these individual lifestyle changes is that they need to be *embedded in systemic change* and ultimately lead to *collective social change* going beyond the individual. “Having the right policies, infrastructure and technology in place to enable changes to our lifestyles and behaviour can result in a 40-70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This offers significant untapped potential,” [said IPCC Working Group III Co-Chair Priyadarshi Shukla](#). “The evidence also shows that these lifestyle changes can improve our health and wellbeing.”

This approach is systemic, as it does not say “either or” (either we need individual action or systemic change); it says “and and”; we need both. Policies need to create pathways for structural, systemic change, which in turn facilitates radical lifestyle change, initiating a virtuous circle towards transformative change. Putting concrete collective solutions in place locally, by communities, is part of structural, systemic change, because of the nature of the planetary crisis as a “[wicked problem](#)” that can only be tackled together, collectively. Think of the energy system, which we cannot influence easily as individuals. In order for such transformative policies to exist, people need to demand systemic change and assume their role as eco-citizens, advocating for change and the right policies, infrastructure and technologies.

The proposition: *Through collective action, communities can contribute to system change*

The predominant policy emphasis on behaviour and lifestyle changes on the part of individuals ignores that these changes do not arise in isolation, but in the social context of the different kinds of communities in which people operate¹. The potential for community action as an enabling context for more sustainable lifestyles

is activated when people self-organise, at local levels, as part of initiatives that empower them to work towards meaningful change². As such initiatives develop and mature, they can become a potent source for deeper structural change. They activate new forms of social identity, collective learning, knowledge creation and political engagement that create conditions for new and more powerful forms of collective action³. Collective and individual actions are thus strongly interconnected, and can create a virtuous circle of transformative social change⁴.

To illustrate this point, lifestyle and social changes depend on inspiration from others, in shifting what is socially acceptable and desirable, within a strong social fabric. Culture (which includes technology and also political action) is the reason why humans have become so “successful” in evolutionary terms: Learning and education are examples of how we collectively shape our culture, creating and exchanging knowledge and shaping social norms, now and for future generations. Many CLIs are very active in the field of transformative learning and education, as well as innovative approaches to research such as participatory action research (see also thesis 6).

Changing the system implies not only putting into place concrete solutions with collective action, as CLIs do by definition, but also political action, i.e. advocating for political systemic and structural change.

Healthy networks and resilient communities are a basic prerequisite for any form of collective action, and the foundation of community resilience is the strengthening of social and socio-ecological ties⁵. The positive impact of this on health and wellbeing is often one of the main motivations for communities to act together for a better life within planetary boundaries, creating a virtuous circle, by mainstreaming good practices and knowledge transfer.

Link to the European Green Deal

There is no blueprint or plan on how to localise the EGD, and how to strengthen collective action to do so. Some of the rare touchpoints between European policy and collective action at local levels are existing methods and frameworks such as the EU’s [LEADER/Community-Led Local Development \(CLLD\)](#), which channels EU funding to local levels. Its guiding principles include the need for bottom-up, decentralised, multi-sectoral and place-based collective action and the method has a large reach of 3000+ local action groups within the EU. EU initiatives such as the [Rural Pact](#) and the [European Climate Pact](#) acknowledge the need to reach out to citizens in order to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal, but they are yet to integrate the scope for collective and political citizen action and activism.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- The EU to acknowledge collective action and place-based autonomy in initiatives such as the [EU Rural Pact](#) and the [EU Climate Pact](#) as the basis for transformative change, strengthening the political capacities of communities by supporting learning, skill development, translocal exchanges and advocacy.
- Deliberative, participative democratic practices need to be included in policies and funding mechanisms at all levels, in order to strengthen the impact of advocacy by CLIs (see also thesis 9).
- Existing EU methods and frameworks which connect EU and local levels with collective action need to be strengthened. For example, the [LEADER/CLLD](#) approaches need to prioritise ecology and culture (community-building, facilitation, peer-to-peer learning, capacity building etc.) in order to deliver transformative local/bioregional development plans. The LEADER/CLLD approach could be mainstreamed across all EU funding programmes, so that community-led local development and its bottom-up principles are a requirement for all member states when receiving EU funds, and can be applied in all areas (rural & urban/bioregional).
- Localising the European Green Deal demands an adequate share of the EU budget dedicated to reinforcing collective community action locally, with a minimum of 8% of the overall EU budget dedicated to sustainable community-led local development following LEADER/CLLD principles, in line with the [ELARD Halmstadt Declaration](#).

Good practice examples

- [ECOLISE wiki/ research](#)
- [Gaia Education](#)
- [Centre for Alternative Technology \(CAT\)](#) (Wales, UK)
- Energy cooperatives (e.g. ReSCOOP)
- Short circuit food systems (IT)
- [Community Climate Coaches](#)

- [Municipalities in Transition](#) (Transition Network)
- [Ecovillage Transition in Action](#)

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

OXFAM : Report: Carbon inequality in 2030 ([policy position paper 2021](#))

ELARD: [Halmstadt Declaration](#)

EESC: [Sustainable development](#)

5. Which values and regenerative cultures do CLIs bring to transformative change?

The challenge

Extractive economic systems are the root cause of the planetary crisis (see thesis 3). These systems both reflect and promote mindsets and extrinsic values such as hyper-individualism, materialism, competition and consumerism. Often, the politically proposed solutions to crises - such as the COVID pandemic - are increased consumption and production, and their “success” is measured by an increase in GDP. The underlying worldview is based on a view of humans as “*Homo oeconomicus*”, whose self-centred individualistic values will ultimately serve the common good. In short: the current vision being promoted by mainstream actors of being a good citizen and leading a “good life” is to work and consume.

In contrast, an increasing body of evidence highlights that sustainability is a normative concept, and that values and worldviews (culture/mindsets) play a decisive role in achieving (or failing to achieve) transformative change¹. For example, in July 2022 the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [stated](#) that the “way nature is valued in political and economic decisions is both a key driver of the global biodiversity crisis and a vital opportunity to address it”. The IPBES Values Assessment finds that there are a number of deeply held values that can be aligned with sustainability, emphasising values like unity, responsibility, stewardship and justice, both towards other people and towards nature. This supports the argument that there is an urgent need to support a plurality of non-economic values, including relational and transcendental values, in political and economic decisions².

The proposition: *Communities are laboratories for regenerative cultures*

CLIs can be seen as “laboratories” for regenerative cultures. A regenerative culture is, as [Daniel Christian Wahl](#) puts it, a culture that is “consciously building the capacity of everybody in a particular place to respond and change and accept transformation as something that life just ‘does’”. [Regenerative cultures](#) are based on a systemic approach that recognises that our cultures - our way of thinking and feeling, worldviews, shared understandings, values, structures of meaning and all the other factors that influence discourse and action - are the foundations of the material systems in which we live. Our inner life, including our values, is reflected in our external environments, including political and socio-technological systems, landscapes and urban environments, and the ways we think about and act towards

sustainability³. Systems thinking involves recognising that everything is interconnected, that one's own perspective depends on one's place in the socio-ecological system, and involves paying attention to the role of structural power. This means systemic thinking puts cooperation, justice, equality, equity in the focus: for example the interconnections between the European way of life and the Global South⁴.

Principles of systems thinking are part of regenerative cultures in that they can be applied to any activity such as governance (e.g. multi-level, multi-stakeholder, holacracy, sociocracy - see also the [glossary](#)), but also to different fields of life such as regenerative agriculture, renewable and cooperative energy systems etc. Community-led initiatives such as [permaculture](#) groups, ecovillages and Transition towns have created principles, methods, frameworks and processes that are practical expressions of these systemic perspectives (see also thesis 6). One example is the permaculture approach that focuses on *care* for the soil as a guiding principle and value. In other words, nourishing life by creating the right contextual conditions, with a focus on the process and not only on specific outcomes. The relevance of values and worldviews is also expressed in the Transition movement's concept of "[Inner Transition](#)": tending to inner landscapes is seen as a prerequisite for outer transition (action)⁵.

Nurturing relationships and cooperation - between humans, but also between humans and their environment - is a value in itself. Strong, healthy socio-ecological relationships are key to facing the planetary crisis. This approach values abundance over scarcity and shines a light on the fact that real values are currently not part of the economic market system, which operates on scarcity. Human-nature relationships grow if "used" or rather: if nurtured, they create virtuous circles ("the more, the more"), as do trust, reciprocity, respect, love, imagination, learning, curiosity, openness, vitality, collaboration, tolerance, and more.

Link to the European Green Deal

The EGD has started to acknowledge the need for values, culture and in general a new inspiring narrative. This is exemplified in initiatives such as the [NextGeneration/Recovery Plan for Europe](#) "Build back better", which sees the Covid pandemic as a call to a new start to transform the system. The [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative was set up in order to connect culture and the creative sectors with the planned [Renovation Wave](#) (with a current focus on design and architecture/urban planning), but [holds the potential](#) to become an interface between culture and the EGD in general. The European Commission's ongoing search for a strong "narrative" and values is also embodied in its focus on a [European way of life](#).

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- Non-economic values that nurture pro-environmental behaviour and Earth stewardship to be incorporated into political and economic decision making, such as unity, cooperation, responsibility, earth stewardship and justice, towards both people and nature.
- Greater participation and interaction of EU citizens in civic life and with nature. Strengthen policies that recognise the need for and support a partial shift from economic activity (working time) to civic activity (e.g. participation in CLIs or participative democracy) and cultural activity (with greater access to nature, but also culture - arts, literature, sport etc.).
- Acknowledgement of the role of culture and values in achieving transformative change in general, and in particular in initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus and the European Climate Pact.

Good practice examples

- [ECOLISE Wiki: Living values](#)
- [Regenerative Cultures](#) (ECOLISE policy pathways 2021)
- [Cultural Emergence](#) (permaculture)
- [Worldview aspect in the Global Ecovillage Mandala](#) (a holistic approach to sustainability)
- [Transition Network values and principles](#)
- [Inner transition](#) (Transition Network)
- [Human permaculture](#)
- [Common Cause](#) Foundation: Values and Frames

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

International Labor Organization (ILO): [Decent work for all](#)

6. Why does repairing the feedback loops of our systems entail massive, rapid and scaled social and cultural innovation?

The challenge

The planetary crisis can be seen as an outcome of broken feedback loops between our human systems, and also between human systems and the biosphere, with our human systems being decoupled from natural systems. For example, global supply chains lack adequate mechanisms to track the social and environmental impacts of provisioning and consumption as they reduce the direct relationships between producers and consumers, who are often highly geographically distant from each other. Moreover, a disconnection between people and nature (see thesis 2) lessens feedback loops between human systems and the surrounding natural world.

There is a need to reconnect the feedback loops that make visible the social and ecological impacts of production and consumption. This further implies redefining the meaning of innovation to emphasise its socio-ecological and transformative aspects. The potential of such innovation is highlighted in the findings of the EU-funded [TRANSIT](#) research project on transformative social innovation, which is understood as “[changing social relations, involving new ways of knowing, doing, organising and framing](#)” in order to challenge, alter, or replace dominant institutions in a specific context¹.

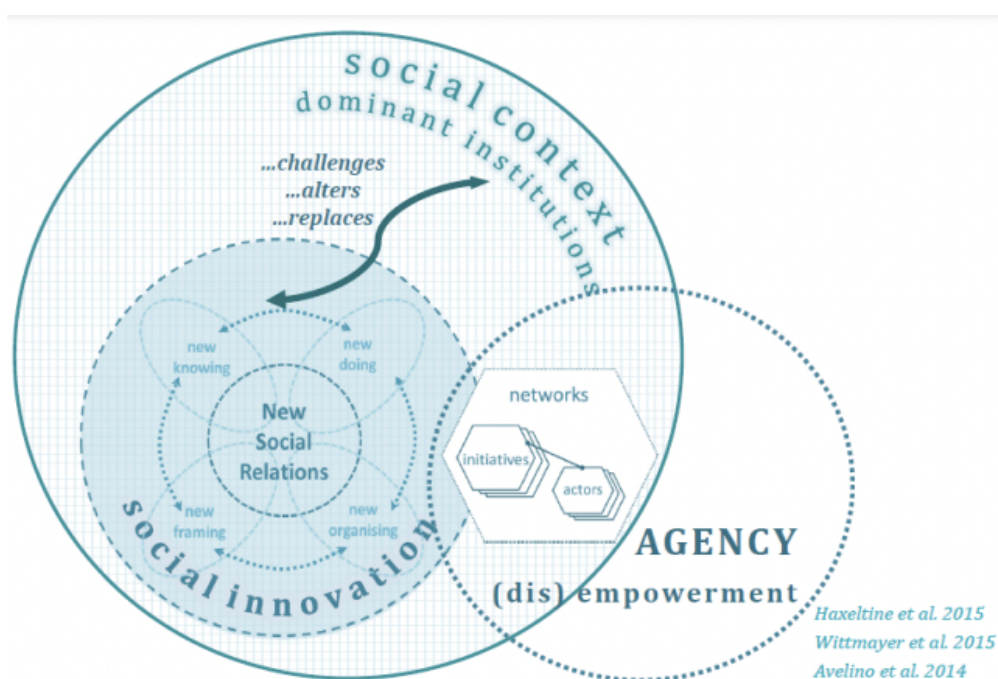


Figure 4: Transformative social innovation (TSI): new ways of knowing, doing, organising and framing. Source: TRANSIT (EU FP7 grant agreement no. 613169) <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/>.

Example: Current policies and markets pursue a focus on technological innovations that feed markets and often promote efficiency gains as the solution to the planetary crisis, aiming to decouple resource use and growth (see also thesis 3). Technological solutions are favoured over socio-ecological innovations, because the latter do not have any monetary value (yet) in market systems. The externalities (= negative collectivised impacts) of technological innovation on humans and nature tend to be overlooked (for example, rare earth elements used in electric car batteries). Without radical social change, the efficiency gains of technological solutions tend to be “eaten” by increased consumerism and resource use (known as the rebound effect). This is only one reason why innovation needs to be understood holistically as socio-ecological innovation (which includes technology, but does not prioritise it), supporting cultural changes such as a focus on sobriety and sufficiency, acknowledging the planetary boundaries and thus supporting technological efficiency gains without increasing resource use.

The proposition: Through learning and practice, community-led initiatives promote transformative social-ecological innovation

As instances of transformative social innovation, CLIs can be seen as laboratories of socio-ecological experimentation, dedicated to nurturing nature-human connections. They do not ignore the important role of technological solutions, but locate them within broader narratives of change, challenging dominant policy narratives that frame innovation as a means to further economic growth, and hence reinforce the root causes of the current crisis².

At the heart of the innovation processes undertaken by CLIs are ongoing processes of action learning, which range from highly informal, spontaneous, improvised and experimental to structured, organised and ongoing programmes of education and research³. Such learning increasingly takes place in partnership with universities and research institutions and professional researchers, leading to new co-creative partnerships based on defining common research agendas and goals, along with methodological innovation that integrates transformative learning approaches developed within CLIs⁴.

Social innovation is highly dependent on what is usually called (and undervalued) “soft skills”, and socio-ecological innovation must include skills such as communication (e.g. non-violent communication) and inner transition with a focus on tending to one's “inner landscape” as a prerequisite for outward action. Social-practice oriented innovations such as the sharing of little-used objects, collective action in energy cooperatives, repair cafés and mutual aid, make a more

collective, less individualistic life desirable and feasible. CLIs are particularly well placed to carry out education and training through small-scale practice. While state or corporate actors could be suspected by citizens of interference, CLIs have a legitimacy that allows them to communicate as equals with individuals.

Link to the European Green Deal

Innovation is an integral part of the European Green Deal, as the European innovation ecosystem shows. Examples include the [European Institute for Innovation](#) and its Knowledge and Innovation Community on Climate ([EIT Climate KIC](#)), which brings together education, business and politics. Another example is the EU's extensive funding for research and innovation within the funding programme [Horizon Europe - which includes so called "missions"](#) on EGD-relevant topics such as adaptation to climate change, soil health and food, and climate neutral cities.

Although there is growing awareness that technological solutions are only one piece of the puzzle, they are still prioritised, with social, cultural and socio-ecological innovations generally underfunded and undervalued. A new cluster on ["Culture and Creativity"](#) within Horizon Europe is a first start to take cultural innovation more into account, yet social innovation is not yet a focus.

The [Eco-innovation](#) initiative is connected to the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#), offering potentially transformative solutions, yet does not take into account social innovation. It includes a [focus on green skills](#), acknowledging the need for the massive reskilling of people.

The [smart village concept](#) implies the participation of local people in improving their economic, social or environmental conditions, as well as cooperation with other communities, social innovation and the development of smart village strategies. This concept is part of the [Rural Action Plan](#) and includes a strong focus on digitalisation (e.g. 5G), and a much smaller focus on social innovation.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- Public support for the creation and mainstreaming of niches for experimentation for socio-ecological innovation in the form of CLIs, e.g. in funding programmes such as Horizon Europe as well as in initiatives such as the [smart village concept](#) and the [Rural Action Plan](#).

- EGD policies to acknowledge the need for continuous learning, re- and up-skilling of all age groups, including new forms of blended transformative learning. The right to learn and exchange (green skills, education, transformative learning) to apply to all age groups, stressing the relevance of integrating local and experiential knowledge (e.g. in regenerative agriculture and permaculture), alongside academic knowledge.
- Innovation programmes such as the EU's [Eco-innovation](#) or the [smart village concept](#) to prioritise socio-ecological innovation over “tech” innovation. Digitalisation and technology should work in service of human-nature relationships, and technology should be [human-scale](#) (e.g. ethical tech, the right to an analogue lifestyle, frugal innovation, nature-based solutions etc.).
- integrate and mainstream a funding and policy focus on socio-ecological innovation as learning, researching and innovating with nature (e.g. nature based solutions, permaculture etc.).

Good practice examples

- [GEN Research Working Group](#)
- [Permaculture International Research Network](#)
- [Transition Network: Research](#)
- [Gaia Education](#)
- [CCIAM at Lisbon University Science Faculty](#)
- [Dutch Research Institute for Transitions](#) (DRIFT)
- [Communities for Future Knowledge Commons](#)
- [UrbanA Project Knowledge Commons](#) and [Community of Practice](#) on sustainable and just cities
- [Transition Design](#)
- [Transformative Social Innovation Manifesto](#)
- [Sustainability Transitions Research Network](#)
- [Centre for Alternative Technology Graduate School for the Environment](#)
- [Schumacher College](#)
- Boekel Ecovillage (Holarchy)
- [Community Learning Incubator Programme for Sustainability CLIPS](#) - example: Sunny Hill (Istria Slovenia): Classroom for Life;
- Slow Food movement; Suderbyn /biogas

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

European Association for [Innovation in Local Development](#) (AEIDL): European Local Innovation Forum on: [Community-led local innovation](#) (2022)

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): Opinion: [Empowering youth to achieve sustainable development through education](#) (2022)

7. Why do we need a strong connection between local and European levels of governance, including binding local plans for socio-ecological transformation?

The challenge

The complex, unpredictable and multi-faceted nature of the planetary crisis means it is often described as a "wicked problem", intractable to simple solutions. Put simply: no single actor can solve this problem alone; humanity has to work together, learn from each other and work towards shared goals (see also thesis 4). Such place-based measures cannot be exclusive or inward-looking. They need the support of appropriate enabling mechanisms from higher levels of governance (regional, national, EU, global) as well as connection and collaboration via translocal networks of locally rooted initiatives.

This means that we need strong connections across supranational, national, regional and local/village levels, with each level using to the fullest its range of integration with other levels, and at the same time supporting the fullest range of experimentation and autonomy for local levels and CLIs. The supranational levels are where international science-policy interfaces such as the IPCC and IPBES are situated, as are international agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. The relevance of local and bioregional levels is increasingly clear, yet the role of bottom-up, grassroots organisations such as community-led initiatives (CLIs) in socio-ecological transformation still needs to be recognised and supported politically.

Practitioners operating at the local level have identified the following key barriers to ambitious and appropriate action at different levels of governance:

EU level:

Regulations often contradict the aims of the European Green Deal

Subsidies are spent on environmentally damaging industries (e.g. aviation, industrial agriculture)

National level:

While the national level oversees implementation of European Green Deal, it is not always open to listening and engaging with local, community-led initiatives and stakeholders

Local/Regional Level:

Lack of support for participatory governance towards sustainable regional development

Across levels:

Appropriation of power

Lack of systemic approaches and long-term thinking

Responses are rather restricted to technological innovations, instead of social innovations

The proposition: *Multi-level governance with a bioregional focus*

In creating post-growth alternatives through transformative social innovation, CLIs have repeatedly converged on the bioregion as the optimum scale for collaboration and action. Bioregions are human scale, large enough to form a viable basis for economic organisation, small enough to ensure feedbacks are both visible and meaningful¹. Collaboration among diverse local initiatives at bioregional scale leads to the emergence of 'commons ecologies' - self-organised provisioning systems rooted in the distinctive ecological, social and cultural features of place². The bioregional focus is neither exclusive nor inward-looking, but relies on collaboration, mutual learning and partnership through translocal networks among place-based initiatives in different locations³.

However, CLIs often lack the capacity for such translocal collaboration, and they often face barriers stemming from unfavourable legal and social conditions at local and higher levels⁴.

Link to the European Green Deal

There is not yet a blueprint for how to implement the European Green Deal at local levels, and how to follow up and implement binding regulations such as the Climate Law or the expected Nature Restoration Law at national, regional and local / village levels. Initiatives such as the [European Climate Pact](#) and the [Rural Pact](#) are good examples of initiatives which aim to reach local levels and citizens, but they are just a starting point and are neither enshrined in legislation nor adequately funded.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- Strong multi-level governance alongside autonomous local spaces for experimentation and socio-ecological innovation (see below).

- Legally binding targets, and translating the European Green Deal to national and local levels, is one of the best ways to ensure that CLIs can thrive locally. This means that the EGD's principal goals - especially the Climate and Nature Restoration Law - should be a guiding principle for binding bioregional plans including smart targets at local authority levels, taking into account national plans, but also international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the key science-policy interfaces, IPCC on climate change, and IPBES on biodiversity.
- We call on the EU to work towards establishing demand-side (consumption based) contributions as well as plans for localisation as an obligatory criterion within national contributions towards the EU (EU Climate Law, Nature Restoration Law). Demand side factors include behaviour change, lifestyle change and social change as crucial parts of transformative change in policies. Localisation as an obligatory criterion supports multi-level governance and a strong focus on community-led initiatives.
- CLIs to be recognised as autonomous actors with a large scope for experimentation, innovation and collective action in finding place-based pathways toward socio-ecological transformation. This includes support for CLIs as key actors in the multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder process, acknowledging the crucial role of collective action and CLIs.
- The EU to adopt bioregional approaches in their policies such as territorial/ rural and urban development, which link rural and urban areas with natural characteristics into bioregional "functional areas".

Policy makers and civil servants in general to support different governance measures to support the design and implementation of bioregional development.

We call for strengthened multi-level governance overall across EU, national and local levels.

At the EU level, we call for:

- A socially just implementation of the Paris Agreement, policy coherence with the European Green Deal, support for participatory policy making and local level policy implementation through amplifying grassroots initiatives through financial support for mobilisation, networking, coordination and sharing of knowledge and best practices of community-led initiatives and Local Action Groups. Moreover, adequate funds for reparations towards countries in the

Global South need to be established and a holistic sense of “development” needs to guide multi-governance approaches overall (see thesis 8).

At the national level, we call for:

- Legal support and funding for local level implementation of the European Green Deal, as well as the support of community-led initiatives overall, e.g. community-building activities within the national LEADER/CLLD networks. The LEADER/ CLLD approach needs to be established across the EU's member states, thereby overcoming the urban-rural divide.

At the local/regional level, we call for:

- Support from EU and national levels in the establishment of transition plans which transfer the goals of international political agreements (e.g. SDGs, UNFCCC) to the local level by means of participatory and deliberative democracy. LAGs within the LEADER/CLLD programme are ideally placed as governance institutions for this matter, in cooperation with community-led initiatives. Local development strategies need to reflect the principles of social justice, inclusivity, sustainable development and set out specific measures within the areas of food, forests, energy, transport, water, education, consumption- with biodiversity, climate and pollution as transversal topics and goals. Impact measurement among LAGs needs to go beyond economic indicators to measure both social and ecological impacts. Local authorities need to build trust and engagement with local populations. Collective (commons-based) ownership should also be supported by municipalities, who need to provide access to land and building permits for community-led initiatives working towards sustainable development.

Good practice examples

- The [Bioregional Learning Center](#) (UK)
- [Municipalities in Transition](#)
- [Fearless Cities](#)
- [Flatpack Democracy](#)
- [Ecovillages Transition in Action](#) project
- Freiburg Klimaneutral; [German Zero](#); SmartRural21; RENN-Network, INTEREGG; ReScoop; Climate Puzzle ...

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

- Committee of the Regions: [“Green Deal going local”](#)
- [Commons Strategy Group](#)
- European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Climate KiC: Declaration EU Green Deal: from local to global (2022)
- <https://www.climate-kic.org/news/eit-climate-kic-signs-declaration-eu-green-deal-from-local-to-global/>
- EESC opinion:
[Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (2021)
[Building a coalition of civil society and subnational authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement](#) (2016 own-initiative opinion)
- Consumption based targets on national levels (Sweden) / Demand side: [Sweden Sets Historical Climate Target; Aims to Reduce Consumption-Based Emissions Created Abroad](#)
[Klimatmålsinitiativet](#)

8. “Development” implies a goal – what’s our vision of bioregional transformative development?

The challenge

“Sustainable development” is a term often used, and its definition is steering policies and funding, yet its meaning is contested. “Development” is, and always has been, about the continued imposition of colonial economic structures and power relationships within the post-colonial world (for example by forcibly exporting and promoting high-consumption lifestyles typical of Western Europe and North America to the rest of the world). Sustainable Development, as originally articulated in the Brundtland Report, simply appropriated the emerging sustainability discourse to that agenda, which the SDGs perpetuate – perhaps with more nuanced rhetoric, but still with a general assumption of market-led and centralised forms of implementation.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a globally accepted measure of development and the European Green Deal is an integral part of the European Commission's strategy to meet the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs make clear, for the first time, that “development” is not only about developing the Global South or “underdeveloped countries”, but equally targets richer countries from the Global North in reaching a certain level of sustainability.

Yet the SDGs are contested, as there is no prioritisation amongst the different goals, leading to cherry-picking and a lack of integration (see thesis 2 and the SDG “wedding cake” model, proposing a healthy biosphere as the basis for all SDGs). The SDGs also list “growth” as one of the goals ([SDG 8](#)), which is in contradiction to its overall “sustainability” goal, as the root causes of the planetary crisis are extractive economic systems and an economic growth ideology¹ (see thesis 3). The aim of current development efforts should be to balance this lopsided economic view with ecological and social goals on a higher footing, creating a holistic sense of sustainability, taking future generations as well as bioregional/local needs into account. Yet a shared vision of what a truly sustainable bioregional development policy could look like is still lacking.

The proposition: *Community-led initiatives offer valuable perspectives and visions of transitions towards a good life*

Many CLIs have a holistic sense of sustainable development, consistent with the more widely held notion of “living a good life within planetary boundaries”². The [ecovillage design mandala and map of regeneration](#), for example, combines social, ecological, economic and cultural (worldview) aspects, along with an integrative

perspective that combines the four. [Permaculture is rooted in three overlapping ethics](#) of Earth Care, People Care and Fair Shares, realised through design processes that treat nature as both the primary source of inspiration and main collaborating partner. The Transition movement makes such thinking the basis for radical revisioning and revitalisation of local communities, rooted in [principles](#) such as inclusivity, social justice and free sharing of knowledge and ideas. Nurturing relationships – among humans, but also between humans and their natural environments - is central to all such CLI activity, transformative social innovations rooted in co-creation, mutual inspiration, and empowerment, through both local and translocal collaboration³ (see also thesis 6).

Within a more conventional framing of “development” as “transition” towards a good life within planetary boundaries, the roles and potential contributions of CLIs are well-demonstrated. Extrapolating from existing data on the achieved emissions reductions of CLIs shows the potential for rapid and widespread upscaling of CLI activity to make significant contributions to national climate change mitigation efforts⁴. The realised and potential contributions of CLI activity to climate adaptation are equally important, with demonstrated impacts in fields ranging from soil restoration and water management through to conflict transformation and new forms of collaboration⁵ (see also thesis 1).

CLIs' role in systemic change is not limited to their own actions. It is linked to their potential to inspire systemic transformative change, which is dependent on their impact on policies at international, EU, national, regional and local levels (see also thesis 7).

Link to the European Green Deal

The EU is [working towards](#) the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, yet without an overall prioritisation of a healthy biosphere, and including SDG 8 with its demand of sustained economic growth. Arguably, the [European Green Deal](#) is the main instrument for implementing the 2030 Agenda – and the EU’s new definition of [“sustainable development” in itself](#). The EU has started to mainstream this notion of sustainable development into all its policies, including local development policies within Europe. One example: The Rural Pact and [its goals](#) as part of the [Long Term Vision for rural areas](#) embrace a holistic notion of sustainable development, with social, economic and environmental aspects. Yet the vision and its [action plan](#) lack the prioritisation of a healthy biosphere as a prerequisite for all human activities (see thesis 2), as well as a strong notion of intergenerational and social justice. Also, rural development is still funded and defined as [part of the Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\)](#), which still places “competitive agriculture” as its priority. The EGD’s [Farm to Fork](#) strategy with its focus on sustainable food systems is meant as a corrective to

the CAP, yet it is currently blocked mainly due to vested interests from agro-industries. Leading NGOs such as the EEB [are already warning](#) that the new CAP (starting in 2023) will not deliver on the EGD.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- The EU to nurture a shared vision of transformative sustainable development with regenerative cultures and values (see thesis 5) as well as transformative concepts such as planetary health and wellbeing at its heart.
- The EU to accept the plurality of place-based local versions of a “good life” and the need for a strong support in order to strengthen social imagination.
- The EU to decouple local development policies from agricultural policies and introduce a diversified and holistic approach to bioregional development in line with the wellbeing economy and planetary health.

Good practice examples

- [Permaculture Ethics](#)
- Rob Hopkins: [“From what is to what if”](#) (book by the founder of the Transition Network about social imagination)
- Global Ecovillage Germany: Project “living in future-proof villages” <https://gen-deutschland.de/leben-in-zukunftsfaehigen-doefern/>
- The [Bioregional Learning Center](#) (UK)
- [Ökoregion Kaindorf](#) (Austria) (bioregional approach, collaborating with municipalities)

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

- EESC: [Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development](#) (own-initiative opinion) (2021)
- EEB/ BirdLife Europe: [“Strategic CAP plans will not deliver on the Green Deal”](#)
- [Buen vivir resolution between the EU and Latin America 2015](#) (European Greens)
- ARC2020: [Rural Europe takes action \(book\)](#)

9. Why do CLIs need to engage with EU politics and policies, such as the European Green Deal?

The challenge

CLIs often lack a shared political vision, and political apathy or distancing from mainstream politics is prevalent. This represents a barrier when it comes to advocating for systemic change and engaging in deliberative democratic practices with political stakeholders. EU legislation influences about 80% of national legislation, especially in the area of environmental legislation. To address the planetary crisis, both policy change and bottom-up collective action are essential.

The proposition: To transform society, communities must engage with politics and policies on all levels

CLIs cannot by themselves bring about the needed transformation of European society, nor can they fulfil their full potential without support from governments at all levels. CLIs are actively fostering collaborations with local governments through strategic actions such as the Municipalities in Transition Project, which uses inclusive governance approaches such as sociocracy to foster collaborative partnerships between local government and community initiatives¹. However, attempts to legitimise and deepen grassroots action through local government often become counterproductive, creating regulatory pressures and bureaucratic requirements that are hard to sustain, and may be in conflict with fundamental values and goals². Some CLIs have taken the further step of direct involvement in local government. For example, community housing initiative Barcelona em Comú was elected to the city council, in turn sparking the Fearless Cities movement of municipal authorities, and with it new potential for transformative change beyond the local scale³. ECOLISE was initiated, among other things, as a common platform for policy advocacy at EU level on the part of national and international networks of local initiatives, recognising both the need for active political engagement at that level and the tensions and challenges that such engagement entails⁴.

Link to the European Green Deal

The EGD offers the potential of a paradigm shift, yet is currently facing a backlash, also due to the energy crisis caused by the Russian war against Ukraine. There is a clear need for support (and improvement) of the EGD by citizens, and initiatives such as the European Climate Pact, the Rural Pact or the Conference on the Future of Europe show that the European Commission acknowledges this.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- Policy makers involved in the European Green Deal to rebuild lost trust caused by neoliberal politics in the past (e.g. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)) through coherent policies, a systemic approach (doing away with siloes) and ensuring a multi-governance, multi-sectoral approach, bottom-up approach (local-global).
- Communities to be at the centre of participative democracy and of initiatives such as the EU Climate Pact, Rural Pact and Conference on the Future of Europe, establishing participatory budgeting, citizen councils etc.
- Greater political support for CLIs to improve access to alternative lifestyles (such as through commons, access to land, housing, resources etc.), using concepts like LEADER/CLLD and smart village as leverage points.
- Lowering the thresholds in order for people to be able to engage politically e.g. through a shorter work week, basic income, tax incentivisation for care work which includes political activities, etc.

Good practice examples

- [Democratic practices](#)
- [Ecovillage Transition in Action](#)
- [Municipalities in Transition](#)
- [Transformative Cities](#)
- [Fearless Cities](#)
- [Flatpack Democracy](#)

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Similar demands by partners and other organisations

- [Phoenix Horizon Project](#) (The Good Lobby)
- [The Real Deal Project](#) (EU-funded Green Deal project on deliberative democracies)

10. Why do CLIs need to be strengthened by increased public support networks?

The challenge

The impact of socio-ecological transformative innovation which CLIs can bring (as described in the 10 theses overall) depends on their ability to connect with the wider system. These “interfaces” which connect CLIs and the wider system, making mushrooming, scaling and mainstreaming of transformative socio-ecological innovation possible, are currently missing, and there are very few support mechanisms in place. Current funding programmes at EU, national, regional and local levels do not support community-led initiatives adequately.

Yet public funding is needed, as care work for socially diverse networks and nature is not (yet) remunerated by market economics. Communities and individual change makers experience a lack of support and financing overall, leading to the burn-out of structures and people.

The propositions: *Greater public support is needed to strengthen community-led initiatives*

CLIs are well placed as laboratories for transformative social innovation, but receive little in the way of public funding and other support. Even when funding is available, it is often a mixed blessing. The Scottish Government’s Climate Challenge Fund supported notable expansion of community action Scotland-wide, but also obliged initiatives to conform to the bureaucratic requirements and timeframes of the funding programme, including the competitive allocation of funds¹. It also imposed upon funded organisations particular constructions of community, place and the local that often conflicted with their basic ethos and aims, ultimately alienating them from their original aims and goals². Persistently, and across a range of contexts, CLIs that seek to adopt a legal form in order to perpetuate and deepen their work experience twin pressures of resource dependency and external pressures, both of which undermine their capacity for innovation and transformative potential³.

CLIs also face internal barriers to mainstreaming and growth, in particular when they struggle to recruit and engage publics beyond narrow demographic boundaries of race, education, and class⁴. Making CLI approaches accessible to wider society thus depends on CLIs becoming more inclusive, open and diverse. To do so, CLIs need support in the form of capacity building and training, but there also needs to be support for mainstream players and people to connect with CLIs.

Policy recommendations

We call for:

- Adequate EU support for healthy communities and social innovation, including core funding for diverse and resilient networks and community building instead of a sole focus on project funding. This means strengthened public support (funding, fiscal incentives, capacity building, networking etc.) for grassroots initiatives and planetary health care work overall.
- Public support needs to enable CLIs to earn a livelihood sustainably and prioritise this in local/bioregional eco-social-economic development plans, following a vision of diverse economies within planetary boundaries (see thesis 3).
- Support for transformative education in order to guarantee upskilling and reskilling of people of all age groups in an inclusive and just manner (see thesis 5 and 6).
- Adequate funding for communities within sub-local (village), local, municipal and bioregional structures, within the framework of a dedicated funding programme, to ensure local implementation of the European Green Deal. Mainstreaming social innovation and sustainability within all funding programmes is needed at the same time. National contributions towards the European Green Deal need to include obligatory funding for localisation, i.e. for local and village levels including citizens and CLIs.
- Principles of bottom-up and multi-sectoral methods such as [LEADER/Community-led local development \(CLLD\)](#) to be strengthened and improved in their holistic focus on sustainability and used as a blueprint for all EU funding at the heart of bringing the EGD to local levels. Funding programmes need to integrate community-led initiatives and include capacity building both for local authorities (civil service, politicians) as well as for communities on deliberative politics and the European Green Deal.
- Greater support for building and supporting interfaces such as ECOLISE which can intermediate between CLIs and regime levels of policy, in order to mainstream transformative social innovation and to strengthen advocacy of CLIs in general, enabling communities to speak with a stronger, more united voice. Connections between change makers on policy levels (civil servants & politicians) and CLIs need to be supported.

- Transformative socio-ecological innovation (see thesis 6) to be a much more prominent focus across all funding, including research and innovation programmes such as Horizon Europe, and the overall European innovation agenda, as for example represented by the European Institute for Innovation and Technology and its Knowledge Communities (KICs).
- exploring and introducing new measures of success in funding programmes overall (funding indicators and targets) to be adapted accordingly, integrating strengthened socio-ecological ties (see theses 4,5,6), transformative social innovation (thesis 6) including capacity building, learning and education as well as transformative economic systems (thesis 3) which valorise and incentivise care for humans and the planet.
- “Perverse subsidies”, which damage people and the planet, urgently need to be phased out. All public funding needs to be in line with a systemic view of sustainability, international agreements and the EGD, including a strict implementation of the current EU principles of “do no harm” and the “polluter pays”, aiming for positive socio-ecological impacts.
- Cultural changes to be supported by the public sector, for example with a European festival of socio-ecological transformative innovation within the framework of the New European Bauhaus initiative. [Inner transition](#) is a good example of cultural change which in turn triggers outward action. Public sector support needs to include this internal aspect of transformative change as a prerequisite for collective action. Adapting to the planetary crisis and keeping a healthy mental balance requires public investment into social and human capital as well as into stronger connections with nature/natural capital.

Good practice examples

- Project “[Boost Eco-Citoyen](#)” (France; ADEME, in cooperation with CSOs such as Transition Towns France)
- [Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund](#) 2008 - 2021 (contact: Philip Revell, Convenor, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network)
- Civil initiative called [Revival of Istria](#), leading to a deep reform in the Local Action Group (LAG), [LAS Istre](#) (eco-community Sunny Hill participated)
- Inner transition (Transition Network): [prevent burn-out of people and structures](#), [EuroRegen Project](#)/ Knowledge Wiki;
- ENOLL, Low Tech Lab
- [4 per Thousand](#)

- [Participatory budgeting](#) (cf “[The Ostbelgien Model](#)”/ Belgium) ; <https://www.citizenlab.co/>
- [Edge Funders Alliance](#)

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Further resources

Thesis 1

IPCC scientists [see CLI approach as crucial for transition](#)

IPCC [6th Assessment Report](#)

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ECOLISE Status Report 2019: [Reshaping the Future](#)

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List of Abbreviations

ARC2020 - Agricultural and Rural Convention
BP - British Petroleum
CAN-E - Climate Action Network Europe
CAP - Common Agricultural Policy
CAT - Centre for Alternative Technology
CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity
CLI - Community-led initiative
CLIPs - Community Learning Incubator Programme
CLLD - Community-led local development
DRIFT - Dutch Research Institute For Transitions
ECOLISE - European Network of Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability
EEB - European Environmental Bureau
EESC - European Economic and Social Committee
EIT - European Institute for Innovation
EGD - European Green Deal
ELARD - European Leader Association for Rural Development
EU - European Union
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
GEN - Global Ecovillage Network
GHG - Greenhouse gas
IPBES - Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KIC - Knowledge and Innovation Community
LEADER - Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale
LTV - Long Term Vision for rural areas
MLG - Multi-Level Governance
NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisation
SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
TRANSIT - Transformative Social Innovation Theory
UN - United Nations
UrbanA - Urban Arena

Glossary

Anthropocene

“The Anthropocene is a proposed label for a new geological epoch whose defining feature is measurable human impacts on global biophysical conditions and effects upon ecological conditions worldwide. Many analysts see its onset and recognition as demonstrating a need for a shift to an ethos of planetary stewardship as the basis of global society.”

<https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Anthropocene>

Agenda 2030

Agenda 2030 is a UN General Assembly resolution that brought forward the Sustainable Development Goals which shall be achieved by the year 2030.

Bioregionalism

Is the philosophy that human economic-political systems should be primarily organised within ecologically defined areas, in order to respect the boundaries of both local and global ecosystems, whilst translocal cooperation between bioregions is a crucial element of ethically sound bioregionalism.

Bioregional Economy

The Bioregional economy, regards the bioregion as appropriate scale for most economic activities, and aims to replace economics for profit with an ethical approach to production and consumption, via localised, democratised and largely self-sufficient economies (Molly Scott Cato)

Care Economy

The Care economy, operating outside of the logic of wage labour, provides a huge portion to physical and emotional wellbeing of members of the society

Community-led initiative

“Community-led initiatives (CLIs) are any form of action undertaken by self-organised groups of people, often but not always living in the same geographical location, to improve their social and environmental conditions.”

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Community-led_initiatives

Cooperatives

“Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.”
(<https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/what-is-a-cooperative>)

Deliberation / Deliberative Democracy

“Deliberative democracy involves consensus decision-making and majority rule (...) whereby five characteristics are essential for legitimate deliberation: (James Fishkin^[2])

Information: The extent to which participants are given access to reasonably accurate information that they believe to be relevant to the issue

Substantive balance: The extent to which arguments offered by one side or from one perspective are answered by considerations offered by those who hold other perspectives

Diversity: The extent to which the major positions in the public are represented by participants in the discussion

Conscientiousness: The participants should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect.

Equal consideration: The extent to which arguments offered by all participants are considered on the merits regardless of which participants offer them”

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy

Degrowth

“Degrowth is a linked intellectual and social movement that seeks to challenge the central place of growth in economic policy and to support and create practical alternatives to growth-based economics.” <https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Degrowth>

Doughnut Economy

The doughnut economy argues that economies need to operate in the space between two boundaries that should not be crossed. One is the social foundation, that enables all human beings access to essential services, laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals, the other one is the ecological capacity of the planet, laid out in the scientific study on the planetary boundaries.

Ecocide

“ECOCIDE is broadly understood to mean mass damage and destruction of ecosystems – severe harm to nature which is widespread or long-term.” Some examples include overfishing, oil spills, plastic pollution, deep sea mining, industrial livestock farming, mining, chemical disasters and weapons, textile chemicals.

<https://www.stopecocide.earth/what-is-ecocide>

Economy of the Common Good

The economy of the common good measures the social and ecological value of economic activities against the background of democratically defined criteria and aims to establish policy incentives for businesses with a high value for the common good

Ecovillages

"Ecovillages are (usually) intentional communities that operate on a shared set of ecological, social and/or spiritual values, with sustainability as a common concern. They consciously seek to create and enact working models of sustainable living combined with social wellbeing and (in many cases) spiritual growth."

<https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Ecovillages>

European Green Deal

Is a policy package by the European Commission aiming for net zero emissions within the EU by 2050. It was approved in 2020 and encompasses the policy areas of clean energy, sustainable industry, building and renovation, food systems, pollution, mobility, biodiversity and finance. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Green_Deal

Extractive Economy

"An *Extractive Economy* is a capitalist system of exploitation and oppression that values consumerism, colonialism, and money over people and the planet. The extractive economy perpetuates the enclosure of wealth and power for a few through predatory financing, expropriation from land and commonly accessed goods/services, and the exploitation of human labor." <https://ggjalliance.org/program-activities/extractive-economy/>

Food Policy Council

Aiming for more environmentally sustainable and socially just local food system, Food Policy Councils "attempt to establish a platform for coordinated action at the local level (...) to discuss and strategize among various sectors and interests, in order to then recommend, or directly implement changes in the food system."^[2]

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Food_policy_councils

Grassroots initiatives

"The term 'grassroots innovations' refers to "networks of activists and organisations generating novel bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved. In contrast to mainstream business greening, grassroots initiatives operate in civil society arenas and involve committed activists experimenting with social innovations as well as using greener technologies." (p.587)^[1]" https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Grassroots_innovation

Holacracy

“Holacracy is a revolutionary management system that redefines management and turns everyone into a leader. Holacracy distributes authority and decision-making throughout an organization, and defines people not by hierarchy and titles, but by roles. Holacracy creates organizations that are fast, agile, and that succeed by pursuing their purpose, not following a dated and artificial plan”

Brian J. Robertson (2015): Holacracy: The New Management System for a Rapidly Changing World

Nature Positive & Net positive

"Nature-positive means halting and reversing nature loss by 2030, measured from a baseline of 2020....'Net Positive by 2030' means conditions are improved from the 2020 baseline so that through our combined actions humanity succeeds in bending the curve of biodiversity loss from its current negative trajectory to a positive one. It recognizes the inevitability of a limited period of continued species and ecosystem loss, while setting the goal of reaching an inflection point within this decade and a transition to a net zero point (in relation to the 2020 reference point) before 2030 ...This implies halting loss of species, effectively conserving important sites for biodiversity such as Key Biodiversity Areas, safeguarding intact natural systems, restoring human impacted landscapes and seascapes, and reducing the consumption and production drivers of biodiversity loss."

Participatory democracy

"At its core, participatory democracy aims to strengthen civil society to lead to a stronger polity and emphasises accountability, inclusion and empowerment of ordinary people. (...) Numerous councils and public administrations around the world, especially at the regional and local level, are utilising some participatory democracy elements. Some of the most common examples of citizen participation are; participatory budgeting, citizen councils, neighbourhood councils, participatory planning"

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy

Permaculture

"Permaculture is a design methodology for sustainable human habitats that takes inspiration from ways in which natural systems self-organize for resilience and productivity.^{[1][2][3]} It was originally conceived in the 1970s by Australian field ecologists David Holmgren and Bill Mollison as a contraction of the term 'permanent agriculture'.^{[4][5]} Its scope of common usage later expanded to encompass the full range of factors affecting the ecology of human settlement, economy and culture, and is now more commonly considered shorthand for 'permanent culture'."

<http://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php?title=Permaculture>

Planetary boundaries

"The proposed concept of "planetary boundaries" lays the groundwork for shifting our approach to governance and management, away from the essentially sectoral analyses of limits to growth aimed at minimizing negative externalities, toward the estimation of the safe space for human development. Planetary boundaries define, as it were, the boundaries of the "planetary playing field" for humanity if we want to be sure of avoiding major human-induced environmental change on a global scale."

Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, Å., et.al. 2009. A safe operating space for humanity. [Nature 461: 472-475 DOI 10.1038/461472a](#))

Planetary Health

"planetary health is the achievement of the highest attainable standard of health, wellbeing, and equity worldwide through judicious attention to the human systems—political, economic, and social—that shape the future of humanity and the Earth's natural systems that define the safe environmental limits within which humanity can flourish."

in: Whitmee S, Haines A, Beyrer C, Boltz F, Capon AG, de Souza Dias BF, et al. Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch: report of The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on planetary health. Lancet (2015) 386:1973–2028. 10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60901-1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5649127/>

Resilience

"Resilience has been defined as. "[T]he capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks." ^[1] <https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Resilience>

Slow Food

"Slow Food Network connects initiatives globally, striving to *"prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us.*" ^[1] Slow Food Network official website https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Slow_food

Smart Villages

"Smart villages (in full, smart eco-social villages) is a rural development initiative based on a DG AGRI action that aims to support villages to identify and respond to current and future challenges by combining existing, including traditional capacities with better use of modern communications and other technologies." https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Smart_Villages

Social Innovation

“Social innovation (SI) has been defined as changing social relations through a process that involves new ways of doing, organising, framing and knowing (...) rather than a new technology.

For instance, community energy cooperatives and ecovillages are examples of social innovations. They entail:

New ways of doing things – e.g. a new way of producing energy, a new way of living in a community ^[3];

New ways of organising – e.g. a new way of distributing and consuming energy; a new of distributing work among community members ^[4];

New framings – e.g. the word ‘prosumer’ in the case of renewable energy communities who produce and consume their own energy, or the participatory approaches and ‘language’ conventions developed by ecovillage communities ^[5] ;

New ways of knowing – e.g. new knowledge on renewable energy; new knowledge of eco-construction techniques ^[6]”

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Social_innovation

Social solidarity economy

“The Social Solidarity Economy is an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. (...) It seeks systemic transformation that goes beyond superficial change in which the root oppressive structures and fundamental issues remain intact.” <http://www.ripest.org/what-is-sse/what-is-social-solidarity-economy/?lang=en>

Sociocracy

“a system of governance that seeks to create harmonious social environments as well as productive organizations and businesses. It is distinguished by the use of consent rather than majority voting in decision-making, and decision-making following open discussion by people who know each other.”

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Inclusive_governance

Stewardship

"Local environmental stewardship is the actions taken by individuals, groups or networks of actors, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, care for or responsibly use the environment in pursuit of environmental and/or social outcomes in diverse social-ecological contexts." ^[1]

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Nature_Stewardship

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon by the UN General Assembly, all aiming for the wellbeing of people and the environment.

Sustainability

Sustainability "is a destination^[1], a process or behaviour, a quality of a product, and a way of life and societal pathway. It goes from a single and specific perspective or regulatory measure to a more systemic and holistic view, strategy or policy and most commonly understood as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs."* (Brundlandt-Report)

<https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Sustainability>

Transformative Social Innovation Theory

"A theory of transformative social innovation (TSI) was developed by the EU-funded **TRANSIT** research project (2014-2017) as an analytical approach that reveals common ground among and helps improve understanding of a range of grassroots movements and networks for societal change. (...) TSI is defined as a social innovation process: "the process of challenging, altering, or replacing the dominance of existing institutions in a specific social and material context" ^[1]." (...) "The core concern of TSI theory is understanding how these social innovations can contribute to transformative change, and how the social innovation actors can be (dis)empowered in this process" -

https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Transformative_social_innovation

Transition Towns

"Transition is a movement of local initiatives working towards greater **resilience** in their home communities in response to environmental, social, economic and other challenges. It was initially framed as a structured local response to **peak oil**, **climate change** and, especially since the 2008 financial crisis, economic instability. As it has spread and been adopted in diverse places around the world, it encompasses an increasing range of issues, often the local manifestations of global problems."

http://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php?title=Transition_movement

Wellbeing economy

The Wellbeing economy, centres around the fulfilment of human needs and happiness, instead of seeking for profit and continuous accumulation of material wealth/ commodities. Hereby, the attitude/value of sufficiency, that is based on an abandonment of linear thinking, and instead focus economic activities on what matters most, is key to its realisation.