Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovation

TRANSIT Deliverable 2.3. Cross-cutting theme: "Social Learning". Report by Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema-Blanco, Ricardo-García Mira, Iris Kunze, Tim Strasser, René Kemp

transformative social innovation theory

About TRANSIT

TRANSIT is an international research project that aims to develops a theory of Transformative Social Innovation that is useful to both research and practice. It is co-funded by the European Commission and runs for four years, from 2014 until 2017. The TRANSIT consortium consists of 12 partners across Europe and Latin America. For more information, please visit our website: http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/.

Focus of deliverable:

This deliverable focuses on the topic of social learning and transformative social innovation (TSI) and contains: (1) a Working Paper on Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovation; (2) a synthesis of the Third Integration Workshop; (3) a paper on Inner Transformations: Dimensions, Practices and Facilitation; and (4) Insights on Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovation Practice.

Reference

Authors: Adina Dumitru, Isabel-Lema Blanco, Ricardo García-Mira

Lead partner: Task-lead: University of A Coruña
WP2-lead: Maastricht University

Contact person: Adina Dumitru
University of A Coruña
E-mail: adina.dumitru@udc.es

Table of contents

transformative social innovation theory

transformative social innovation theory

1. Introduction to Deliverable 2.3

The object of the present deliverable is the integration of the main outcomes of empirical research and integration activities developed within the TRANSIT project on the cross-cutting theme of "social learning" as well as the distilling of main insights for the development of "practical briefs and tools".

Deliverable 2.3 reports on the outcomes of these activities, and consists of the following sections:

1. **Working paper: " The role of social learning in transformative social innovations"**
The paper presents a literature review of the concept of social learning and builds on a definition suitable for the context of transformative social innovation. Based on TRANSIT empirical data, we propose an analytical framework that differentiates between types of learning, learning environments, methods or conditions for social learning, outcomes of social learning processes and actors that facilitate or play a role in promoting it. This framework is then applied to a selection of empirical cases (Slow Food, Credit Unions and Ecovillage Movement). The results obtained stress the importance of social learning environments in creating adequate conditions to link experiences, reflection, and experimentation between individuals and groups. Finally, the proposed analytical framework has been applied to understanding how SI initiatives attempt to promote wider societal learning, presenting examples of how social learning transcends the internal context of each social innovation initiative and produce changes in a wider socio-material context, challenging, altering or replacing current social systems and institutions.

2. **Synthesis of the third integration workshop: Motivations, relations and transformations. The role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation**
The Third Integration Workshop "Motivations, relations and transformations: the role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation" focused on the drivers and motivations for transformative social innovation and how social learning contributes to the creation of new social relations, involving new ways of thinking, knowing, doing and framing. Concretely, the workshop introduced three themes for discussion: 1)Motivations in transformative social innovation ambitions; 2) Processes through which new social relationships are established, contexts that foster satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the role of social learning in such processes and 3) Social learning in collective agency for social innovation. A summary of the main outcomes of the workshop is provided.

3. **Social Learning with PEERs: Practitioner Engagement for Empowering Reflections**
The paper highlights some of the emergent themes and insights about the deeper implications of social learning for transformative change that resulted from an ongoing process of engaging seven selected practitioners involved with various social innovation initiatives as leaders, organizers, supporters and facilitators. The themes discussed are: 1) the dimensions of and methods for inner transformation, in relation to transformation in groups and society at large; 2) practices for cultivating inner transformations in organizational and facilitation contexts and 3) ways of knowing, in relation to emerging worldviews and the roles and methods of facilitation for these deeper processes of transformation.

4. **Insights on Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovation Practice (input for practice brief and practice tool.**
This section constains insights into shaping social learning in ways that are conducive to conditions for effective agency. The insights are grouped around six themes: 1) Shaping learning environments to promote autonomous motivation; 2) Shaping learning contexts to promote relational changes; 3)

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

Strategic/political learning and its relationship to effective adaptation to a dynamic socio-material context; 4) Social learning and empowerment; 5) Enhancing transference of ideas between multiple actors; and 6) Shaping contexts to promote inner transformations.

The role of social learning in transformative social innovations

TRANSIT Working Paper

Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema-Blanco, Iris Kunze, Ricardo García-Mira

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About the TRANSIT working papers series:

The TRANSIT working paper series aims to accelerate the public availability of research undertaken by TRANSIT researchers. It presents (intermediate) research results that in whole or part are suitable for submission to a scientific journal or book. It also considers those articles, which are appropriate for submission to (scientific) conferences, workshops or symposia. Our intention is to provide early access to TRANSIT research through the TRANSIT working paper series.

About this TRANSIT working paper:

This paper has been presented at the Third Integration Workshop on Social Learning organized by the People-Environment Research Group in the University of A Coruna, the 8-9th of June 2016. The paper is included in the deliverable D2.3.

Contact: Adina Dumitru; e-mail: adina.dumitru@udc.es

transformative **s**ocial **in**novation **t**heory

Abstract

Social learning has become a buzzword within academic, practitioner and policy-making circles. The literature on social learning currently spans several academic disciplines and there has been a proliferation of overlapping and sometimes contradictory definitions of the concept (Reed et al., 2010). Also, the concept of social learning is infused with assumptions about its relationships to capacities for active engagement in decision-making, transformative agency and empowerment, and these assumptions are rarely critically examined, or empirically-grounded.

In order for social innovation initiatives to engage in transformative change, defined as change that challenges, alters and/or replaces established dominant institutions in a specific socio-material context, we contend that there are two prerequisites: first, they need to be able to build a project/initiative that attracts and maintains membership; and secondly, they need to develop effective strategies to engage with different elements in the socio-material context, including other actors, ideas, institutions and existing relations of power. Although social learning can also be approached as the process through which particular communities or societies reach a change in their collective understanding, we are focusing here particularly on how SI initiatives and networks become effective agents of change and how social learning processes might contribute to both the construction of the initiative itself as well as to effective strategies to pursue its goals and achieve the desired impact.

Based on a critical review of the literature on social learning and TRANSIT empirical data, we propose an analytical framework that differentiates between types of learning, learning environments, methods or conditions for social learning, outcomes of social learning processes and actors that facilitate or play a role in promoting it. This framework is then applied to a selection of empirical cases (Slow Food, Credit Unions and Ecovillage Movement). The results obtained stress the importance of social learning environments in creating adequate conditions to link experiences, reflection, and experimentation between individuals and groups. Thus, four main categories of social learning outcomes have been identified in SI initiatives and networks: 1) changes in understandings and framing that lead to new narratives; 2) changes in the quality and characteristics of social relations; 3) empowerment; and 4) changes in behaviours and strategies for action. Finally, we reflect on how wider societal learning promoted by SI initiatives might lead to a series of transformational outcomes, which might contribute challenging, altering or replacing current social systems and institutions.

Keywords: social learning, social innovation, transformative change, empowerment, agency

transformative social innovation theory

1.   Introduction

The TRANSIT project aims to develop a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation through a combination of deductive theoretical reasoning and extended empirical research on 20 transnational networks of social innovation initiatives, and around 80 local initiatives in Europe and Latin America. Social innovation has been defined in TRANSIT as "a change in social relations that challenges, alters or replaces dominant institutions in the social context, including new ways of knowing, doing, framing and organizing" (Haxeltine et al., 2015:29). The synthesis of empirical results is guided by four cross-cutting themes: governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing.

Learning in general, and social learning in particular, is increasingly considered a desirable and normative goal within democratic processes that rely on stakeholder engagement (Reed et al., 2010) and has become a buzzword within academic, practitioner and policy-making circles. The literature on social learning currently spans several academic disciplines (e.g. philosophy, psychology, sociology, educational sciences, organizational studies, environmental management etc.), and there has been a proliferation of overlapping and sometimes contradictory definitions of the concept (Reed et al., 2010). However, in spite of such proliferation, there is still considerable need for conceptual clarity in the definition of the concept which might then guide appropriate measurement of its multi-faceted dimensions. Also, the concept of social learning is infused with assumptions about its relationships to capacities for active engagement in decision-making, transformative agency and empowerment, and these assumptions are rarely critically examined, or empirically-grounded.

The project adopts a co-production approach to social innovation and a perspective of agency as having a dispersed "rhizomic" nature (Scott Cato & Hillier, 2010), but is primarily interested in the agency of individuals, networks and fields and how they engage with different elements of the socio-material context in which they operate and thus play a role in bringing about a change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing (Haxeltine et al., 2016). As our focus is on understanding how social innovation initiatives and networks become effective agents of change, we have posited social learning as a potentially important set of processes through which the conditions for effective agency might be created. In order for social innovation initiatives to engage in transformative change, defined as change that challenges, alters and/or replaces established dominant institutions in a specific socio-material context, we contend that there are two prerequisites: first, they need to be able to build a project/initiative that attracts and maintains membership; and secondly, they need to develop effective strategies to engage with different elements in the socio-material context, including other actors, ideas, institutions and existing relations of power. Although social learning can also be approached as the process through which particular communities or societies reach a change in their collective understanding, we are focusing here particularly on how SI initiatives and networks become effective agents of change and how social learning processes might contribute to both the construction of the initiative itself as well as to effective strategies to pursue its goals and achieve the desired impact. The questions we focus on in this paper are: What types of social learning are necessary and through which methods is it acquired, in order for SI initiatives and networks to exhibit effective agency? (what is being learned and how is it being learned?) And what are the mechanisms through which social learning contributes to the construction of transformative agency? (what are the outcomes of social learning that are relevant for transformative agency).   Furthermore, transformative change requires social learning that can be situated at different scales, and social innovation agents, often either intentionally actively shape such processes to achieve diffusion of new ideas and practices. Although this paper will mainly focus on how the initiatives and networks themselves become effective agents of change, we do not ignore the relevance of such outward-oriented social learning processes and the role they play in the transformative impact of SI initiatives/networks. In keeping with the

difference established between transformative ambition, potential and impact (Haxeltine et al., 2016), the focus here is on how social learning contributes to the transformative potential of SI initiatives and networks.

The present paper will be structured as follows: first, we review the concept of social learning and build on a definition that can be useful in the context of transformative social innovation, based on a brief overview of the literature and on theoretical developments within the TRANSIT project (sections 2 and 3). Secondly, we describe the empirical methodology used to understand social learning in social innovation initiatives and networks. Based on the empirical data, we propose an analysis framework that unpacks the multi-faceted nature of social learning. The analysis differentiates between methods or conditions for social learning, types of learning, outcomes of social learning processes and actors that facilitate or play a role in promoting it. This framework is then applied to a selection of empirical cases (section 4). Finally, we will look at wider processes of societal learning for transformative change, by focusing on the methods SI networks use to promote social learning, the scales of change they target through these and what outcomes can be assessed when analysing transformative impact of social innovations (Section 5).

2.   Agency and transformative social innovation in TRANSIT

Social innovation has become a hot topic in policy discourses across Europe (Haxeltine et al., 2013). This has been reflected in policy documents such as the Bureau of Policy Advisers (BEPA) report, that have considered social innovation a potentially useful response to important and complex societal problems related to the recent economic crisis, environmental challenges related to climate change and social problems such as decreased cohesion, inequality and poverty (Avelino et al., 2015). Policy enthusiasm with social innovation is infused with assumptions about its potential for driving important social change and bringing about positive outcomes such as higher equality, wellbeing, and empowerment (Avelino et al., *forthcoming*), and TRANSIT has set out to submit these assumptions to critical scrutiny and to analyse the extent and the mechanisms through which social innovation can deliver on such high promises and expectations. As the many societal problems we now confront are considered to require fundamental systemic changes (Haxeltine et al., 2016), the transformational and empowering potential of social innovation is not self-evident (Avelino et al., forthcoming).

Scholars have also pointed out that social innovation is viewed as a normative instrument which will resolve social problems through the creation of new products and services (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). The Bureau of Policy Advisers definition of social innovation considering it to be "innovation that is social in both its ends and means" (BEPA, 2010), has been criticized for assuming an intentionality that is not always warranted (Franz et al., 2012). In TRANSIT, we have argued that neither the intention nor the outcome should be included in the definition of social innovation (Haxeltine et al., 2016) and we argue that such normative assumptions about the purpose of social innovation rely on overly simplistic conceptions of agency. TRANSIT project adopts a rich ontology of agency that is distributed and not confined to human actors, although it is also particularly interested in the agency of human actors, considered to be locally rooted and globally connected, and active in porous fields, rather than well-demarcated systems (Cf. Nicholls & Murdoch, 2012, cited in Haxeltine et al., 2016), and it has set itself the theoretical challenge of resolving the linkages and feedbacks between individuals, social activities and the wider socio-material context in which social innovation takes place. Moreover, the "transformative" dimension of agency is conceptualized as an emerging property of relationships among diverse actors in complex social and institutional contexts, and not an intrinsic characteristic of any particular actor´s strategies for action. Social innovation initiatives can have transformative ambitions, but radical social change is the result of

transformative social innovation theory

co-production, and characterized by complex interactions among diverse actors, objects and ideas in a given socio-material context.

Furthermore, sociologists (Tönnies, 1987; 2002) have concluded that social behavior arises from everyday interaction and living together, subsequently creating communal structures. From this perspective, social innovation initiatives can be seen as fields where communal structures are permanently created. Already in medieval times, in Europe the major social infrastructure changed from small-scale, personal systems of trade to larger, anonymous economic organizations. The traditional community that lived and worked together was substituted on the one side by private nuclear families in reproductive households and on the other side by forms of official employment in commercial enterprises. Historical research on "communalism" during this medieval process of change in Europe has suggested that all governmental and institutional structures result from social processes and communal living – personal-based social organizations that the social innovations of today are re-inventing in a new manner (Kunze 2012). While having mainly occurred in Europe, this transformation has produced effects in other parts of the worlds in early modern times through colonialization. It has created a variety of combinations between traditional and modern social relations that can be observed in different parts of the world. In a nutshell communality has lost its dominance to societal institutions in the changing process from medieval times to modernity mainly in the Western world and to some degree in all modern societies (Kunze 2012). From the perspective of liberalism, the modern 'loss of community' can be seen as empowerment and liberalization from traditional, oppressive, small-scale communities. In this interpretation, modern societies afford individuals agency to choose their religion, lifestyle, and occupation. In practice, it can be observed that the modern 'loss of community' has produced ambivalent results between freedom and alienation that has led to the *colonialization of the life world* (Habermas 1984).

We have argued elsewhere that agency relies on the capacity for purposive action and the capacity to imagine new ways of being, new relationships and new ways of doing (Haxeltine et al., 2015). Although these capacities depend themselves on the biological, social and cultural contexts that inform and shape who we are, they cannot be considered mere effects of these contexts. The concept of agency has many times been given connotations of free will, understood as a result of our cognitive/rational capacities for understanding options and choosing according to our own criteria. However, in TRANSIT, we go beyond such conceptualizations of agency to include its relational dimensions—seeing it as a central feature of the relational, embodied person, embedded within dynamically evolving social and interactive contexts. Agency is not a static set of capacities, but rather a fluid process through which individuals and groups direct their actions to effect change at individual and interpersonal levels and in the context in which they exist. Agentic capacities are thus conceptualized as emergent, embodied and experiential, and: "this process always evolves within an inter-subjective field and cannot be understood as the function of a disengaged, rational mind" (2008, p.36). Understanding SI has to be informed by an understanding of how individuals organized in groups imagine, experiment with and promote alternative ways of knowing, organizing, framing and doing; and how they organize action in ways that challenges, alters or replaces dominant institutions in the (socio-material) context. We posit that experimenting with new ways of knowing, doing, organizing and framing entails a deconstruction of assumptions and values underlying current societal arrangements; the imagining and construction of an alternative, which includes the articulation of a coherent discourse to express it and the pathways to reach it, which have been conceptualized as narratives of change in TRANSIT, attracting and maintaining membership, resolving difference and conflict. Finally, organizing action relies on the capacity of effective adaptation to complex and dynamic circumstances, which requires reflexive adjustment of strategies in response to these. We will use empirical evidence to characterize social learning processes that contribute to these conditions of effective agency.

3.   The concept of social learning

Social learning suffers from some of the same problems as the concept of social innovation: it is infused with positive assumptions about its nature and the potential to bring about desired normative outcomes such as empowerment, higher capacities for deliberation and consensual decision-making, higher trust and cohesion, and increased capacities for action; it lacks clear conceptualizations that transcend specific issue- and policy contexts such as natural resource management; and while there is a lot of normative discussion about the concept and illustrations of applied processes targeting learning in a particular context, the literature on social learning lacks clear distinctions among the different dimensions of learning, which could inform assessment and evaluation methods in different contexts.

We argue that in order for transformative social innovation to be possible, members of SI initiatives need to learn how to work together effectively at different scales (e.g. local, regional, transnational) and how to effectively engage with the changing socio-material context in order to pursue their stated goals. Empirical evidence in TRANSIT suggests that initiatives are aware of the importance of these learning processes and they actively shape them, both internally (within the initiative) and externally, to achieve a series of objectives that they reflexively define. Formal and informal reflexive processes are a key part of social learning efforts.

However, although promoting social learning is hailed as a key dimension of transformative agency by social innovators, there is a blatant lack of research and evidence regarding the characteristics of learning processes, contexts and actors, as well as of its outcomes in terms of capacities for effective agency in social innovation initiatives. Also, little research is available on the wider societal learning processes that social innovation initiatives might attempt to promote in their efforts to challenge, alter or replace institutions and the outcomes such processes might have on actually achieving transformative change. TRANSIT has taken up the challenge to propose an organizing framework for social learning in social innovation initiatives that would bring conceptual clarity and open up possibilities for their reflexive monitoring and assessment by researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.

Initial conceptualizations of social learning came from psychological studies of individual processes of learning and the social influences that explained the acquisition of values, norms and behaviour. Early studies of learning through imitation of models and the observation of the consequences of others´ behaviour (Bandura, 1977), or through active experimentation (Kolb,1984, 2001) pointed to the fundamental social nature of learning, highlighting the mechanisms through which social values and frames for behaviour are transmitted from generation to generation, and pointing to the active rather than passive nature of learning through the constant reformulation of the meaning of one´s experiences. These studies also stressed the role of *social interactions* in the construction of the meaning of individual experience. Posing the question of how more radical individual transformation might be promoted by learning processes, theories of transformational learning (Mezirow, 1990, 1997) contributed insights into how deep changes in values, beliefs and behaviour might lead to autonomous, liberated and pro-active individuals that can then imagine and pursue radically different courses of action, thus becoming effective agents in processes of transformative social change.

Understanding how individuals become liberated from internalized dominant institutions, and how they elaborate them through processes of integration and identification (Haxeltine et al., 2016, Ryan and Deci, 2000) provides a basis for conceptualizing agency in social innovation and for providing an answer to the question of how new frames and ideas for solutions to pressing societal problems are possible in the first place. However, transformative social innovation also requires an understanding of how collectives learn and adopt new ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing. Organizational studies provide insight into how groups and organizations learn through

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

interaction and collaboration, and have looked at the types of social interactions that provide the context for learning to take place (Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Such studies stress the importance of *learning contexts*, as spaces where stakeholders meet and engage and also focus on the governance structures that shape them. Appropriate social learning spaces are considered to be those that create the adequate conditions to link experiences, reflection, interaction and experimentation between individuals and groups (Reed et. al., 2010; Armitage, 2008; Bess et al, 2011) as well as making connections with other communities (Blackmore, 2012). Through the "Communities of Practice" approach, such learning contexts have become institutionalized in domains as diverse as health, police services, farming, environmental regulation and management or education.

Beyond particular organizations or policy domains, political theories analysing democratic processes have included social learning in explanations of social change. Habermas's theory of communicative action (1984) has stressed the public´s capacity to solve problems of societal relevance, by stressing the fact that actors in society seek to reach common understandings and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than undertake strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals. Based on this, it has been argued that social learning requires the creation or enhancement of a social space for "communicative action", for example, through new social movements. In this way, social learning may contribute to the changing of social networks and institutional structures, through the deliberation and negotiation of new rules, norms and power relations (Rist et al., 2007 in Reed et al, 2010). The analysis carried out in social innovation initiatives within TRANSIT shows that, beyond rules for negotiation and deliberation that encourage equality, having each voice heard and participation, such spaces also need to encourage active experimentation with alternatives. Creating effective conditions for experimentation and for the translation of lessons learnt into strategies for action are important outcomes of social learning processes.

Many contemporary societal challenges such as economic and environmental crises, are characterized by complexity and uncertainty, and require collective problem-solving and decision-making in order to avoid drastic consequences. Accounting for the lack of clear positions on issues that are nevertheless personally and collectively relevant, a recent school of thought has defined social learning as a process of social change, in which learning takes place in interaction and in ways that can benefit social-ecological systems (Folke et al., 2005; Reed et al., 2010). Adopting this position, an extensive body of literature has analysed social learning processes in natural resource management such as water, land, or wildlife (Ison, 2013; Ison et al, 2007, Palh-Wostl et al, 2013; Schusler et al., 2003; Brummel et al. 2010; (Measham, 2009; Webler et al., 1995; Dedeurwaerdere, 2009; Buck et al, 2001; Wollenberg et al, 2000: Blatner et al, 2001). Social learning is conceptualized as both action and reflection which may enhance environmental resilience and adaptive capacity through involvement (Reed et al., 2010), experimentation and reflective practice in decision making processes (Armitage et al., 2008; Borowski & Pahl-Wostl, 2008; Muro & Jeffrey, 2008; Reed et al, 2010; Rodela et al, 2012; Rodela, 2013).

Within this collaborative and adaptive management framework, social learning has been defined as "the collective action and reflection that takes place among both individuals and groups when they work to improve the management of the interrelationships between social and ecological systems" (Keen et al., 2005:4). The contextual nature of social learning processes is emphasized, in terms of the places in which they occur, the experiences from which they arise, and the cultures with which they are associated (Keen & Mahanty, 2006). A similar approach has been applied to the analysis of transitions and strategic niche management (Raven, Van den Bosch & Weterings, 2010; Pesch, 2015) highlighting the crucial role of reflexive learning for facing social challenges and stimulating sustainability transitions (Schäpke et al, 2013).

In efforts towards further conceptual clarification, different types or objects of learning have been identified by studies within the field of natural resource management. Also following the theory of

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

transformational learning (Mezirow, 1990, 1991), Pahl-Wostl and colleagues (2007, 2013) proposed two different categories/types of learning: a) a theoretical/instrumental type, which implies the acquisition of new knowledge or skills through task-oriented problem solving and determination of cause and effect relationships, and b) communicative learning (related to understanding and reinterpreting knowledge through communication with others) that may lead to change in attitudes, values, beliefs, worldviews, and social norms, considered a requirement in sustainability transitions (Pahl-Wostl *et al*., 2008).

Besides processes, contexts and mechanisms of learning, different outcomes are emphasized as relevant in the social learning literature, ranging from the development of liberated, autonomous and socially responsible individuals with a capacity to move from critical thinking to action within the "communities of practice" approach (Armitage, et al, 2008; Kitchenham, 2008), to deep shifting in societal worldviews, including underlying norms and values, power structures and new regulatory frameworks (Pahl-Wostl et al, 2013).

In spite of the intense proliferation of analyses of social learning, a critical review of the literature undertaken recently has identified three key problems that impede conceptual clarity: confusions between the concept of social learning and the methods or conditions necessary to facilitate it, such as stakeholder participation; between the process and the outcomes of social learning (e.g. improvement management of social-ecological systems, enhanced trust, adaptive capacity, empowerment, etc.); and little distinction between individual and wider social learning (Reed et al., 2010). In order to differentiate between the processes or mechanisms of social learning and their effects, and to bring further conceptual clarity, the authors propose a definition of social learning as "a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units or communities of practice through social interactions between actors within social networks" (p.4-5).

This definition provides a good starting point for explorations of social learning processes in contexts of social innovation. We agree with Reed et al (2010) that social learning processes need to be separated from contexts and methods that facilitate it as well as from the outcomes sought through such processes; that a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual is required, and we consider that this should be studied at two different levels in social innovation: within the initiative/network – which already constitutes a wider social unit; and in the interaction between the social innovation initiatives/networks and the wider social context, especially focusing on how SI initiatives actively promote social learning in their efforts to fulfil their goals, at different scales (e.g. a local community, a particular political region or entity, a globally connected society etc.). Finally, we agree with Reed et al (2010) that social interactions between actors are a key differentiating element of processes of social learning, as opposed to individual learning.

However, we further argue that in the context of transformative social innovation, social learning goes beyond a change in understanding that becomes situated in wider social units, to include a change in the quality and type of relations among actors, which encompasses changes in collective meanings/understandings, the reshaping of identities, and new rules and norms of interaction. What follows from this addition is that contexts of learning thus need to facilitate experimentation with, reflection on, emotional learning and personal growth, and negotiation of new relations; the types/objects of learning have to include the development of relational and strategic/political types of knowledge beyond theoretical/instrumental and communicative forms, and the analysis of social learning outcomes would shift from an emphasis on new understandings and capacities for action, to the establishment of new relations between different societal actors. Finally, the social learning literature provides little mention of the different actors that play a role in such processes and the different functions they fulfil. We will discuss social learning actors within the context of social innovation initiatives.

The next sections will describe the empirical approach to the study of social learning and present the integrated framework used for the analysis of results.

4. Studying social learning in transformative social innovation initiatives

The TRANSIT project uses an embedded case study approach to ground and develop a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation (TSI). The analysis of the empowerment of (networked) actors, the processes through which they gain the capacities towards influencing the co-evolutionary process of transformation revolves around four crosscutting themes: governance, social learning, resourcing and monitoring (Jørgensen et al., 2014, chap. 6).

Research methodology consisted of case-study document analysis, empirical observation and in-depth interviews with practitioners and other relevant social actors (Jørgensen et al., 2014; Wittmayer et al, 2015c). The semi-structured questionnaire that guided the interviews contained questions specifically targeting the complex processes of social learning in terms of the existing types of learning, actors, processes of transference and learning outcomes (Jørgensen et al, 2014). Specifically, TRANSIT researchers looked for the relationship between social learning and individual and collective agency and empowerment -understood as an instrumental manifestation of agency- (Wittmayer et al., 2015c) that occurs within the SI-initiative/SI-network and beyond the SI-initiative/SI-network (the broader context).

We adopted a deductive-inductive approach to the analysis of the empirical data gathered in the 20 case-studies. First, we reviewed the existing literature as outlined in Section 3, which led to differentiating between: a) objects or types of learning b) contexts or spaces of learning, including the governance arrangements that characterize them; c) methods intended to promote social learning (e.g. deliberation, linking experience and reflection etc.); and d) outcomes of learning. Based on TRANSIT definition of transformative social innovation, entailing a change in social relations which involves new ways of knowing, framing, organizing and doing, we focused attention on how spaces, methods, types of learning and outcomes contribute to achieving the preconditions for effective agency, which includes new understandings, the generation of possibilities to experiment with alternatives, especially in terms of new social relations, and building adaptive capacity to dynamic circumstances in the social context.

Secondly, we proceeded to an analysis of empirical data obtained through semi-structured qualitative interviews in two case studies: Slow Food Araba, Slow Food Freiburg and Slow Food International- the headquarter organization of the Slow Food movement; and Fiare Banca Etica (Spain) and Febea, the European Federation of Credit Cooperatives and Ethical Banks. Specific sections of the analysis have also been enlarged with empirical data from an ecovillage case study (see Box 1 for a description of the three cases). Additionally, we have used qualitative data from participant observation and document analysis. Interviews were content-analysed in terms of the categories of social learning phenomena described above. Analysis was carried out inductively at first, grouping content into emerging categories of analysis in the tradition of modified versions of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). We then used the analytical framework to check for consistency with categories encountered in the empirical data. This resulted in adding subcategories, as well as to the creation of a new category of types of actors that play a key role in social learning for transformative social innovation. Table 1 describes the final analytical framework we arrived at through this process, and signals which elements were added as a result of the empirical analysis of the two case studies. Finally, a last step was included where the analytical framework was checked by using the reports of the remaining 18 TRANSIT case study reports, and social learning content as reported by case study researchers was matched to the analytical

framework, which led to further confirmation of its validity. Next, analyses of social learning dimensions are illustrated with examples from the three empirical case studies presented in Box 1.

Box 1. Description of empirical case studies

Slow Food International Association[1] is a global, grassroots organization, based in Bra (Italy), which has 100.000 members and one million supporters in 160 countries around the world. **Slow Food** acts as an umbrella organization for its local groups ("convivia") that work to promote a new food system that changes systems of food production, consumption and distribution in both the global North and the global South. **Slow Food** pursues cultural, environmental and social goals built around the right to food, food sovereignty and biodiversity protection. In this paper we present results of the case study on the International Association of Slow Food and two local manifestations: the Spanish convivium "Slow Food Araba-Vitoria" (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country) and the German convivium "Slow Food Freiburg" (Germany).

Credit unions and financial cooperatives are initiatives that aim to create a framework for an alternative financial system that is member-owned, with the potential to operate a profound change in traditional economic systems. Empirical illustrations in this paper will also be provided from the study of focused on FEBEA (European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks) and the Spanish initiative FIARE BANCA ETICA.

The Global Ecovillage Network was founded in 1995 as a bottom-up network of ecovillages around the world and has about 400 local ecovillages as members worldwide, including approximately 130 in Europe. With a great variety of ecovillage concepts, a common characteristic is the aim at providing realistic, holistic experiences in sustainable and community-based living often including small scale economy, communal property of land, commons and local gardening. Ecovillages illustrate an indirect societal impact by teaching their best practice methods. In ecovillages social learning is a main target with transformative ambition, expressed in the key description of an ecovillage the international board of GEN agreed upon in 2012: "An ecovillage is an intentional or traditional community that is consciously designed through locally owned, participatory processes to regenerate social and natural environments." (GEN int. board 2012). **Schloss Tempelhof** is a young and popular ecovillage in Southern Germany with an own innovative school and a large seminar centre.

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1 Quotes from Slow Food International Association will be introduced in the analysis as "SFI". Quotes from Slow Food Araba Vitoria will be cited as "SFAV".

transformative **s**ocial **in**novation **t**heory

Table 1. Analytical framework to the analysis of social learning in transformative social innovations

Analytical framework to the analysis of social learning in TSI	
Types of learning	**Cognitive learning** **Inner, personal transformation and emotional learning** **Relational learning** • Supporting high-quality motivation of members • Learning to participate in cooperative decision-making • Developing communication and leadership skills • Intercultural learning • Learning with and between different social milieus **Strategic/political learning**
Learning environments	**Physical/spatial spaces and contexts** that (intentional or unintentionally) enhance enjoyment and social interaction **Institutionalized educational programs** **Virtual learning spaces**
Methods of learning	**Re-framing valuable knowledge** **Self-oriented learning and collective experimentation** **Deliberation (reflexive learning)**
Outcomes of social learning	**Changes in understandings and framing that lead to narratives of change** **Changes in the qualities and characteristics of social relations** **Empowerment** **Changes in behaviours and strategies for action**
Learning actors	**Inspirational leaders and visionaries**
Promoting wider societal learning	**Changes in societal worldviews and deep values (new ways of framing)** **Changes in norms and institutions** **Changes in ways of doing (practices and behaviours)** **Changes in social cultures** **New actionable capacities**

4.1. Types of learning

The first question to answer when inquiring into social learning and its relationship to transformative agency regards what SI initiatives need to learn in order to become potentially effective agents of change. The empirical analysis in TRANSIT reveals three types of learning that play a role in SI initiatives´efforts to reach their goals of bringing about change: cognitive; relational and strategic/political.

4.1.1. Cognitive learning

In order to build an alternative to existing social and institutional arrangements, and to articulate a coherent vision and theory of change, members of social innovation initiatives often need to acquire specific knowledge that can lead to a change in their understandings of how current institutions and systems work and how action needs to be organized to promote change. This type of social learning is actively promoted by SI initiatives both within and outside their membership, in order for meaningful participation in the construction of the alternative, as well as new ways of doing and organizing to be possible.

The **Slow Food Movement** promotes learning about the food system through a "new paradigm for the global food system" (Slow Food, 2013)*,* a new theoretical discourse that needs to be comprehended by its own members. Practitioners acquire new conceptual knowledge concerning the global food system and the alternative model that Slow Food proposes (why and how "good, clean and fair" food can be produced; how to achieve food sovereignty; the economic impact of food system organization on rural areas etc). They learn about the relationship between current food production and distribution and climate change (e.g. transport footprint of food, principles of biodiversity etc) and what makes food environmentally sustainable and healthy, which in turn contributes to a change in their overall vision of the food system. In the words of one practitioner:

> "Basically, Slow Food allowed me to value the products we are consuming. I began to appreciate gastronomy in my adulthood. I am aware now that when we eat a pineapple, we know that pineapple has travelled thousands of kilometres. We know that there are no local tomatoes in November. That this tomato we eat now is no longer a seasonal product. Slow Food opened my eyes. Life is full of these apparently small details. But as human beings we need to eat three times a day, so it´s really not a trivial issue" (SFAV_03).

Besides a change of understanding about the food system, such cognitive learning also leads to a re-framing of the roles of different actors within the food system:

> "The possibility of a direct contact between producer and consumer gives both new opportunities for learning on how to play their respective roles better. From what the consumers ask, the producer learns how to satisfy them best; from what the producer answers, the consumer learns information about nature, about the labour that goes into a food — and also how to evaluate that food and what a fair price for it should be" (Scaffidi, 2010:2[2]).

The advantages of direct contacts to producers for Slow Food members include the possibility of taking personal insight into the conditions of production. Learning by doing and while experiencing is another way how Slow Food Freiburg improves the cognitive learning success. While guests were

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2 Intervention of Cinzia Scaffidi, current Vice-president of Slow Food Italy and Director of Slow Food Study Centre in the Seminar on "The development of a sustainable food supply chain as a factor in the integrated development of urban and rural areas", organized by the Committee of Regions in Poland, on Monday 13 September 2010. Retrieved from: http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/highlights/documents/1d8b84fb-b8a0-4387-bba3-b465443b31bb.doc

waiting for the first course at a Slow Food diner, the farmer explained details about potatoes, based on his own farming experience.

In the case of **Credit Unions**, considering the nature and objectives of the initiative, members and volunteers require specific and extended knowledge on ethical finances, bank management, and social and solidarity economy principles in order to meaningfully participate in management work, decision-making processes or internal debates. Credit unions are normally run by people who have no previous formal training in economics or finance. They had to learn the basic rules regarding the functioning of the financial system, and leaders make an enormous effort to transmit that knowledge to their partners and newcomers.

> "Most people had no knowledge in Economics or Finance. We did not know what we were getting into. We were eager to learn, to understand how a bank operates. It was very positive. I do not know to what extent we were irresponsible, starting this without knowledge. But we enjoyed that process of learning, and this is a shared view, this is what other people tell me as well" (Fiare_04).
> "In order to be able to introduce our project, in our GIT (N.A: Fiare´s local manifestations) we dedicate some sessions to inform members about and debate the principles of Fiare, ethical finances, the characteristics and differences with other traditional forms of banking. We did this as group work, with more volunteers; it was exciting and very fulfilling. I had never talked in public before, but I can do it now, and it was also a personal milestone" (Fiare_03).

Such learning is closely related to meaningful participation in the shaping of the initiative and in engaging in efforts towards transformative change. Decision-making is only possible on the basis of content knowledge and abilities to elaborate proposals and defend certain positions. Finance and banking do not constitute common knowledge. If lack of knowledge leads to feeling excluded from internal debates, their motivation and involvement is likely to diminish. This preoccupation is often manifested by interviewees, when they reflect about the need of keeping people "engaged and active" in the initiative:

> "Finances are not only for the smart people, professionals or experts. Everybody in FIARE should participate in relevant decisions. Members must be knowledgeable of the issues that are up for discussion. Otherwise participation would be a lie" (Juan Garibi, 2014[3]).

Social learning is a main core of ecovillages because:

- Ecovillage members live & work together, run a community-based governance, collective decision making, shared property (cooperative, association, foundation), and commons
- In ecovillages formal structures are based on informal social relations
- The glue of ecovillages is social relation illustrated in the estimated number of 95% of new ecovillage attempts that 'fail' in first 5 years because of social inner conflicts. In the following, the remaining approximatelly5% that manages to stay as unorganized, sustainable community and includes the realization of major outcomes of social learning, shall be referred to as 'successful'.
- Therefore the remaining successful ecovillages have learnt how to 'work' on social relations and develop social competencies for their stability and survival.
- Having developed successful methods of interaction and reflection many of them are teaching and disseminating these practices in their seminar centers and abroad thus promoting ecovillages to other contexts.

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3 Intervention of Juan Garibi, director of FIARE Banca Ética in FIARE´s Info Day, holded in Lugo (Spain) on 18th October 2014. Participant observation notes taken by the authors (source: Dumitru et al, 2015).

4.1.2. Inner, personal transformation and emotional learning

During our observation and interviews we noticed that self-reflection, personal transformation and emotional learning were of high value for a number of people in the initiatives. While this area is given meaning on a very personal and subjective level, it is hardly expressed in the movement officially, except for instance the 'well-being, heart and soul working groups' of the transition town movement[4].

> "Changing our worldview from separate to interconnected, from scarcity thinking to enough for all, from competitive to collaborative, all form part of the Inner Transition landscape. As individuals, we may experience a wide range of emotions as we imagine and work to build the future we want – or fear of a future much worse."[5]

From their point of view and many other individuals in the initiatives social learning includes questioning own attitudes, imprints and growing over oneself in relation to social interaction (Tempelhof_1).

Even when there is no official statement from the initiative on personal growth and emotional learning, in the ecovillage Schloss Tempelhof, for instance, the formal tools and spaces for personal development are established by the WE-process and the social forum (Kunze et al. 2015). The interviewees say that social learning also includes de-learning of old stereotypes and habits and to be really open for listening to and understanding others (Tempelhof 1,2,6). Community is a field for 'rubbing'. It is seen as a promoter for personal growth. Tempelhof has cultivated a field where people mirror each other in daily life.

> "If you are on your ego-trip, you can be sure that someone gently tells you about it." (Tempelhof_6)

> „After my craftsman work, talking about my sensitivities in the social circles in the evening is not easy for me as a man. I also take a distance and clarify things for myself. But I also enjoy those processes if I am awake, then I do need to take care of going there. It is still exhausting for me – even after three years now" (Tempelhof_4).

Members of the ecovillages in Schloss Tempelhof and Tamera (Kunze et al. 2015), as well as in many other communities, repeatedly emphasize that one can only live in such a community if he or she is willing to change her/himself. The collective transformation towards a new 'we-culture' also includes the ongoing transformation of every single member 'from a rough to a gentle individualist' (Peck 2005).

At its conferences, the **GEN** team is highly motivated to create an atmosphere of trust and openness which invites people to share even deep emotions. At our visit to the GEN Europe Conference (summer 2014 at ZEGG ecovillage), we witnessed emotionally moving moments in the plenary session with more than 400 people.

> "The emotional level is crucial. "The Forum" is central as a learning method for going through your own processes. Singing and massaging each other: these are small non-mental activities." (GEN5)

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4   https://transitiontownmedia.org/volunteer/working-groups/heart-soul-working-group/

5 https://transitionnetwork.org/support/inner-transition/about-inner-transition

transformative social innovation theory

Ecovillages believe in a long-term approach of cultural change and small scale resilience. An important element of their narrative of change is to start with oneself and then unite to build resilient communities. Ecovillages are passionate about changing individual mind-sets and to support personal development towards more responsibility, cooperative behaviour and empowerment. As a GEN member living in Findhorn formulates it:

> "We do a lot of sharing: Being heard, sitting in a circle; the sharings can go very deep… issues, dragons, backgrounds. Some people and guests say it is the first time they feel really heard… an atmosphere, very open hearted… it is mind-blowing and heart-blowing… a lot of people go away completely transformed." (GEN2)

In a nutshell we conclude from our interviews and observation that individuals in the initiatives can be emotionally triggered and use the chance for emotional and personal growth. Initiatives like ecovillages and transition towns offer forums to work on emotional growth which appears as a fundamental precondition for social learning.

4.1.3. Relational learning

As mentioned earlier, social innovation entails a change in social relations. New social relations require learning to relate in ways that rely on different values than the current institutional arrangements allow for. For a social innovation initiative to be maintained or to grow over time, attracting membership and sustaining motivation for involvement is necessary. Furthermore, being a member of an SI initiative entails participating in equalitarian decision-making processes, which in turn requires ability for dialogue and consensus-reaching; cooperation, which ~~in turn~~ relies on trust building, conflict resolution and communication skills; and leadership in designing strategies to achieve goals.

Supporting high-quality motivation of members
Based on research in self-determination theory, we have argued elsewhere that autonomous forms of motivations are maintained if basic psychological needs are satisfied in a social innovation initiative (Haxeltine et al., 2016). It has been previously signalled that SI initiatives learn to shape their contexts in ways that support such need satisfaction (Reznickova & Zepeda, 2016). Our empirical research in TRANSIT points to the fact that relational learning entails understanding of how to create environments and relate in ways that lead to the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence.

The local initiative of Slow Food in Araba-Vitoria learned to create environments that contribute to friendship and conviviality, thus contributing to the satisfaction of relatedness needs:

> "Something fundamental is to ensure an environment where people have a good time. (People like) going home with the satisfaction what they done well. We are happy with our (volunteering) work, we have made friends and we had dinner" (SFAV_01);

> "I thought about giving up many times. But you feel their support, which gives you strength to keep going. Seeing that you are well received, how they look me, that feeling, that encourages me, it motivates me to keep going" (SFAV_05).

Slow Food are also spaces where practitioners feel free to start, conduct or participate in meaningful projects that make a difference in local conditions and contribute to them developing a sense of mastery, thus bringing satisfaction to both the need for autonomy as well as the need for competence:

> "If I could make a change or have an impact I had to do it and I was able to use the Slow Food name as my organization and so…I think Slow Food gave me the freedom to express myself, to bring my skills and talents out. You know I love the garden, I love to cook and I love to teach. Well, that's what I'm doing right now in the School Garden program. I am teaching kids how to garden, cook and teaching teachers how to teach (…) I am not working for a company that has strict policies. Slow Food lets me do it in a lot of different ways (…) I have a lot of freedom, and it's been an opportunity for me to become a leader" (SFI_06).

As illustrated in the following quotes, credit cooperatives support enhance feelings of competence through promoting conditions for active participation that leads to learning

> "A main value of this project (Fiare) is its vocation for transformation and social inclusion through the credit. Hence, the priority areas of work are solidarity economy, environmental sustainability and supporting cooperatives (…). This project involves the active participation of people and organizations that put their savings in the service of an alternative bank. Fiare is a financial instrument in the hands and for the service of citizenship; transparency and participation are the blueprints of our identity" (Fiare-Galicia, 2014).

The members of Fiare are proud of their capacity for transforming the economic system, and supporting (local) social and solidarity economy by means of credit:

> "We have demonstrated that normal people are able to create a bank, which is also a tool of empowerment, because it shows that individuals can change society. Until now, we were just people working together, but we realized that (through the cooperative) we could be and change much more" (Fiare_03).

Members of ecovillages under study said they had to learn to work on their social competences and communication skills in order to improve community management and to be able to reach consensus decisions. Because of the strong influence of every single member within the decision making process, ecovillages have further elaborated diverse conflict resolution techniques (Kunze 2012). Members of 'successful' ecovillages learn in daily life interaction and courses how to co-manage a community, including conflict resolution through practicing challenging negotiation processes. These processes are based on democratic principles, mutual understand, empathy and individual learning. A lot of time is spent on community and relationship building processes as fundamental for decision-making: "what I have learned here is to stay in contact, also if I disagree with you; To communicate directly, openly and honestly" (Tempelhof_4).

Learning to participate in cooperative decision-making
Building a grassroots credit cooperative requires "a lot of patience, consensus, reflection and capacity of team-work" (Fiare_09). As one of the long-term volunteers of Fiare assures, "society does not have ability for dialogue; there is a lack of social skills and group participation" (Fiare_02). Credit Unions consider participation in decision-making processes and collective activities as a means to train such skills:

> "Febea is an inspiring learning space regarding legal principles, the structure of banks or what it means to have a plurality of owners and function as a cooperative. We also learned quite a lot about the importance of a presence on the ground, of having volunteers and involving them in the bank processes, so that they can contribute in the assessment of the projects and the assessment of loans, in the control and verification of the output and the result of projects, and there are a lot of nice examples that you could look at" (Febea_05).

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

A number of social innovations put special emphasis on educating their members for cooperation, conflict resolution and gaining social competences (e.g. ecovillages – Avelino & Kunze 2015; Transition Towns – Longhurst and Pataky, 2015).

Good cooperation requires **building trust,** as reflected in the experience of the Spanish Credit Union Fiare. For instance, the agreement between *Fiare Foundation* and the Italian credit cooperative *Banca Popolare Etica* and their posterior merge was possible after a long-term relationship (favoured by their participation in the network Febea) that enabled, at the same time, a close and continuing interaction between volunteers and members of both initiatives.

Trust-building and cooperation are also supported by strategies to **develop new identities that unite rather than divide.** Slow Food uses an intentional symbolic and persuasive rhetoric discourse that connects with human needs and emotional engagement. Motivational discourses stress elements of a common identity, or the feeling of being part of a "global community" that dreams and work together:

> "Actually, we are not inventing anything new...because sustainable farming was already there before...biodiversity was already there before...community supported agriculture is not our idea...maybe, the different thing we offer is that we dream together, all the people who are engaged in sustainable food and farming, we have created an international network of people who shares a dream; and we collaborate at both local and global level too, to change the food system" (SFI_02).

Developing communication and leadership skills
The following illustrates how Slow Food fosters learning processes that allow members "to bring our skills and talents out" and "make a change or have an impact":

> "Slow Food allows people to develop their leadership skills. I am a good example of that. I knew nothing about food systems ten years ago and now I'm working in schools helping them develop food systems, you know, for the meals that are given to kids, so...and Slow Food gave me the opportunity to become a leader. I was able to take it to certain levels and become effective about it. So I don't believe Slow Food is the doer in making this new food system but we allow the discussions to happen. We create the possibility for people to discuss, and create platforms where people can become leaders and make the change happen" (SFI_06).

In both Slow Food and Credit Unions, practitioners insist on the importance of acquiring communication skills due to their educational mission, which they do through giving talks and participating in public debates, info days, and mass-media interviews.

> "At least the most active people had to learn a lot. We did some training, but I had no idea of economy. Economists are a minority in Fiare. The last years have served to learn a lot and also learn how to communicate. Because it is not only what you know, but the way we transmit our knowledge. It must be in an accessible language, comprehensive to the general public. It is difficult. In public presentations, some colleagues focused more on the ideological part of Fiare. Others focused more on the economic area. It depends on our interest or expertise" (Fiare_09).

Ecovillages purposely intend to live cooperative relations in the community and therefore practice and demand from their members a high degree of interaction and communication including personal openness. Joining an ecovillage often includes a yearlong approaching process for the newcomer to get to know the community and vice versa.

Intercultural learning
GEN has fostered exchange and mutual learning between ecovillages in different countries. Projects in developing countries get support from ecovillages in industrial countries regarding the

application of eco-technologies like solar panels. In return, ecovillages from developing countries teach traditional methods of natural building as well as spiritual and social knowledge about community building, which is often perceived to be missing in industrial countries.

A strong point that GEN activists from Latin America emphasize as social innovative is that GEN fosters respectful approaches of communication between people from the global North and South which enhance mutual learning. They comment on what they find to be innovative about the combination between mostly urban, educated Western people, with traditional, indigenous tribal people:

> "For so long there was such a gap... racism, rejection of the old, colonialism: now there is acknowledgement... that is a really an interesting dynamic, recovering the old medical practices, agricultural techniques, spiritual – there is wealth of knowledge and examples there" (Interview GEN4).

Learning with and between different social milieus
In the case of Slow Food Freiburg, the initiative supports setting for socializing with different milieus, for instance elder people and students, and farmers and academics. Also, an Interviewee of Schloss Tempelhof ecovillage notes that the ecovillage is a place where he slowly witnesses: "How the intellectual class and the working class are approaching each other because people can work in areas different from their traditional profession" (Tempelhof_2).

4.1.4. Strategic/political learning

Strongly connected with relational learning is the strategic and political learning, which refers to the knowledge and skills required to increase the political and social influence of the SI initiative, and increasing their potential and ability for transformative change. Strategic learning for transformative agency includes the creation of good relationships and strategic alliances with a wide range of actors:

> "Slow Food works with different groups, including a neighbourhood of Vitoria, Zabalgara. We approached very well to the topic of urban gardening and school gardens. Slow Food is collaborating with neighbourhood groups, ecologists, etc. There are many platforms. With public administrations the relationship is also excellent. No matters the political colour of the institution. Slow Food has a fantastic reputation; both the County Council and the City Council support us" (SFAV_03)

This capacity for strategic relationship building also contributes to their playing an intermediary role among previously divided actors. SI initiatives learn to engage community actors and the wide society in their activities and strategies, and overcome previous divides in order to achieve their goals and have social impact. Slow Food Araba-Vitoria succeeded in bridging previous divides or relationships of indifference, and establishes collaborations with local third sector and governmental entities to bring new impulse to common sustainability projects:

> "We have managed to combine synergies. Here, there are two environmental organizations that have never collaborated, because they had their suspicions, etc. Now their presidents are both members of Slow Food. We meet them and we do things together. We sit around a table; we enjoy and have fun, and get agreements. For example, now, we have a platform with more than 20 local associations to promote healthy and sustainable food systems in our city" (SFAV_01).

A similar role is played by the Spanish credit cooperative Fiare, which **reunites apparently opposite sides of the civil society** to create a common project as the following interviewee explains:

> "Fiare served to unite groups that, otherwise, would not have come together to do anything. For example, FIARE has unified the two Galician environmental organizations. We joined together the Christian community with the atheists. It was the teamwork of a large and plural range of organizations that greatly enriched the project" (Fiare_09).

Cultivating a position of **inclusiveness** is part of the strategic learning of social innovation initiatives. Many interviewees point to the importance of being inclusive and "not be too radical or strict" in their positions: "we need to be very careful; if you are a fanatic, of if you are excessive in talking about these issues you can be dismissed as a freak, a geek, then one suffers" (SFAV_03).

> "We refuse to settle on just one issue, we want a holistic change to the entire food system, right? What distinguishes us quite a bit is that we are a space where people who have never thought about the food system before are welcome to come and join us for a community parlor, and think for the first time about what the relationship to food is or people who are involved...who are starting their own community, running a farm..." (*SFI_05*)

Such a position of inclusiveness is also manifested in credit cooperatives, whose practitioners consider that it is possible to maintain the philosophy of FEBEA, while also allowing for some flexibility in order to become stronger actors and manage system change:

> "There is an example in France, a bank called *Credit Cooperatif*, which is not an ethical bank, but it has a department of about 20 people who are really working in the social and solidarity sector, so, we decided to accept them as members. This is political thinking (...) there are bigger banks that, nevertheless, have maintained a relationship with the territory, with social and solidarity activities. We need the support of these banks to enter a stage of growing our activity" (Febea_03).

Lobbying capacities are developed by both SI initiatives aiming to gain political influence. Credit Union leaders learned about the importance of becoming a relevant political actor and, as a result, they launched political campaigns to achieve political commitment to ethical banking practices:

> "Febea has an important political role. For the European elections we will ask parliamentary candidates what they think about ethical finance, through the campaign Change Finances to Change Europe" (Ugo Biggeri, 2014[6]).

> "After the European elections, new members of the European Parliament are more sensitive, talk to you, and want us to present things, studies on ethical banking. They ask a lot of things. Just yesterday we were working on a draft about the value of ethical banking and which regulatory frameworks should be changed to protect it. This will be much more effective for us" (Febea_04).

The European network Febea has gained expertise in lobbying European institutions in order to achieve formal recognition of ethical banks and to develop a legal framework that would support them. Such institutional recognition came in the form of a Resolution of the Assembly of Council of Europe on the role of ethical and solidarity-based financing and responsible consumption in social cohesion (Council of Europe, 2007). This public acknowledgement has opened the way to the implementation of social cohesion programmes through financial initiatives funded by the European

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[6]. Intervention of Ugo Biggeri, President of Banca Ética in FIARE´s FIARE's General Assembly, holded in Barcelona (Spain) on March 2014. (source: Dumitru et al, 2015)

Union as well as stimulated negotiations with the European Commission with the purpose of modifying restrictions to ethical and alternative banking:

> "The first question that the Commissioner asked was: what is the difference between an ethical bank and a commercial bank? Febea worked for about a year to establish 30 points of difference, and this information was enough for the Commissioner. Febea is now starting to work on the second question: to establish, at a scientific level, the basis for supporting ethical and alternative banks, the social impact they have. For example, with one million Euros, Febea members will create five times more jobs than a traditional bank would. This means that FEBEA is working on establishing indicators for the social and environmental impact of ethical banks, and this information is more or less ready to be presented to the Commissioner in the next meeting" (Febea_03).

Slow food combines a coherent political discourse with pragmatic proposals, which has been positive appreciated by political institutions, as a spokesperson of the Slow Food liaison office for the European Union explains to us:

> "The way you gain influence has to do with lots of issues (…) I can tell you that, for instance, one officer from the European Commission told me we are one of the few civil society organizations who work directly with people on the ground, with farmers and producers. We can collect these experiences and communicate them to the Commission. The way we work at grassroots level is fundamental because it gives us credibility, together with the political vision. We have both the political vision and the fact that we have experience at the grassroots level and can collect input from our grassroots people. We increase our influence, through better communication, better interaction with civil society…. with all the stakeholders, not necessary only civil society organizations but with stakeholders with whom we are working on the same topics" (SFI_02).

Credit union leaders emphasize the strategic impact of good performance and best practices conducted by ethical banking, as the president of Banca Etica explains:

> "We have to do rigorous work, better that the others banks. A bank uses the money of its clients and has to do it well. It has to consider both economic and social effectiveness, supporting projects which engage social organizations and local networks. The projects that our bank funds are better, the quality of the credit is better than what the traditional banking sector offers, with a high level of commitment and few slow payers" (Ugo Biggueri, 2014[7]).

Besides, initiatives learn about the influence of **mass media** in gaining reputation and acknowledgement.

> "The press. We always call the newspapers, journalist come and take pictures. Last year we organized 72 activities. 40 or 50 were covered by press. It sees the press. We also have a radio program. If three articles talk about you, politicians think that you are important" (SFAV_01).

Credit unions across Europe increase their popularity through increased press coverage, especially in the midst of the financial crisis of 2008, as journalists focused on the successful experience of ethical and alternative banks (presented as an alternative to mainstream baking). For FIARE, the researchers were able to find extended mass media reports, articles in newspapers -including interviews with pioneers-and TV documentaries that have covered the process of creation of the

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7 Intervention of Ugo Biggeri, President of Banca Ética in FIARE´s FIARE's General Assembly, holded in Barcelona (Spain) on March 2014. observation notes taken by the authors (source: Dumitru et al, 2015)

credit union and projects funded by FIARE.

1.1. Learning environments

Learning environments are spaces/contexts in which practitioners interact and new knowledge, skills and abilities are acquired or new relations are developed. When inquiring into processes of social learning, a recurrent theme in the discourse of social innovation initiative members refers to appropriate spaces/contexts for experimentation with new social relations, as well as new ways of knowing, doing, organizing and framing. Both physical/spatial characteristics as well as social and symbolic dimensions are considered important. Social learning is promoted through sharing of spaces and activities that promote free interaction and interchange of ideas as well as common reflection on values, goals and strategies. The co-shaping of the rules governing these spaces already constitutes experimentation with new social relations, entailing new ways of knowing, doing, organizing and framing.

Some spaces are fluid and flexible and learning is not necessarily pursued as an explicit objective. They are shaped in ways that enable emergent, spontaneous interactions that lead to learning and at the same time are experienced as natural, self-driven, fun, non-constrained, and autonomous. Slow Food leaders highlight the necessity of creating adequate spaces for conviviality, knowledge sharing and engagement. The Slow Food movement claims that knowledge transmission is an act of "conviviality" that can take place through the sharing of food: "getting together around a table not only to share a meal but also to talk and discuss and indulge in social relations. Conviviality enables the "shaping of ideas and agreements and the creation of affective bonds, promotes friendship, and reinforces the pursuit of common good and the capacity of every person to shape his or her own future" (Slow Food, 2012:15-16).

Spaces/contexts for social learning promote enjoyment and social interaction as a way to reach new understandings and to support motivation for maintained involvement. Slow Food leaders have learned that enjoyable sharing activities are needed to keep the project alive, attract new members, maintain motivation and reinforce group cohesion:

> "Many people who first become involved with slow food are more interested in enjoying themselves, eating and having fun, but things change when they participate in our activities with children, students or producers. After a while, their interest shifts to about 60 % for the sustainability aspect of our projects and 40 % for enjoying food and having fun, because they learn a lot and change their minds" (SFAV_01).

Slow Food local initiatives have developed innovative and experiential learning activities (for both practitioners and non-members) which take various forms: food and wine tastings, visits to farms and agricultural production sites, cooking clubs, conferences, workshops and dinners with producers.

> "Our visits and fieldtrips aim to establish contact with artisans and food producers, in order to know their problems and place their products on the market. By pursuing direct information, you may find ways to avoid the traps of the current food system. A system that decreases our decision-making capacity in relation to food, imposing culinary standards and food habits that reduce, and even eliminate, much of the cultural and culinary diversity of our society" (SFAV_01).

> "Last weekend we organized an event called "we feed the planet" with more than 2000 young farmers from across the globe (...) They were basically establishing collaborations, discussing solutions, from farming to solutions in terms of how to encourage civil society to dream about change, and about alternatives" (SFI_02).

Spaces/contexts that promote face-to-face encounters, the sharing of meaningful experience with others confronting the same difficulties in other places and the establishment of trust, are considered to be conducive to social learning. Credit Unions practitioners constantly emphasize the importance of learning spaces -especially those that enable physical encounters like international conferences- that provide the opportunity to meet and know each other, learn from other experiences and partners, and reinforce trust. Credit Union practitioners stress the emotional significance of social initiatives as spaces where one could meet with like-minded others, and feel part of a group of peers. Becoming part of a network and participating in networking events is considered a 'crucial' part in processes of social learning and in identifying common strategies and possibilities for collaboration that might increase their transformative potential:

> "Becoming a member of Febea enabled us to get in contact and establish "a trustworthy relationship with the Italian credit union Banca Popolare Etica, sharing knowledge, expertise and finally sharing the same project" (Fiare_07).

> "We learned a lot. It is mutual learning. One can see it from the first assembly in Barcelona. All the board of Banca Popolare Etica was there. Many Italian members come here. We saw a lot of interest from both sides (i.e: Italian and Spanish). They meet you, they know you, and you talk to them. This is the most important part of these meetings, meeting people, both for the Spaniards as for the Italians" (Fiare_01).

Some practitioners recognize that, as a consequence of the personal contact with other European ethical banks, their banking model became "a sort of combination" of the best practices that they have learned from FEBEA, "with their own innovation" (Febea_05):

> "I really like how BANCA ETICA is dealing with the alternative social market, how they are able to have very low default rates through very simple methods, having volunteers who are reporting back to people, taking this as a part of integral risk assessment approaches for example. It was quite impressive to see how alternative banks in Switzerland receive support and they finance housing cooperatives and invest in green energy and how to basically create value without any or almost any risk from those kinds of investments; the management of a large social cooperative, with hundreds of thousands of members. The German GLS Bank experiences with local currencies, where they are working introducing them to several municipalities; We have learned a lot about ethics, what criteria to look at, what kind of assessments in the projects we will have priorities just from the practice of others and this kind of things" (Febea_05).

In addition to being a place for knowledge and experience exchange, the network Febea forged new business relations to support existing European initiatives and to encourage the growth of new initiatives in the field of solidarity finance. Examples of this are a number of financial tools created by Febea or their member:

> "In this sense, six members of FEBEA are creating a new European financial cooperative called "TAMA" (There Are More Alternatives) with the aim of providing spaces for social investment for people interested in supporting social economy projects in the European context" (Febea_04).

The most intense learning space including a strong impulse for changing of behaviour is living together in a community space with purposeful rules, for instance on sustainable living, cooperative interaction and collaboration in daily life like in ecovillages. Membership rules, newcomer processes and internal, protected spaces for communication enable the members to learn and share deeper issues. In ecovillages like Schloss Tempelhof the experimental space is allowing members to informally try out new jobs. The residents state to easily have the chance to learn new occupations because of three reasons: First, the community offers an informal frame to join "friends" at their work places and get professional advice more informally. Second, there are lots of opportunities for

everyone to contribute like in agriculture, cooking for more than 100 people or facilitating meetings. Third the barrier to try out something new is low because an attitude of empathy is cultivated where failing is accepted based on the trust and broader knowledge of each other (Tempelhof_1).

Participating in common projects also becomes a social learning space/context in which sharing knowledge and experiences is the learning method. This is observed not only in Credit unions and Slow Food but also in Transition Towns (Longhurst and Pataki, 2015), Time Banks (Weaver et al, 2015) and Desis network (Cipolla, Afonso and Joly, 2015) among others. Information transparency, peer-to-peer cooperation and participatory decision-making rules are characteristics of social learning contexts in SI initiatives (as observed by members of Inforse, Credit Unions, Ecovillages and HackerSpaces (Elle et al, 2015; Dumitru et al, 2015; Kunze & Avelino, 2015; Hielscher, Smith and Fressoli, 2015).

Some initiatives – in special Impact-Hubs and Fab Labs- further highlight sharing the same working space as conducive to social learning. Members spontaneously exchange experiences and information, develop common projects such as free software/hardware innovations in Hacker-Spaces (Hielscher et al, 2015), or become "incubators and facilitators" of learning networks in which individuals are continuously encouraged and nudged into joining activities and are exposed to others that become models and inspiration (Wittmayer, Avelino and Afonso, 2015).

Other **spaces/contexts are intentionally designed** to promote the acquisition of specific knowledge, abilities and competences and these tend to display more formal characteristics. These include educational programs, workshops and seminars, regional or international conferences that are intended to serve to identifiable actors and specific learning objectives. In the case of the Slow Food movement, education has become an important explicit goal that the initiative pursues at local, national and global levels.

Creating inspiring spaces is also conducive to social learning. Getting inspired contributes to enhanced motivation for pursuing the goals of the SI initiative, to the creation of a common identity and to more effective strategies for pursuing their goals. The biannual "Terra Madre Forum" illustrates the relevance of enabling inspiring spaces that gather "thousands of food communities, producers, chefs, academics and students from 160 countries" (Slow food, 2014). Invited lectures are combined with workshops and small group discussions where participants share experiences and learn how others face the same problems, as well as finding new solutions ("real tools") to their problems. Social learning in these inspiring contexts leads to a series of positive outcomes such as empowerment, fuelled by a sense of communion with others sharing the same values, fighting for the same objectives and confronting the same obstacles, maintaining and renewing motivation, which can support them in their local struggles:

> "Terra Madre empowers people to return to their territories. They all say that before they felt lonely, but that after Terra Madre they did no longer feel alone. Slow Food is an international network that understands what they are facing; they meet people who share the same issues and problems that they have to cope with in their countries. This emotional gain has been the core of Terra Madre at first, but I think that we have learnt we need to include and address more issues. The emotion is still very important but we must also provide real tools for people to build things when they return home. We have just organized the young Terra Madre and it was very touching for young activists. Through social networks, we are now able to observe how things keep evolving, how the young people who participated have an ongoing dialogue, they discuss things between them, what they need and so on. For future activities, we will focus on providing them with concrete tools they can use in their countries. Using the fact that they meet face-to-face, not just online" (SFI_04).

The cases we study in TRANSIT differ in their kind of creating and using space. The emphasis of activities can be more on the global network or on the local cases. In terms of creating physical space according to their ideas and culture the local cases show a great variety which has an effect on the

degree and kind of impact to the members' lifestyles and to the local societal structures. Some mainly collaborate virtually and have little physical spaces in limited time frames (durational perspective) where they encounter internally (e.g. hackerspaces, FABLABS) while others trying to manifest their ideas and culture physically (transition towns) and even live together (ecovillages).

Intentional social learning spaces sometimes include **institutionalized high quality training/educational programs**. Examples of that are the "Transition Trainings" developed by the Transition Town network (Longhurst and Pataky, 2015) or the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) programs that the Global Ecovillage Network launches in 42 countries worldwide (Kunze & Avelino, 2015). FabLabs are connected to universities like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in order to develop training courses (e.g. Fab Academy) (Hielscher et al, 2015b). In the case of the Inforse network (Elle et al, 2015), training activities are not only oriented to the members of the initiative but also NGOs and civil society (teaching "future scenarios" techniques to increase resilience to peak oil). Impact Hubs facilitate learning through programs that "give room to structured and unstructured, explicit and implicit learning from and with each other" (Impact Hub School Event in Brasil, Wittmayer, et al, 2015).

Virtual learning spaces have gained relevance in the last years and several initiatives have enlarged their presence on the cloud for educational purposes, Time Banks enable social learning through peer-to-peer exchange conferences and workshops as well as on the online "TnT platform", developed by the hOurworld Timebank network (Weaver et al, 2015). The Impact Hub´s "Hub-Net" (Wittmayer et al, 2015) or Hackerspaces´ website provide shared working spaces for "autodidactic" and "peer-to-peer" learning (Hielscher et al, 2015).

1.2.   Methods of learning

Different learning contexts are characterized by different methods for the facilitation of social learning, depending on the learning culture that social innovations endorse and the specific objectives they set for themselves. Learning methods range from re-framing of the value of different types of knowledge, the facilitation of self-oriented learning and collective experimentation with new ways of doing, relating, organizing, and to creating conditions for deliberation as basis of new forms of decision-making. Through adopting innovative learning methods, SI initiatives aim at developing capacities for reflexivity and adaptation to complex and dynamic social contexts.

1.2.1.   Reframing valuable knowledge

Social learning is strongly enhanced within SI initiatives through processes of peer-to-peer interchange of knowledge as TRANSIT´s researchers identified in numerous cases such as Credit Unions, Slow Food, Time Banks, Impact Hubs, etc. Initiatives engage in a re-framing of what constitutes valuable knowledge, departing from traditional manners to establish expertise and towards a valorisation of practical and experiential knowledge:

> "Slow Food really owns the expertise of people who are not experts, right? So it brings together people who would not think of themselves as experts like for example someone who is a community gardener, he doesn't think he is an expert on urban biodiversity. He doesn't think he's an expert on social relationships necessarily. And that knowledge, based on experience, is exactly the knowledge that is lost in other places so....If we would have met with someone who is a...you know- running a huge Foundation or working for the government or working at a local restaurant and you say- You guys are equal here expressing your opinion...Your opinions have equal value and that's real movement building, right?

which is exciting...But globally you also see it happening, I´ve seen amazing projects appearing and growing in places where people just learn to think differently...They create relationships with each other....they change their bad habits, maybe more importantly they change their social habits...All the way to, you know, very large scale influence like, . you know, the Cattle-Rangers Association where you see wow these people at this level, they want to invest in Slow Food...These big players, they suddenly become interested in ideas that we call today from people who would be kind of left aside if you were only looking at traditional experts" (SFI_05).

Other SI initiatives studied in TRANSIT also engage in such re-framing. In the case of Hacker Spaces, vertical "tutor-pupil" relation disappears in favour of *"non-tutoring relations between peers"* based on autodidactic learning methods *(*Hielscher et al*,* 2015*)*. As the Smith and colleagues observed (2015, non-published report): "values that relate to learning through sharing knowledge and self-teaching become are very quickly visible when spending a day at the Amersfoort Fab Lab (...) Such efforts of sharing knowledge, helping each other to find out things nobody might not know about and encouraging people to learn and experiment for themselves runs through all the machines and activities in the lab" (p.49-50).

1.2.2. Facilitating self-oriented learning and collective experimentation

Most Social Innovation initiatives enable spaces for experimentation in an attempt to provide the right contextual conditions for social learning. Slow Food claims that social learning arises through direct experience and active engagement. The cultivation of the sense of taste or acquisition of knowledge about good, clean and fair food form part of a "broad-reaching educational approach" that involves "cognitive, experiential and emotional dimensions" that makes those involved "feel good and enjoy ourselves" (Slow Food, 2010[8]). Slow Food defends a "hands-on experience" (in school gardens, guided tastings, farm visits, practical workshops, etc.) to offer an insightful approach to food:

"In Slow Food you can learn about the other side of the issues (....) If you want to be active, Slow Food gives you an opportunity to get involved in different activities. If you want just to be a passive learner, either you can join and receive the documents, and the emails and learn from that. If you want to participate, you will have fun with food...because certainly we have a lot of events and a lot of opportunities for people to get involved (SFI_05).

European **credit cooperatives** intentionally provide opportunities for experimentation with "utopic" alternatives to existing social and economic models or systems and with strategies for action to achieve their goals*.* The process of building Fiare (which took almost eleven years) was a ´learning-by-doing´ process that allowed their members to develop flexible adaptation strategies to changing and unforeseen circumstances (e.g. new legal requirements, changes in political support). In the words of one of their pioneers, Fiare emerged from the desire of a group of concerned people who were interested in testing and experimenting with the possibility of creating a bank that truly fulfilled their objectives, expectations and ambitions –which were theoretically discussed for a long time*.*

Following this idea of experimentation, The Fiare Banca Etica is launching the project of "the new economy lab" in Spain with the aim of creating a common networking and public space for

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8 The culture of experimentation is explicit in the Education Manifesto: "Education for Slow Food"(Slow Food, 2010: pp.1-2).

businesses, academia and third sector organizations, which can together evaluate the experiences that are contributing to a new economy in Spain and thus also receive external feedback and inputs on ethical banking activities and possibilities. This initiative has been inspired by the Italian "Laboratorio di Nuova Economia", inspired by the ideas of the economist Antonio Genovesi:

> "We should have imagination to respond to the changing needs of society. The structures we put in place should not limit us to do what we have to do. We should be a "laboratory of constant experimentation". The initiative must be a good place to "fight for the transformation from a sense of justice (…) We want to sit with relevant stakeholders, not only members of Fiare, but also the business sector, organizations that promote innovation and entrepreneurship etc., and ask them what we could do with the credit activity according to them" (Fiare_07).

The presence of an experimental culture is also observable in the case*s* of *e*covillages - which intentionally set an experimental space appropriate to "create heterotopias of a "new culture" of creativity, experimenting, and collaboration" (Kunze & Avelino, 2015:99)- and Transition Towns, that encourage practitioners to follow their own passions and interests. Transition network stimulate people to experiment and create their own projects, providing resources and counselling (Longhurst and Pataky, 2015). The Transition network "is an ongoing social experiment, in which communities learn from each other and are part of a global and historic push towards a better future for ourselves, for future generations and for the planet" (TN, 2014 in Longhurst & Pataki, 2015:13). Some social innovation initiatives attempt to introduce this ´learning by practice´ approach in external institutionalized contexts like education system: "FabLabs are already changing institutions in education (e.g. more hands-on, practice-based learning in schools), investment (e.g. crowd-funding and alternative finance), consumption (e.g. post-consumerist interest in how things are made), knowledge production (e.g. free culture), and other key areas of social life" (Smith et al, 2015b:7).

The idea of **ecovillages as living and learning centres** emerged in the late 90es. Ecovillages can be seen as 'laboratories for sustainable living' (Kunze 2012, Kunze et al. 2015). They create social learning environments in daily life. With the effect to learn by experience and while doing it; an important way of education for visitors in one of the many seminar centres in ecovillages: "We have positive, real examples. Seeing a living example is much more valuable than talking. Living the change." (Interview GEN5).

As a way to support free and creative experimentation, some initiatives – such as Impact hubs, Transition Towns or HackerSpaces, have introduced a culture of "failing is okay", supported through moments of sharing failures. Transition Towns explicitly encourage an experimental ethic where failing is permitted and comprehended as a necessary part of putting in practice new ideas and projects (Longhurst & Pataki, 2015). Going further, Impact Hub organise specific meetings to "exchange failures" (Wittmayer et al, 2015: 41).

1.2.3. Facilitating deliberation

Reflexive learning in SI initiatives is enhanced through participatory environments and democratic (non- vertical) structures that engage practitioners in process of decision-making, providing information and spaces for deliberation and where decisions are reached through discussions and reaching consensus. As TRANSIT researchers observed in most SI initiatives studied, such as Credit Unions, Impact Hub, Ecovillages, Transition Towns, Hablabs, Inforse, etc., SI initiatives develop methods (new social techniques and participatory dynamics) to promote the free expression of ideas

that leads to deliberation – essential element is the encouragement of expression of ideas as well as to innovative processes of community organizing (Longhurst, 2015). Ecovillages have implemented different techniques of innovative facilitation methods for consensus decision-making, conflict resolution and plenary meeting processes (Kunze & Avelino, 2015). Novel governance practices include examples such as "sociocracy" and "The Social Forum" in the Ecovillage Movement (Kunze & Avelino, 2015), "magic anarchism" in Hacklab Barracas (Smith et al, 2015); and "holocracy" in the Impact Hub Amsterdam (Avelino et al, 2015). As Kunze and Avelino (2015) pointed out, ecovillages have developed a range of innovative techniques for fair and participatory decision making processes aiming to avoid conflict over power imbalances, that eventually have spread out or teach to other organizations (e.g. *World Cafe, Think and Listen, Open Space, Mind mapping, Fishbowl, Forum space*).

In their seminar centres these techniques are offered in courses and taught to external visitors. In ecovillage Schloss Tempelhof a general attitude of learning could be observed for instance when several interviewees say, we do not know yet how we solve the challenge of caring for elderly people in our community in several years, but we trust we will find out when the time comes. The ecovillage movement has worked a lot on improving and adapting consensus decision making methods to their needs. Ecovillages like Schloss Tempelhof have proven that the idea of decision making by consensus – sometimes smiled at as utopian – can indeed work. Understanding the larger picture, we observe that successful consensus decision making is related, first, to a system innovation in the ownership structures and, secondly, to social tools of conflict resolution thus constituting social learning outcomes. Supported by clear rules of commitment, power and responsibility, as well as by a culture of non-violent communication, ecovillages have designed methods that have spread out to very different organizations in society.

1.3.   Outcomes of social learning

As already mentioned above, the social learning literature is infused with positive assumptions about outcomes. Empirical research in TRANSIT has focused on the outcomes of social learning in terms of the potential for exercising effective agency in pursuing the initiative goals. We were particularly interested in identifying whether social learning leads to changes in the quality and characteristics of relations, empowerment and changes in capacities for strategic action; and to understand how or through which mechanisms such changes happen. As recent definitions of social learning consider its main outcome to be a change in understandings that become situated in wider social units (Reed et al., 2010, see section c), and changes in understandings are likely to accompany all the other outcomes of interest, we also looked at the effect of social learning processes on how understandings of the social context and of how to engage it change over time, upon reflecting on their experiences.

1.3.1.   Changes in understandings and framing that lead to new narratives of change

As a result of experiences of engagement with the initiative, participants experience changes in their attitudes, values, beliefs and worldviews. Initiatives start out with a set of principles and values founders co-shape and endorse, as well as a theory of change expressed in more or less coherent narratives (Wittmayer et al, 2015b). These are further shaped over time, through collective reflexive processes and by adapting to a dynamic social context and through elaboration of their experiences in pursuing their goals. Such processes of elaboration of and reflection upon experiences of

interaction with the social context lead to new visions of certain systems, of relationships between different institutional actors, and of the causes and consequences of specific actions.

The Slow Food network offers a new -holistic- frame to understand relationships within the food system and proposes a recovery of an enlightened version of hedonism (based on the right to "good, clean, and just food" and "the right to pleasure") within a framework of social and environmental responsibility. Practitioners of Slow Food report how their understandings of both the relations within the food system, as well as the sense of their personal responsibility, has changed as a consequence of their involvement in Slow Food: and Joining a Slow Food chapter can provokes a change in practitioner´s values and sensibility towards food, environment or culture, rethinking their own lifestyles in terms of consumption, time-use or relations:

> "Slow Food discourse connected with my own beliefs. By looking from the angle of a desire for good, clean and fair food, one starts to care about the living and working conditions of food producers. When I see products that have ridiculously low prices because they are imported by multinational companies, I know that those people more paid terribly. Slow Food has opened my eyes a lot in that regard. Also, it has made me more aware of my moral ethical and professional duty to contribute something to society" (quote: SFAV_03)

Besides, both initiatives reflect – as a consequence of their experience dealing with challenges such as the economic crisis - on the concept of "commons" (in terms of the economic governance of commons by communities proposed by Ostrom, 2000) and the new meanings of democracy:

> "It is a very important ethical and cultural step, as well as economic, to think of natural resources in terms of commons. Air, water, biodiversity, the health of the land, seeds: these are all commons (…) Creativity, beauty, happiness and health must be considered commons, since commons have the most important characteristics: without them we cannot survive; if someone blocks access to the resource, it becomes impoverished; enjoyment by the individual can and must be reconciled with enjoyment by the community (…) On the basis of these premises, food itself should be considered a common (...)The first step to do all this is to recognise the incompatibility between the idea of a free market and the idea of commons" (Scaffidi[9], 2014).

Reflexive learning led to changes in worldviews of credit union members as a result of the 2008 economic crisis, and alternative narratives started to include a focus on "democratic-cultural regeneration" of societies oriented to "the common good", sustainability and solidarity:

> "We are in a systemic crisis that is not just financial, environmental, or economic; it is a political crisis, it is a systemic crisis and we need a new generation of people, of organizations with the ability to interpret the new future. (…) It began with the financial crisis but we are in a phase where, for the first time, we have a problem to change almost everything… What we are doing is we are forming people in the culture of a new system, not just economic, solidarity and social, but political and economic, of all of them. There are some places which have already taken this up, have transformed themselves; in Italy there are some small cities, which call themselves in transition: they are working in a holistic manner and they do not only undertake an economic or social transition, they are going through a cultural transition, a different way of life. I believe that this is the main novelty and it is, roughly, 400 small communities in Italy that have started on this path, only in the last 3 or 4 years". (Febea_03).

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[9] Article of Cinzia Scaffidi, Director of Slow Food Study Centre, published online in "Glocalism" http://www.glocalismjournal.net/Other-Contents/Focus/Feeding-The-Planet-Energy-For-Life/A-Sustainable-Future-The-Words-To-Do-It.kl

transformative social innovation

Transformative social innovations have introduced or embraced a new generation of universal human rights. Slow Food movement defends Slow Food defends the "right to food" as the primary right of humanity to ensure, symbolically declaring "a fight against hunger, just like the fight against slavery was declared in the past" (Slow Food, 2012). Credit Unions posit a **"new paradigm of banking based on the human right to the credit",** the transformative discourse proposed by the Nobel Prize, Muhammad Yunus. The right to credit is defined as an **emergent human right** and it incorporates discourses of **"critical economy"** into their transformative discourses.

Furthermore, their theories of change evolve as a result of experience, and SI initiatives refine their ideas about cause and effect relationships; actors and institutions to target and through which methods; and the scales at which to operate. For example, Slow Food´s discourse gained in complexity and consistency over time, by encompassing a number of emerging issues such as global warming, GMOs, animal welfare, women´s or indigenous rights, among others (e.g., Slow Food incorporates new discourses such as the one on food sovereignty, initially proposed by 2002 Forum of NGOs and Civil society holded in Rome) as practitioners learn about how different issues are connected, and different strategies to reach a wider audience and to exert influence:

> "We have taken a while to understand what this story of food sovereignty was. It is an expression that has not even emerged in news broadcasts, let alone in our homes. We have had to deal with it, more or less confidently, for little more than ten years (…) The link between food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture and the right to food makes us understand that the situation of nutrition in which the rich countries find themselves is not only in some way connected to the conditions in which the poor countries find themselves, but shares with those problems the origin of the solution, which must inevitably be political" (Scaffidi[10], 2014).

The 2012 Slow Food conference constituted a critical turning point in terms of framing, ambitions and discourse of change. The former hedonistic discourse (based on the "right to pleasure") evolved in terms of environmental protection and political action, by defending good labour conditions for food producers, emphasizing consumers' capability and responsibility to orient the market with their choices. Despite being approved by the network (and explicit in the document "the central role of food"), practitioners and local leaders needed to comprehend this change of vision, and incorporate it to their own discourses and ways of doing:

> "How and when the movement was born also matters. It has different characteristics in each country or region. Over 25 years, the movement has changed considerably. It is different in countries where Slow Food was born over 10 years or before, and those regions where Slow Food is more recent. In the first group, gastronomy and pleasure have still stronger importance. Where Slow Food was born later or where the initiatives have adapted better to the recent changes within the movement, the national and local structures are more aware of political issues or food sovereignty. Slow Food has a strong political component (…) The movement has changed. In Mexico it has changed. At the beginning they (practitioners) were more exclusive, they made very interesting things but they didn't engage many people from different sectors of civil society, now Slow Food is more inclusive" (SFI_04).

Besides, as a consequence of social learning and knowledge co-production, modern Credit Unions have built -in the last thirty years- a new framework for financial practices, establishing the principles, norms and organizational relations that must drive the activity of ethical finances. At the

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10Article of Cinzia Scaffidi, Director of Slow Food Study Centre, published online in "Glocalism": http://www.glocalismjournal.net/Other-Contents/Focus/Feeding-The-Planet-Energy-For-Life/A-Sustainable-Future-The-Words-To-Do-It.kl

same time, Credit Unions propose a change in personal values, attitudes and behaviour of consumers, claiming a change in the passive attitude oriented to a critical and co-responsible involvement of citizens in the economy.

SI initiatives purposefully promote an attitude of constant reflexivity regarding one´s values and behaviours, and their relationship to transformative change. Most endorse a vision of internal individual transformation as a stepping stone towards the generation of a new society. The ecovillage movement, for example, proposes a "cultural inner transformation" from individualism to a new communal culture (Kunze & Avelino, 2015). The Transition Towns movement promote an 'inner transition' from individualistic consumer identities and behaviour, towards a more co-operative and convivial way of life" (Longhurst & Pataki, 2014:63).

When Slow Food practitioners are asked about learning, a number of them describe how the initiative changes their understanding, through a process of reflexivity on their own lifestyles:

> "Slow Food has almost become a lifestyle to me. A way of being more coherent with everything. For example, concerning my consumption choices, my behaviour has changed a lot. Before (joining Slow Food) I used to buy in big supermarkets and grab any product without checking who the producer was, where it was produced etc. I sought after the sales or simply bought the ones I liked the most. But thanks to Slow Food, now I care a lot about what I am buying" (SFAV_04).

1.3.2. Changes in the quality and characteristics of social relations

Changing social relations is at the core of social innovation (Haxeltine et al., 2016). The values and principles SI initiatives endorse normally include a vision of new ways of relating. The principle of "fair food" in Slow Food, refers to new bases for the relationship between producers and consumers. The value of solidarity endorsed by Credit Unions incorporates a new perspective on the relationships between financial entities and other community and institutional actors.

SI initiatives experiment with the creating of relations of a different quality and are likely to learn how to achieve such changes. Slow Food endorses a vision of relationships in local communities and within the global food system that are based on conviviality; cooperation; recognition of and respect for the contribution of actors that have been disenfranchised through the de-individualization of food production and distribution; fair distribution of benefits and burdens; sharing of common responsibility for protecting biodiversity as well as the uniqueness of each community´s identity and history.

Experiencing enjoyment through collective celebration, sharing quality time in gathering with others around the pleasurable experience of food contributes to the establishment of emotional connection between different community members, of solidarity around a set of commonly-shared goals and of trust which supports collective action. Recovering rituals of shared pleasure around food is a pathway to community building through the re-valuing of local landscape and production techniques, the re-framing of stakes as being common and shared.

Slow Food practitioners observe that local manifestations which develop an intense activity and enable spaces for celebration seem to be more successful and participative: "close relations and friendship encourage people´s participation in our activities, because they are sharing time with friends and having a good time" (SFAV_04). Slow Food leaders promote camaraderie and friendship ties because they have learned that, to be attractive and maintaining members´ motivation, the convivium must be a space that makes people happier. The president of Slow Food Araba Vitoria presents himself as a leader who really cares about human relations inside the group, and a

facilitator of a good atmosphere: "I like people having a good time, enjoying, that they feel satisfaction with what we have done, and experiencing that the work they do is useful" (SFAV_01).

Belonging to a group where they meet other like-minded people, that work and care about "the same things, the same rights, who share common values" provides practitioners with important emotional experiences (SFAV_03). This vivid engagement occurs also in the global context, when they meet people from other parts of the world who are interested in their work, products and experiences. Interviewees describe participating in "Terra Madre" event as an emotional and learning experience that reinforces belongingness and identity processes (see quote SFI_04 on page 27).

Collaborative relations between consumers and producers are promoted through the facilitation of contact and face-to-face encounters, which contribute to the experience of empathy, which in turn supports egalitarian or collaborative relations between actors. In Credit Unions, relationships with customers are thought of as a partnership. This entails a governance structure where broad participation is ensured of both the customers/members and the employees. In Slow Food, consumers become "co-producers", emphasising their strategic role and individual responsibility in supporting "good, clean and fair" production worldwide "because they want to feel part of the network and are aware of and develop responsibility for their consumption choices" (SFI_01).

The change in relationships towards more collaborative ones goes beyond the interpersonal or social innovation initiative level, to a larger institutional level.

> "Networking is key, helps a lot. Slow Food always collaborates with local organizations, cooperatives, associations of producers. When we promote a project in these countries, rarely we work with individuals. There are many approaches to national and international organizations, while more national than international, such as Greenpeace Mexico. It is important to join efforts. When we apply to calls for international projects, we should work together with these organizations. The interesting thing is that now we are working permanently with some of them. We also have tried to create Latin American networks, for example, we formed the *Platform for the Regional Biodiversity* in order to work together in these territories. In some cases, we develop projects with the same financier, the Ford Foundation, and the same partner, RIMISP, the Latin American Centre for Rural Development" (SFI_04).

Developing institutional relationships of collaboration where before there was fragmentation is also a result of social learning, (in special when occasional collaboration turns into stablish relations).

> "We have even engaged politicians from local and regional administrations as well as different political parties, Trade Unions, cultural associations; because Slow Food has the ability to reach people from all the sectors of Araba society. We can do that because everybody cares about food" (SFAV_01).

Slow Food works in Italy with food and beverage companies with whom they previously did not share interests, like the Italian coffee company Lavazza (with whom they are working on the development of "product narrative labels"):

> "Which is of course a traditional company, but it has started a very good and transparent process, also related to producers in South America and they are doing a good job of managing change in a sustainable direction. Of course, change is very slow, because a company like that does not change overnight, but we continue to support their efforts because they look promising (…) we teach them about the narrative labels, which give more information about the production and distribution of food, and attract people more to food. The European Union only asks for very little information about the characteristics of the products, and we teach them to tell the story of the product" (SLI_01).

In the case of Credit Unions, Febea network has strengthened its relations with European organizations and networks that are involved in supporting the social and solidarity economy, such as RIPESS or the Institute for Social Banking. Also, several members of Febea belong to another international network named the *"Global Alliance for Banking on Values"* which groups together credit unions and ethical banks such as *Triodos.*

> "Fiare has networked with other ethical banks around the world through the Global Alliance for Banking on Values, which consists of 25 banks that have different organizational models, but that respond to the same question: What is done with my money? Among all of them, possibly Fiare has the widest level of social participation and embeddedness in the social network. The aim is to promote and accelerate the local economy, this process of globalized ethical banking. Other projects, as microcredit, are very positive but I believe that only with microcredit we won't be able to contribute to social change. It is necessary that ethical principles enter in banking" (Ugo Biggeri, 2014[11])

Changes in quality and characteristics of relations have been facilitated by certain innovative experiences of radical democracy like "sociocracy", "holocracy" or "magic anarchism (see section on methods of learning). Besides, new social relations have been forged through **Participatory Budgeting** initiatives, which forge egalitarian relations between government, civil sevants and citizenship (Cipolla et al, 2016). The **cohousing** Argentinian cooperative "El Hogar Obrero" positioned cooperativim as a way of organizing people in Argentina and installing cohousing as a form of access to housing for the working class (Picabea et al, 2015:53).

1.3.3. Empowerment as an outcome of social learning

Within TRANSIT, we have adopted the view of empowerment as the instrumental subset of agency (Alkire, 2005) and have argued that it relies on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which supports the development of autonomous motivation and thus the carrying out of behaviour that is self-determined, as well as outcomes such as wellbeing, creativity and commitment, which are essential for innovative ideas to arise in SIs (Haxeltine et al., 2016; Reznickova & Zepeda, 2016; Zepeda, Reznickova and Russel, 2013). Empowered people can challenge, alter or replace elements of the social context that thwart the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs, and as a consequence, lead to passivity and alienation, as well as social relations and institutions that do not support the natural human potential for growth, integration and pro-active, engaged and committed behaviour.

Empowerment can be considered the actual ability to carry out effective action towards goals are freely chosen and are important to a person or a group. Such ability relies on the felt sense of individual or collective power to carry out goal-targeted actions, and is supported by the experience of achieving impact, which entails the capacity to reflect upon and adjust courses of action as well as to persist in front of obstacles and failures.

Slow Food members experience a sense of personal power when they contribute to their communities in meaningful ways, when they experience they bring change to the places where they live, or feel they make a different in the life of farmers and food producers. Interviewees mention that face-to-face relation between producers and consumers ("co-producers") reinforce their

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11. Intervention of Ugo Biggeri, President of Banca Ética in FIARE´s General Assembly, holded in Barcelona (Spain) on March 2014. (source: Dumitru et al, 2015)

commitment to action, in special whether they perceive that their effort has a direct and immediate positive effect on local community:

> "One feels proud when one feels able to improve the living conditions of local peasants or organic farmer, as we are getting through the food communities, or when one perceives that one's message is known by the local community because politicians care about your presence in press and you are very well known here" (SFAV_01).

> "It is not the same if I buy a product in a supermarket than if I go to Victor´s house (N.A.: a local food producer), have a coffee with him, talk a bit and buy his product paying a fair prize. The second one is better for me, as well as for the customers that come to my restaurant and for him (the producer). I am helping him to have a better life" (SFAV_02).

The projects being carried out within the framework of SI initiatives are considered laboratories of empowerment – thus experimenting and learning how to achieve impact is seen as a key source of empowerment or, alternatively, as a way to counter helplessness or disempowerment: "this is a Utopia, but it is also real, and we need more people to have more impact. Two or three leaders are not enough; because the first step is to reinforce the local, involving people in small projects. It is happening worldwide" (Paolo di Croce, 2015[12]).

In similar terms, Hackerspaces' members manifest the empowering outcome of constructing the initiative. As Hielscher and colleagues affirm, "it is a tremendous source of pride and empowerment for those involved that the space has been created through their own resourcefulness" (p. 40). Fiare is perceived by practitioners as a useful tool for social transformation and empowerment because "normal people can put together a bank that actually works like a real bank and supports projects that its members believe in" (Fiare_03).

> "Demonstrating that normal people are able to create a bank is also a tool of empowerment, because it shows that individuals can change society. Until now, we were just people working together, but now, we realize that we can be and change much more" (Fiare_03).

In Credit Unions, interviewees perceive themselves and the initiative as more capable to fulfil their aims and to deal with challenges, (e.g. changes in banking regulations that jeopardized their position), to deal with internal and external obstacles, and to take advantage of changes in the social context, which gives members a sense of competence: "You see that it's possible to collaborate in small initiatives without another bank or government funds. Some projects have succeeded thanks to the initiative of one or two people. That encourages you because sometimes we do not trust individual initiative; we say we are not able to do anything. In Fiare, I noticed that people take the initiative, which motivates you to participate" (Fiare_06).

Also, acquiring practical knowledge and abilities to function with limited resources, or to obtain external financial resources increase initiative´s capacity of resilience, flexibly adapting to new circumstances, as this Slow Food interviewee explains: "we are tremendously flexible. There are associations that cannot operate with less than 40,000 euros. If we have only 8 euros, we will do things with these 8 euros. I believe in this idea. We are able to do more or less depending on our resources. When we started we have nothing and we managed. But this project must go on" (SFAV_01).

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12   Intervention of Paolo di Croce, General Director of Slow Food during a meeting with the convivium Slow Food Galicia, in Vimianzo (Spain) on June 2015. Notes taken by the researchers during a participant observation activity.

1.3.4. Changes in behaviours and strategies for action

Interviewees report changes in individual and collective behaviours as a result of social learning that takes place through activism in SI initiatives. Slow Food aims to change the kind of products people consume as well as the way and the place where people (individuals, chefs) purchase fresh produce (substituting supermarkets for local or rural markets or online direct selling services, etc.).

As a consequence of increased awareness, practitioners mention changes in their consumption choices, such as buying more local, organic and fair products, in local/rural markets or directly to the producer (joining to food communities); living in a healthier way, or behaving in ways that are coherent with their values. Being asked about in what extent Slow Food has contributed to a change in their behaviours, the following interview responds that after being a member for ten years she feels that her life has totally changed:

> "Yes! Absolutely! I can tell you that I love cooking, I've worked in restaurants, and I loved it and it is OK. But now I decided to be a food activist fulltime, so it is a big change. The way I think about the world, I feel myself as more connected to the environment; I am more an environmentalist than I used to be. I work more with my community that I've ever had otherwise. So many ways! Absolutely, Slow Food changed my life. Certainly my consumption practices have changed as well. When I shop, I cook at home a lot. I've always cooked at home but now I cook things absolutely differently than I used to do. I love to know the whole story of the product I cook. I don't think that I am slower in other parts of my life" (*SFI_05*).

The following practitioner reflects on necessary steps to introduce people in Slow Food Lifestyles:

> "The most important thing I've learned is to be patient, to be slow... To be patient and to accept that people need multiple points of entry. In order to get people to come along and think with you, you need to give them a very, very easy way to start. Eventually, people change, people's mind changes, people's behaviours change, but they need a place to start. It is possible to change behaviour; I think so" (*SFI_05*)

Slow Food chefs have also introduced slow practices in restaurants, hosting students or mentoring new associates:

> "We teach students about slow food philosophy and I feel proud when you see them introducing our practices in their own restaurants (...). When a new restaurant approaches Slow Food aiming to be a "KM0", I advise them and I introduce them to local producers, and farmers who supply me with products" (SFAV_02).

In the case of Credit Unions, one of the goals of the initiatives is to help improve people's financial behaviours and habits, in terms of responsible and conscious consumption of baking products as the following interviewee affirms: "I don't see credit unions as an alternative to banks or payday lenders, I see them as part of a financial package for the individual. We want people to choose wisely because it's about thrift and changing behaviour not just about the money" (Ian Leather, 2014[13]). Developing an interest in how the money is used can also be seen as a driver of behavioural change:

> "This is the question we address in many of our presentations of the bank: Okay, look, you know you cannot get support from mainstream banks, but whose money are the banks using? It is our money! Do you think it is logical that we do not have any influence? There is no transparency, you have no clue about what they are doing with the money, and you don´t have any oversight control. Banks have a relevant role in our economy and they decide which

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13   Norwich CU expert. Interview conducted by Anne Frances, in Norwich, in 2014 (source: Dumitru et al, 2015)

type of economy will be developed by choosing certain investors. And why wouldn´t we have any control over this?" (Febea_04)

Strategies for action are also developed as a result of cross-fertilization of ideas between initiatives in different places, which in turn can lead to the development of new practices within the SI initiative.

> "I see Banca Popolare Etica as a big bother. I see the steps we can take in the future. Managing and operating ideas… the network of mutuality, where partners offer their services, the crowd-funding platform… They give mortgages. Of course our steps don't have to be the same. We should choose our own pathway. We learned a lot. It is a mutual learning. You can see it since the first assembly in Barcelona. There was all the board of Banca Popolare Etica. Many Italian people come to here. We saw a lot of interest from both sides. We met and talked each other. This is the most important part of these meetings, meeting people, from the Spanish territory as well from the Italian one. You feel happiness on both sides. And we also bring freshness to the project. When we work in groups, everyone wants you in their group, because you are Spanish and you bring freshness. They have been working together for so long that maybe they do not generate new ideas. Another perspective makes them think differently. This is an interesting part of the project. Learning from all persons and organizations that are very different" (Fiare_01).

Gaining reputation and legitimacy becomes one of the strategies that SI initiatives learn in order to increase their leverage and become influential, which also serves to maintaining member's motivation. Both Credit Unions and Slow Food have learned that reputation depends of their capacity to maintaining the integrity of their principles and core values on the one hand, and being an example of viability and sustainability of alternative ways of doing, becoming an authority in the field, on the other.

Maintaining certain level of credibility implies do not compromise SI initiative's principles. SI practitioners in both Slow Food and Credit Unions insist on the importance of not compromising their principles and maintaining their core values. Thus, when Slow Food activists are asked about their critical positions confronting, for example, European policies, they feel confident that their consistent work on the ground supports their claims:

> "We do the projects we want to do, and the European Union sees that what we do is not utopic but it works because we write reports and show how we are able to increase the number of local producers, the economic activity etc., and they see that it works and ask us for more information and projects. This does not conflict with that we claim, it is in line with our discourse and practice" (SFI_01).

Such understanding seems to be shared also by credit unions members. As one interviewee stated, impact is achieved by maintaining the purity of the concept of socially responsible and ethical banking in practice and thus drawing societal attention to the perversion of the mainstream banking system. Impact is achieved by occupying a position of being "alternative, but not marginal" (Febea_02).

In Febea, there is an ongoing discussion on how to achieve transformative change and the need to grow or not in number of associates, whether that is desirable. For the "grow bigger" perspective, impact will be achieved by becoming a stronger actor in the field -which is related to the level of representativeness of Febea- and thus slowly transforming the rules of the system. On the contrary, the founding members of Febea -which have been pioneers in starting credit cooperatives in their own countries- tend to perceive Febea as a place to meet, discuss and exchange experience and thus find a like-minded group and environment. They are also reluctant to letting go of this culture and tend to fear that being in a hurry to grow or achieve political objectives might have that effect.

"We need to maintain the qualities of being an alternative and ethical bank, so this poses a problem...I believe at this point most ethical Banks are working to consolidate their growing, okay? The next step – and this is a personal opinion, would be to have an ethical bank in every country...and these Banks will need to work together more...at this moment we have the federation, but the federation is an association where we go to meet and talk about our problems, solve our problems and do some activities, but the problem is that European ethical Banks want...need a greater consolidation and it might be that some need to merge with one another. But at this point, it is not...we do not talk about it. We talk about our problems, about the problems related to consolidation and responding to society´s need for credit. This is the main issue now" (Febea_02).

Being an example of viability of alternative ways of doing. Credit Unions are proud of being able to respond to the increasing needs of individuals and institutions that are excluded from the banking system as well as to the needs of investors interested in how their money is used. Credit Unions have gained credibility functioning effectively during the economic crisis, by sustaining their model and the idea of giving priority to social and environmental criteria in banking. As one interviewee stated, credit cooperatives were the only ones still giving credit during the economic crisis. As they have not engaged in speculative financial activities before, they did not have to reform or suffer the consequences of the crisis. On the contrary, they grew at a significant rate (some up to 20 %) during the crisis. These paths are opposite to commercial banks (...) which have created the premises of a financial crisis that have affected the lives of millions of citizens" (Febea, 2012[14]).

Slow Food leaders claim to own "t**he moral authority"** to promote a more 'civilized' economy that, actually, "has limited persuasive power in comparison to large corporations and food industry lobbies" because they do "the work that institutions should have done for safeguarding of their heritage and they hadn´t" (Interview to Carlo Petrini in Le Monde, 2005). Slow Food gained reputation overtime developing a consistent discourse and demonstrating the viability of their proposals, despite being a minority discourse confronting dominant food and economic systems:

"We are a minority, but we have the ability to influence, to change things gradually, through food education activities that change individual consumption decisions" (SFAV_02).

"We have already seen that, without local economies, there would be no Terra Madre, no producers or "co-producers" and no exchange between them: exchange of knowledge, products, information, innovation and sincere friendship. It also has to be pointed out that the small productive scale is not a "return to the past", but is as modern as can be—even from an economic point of view. It has been demonstrated, in fact, that many small-scale economies produce at least as much as large-scale or global-scale systems. They are fairer, more sustainable systems for the distribution of wealth and well-being at every level, from the personal to the global" (Slow Food, 2012).

In addition, Slow Food establish bodies that can provide them with expertise as a way to gain credibility, like the "group of experts in food issues" that counsel and elaborate documents and "position papers" regarding the main "hot topics" in food system:

"They (the group of experts) are people who created slow food in the first place and who have been following the whole evolution and have the political vision. Also, we have an animal welfare expert group. It involves producers, farmers, who give us the point of view of

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[14] Source: Febea´s position paper: What really differentiates ethical banks from modern banks? http://www.febea.org/sites/default/files/definition_ethical_bank-en.pdf

the farmers so that we not suggesting something that is not feasible for the farmers and it involves other farmer's organizations who are collaborating with us on the topic (SFI_02).

Social learning leads to the refinement of effective strategies for influencing existing institutional relations. In order to increase their transformative capacity, SI initiatives learn, from their own experience, that political institutions should be involved in transition processes, and SI initiatives are conscious of the need of developing strategies to gain political influence.

Slow Food has developed -in its 30 years of history- extended lobbying capacities as well as the International Association has become an "acknowledged interlocutor" for political institutions, a counter voice that has demonstrated change is possible and gained a role in "advising and counselling on agriculture issues" (SFI_02). The European Commission, considers Slow Food as being the biggest membership-based organisation in the world and therefore most welcome in policy debates (e.g. in the CAP reform). However, Slow Food leaders reflect on the difficulties to change political decisions and reflect on the necessity to develop new ways of lobbying: "The officer of the EU Agriculture Commission told us two years ago, before the approval of the new European common agriculture policy, which is a disaster; he told us that we have to invent a new way of lobbying" (Paolo di Croce, 2015[15]).

This influence has been observed at the local scale in different ways. In the case of the Basque initiative, Slow Food leaders are called by the local Council to advise in the development of food, tourism or edible garden local projects. Besides, Slow food discourse is relevant for political parties: "For example, in the last 2015 local elections several parties included in their political programs to attend Slow Food demands and support our projects, which means that we are doing a good work here" (SFAV_01).

However, other local chapters have not been so proactive in pursuing political influence or they have avoided it intentionally due to their intuition that society would not perceive it positively:

> "I don't think USA is a good place to launch this political campaigns, because we have a kind of allergy to politics and I think people don't want to participate, we do not care how people lives over there (in developed countries) if they are not attached you. But I think this is part of the logic of difficulties in engagement" (SFI_05)

In the case of Credit Unions, especially the newer members of FEBEA tend to see the initiative as an instrument to achieve significant objectives that would lead to system transformation. For these members, changing European regulations would contribute to a wider systemic change by re-setting the rules of competition and potentially making social impact indicators a central aspect of banking activity. They see the potential of FEBEA as a relevant interface with European institutions and other relevant governmental and regulatory institutions:

> "It is clear that it is a small development in relation to everything that happens, but being able to meet with the President of the European Commission, the Director of the European Investment Bank, of the European Investment Fund, I believe that this is a sign of recognition, it shows some will for change". (Febea_03)

Developing strategies to gain more autonomy and capacity for action on the ground. Reflection on experience leads to questioning of initial strategies and the development of new ones that helps the initiative adapt to changing circumstances, as the following Slow Food interviewee explains:

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15   Intervention of Paolo di Croce, General Director of Slow Food during a meeting with the convivium Slow Food Galicia, in Vimianzo (Spain) on June 2015. Notes taken by the researchers during a participant observation activity.

"Our most fundamental challenges we have for several years now I mentioned we are trying to figure out right now is to create a kind of business model so we can continue to give very good support to our network and to grow the movement and continue to engage with the international community. The non-profit sector, since the economic downturn here, as in Europe, has struggled to a sort of redefinition in order to act within this environment. Fewer and fewer people are interested in membership organisations, there is more competition for fundraising, more competition for government money and so on.. So that's internally, I would say, our biggest struggle and then externally I think that our greatest challenge is really making sure that we are involving rural communities and communities that are not as fully engaged in the food movement. We've made excellent strides in a lot of communities and you could say that it is becoming a majority opinion the need to change our food system but I think we need to really work to incorporate, to be more inclusive of those groups...I think that's always the hardest part, because we are a very large country and so figuring out how to work within the existing model, either trying to fix it...or actually proposing an entirely different model. I think that's kind of the struggle that Slow Food is having in the US right now..." (SFI_05).

1.4.   Actors who play a key role in processes of social learning in social innovation initiatives and networks

A number of SI initiatives have mentioned the relevance of "inspirational leaders and visionaries" in contributing to social learning both within and outside the initiative. Carlo Petrini (leader of the Slow Food movement) or Rob Hopkins (founder of Transition Movement) are examples of such inspirational leaders who have received international acknowledgement for their pioneering work in founding and leading global movements "which have had a significant positive impact on the environment. Petrini received the UN's *Champions of the Earth award* and served "as inspiration for transformative community action across the world" (as the UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, stated in 2013).

Leaders and gurus successfully disseminate the vision and main values of the initiative in both internal (inside the initiative) and external contexts, by giving talks, having an impact in the media, creating alliances with politicians or maintaining good relations with relevant international figures (as Carlo Petrini did with Pope Francis). Such leaders also travel across a certain space/geography and they develop a dissemination or pollination activity, constructing discourses of change and developing visions of the future. Peru Sasia, in Fiare, as well as Ugo Biggeri in Banca Etica, are both representatives of the European credit union movement that fit this category of leaders. Mulgan (2006) has also described a category like this, asserting that social change seems to be driven "by a very small number of heroic, energetic, and impatient individuals that planted the seeds of a powerful idea into many minds" (pp.148-149).

The networking culture of ecovillages works rather in the form of community and circular communication than with frontal leaders. GEN is a bottom-up and diverse network of very different projects. Nevertheless, there are key people who have brought forward the global movement like Ross and Hildur Kackson from the GAIA trust and the GEN presidents. Since the HABITAT II conference 1996 GEN collaborates with the United Nations and UNESCO, for instance in the United Nations institute for Training and Research (CIFAL Scotland[16] Affiliated Training Centre of UNITAR)

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16 http://www.cifalscotland.org/

to empower individuals, local authorities, governments and organisations through knowledge and learning to effectively implement sustainable development.

However, besides such visionary leaders, visiting or receiving members from other initiatives seems to have "pollination effects" enabling the interchange of experiences and conducting common projects. As Kunze & Avelino (2015) explain, such "pollination" between local ecovillages happens when individuals move to other projects or start a new one, carrying their knowledge and experience with them, or when they "supervise, coach or teach methods to others" (p.93). Especially in the younger ecovillages (like Schloss Tempelhof) we observe a (small) number of community experienced people who have lived in several ecovillages or intentional communities before. The same occurs within the Impact Hub network (Wittmayer, et al, 2015) and Fab Labs network with "travellers or gurus that share information between labs" (Hielscher et al, 2015b:29-30).

SI initiatives and networks also assume an educator role in wider communities, actively teaching and stimulating the emergence of projects through enrolling other actors (from ordinary citizens to political leaders) to work towards the overall goal, as in the case of Transition Towns (Longhust & Pataki, 2015). Slow Food and Global Ecovillage Network have developed educational projects that are connected to society as well as Schools with alternative (experiential, hands-on) learning models (Kunze & Avelino, 2015), and DESIS network attempts to introduce innovative educational methods in design schools (Cipolla et al., 2015). Science Shops introduce participatory research methods in academic contexts through the interaction between Universities and NGOs (Dorland and Søgaard Jørgensen, 2015). FabLabs enhance the participation of the community in their knowledge sharing and learning activities, popularizing and training people in free software technologies and digital fabrication (Hielscher et al, 2015b).

Most of SI initiatives put their efforts into publishing books, guidelines and handbooks (as well as Webpages, blogs, documentaries) to disseminate their activity, philosophy or theories of change. For example, Carlo Petrini's best-sellers *("Buono, pulito e giusto. Principi di nuova gastronomia"*, 2005; *"Slow food nation: Why our food should be good, clean, and fair",* Petrini et al., 2013) have contributed to the general knowledge of the food system complexity and the alternative "eco-gastronomy" paradigm that Slow Food proposes. Fiare´s leaders Peru Sasia and Cristina de la Cruz published the book *"Banca Etica y Ciudadanía"* (Ethical Banking and Citizenship, Sasia & De la Cruz, 2008) to set up the ethical values and principles of its innovative project. Robert Hopkins´ *Transition Handbook* (2008) serves of inspiration for transition leaders and practitioners worldwide.

1.5.   Promoting wider societal learning

Social innovation initiatives often contribute and/or actively promote wider processes of societal learning. Although a detailed account of how these processes are organized is not within the focus of this paper, we point to a set of social learning outcomes that can be assessed in order to evaluate the transformative capacity of social innovation initiatives.

We do not claim, however, that social innovation initiatives are the sole sources of such outcomes. Consistent with the co-production framework adopted in TRANSIT (Haxeltine et al., 2016), we argue that social innovation initiatives/networks are key actors in the shaping of wider social learning processes, but that the final outcome is a result of co-production.

Changes in societal worldviews and deep values (new ways of framing)
 Slow Food has introduced a new frame to comprehend food systems and market relations (between producers and consumers) which involve taking personal responsibility/commitment to social transformation and adopting new values in food consumption such as respect for producers. Credit

cooperatives proposed a different understanding of the relationship between financial entities and their beneficiaries, and promoted a change in the role of the bank as an external observer to either success or failure of its projects, towards that of a partner with a stake in a project´s success. Hackerspaces pursue the transference of their organizing model to a wider society, "creating new cities in which people co-live with each other and organise themselves in a decentralised manner" (Hielscher et al, 2014:18).

Changes in norms and institutions

Social innovations initiatives have a direct influencing role in promoting social learning that leads to changes in norms and institutions. The European credit cooperative (Febea) has recently engaged in an interesting dialogue with the European Commission on defining the elements that differentiate ethical and alternative banking from traditional banking, aiming to protect the cooperative model in European banking norms. Slow Food advises governments (Colombia, Brasil, South Korea) and public institutions (Council of Vitoria-Gasteiz) on changing food systems in both global and local contexts. Slow Food´s President has been invited to speak at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (New York, 2012) on the right to food and food sovereignty as well as he has been panellist on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development– Rio+20 (Brazil, 2012). The free software movement gained the support of public institutions and governments to pro-free software/open source policies. Inforse adopted a strategy of involvement in energy institutions to develop a more favourable framework for renewable energies in Europe, by participating in the works of the Belgium National Committee of Energy (Elle, 2015). Interest in trying to change the educational system is shared by Slow Food (Dumitru et al, 2016), Desis network (Cipolla et al, 2015), Ecovillage movement (Kunze and Avelino, 2015), Living Knowledge (Dorland and Søgaard Jørgensen, 2015) or the FabLab network Hielscher et al, 2014b) proposing new learning methods in schools and based on experimentation and the "learning by doing" model.

Changes in ways of doing (practices and behaviours)

Social innovation initiatives also promote societal learning about new ways of doing, contributing to changes in practices and behaviours. Slow Food cooperates with market organizations such as *AlceNero* or *Lavazza* on the development of "narrative labels" in food products (see quote SLI_01, p.38). Credit Cooperatives have introduced transparency practices that other banking institutions started to implement. The Desis network was able to introduce changes in institutions such as new design practices in Design Schools (going further traditional industrial design themes and involving communities in designing methods). Ecovillages also propose changes in the educational system, introducing innovative teaching models ("Reform village school") based on experimental learning methods (Kunze & Avelino, 2015).

Changes in social culture

Looking from a sociological perspective we discover a reinvention of a new mode of community. Based on modern individualization, the social innovation initiatives of today seem to herald a revival of community in a new, post-individualised manner. Social learning becomes increasingly important in a globalized world of change and insecurity. In our initiatives under study we observe that social cohesion is not only be based on a collective of like-minded people but in a post-individualized manner on a pluralistic community of mutual sharing and welfare. Robert Schehr (1997) discusses the impact social movements, especially intentional communities including ecovillages, make upon the *de*colonialization of the lifeworld. Susan Brown (2002) characterizes intentional communities as a 'cultural critique' in the form of a 'revitalization movement'.

New actionable capacities

Besides the development of new ways of behaving, social learning processes also contribute to the development of capacities for higher self-determined action on the part of wider groups or communities. Different previously vulnerable groups might develop capacities to self-organize in order to get access to certain services, opportunities etc. Previously passive citizens might be

inspired and gain the capacities to intervene and become active contributors to different causes. Slow food enhances community empowerment, especially in rural areas (agricultural based) providing them support, resources and assistance that permit them to develop new ways of doing things (such as alternative food systems and short market circuits) and enabling rural slow-life communities. 'Hacker ethic' has been said (Haywood, 2012 in Smith et al, 2015) to influence the democratised activism of the 'Arab Spring', Occupy and Anonymous 'movements (p 18).

2.   Conclusion

Transformative change entails learning for different societal actors. The types of lessons that each group needs, the leverage they have in shaping public discourse, as well as how the discourse of social innovation initiatives starts to shape the lenses through which certain issues are seen are questions which TRANSIT attempts to answer. Social innovation and social transformation inherently require new ways of thinking and doing which in turn entail dedicated learning processes that are essential to transformative change "in terms of capacity-building, individual and collective empowerment and self-determination of social actors, which constitute the basis of the success or failure of social innovations" (Haxeltine et al, 2015:54).

Following an inductive-deductive analysis of the social learning processes manifested in TRANSIT empirical studies (Jørgensen et al, 2015; Wittmayer et al, 2016), this paper proposes an analytical framework for understanding and assessment of social learning that include both personal/individual change and changes in the social structures which can lead to (transformative) social innovation.. concretely, this paper focused attention on how spaces, methods, types of learning and outcomes contribute to achieving the preconditions for effective agency, which includes new understandings, the generation of possibilities to experiment with alternatives, especially in terms of new social relations, and building adaptive capacity to dynamic circumstances in the social context. Following an inductive-deductive analysis of the social learning processes manifested in TRANSIT empirical studies (Jørgensen et al, 2015; Wittmayer et al, 2016).

Research methodology consisted of case-study document analysis, empirical observation and in-depth interviews with practitioners and other relevant social actors (Jørgensen et al., 2014; Wittmayer et al, 2015c). The semi-structured questionnaire that guided the interviews contained questions specifically targeting the complex processes of social learning in terms of the existing types of learning, actors, processes of transference and learning outcomes (Jørgensen et al, 2014). Specifically, TRANSIT researchers looked for the relationship between social learning and individual and collective agency and empowerment -understood as an instrumental manifestation of agency-(Wittmayer et al., 2015c) that occurs within the SI-initiative/SI-network and beyond the SI-initiative/SI-network (the broader context). Secondly, we proceeded to an analysis of empirical data obtained through semi-structured qualitative interviews in two case studies: Slow Food Araba, Slow Food Freiburg and Slow Food International- the headquarter organization of the Slow Food movement; and Fiare Banca Etica (Spain) and Febea, the European Federation of Credit Cooperatives and Ethical Banks. Specific sections of the analysis have also been enlarged with empirical data from an ecovillage case study.

The framework proposed in this paper identifies and evaluates social learning taking place in social innovation initiatives (types of learning), describing the characteristics of those processes (learning environments and methods) and mapping the personal and collective changes that they lead to (outcomes). We distinguish between four types of learning: cognitive learning, inner, personal transformation and emotional learning, relational and strategic/political learning. Cognitive learning refers to the acquisition of new theoretical or conceptual knowledge which is required for

meaningful participation in the social initiative. Inner learning refers to self-reflection processes that lead to personal transformation on a subjective level. Relational learning involves supporting high-quality motivation of members, capacities for participating in cooperative decision-making, intercultural learning, as well as developing communication and leadership skills. Strongly connected with relational learning is the strategic and political learning, which refers to the knowledge and skills required to increase the political and social influence of the SI initiative, and increasing their potential and ability for transformative change.

This approach also stresses the importance of social learning contexts/spaces and methods, which create adequate conditions to link experiences, reflection, and experimentation between individuals and groups. We analyse the knowledge creation and reflexive thinking processes taking place within the initiatives, the relationship between learning processes and empowerment, those leading to active engagement in collective decision-making and actions. This paper focuses on understanding how social innovation initiatives and networks become effective agents of change, and what are the mechanisms through which social learning contributes to the construction of transformative agency. Thus, we identify four main categories of outcomes of social learning in social innovation initiatives and networks: (1) changes in understandings and framing that lead to their causes and their solutions; (2) changes in the quality and characteristics of social relations; (3) empowerment; and (4) changes in behaviours and strategies for action.

Social learning processes have to be understood in order to further develop our comprehension of the mechanisms through which social networks and institutional structures change. As the last section of this paper argues, social learning contributes to wider societal changes in terms of promoting changes in societal worldviews and deep values (new ways of framing), changes in norms and institutions, changes in ways of doing (practices and behaviours), changes in social cultures and, finally, new actionable capacities.

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3. Synthesis of the third integration workshop: "Motivations, relations and transformations. The role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation".

By Isabel Lema, University of A Coruña

3.1. Justification of the workshop

The TRANSIT project aims at developing a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation (TSI), through a combination of interdisciplinary theoretical development and empirical research on a series of case studies of social innovation initiatives. In TRANSIT, we define social innovation as "changing social relations, involving new ways of thinking, doing, organizing and framing" (Haxeltine *et al.*, 2015). But how do these changes happen, what drives them, and what is the role played by different actors in these processes? In order to answer such a question, a psychologically-informed understanding of processes of change within social innovation initiatives and in their interaction with the wider social context is needed. In TRANSIT, an understanding of the dynamic interplay between agency and structure is considered crucial for transformative social innovation, and a micro-theory of change is thus an important part of such an endeavour. Such a theory is unconceivable without an understanding of processes of social learning in individual and collective agency for social change.

The Third Integration Workshop *"Motivations, relations and transformations: the role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation"* focused on the drivers and motivations for transformative social innovation and how social learning contributes to the creation of new social relations, involving new ways of thinking, knowing, doing and framing. Concretely, the workshop introduced three themes for discussion:

1) **Motivations** in transformative social innovation ambitions
2) **Processes** through which new social relationships are established, contexts that foster satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the role of social learning in such processes
3) **Social learning in collective agency for social innovation**

Discussion sessions address the following questions:
- What types of motivations drive (ongoing) involvement in processes of transformative change and how do these influence the theories of change that social innovation initiatives construct and the strategies they use to bring about societal transformation?
- How do these motivations relate to processes of empowerment and disempowerment of members, at different stages in the development of the initiatives, and what are the elements that lead to cohesion and flexibility rather than dissolution/dispersion and rigidity?
- How do different processes of social learning relate to individual and collective transformation at different stages? What types of individual and collective transformation processes lead to visions, values, identities and motivations that support action? How can we effectively conceptualize and map social learning processes, as well as maintain ongoing personal and collective reflection on processes and stages of transformation?

- What is/should be the relation between social learning and policy support in social innovation processes? Learning and non-learning in social policy institutions.
- Does social learning have meaning for the initiatives? Do the initiatives design/organize social learning processes consciously to promote empowerment?

3.2.   Participants and contributions

The workshop consisted of a combination of invited lectures that nourished TRANSIT discussions with novel perspectives; a number of paper presentations by TRANSIT researchers and two invited European researchers; as well as a series of group discussions that aimed to provide of useful practical insights on social learning.

Inspirational lectures and keynotes were delivered by Peru Sasia (leader of the creative movement in Spain) and Kennon Sheldon (University of Missouri, USA), an expert on the topic of motivations and satisfaction of basic psychological needs. The paper session included contributions from TRANSIT researchers Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema-Blanco, Ricardo García-Mira, Rene Kemp, Julia Backhaus, Bonno Pel, Tom Bauler, Tim Strasser, René Kemp, Iris Kunze, Carla Cipolla and Flor Avelino. TRANSIT paper presentations were enriched with contributions of researchers from other European Projects, such as Ferdinando Fornara (BIOMOT project) and Tony Craig (GLAMURS project).

With the aim of providing practical and useful knowledge to social initiatives, we invited practitioners and local activists to participate in the different sessions of the workshop and, specifically, we invited them to propose a question or real issue that is relevant for their practical work, to be discussed in small groups with researchers, looking for innovative ideas and solutions based on our empirical knowledge on TSI. They were: Peru Sasia (member of the board of Fiare Banca Etica), Helena Sanmamede (member of the local chapter of Fiare Banca Etica in A Coruña), Laura Castro (member of local organic consumption cooperative Zocamiñoca) and Javier Vázquez (senior policy advisor on social innovation strategies in the Council of Santiago de Compostela, Spain). The workshop generated insights into the types of motivations that SI initiatives display and ways to promote members' motivation; volunteers' engagement in collaborative projects and communicative and persuasive strategies to reach the wider public (in order to gain transformative capacity). Besides, researchers and practitioners mapped the new social relations and new societal arrangements that social innovation and sustainability initiatives aim to promote.

Picture: participants in the TRANSIT Third Integration Workshop

transformative social innovation theory

3.3. Agenda

Wednesday, 8 June 2016
Faculty of Educational Sciences. Room: "Salon de Grados" (First Floor)
Campus de Elviña. University of A Coruña

When	What	Where
09:00-09:30	Check in and welcome coffee	UDC
09:30-10:00	**Introductory remarks** **Social innovation and the transformation of politics** Professor **Ricardo García Mira**, University of A Coruña and President of the International Association for People-Environment Studies. **Welcome and workshop introduction** **Adina Dumitru**, University of A Coruña	UDC
10:00-11:00	**SOCIAL LEARNING IN COLLECTIVE AGENCY FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION** Inspirational lecture: **Agency in processes of personal and collective change: the role of social learning in the case of Fiare Banca Etica** **Pedro Manuel Sasia**, leader of the credit cooperative movement in Spain and Professor at Deusto University, Basque Country, Spain.	UDC
11:00-11:20	*Coffee break.*	UDC
11:20-12:30	**Paper session: SOCIAL LEARNING INSIGHTS IN TRANSIT CASE-STUDIES** Chair: **Iris Kunze**, Center for Global Change and Sustainability, Austria. Note-taker: Alberto Díaz **Social learning for transformative social innovation: empirical research outcomes of TRANSIT** **Adina Dumitru** and **Isabel Lema-Blanco**, University of A Coruña, Spain. **Social media, social learning and the basic income movement**	UDC

transformative social innovation theory

	Rene Kemp and Julia Backhaus, University of Maastricht, the Netherlands and **Bonno Pel,** Free University of Brussels, Belgium. **Practitioner engagement in social innovation: the role of social learning** Tim Strasser and Rene Kemp, University of Maastricht, the Netherlands.	
12:30-14:00	**DISCUSSION FORUM 01** **Enhancing learning for transformative agency** *Speakers and participants distributed in small groups* Working groups: Practitioner + researcher *Group1: Flor Avelino; note-taker: Helena* *Group2: Iris Kunze; note taker: Alberto* *Group 3: Bonno Pel; note taker: Monica* *Group 4: Isabel Lema; note-taker: Donia* Plenary	UDC
14:00-15:30	Lunch	UDC
15:30-18:30	**Paper session: INDIVIDUAL AND RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL INNOVATION INITIATIVES** **Chair: Adina Dumitru**, University of A Coruña, Spain. Note-taker: Helena Martínez	UDC
15:30-16:30	**Increasing the learning potential and reflective agency capacities through a critical turning points database.** *Design exercise for the CTP database.* **Bonno Pel** and **Tom Bauler**, Free University of Brussels, Belgium.	
16:30-17:20	**Searching for a new mode of community in social innovation initiatives** **Iris Kunze**, Center for Global Change and Sustainability, Austria. **Transforming social relations in social innovation initiatives** **Carla Cipolla**, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brasil	
17:20-18:30	**DISCUSSION FORUM 02** **The quest for new social relations and new societal arrangements in social innovation and sustainability initiatives: insights for practitioners and researchers**	UDC

transformative social innovation theory

Speakers and participants distributed in small groups
Group1: Jens Dorland; Note taker: Helena
Group 2: Tim Strasser; Note taker: Alberto
Group 2: Carla Cipolla; Note taker: Monica
Group 4: Tom Bauler; Note-taker: Donia

Thursday, 9 June 2016
Faculty of Educational Sciences. Room: "Salon de Grados" (First Floor)
Campus de Elviña. University of A Coruña

When	What	Where
09:30-11:00	**MOTIVATIONS FOR CHANGE** Invited lecture: **Self-determination theory –a motivational account of the quest for social change –** Professor **Kennon Sheldon**, University of Missouri, USA	UDC
11:00-11:20	*Coffee break.*	UDC
11:20-12:40	**Paper session MOTIVATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE** **Chair: Ricardo García Mira**, University of A Coruña Note taker: Helena Martínez **Motivations for transformative social innovations: TRANSIT results** **Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema** and **Ricardo García Mira**, University of A Coruña, Spain **Becoming a change agent in sustainability initiatives** Ferdinando Fornara, University of Cagliari, Italy **Temporal Autonomy: Exploring Flexibility, Everyday Life, and Wellbeing** **Tony Craig**, The James Hutton Institute, Scotland, United Kingdom.	UDC
12:40-14:00	**Conceptualizing empowerment in social innovation initiatives and its relationship to motivations for action** **Flor Avelino**, Dutch Research Institute for Transitions, the Netherlands, and coordinator of the TRANSIT project	UDC

	Discussion/working groups: Motivations and empowerment in social innovation initiatives. *Speakers and participants*.	
14:00-15:30	Lunch	UDC
15:30-19:00	Guided city visit: the Tower of Hercules (World Heritage Site) and the city of A Coruña	

3.4. Summary of participants´ contributions and outcomes of discussion sessions

Agency in processes of personal and collective change: the role of social learning in the case of Fiare Banca Etica

The first invited speaker of the third integration wokshop was Pedro Manuel Sasia, leader of the credit cooperative movement in Spain (Fiare Banca Etica) and Professor at Deusto University (Bilbao, Basque Country). Sasia approached in his inspirational talk the motivations that lead a small group of pioneers to create a new ethical credit cooperative sustained by a tough network of social organizations (from social and solidarity economy). Learning lessons connect with the challenges of the credit cooperative in terms of maintaining motivation and commitment of its talented "militant" people as well as dealing with the high intensive voluntariness that this type of organizations require. As "*being sustained only by superheroes is unsustainable in the long term*", the initiative pursues to gain wider public support, increasing the number of associates and approaching to young people that do not trust or not relate with banking institutions. This objective involves to adapt the cooperative to the ongoing cultural change -in terms of relations among bank and clients- that leads to online banking practices. Fiare leaders have learned that social innovations are grounded on personal relations, "*face-to-face communication*" that allow building group identities, as well as social learning arises in informal sharing spaces. The challenge is how to take advance of technological innovations without jeorpardizing the social relations (based on local short-chain networks) that constitute the basis of the grassroots initiative.

In order to "change the financial system", Fiare has developed a series of strategies for transformative action, such as the creation of networks and alliances. According to Sasia, ambitions of changing the system involve necessarily that social innovations should relate and engage with public institutions due to the fact that "*changing the financial system is not only our responsibility and more institutionalization of ethical banking is needed*". However, social initiatives should be aware of not compromising their principles and core values "*we are not pure social movements. We want to talk to local administrations, national and regional governments. We have taken actions and making suggestions for changing the criteria that public administrations use when making their purchases. The issue is how to convince institutions to join Fiare without losing our identity.*"

transformative social innovation theory

Social learning for transformative social innovation: empirical research outcomes of TRANSIT

Social learning has been approached in TRANSIT project in terms of understanding how social innovation initiatives and networks come to know what they need to know to effectively engage in efforts toward transformation. The nature, characteristics and outcomes of social learning processes -that lead to transformative agency- has been analysed in a total of 20 case-studies conducted in 2014 and 2015, as Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema-Blanco and Ricardo García-Mira (University of A Coruña, Spain) presented in their paper. All cases include the analysis of 1 transnational social innovation network and at least 2 local manifestations. Dumitru and colleagues presented the "TRANSIT working paper: Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovations" (which is included in section 1 of this Deliverable D.2.3). Dumitru and colleagues presented a novel framework analysis on social learning – grounded on literature on social learning and Transit case-studies on empirical analysis- that proposes a differentiation between four different categories of analysis: a) learning contexts/spaces and methods; b) types of learning; c) social learning outcomes; and d) relevant learning actors.

The presentation specifically focused on the outcomes of two case-studies: **_Slow Food Movement_** and **_Credit Unions_**, which demonstrate that informal learning environments (that enable peer-to-peer knowledge exchange) facilitates social learning as well as contributes to wellbeing, trus-building and enhances motivations to participate. Regarding methods of learning, the paper remarks the importance of spaces where people can feel free to do whatever they want, and where they feel there is no judgment for failure was remarked. In terms of types of learning, cognitive learning, relational learning and strategic/political learning are required for gaining competences for transformative change. Concerning the main outcomes of social learning, the authors mentioned changes in understandings and framing as well as in the qualities and characteristics of relations (e.g. trust-building and cooperation, strategies for community and institutional engagement and transformation, increasing capacities for the promotion of optimal need satisfaction, feelings of empowerment). Finally, social learning also produces changes in a wider socio-material context, challenging current social systems and institutions.

Following with the analysis of social learning in TRANSIT, Rene Kemp, Julia Backhaus (University of Maastricht, the Netherlands) and Bonno Pel (Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), presented his paper on "Social media and social learning in the Basic Income movement". The case study approaches the transformative potential of basic income, an idea with a long history that aims to introduce new social relations between state and citizens, employers and employees and people in general. The paper focuses on networks of practitioners, and the role social media as a possible social learning tool-media. The researchers analysed the use of the Facebook portal (Basic Income Europe) -the biggest group discussing the Basic Income (3,350 members)-, and most often watched YouTube clip (TED talk by Rutger Bregman). Results of the study show that both social networks do not facilitate -in the case of Basic Income-reflective learning opportunities nor deep engagement in critical discussions. Facebook is a useful platform to share information and sharing people's "personal narratives". Overall, much more passive consumption than active engagement was found, so social media appear to serve as an entrance point and to be conducive to some critical exchange and social learning, but in any case, a new idea seems to need to fall on fertile ground for people to seriously engage.

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

Tim Strasser and René Kemp (University of Maastricht, the Netherlands) presented the paper "Practitioner engagement in social innovation: the role of social learning" (included in this Deliverable 2.3). The paper addressed the main insights extracted from qualitative interviews with a selection of talented leaders/practitioners from Transit case studies/ Knowledge group and one external (from the SCIRcle project -Social Innovation for Resilient Communities-) . The authors focused on the inner motivations or individual responsibility that called them to "find other ways of being, and of impacting, of acting out of challenges and crises, to develop response-ability: to develop the ability to respond as a capacity to answer to the challenges we face". Besides, practitioner engagement seems to involve an "inner transition" with changes in both individual and group (organizational) practices (e.g. consent process to make decisions, seeing objections as a gift, monthly meetings to deal with internal conflict etc.). Regarding social learning, SI initiatives possess a wealth of knowledge, academic and practical, on mobilization, framing, and climate of ideas, strategy, prefigurative politics, design thinking, power analysis or history among others. The challenge -and the opportunity -for TRANSIT project is to distill that mainly experiential and practical knowledge and shared it in an appropriate way with other social innovations.

Enhancing learning for transformative agency

After the first paper session, a *Discussion Forum* was conducted with the object of obtain insights and reflections on how to facilitate social learning in transformative social innovations and how to orientate these learning processes towards social change. With the aim of providing practical and useful knowledge to social initiatives, we invited to a reduced number of practitioners and local activists to present a "question or real issue" which they are dealing with in his/her initiative. Peru Sasia (member of the board of Fiare Banca Etica) formulated the question of how social innovations can reach to middle class and young people. Helena Sanmamede (member of the local chapter of Fiare Banca Etica in A Coruña), presented the issue of how social innovations can enhance the meaningful participation of their members. Laura Castro (member of local organic consumption cooperative Zocamiñoca) questioned how learning and training can be integrated in social initiative´s activities. Finally, Javier Vázquez (senior policy advisor on social innovation strategies in the Council of Santiago de Compostela, Spain) addressed the issue of how social innovation can be promoted by institutions in order to enable a participatory culture in municipalities.

All participants – practitioners and researchers- debated in small groups and produce potential solutions and strategies to cope with the mentioned problems (based on their knowledge of social innovation networks). Group discussions provided insights and reflections on the factors that condition the consolidation and transformative capacity of social innovation initiatives. For example, the importance of maintaining the motivation of volunteers and gaining in number of committed members, in order to guarantee the sustainability -at the long term- of any SI initiative. In second term, social learning plays a key role in both maintaining motivation and enhacing capacities for social transformation. According to participants, SI initiatives should drive social learning opportunities oriented to increase relational competences of members and volunteers as well as the renovation of internal structures with experienced and qualified people. This seems to be strategic to increase initiative's resilience and capacity of adaptation to internal and external challenges.

Finally, participants discussed on strategies to reach and persuade wide public to engage in social innovation. In this term, the groups identify the necessary precondition of producing a "wider

cultural change" grounded on an "inner transformation" of people's values and wordlviews. Thus, the role of SI initiatives is to contribute to this cultural change developing better communication and persuasion skills that permit them to elaborate attractive discourses targeted to non-militant people. Cultural changes can/should also been enhanced from local authorities (or in collaboration with them) whether participatory processes -like participatory budgeting- are put in practice. However, for effective transformative change, such participatory initiatives should enable reflective learning processes of participants that lead to individual and collective transformations that eventually tackle social issues.

Individual and relational transformations in social movements and social innovation initiatives

The second part of the workshop started with the presentation, from TRANSIT researchers, Bonno Pel and Tom Bauler **(**Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium) of the work "Increasing the learning potential and reflective agency capacities through the critical turning points database". Social learning in Transformative Social Innovations should be underpinned -and indeed preceded- by an elaborate comparative analysis across transformative social innovation contexts. This idea informed the setting up an online database of Critical Turning Points in transformative social innovations and to open it to the wide public. The leaders of the task, Pel and Bauler, explained the architecture and existing content of CTP database as well as learning potentials of this CTP, which relate to the knowledge about how TSI dealing with internal and external difficulties as well as take advantages of new circumstances or contextual changes. On the basis of these potentials, it can then be considered how to develop the many relations, interactions and learning processes that as yet remain potentialities. In the last part of the session, speakers and participant were involved in a "design exercise" for enhancing the learning potentialsof such CTP Databe. Participants were distributed in four different groups and invited to reflect on how CTP database could be useful for a) researched SI initiatives; b) TRANSIT researchers, c) other researchers; and d), other interested parties. The outcomes of these discussions nurished the work of designing the architecture and content of the CPT database.

Following, Iris Kunze (Center for Global Change and Sustainability, Austria) continued the session with the presentation of the paper "Searching for a new mode of community in social innovation initiatives". Kunze introduces the TRANSIT case-study of ecovillages as social innovations that reflect the linkages between social learning and transformative community. Ecovillages are intentional communities conceived as experimental spaces for developing new kinds or modes of social relations. hybrids of informal and formal social relations appear, there is a re-emergence of communities trying to deal with basic socio-psychological human needs and which include aspects of individual freedom or autonomy as voluntariness or intrinsic motivations. Ecovillages foster experimental learning and create physical spaces for that. Such spaces enable trust building and experiment informal social rules. As a result, social learning increases social competences and leads to social innovation. The presentation also sparked a debate over how ecovillages (and other intentional communities) solve their internal conflicts and the lessons arisen from conflict-solving experiences.

Carla Cipolla (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brasil) focused her paper on "Transforming social relations in social innovation initiatives" in the successful methodology developed by the DESIS for designing relational goods. The production of relational goods happens through design practices by

projects of labs in the network aiming to promote social change by redesigning the way people relate each other, at interpersonal level, unfolding an own theory of change. The concept of relational goods has been defined as the "type of goods that are neither material things, nor ideas, nor functional performances but consist, instead, of social relations" (Donati, 2014, p.20-21). Transformation is sought by rethinking the way people and groups enter into collaboration to produce common recognized results (e.g. service co-production has been the formula for increasing safety in neighborhoods). The starting point for Desis actions is to consider the "non designable character of human relationships". Thus, three models of social relation has be used to approach to different ways of producing relational goods production: a) between local communities that are not used to interact (e.g. Students and professors at university: invention of community and/in place); b) convergence of existing interests and resources towards common goals (new services (e.g. time banks) developed over time in open ended ways); and c) virtuous and continuous circles (matchmaking work, improving interaction between people to generate new commons). Interpersonal relations are one of the basis of the actions proposed by DESIS in its collaborative or relational method, which involve several considerations on the nature of these goods. For instance, relational goods will always have emergent positive effects through the open access to wider community.

The quest for new social relations and new societal arrangements in social innovation and sustainability initiatives: insights for practitioners and researchers

The second discussion forum focused on the types of relations that transformative social innovations try to promote and what relational changes are sought (from what to what?). Participants were distributed in three different groups and were invited to provide examples of **new social relations** that SIs promote and discuss about the mechanisms, processes and strategies that SI initiatives and/or networks try to bring about relational change. Participants provided examples of how SI initiatives introduce more egalitarian relations between citizens and among citizens and institutions. Most of SI seek the "humanization" of economic relations, altering the value of goods and services, substituting the value of money for time-use value or de-centralized currency systems subjected to an ethical code.. Linked to this is the change in labor/welfare system like basic income proposes, which also involves a change in relation between citizens and State. Two more example of new social relations – focused on the individual sphere- are proposed by Slow Food –which defends a change in lifestyles, from anhedonia to experiencing pleasure-enjoyment and collective celebration- and Ecovillages, which claims a change in intimacy relations, from monogamy and exclusive romantic relations to open ones.

A set of challenges and barriers which difficult the normalization those new relations have been pointed out by the researchers. First at all, social/economic conditions should be taken into account: e.g. distrust in "top-down" projects coming from formal institutions, the lack of culture of participation; the lack of responsibility regarding environmental issues; avoidance strategies of neighbours, etc.). Secondly, cultural norms and habits influence people's relations. It was pointed out the issue on self-interest/egoism, and the disconnection with the initiative, the lack of visibility and the engagement of volunteers, and the need to open the initiative to community (for some volunteers), connecting to local needs. Finally, researchers formulate a set of learning insights and key lessons for SI initiatives in order to foster motivation involvement and sense of belonging among practitioners, enhacing autonomy and feeling of empowerment and dealing with contradictions, frustrations and high expectations

tran**s**formative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

Motivations in transformative social innovation ambitions

Invited keynote professor Kennnon Sheldon contributed to the quest of motivations for transformative social innovation presenting the psychological approach of the Self-Determination theory (SDT). Different psychological theories have explained the relation between motivation and behavior and demonstrates that intrinsic motivation comes from people´s curiosity, interests and passions, experiencing a full sense of choice and commitment. Going further, the Self-Determination theory has contributed to explain the factors and conditions that influence on individual´s intrinsic motivations -the fulfilment of the basic needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Sheldon highlights the importance -for sustaining motivation- of autonomy support. Autonomy involves the capacity of *"being the owner of your own behaviour"*. According to self-determination theory, autonomy can be enhanced, for example, whether people are provided with the most possible options (to be chosen) or if substantial arguments support the unique possible alternative. Participants discussed the importance of motivating groups of people in terms of enhancing certain behaviours of practices that are not necessarily pleasant or enjoyable for people. *Besides, w*orking with communities and organizations is a very important motivation which has also been observed within the social initiatives studied in TRANSIT. Creating supportive environments helps people to change the context, gaining autonomy or agency capacity. This also relates with the need for relatedness, and the need of enhancing group identity and providing spaces where people feel good in some way (as some SI initiatives have learned to do overtime).

Motivations for social change

Continuing with the theme introduced by professor Kennon Sheldon, University of A Coruña, Spain) presented the working paper "Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema-Blanco and Ricardo García Mira (Motivations for transformative social innovations: results of TRANSIT project", focusing on peoples motivations to start or joining to social innovation initiatives. Illustrating the analysis with two case studies –Credit Unions and Slow Food movement- the study show that founders and activists in both initiatives are motivated by a search for contexts that better satisfy their basic psychological needs and, consequently, social innovations (consciously or not) shape their organizations to support basic need satisfaction. Participants seem to get involved in social innovation initiatives searching for autonomy and in response to the need for coherence and alignment between one´s values/interests and one´s actions. The second motivation to participate and to start an initiative appears to be the need for relatedness. People desire to connect with equals, both past and present. In order to favour this relatedness, initiatives strive to create good climates, enabling in many cases spaces for celebration and driving also the creation of networks. Finally, Social Innovation initiatives experience the need for competence, emphasizing local knowledge and expertise. Competence is enhanced through the facilitation of knowledge and expertise by the initiative, which in turn generates possibilities for action that are experienced as empowering. To sum up, motivation is sustained by experiencing challenge and the impact of actions (collective competence) and this increases well-being among practitioners.

Ferdinando Fornara (University of Cagliari, Italy) Fornada presented in the paper "becoming a change agent in sustainability initiatives" the results of the BIOMOT project, focusing on the individual psychological dimension of commitment to action for nature. Researchers conducted story-life interviews with a number of activists "champions for nature" from different European countries as well as other set of interviews with leaders in other sectors (politicians, economists, etc.). Results of the project demonstrate that eudemonic motivations (e.g.'curiosity and learning'

and 'living a worthwhile life') along with feelings of autonomy, are key drivers for committed action for nature. However, those motivations do not arise spontaneously then, they must be promoted (e.g. in childhood, in schools, in families) . For committed actors to nature what makes life meaningful is nature itself. In conclusion, the need of promoting nature experiences and social values should be considered in any environmental policy aimed to increase environmental awareness.

Tony Craig (The James Hutton Institute, Scotland, UK) introduced in the paper "Temporal Autonomy: Exploring Flexibility, Everyday Life, and Wellbeing" empirical findings from the GLAMURS project focusing on the implications that temporal autonomy of flexible working in Aberdeen. Flexible working potentially helps organizations shrink building stock and save energy and it also can enhance 'temporal autonomy'. In this sense, flexible working is framed as a new measure of freedom, as a variant of smart working. In GLAMURS, we consider the optimal functioning of any model requires the satisfaction of the three psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness & competence). Among the results, Craig explains a positive correlation between autonomy and life satisfaction. However, as Craig pointed *"flexibility does not be understood as equate working from home; it means you have the capacity to choose".* Although searching the sources of satisfaction is not one of the main objectives of the GLAMURS project, GLAMURS unpacks the relationship between the general structure of the way people distribute their time, people behavior and well-being. Thus, one finding has been that time affluence determines well-being independently of the context.

Conceptualizing empowerment in social innovation initiatives and its relationship to motivations for action

The third Transit social learning workshop finalized with the discussion conducted by Flor Avelino (Dutch Research Institute for Transitions, the Netherlands, and coordinator of the TRANSIT project) on how SI initiative (can) learn to gain empowerment. Avelino provided points for discussion concerning the issue of agency and its relevance regarding (dis)empowerment. In TRANSIT we comprehend empowerment as a process through which human actors (both individually and collectively) gain (or loose) the ability to act on goals that matter to them and develop effective strategies to do. Empowerment can be understood as a needed (or desired) outcome of social learning -as well as a challenge for social change- in terms of impact (be able to "make a difference") and competence (acquire appropriate skills and abilities to reach their goals), meaning (believe in a purpose) and choice (be able to determine what they do). Further, in TRANSIT we argue that empowered people can challenge, alter or replace elements of the social context that thwart the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs that Sheldon or Dumitru and colleagues explained before. Psychological needs are important for empowerment, but this entire framework is intuitive, a heuristic, not tested yet. Thus, participants discuss on the issue of confidence and how confidence is relevant to have an opportunity to apply self-capabilities to a determined task. Other questions focused on the experience of alternatives ways for facilitating the process of learning in these contexts, group participation can be fostered through different techniques (simulations, games, focus group) which also can increase the level of satisfaction and pushing this kind of empowerment at the group level.

transformative social innovation theory

3.5. List of participants

Name	Organization
Adina Dumitru	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Isabel Lema-Blanco	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Ricardo García-Mira	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Helena Martínez	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Alberto Díaz-Ayude	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Kennon Sheldon	University of Missouri (Columbia, USA)
Peru Sasia	University of Deusto (Basque Country, Spain) and Fiare Banca Etica
Javier Vázquez	Municipality of Santiago de Compostela (Spain)
Elena San Mamed	Fiare Banca Etica (A Coruña. Spain)
Fernando Barcia	Equuz Zebra (A Coruña. Spain)
Laura Castro	University of A Coruña (Spain) and ZocaMiñoca sustainable consumption cooperative (A Coruña)
Flor Avelino	University of Erasmus de Rotterdam (Netherlands)
Tom Bauler	Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)
Bonno Pel	Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)
René Kemp	Maastricht University (Netherlands)
Tim Strasser	Maastricht University (Netherlands)
Iris Kunze	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Austria)
Carla Cipolla	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Brasil)
Jens Dorland	University of Aalborg (Denmark)
Donia Tawakol	University of Erasmus de Rotterdam (Netherlands)
Zenith Delabrida	Universidade Federal de Sergipe (Brasil)
Ferdinando Fornara	Università degli Studi di Cagliari (Italy)
Tony Craig	The James Hutton Institutte (Scotland, UK)
Marta Fdez Prieto	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Mónica Maldonado	Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (Mexico)
Amelia Fraga	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Xosé Gabriel Vázquez	University of A Coruña (Spain)
Jesús Miguel Muñoz	University of A Coruña (Spain)

4. Inner Transformations: Dimensions, Practices and Facilitation

Tim Strasser
Maastricht University (Netherlands)

Processes of transformative social change involve learning processes at their core: learning to relate to others, the world, even ourselves in new or forgotten ways, to value, think and behave differently, or even to learn about deeper or hidden parts of ourselves, to take on new identities. The following highlights some of the emergent themes and insights about the deeper implications of social learning for transformative change that resulted from an ongoing process of engaging seven selected practitioners involved with various social innovation initiatives as leaders, organizers, supporters, and facilitators. This process so far involved one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each of them, as well as a group call with almost all of them. This group call set the basis for a series of further group calls for peer-learning among these practitioners, including also myself as a practitioner as well as researcher. Overall, the participants of this process were all very appreciative of being involved in this way, to connect with each other and continue learning with each other. Below, I discuss some of the key themes that surfaced in the interviews and group discussion, as well as offer some reflections of my own and from the practitioners on this process itself. The themes discussed are: 1) the dimensions of and methods for inner transformation, in relation to transformation in groups and society at large; 2) practices for cultivating inner transformations in organizational and facilitation contexts and 3) ways of knowing, in relation to emerging worldviews and the roles and methods of facilitation for these deeper processes of transformation.

Dimensions of inner transformation

Most practitioners working for positive social change recognized that their efforts would be incomplete, ineffective, perhaps counter-productive even, if engaging in change 'out there' in the world does not go hand in hand with attention to changes on the 'inside' as well: "It's critical to have personal reflection and change processes in place […] There is no external without internal", in the words of an Impact Hub Global team member. This applies to individuals as well as the collective interiors of groups, organizations, and even on societies at large, in terms of commonly held values, worldviews and identities. On an individual level, the dimensions of inner change may involve, for instance:

- (stages of) personal psychological or consciousness development;
- the capacities to accept, understand, and creatively respond to personal or societal challenges and conflicts;
- a sense of individual purpose or meaning in relation to one's life and career choices;
- getting out of your comfort zone and facing up to one's vulnerabilities in front of others;
- becoming aware of unconscious mental and behavioural patterns
- shifting identities, beliefs and attachments about oneself;
- shifting out of fear- or judgement-based relations into trust-based relations;
- becoming "whole" in relation to a felt separation or fragmentation of the self (personal vs professional self, authentic vs alienated self, individualistic vs embedded self).

Various **examples of these inner change dimensions** surfaced during the interviews and the group call, some of which are described below. Also included are examples of organizational or facilitation practices that some of them use to create the appropriate context within their SI

initiatives or in their community building or process facilitation work for these inner dimensions of transformative change to be recognized, nourished and integrated with practical action in the world.

In the case of Impact Hubs, the Art of Hosting is frequently mentioned as a core part of the "software, of the DNA of how the Impact Hub was created, how it came to life in the first place". The individual dimension of change is stated as an essential part of the Art of Hosting methodology: "in order to host transformative change, we need to look at how individuals are transforming in themselves. As we create communities of entrepreneurs we need to allow the space to bring their own personality and support them in this transformative change" (Interviewee 7). So besides offering support for social entrepreneurs to develop professionally (business model, marketing, networking, etc) they give equal attention to "the personal journey: this needs to be supported and accompanied as much as the business support". This involves, for instance, learning to be open and vulnerable in the face of challenges and understanding the deeper societal changes they are working on together.

On the basis of this understanding, that personal internal processes are vital component of generating change on a societal level, the Impact Hub also collaborates closely with the U.Lab, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) program on transformative leadership that hones in on the personal and inter-personal inner dimension of global changes (some catch-phrases are "who am I? and what is my work?", "seeing with new eyes", "turning around the camera on ourselves", "sensing" and "leading from the emerging future"), developed by Otto Scharmer and his colleagues at MIT. About three quarters of the Impact Hubs are hosting local U.Lab hubs, since the first two iterations of the course in 2015, where the virtual guidance for people's internal reflection process that is offered by the course can be combined with a space for sharing and ideating projects: "The Popularity of this [program] is directly related to this insight: without a very clear insight of who I am, how I am and how I orient to the world, it will be very difficult to see real changes" (Interviewee 7). Interestingly, however, the Impact Hub also saw that despite high satisfaction among participants in the program, stating that "they got clearer on themselves, what they want to contribute to the world", in fact very few concrete projects emerged after people went through this inner change process. In dialogue with the U.Lab team, they learnt that the process had "set them up for phase one, on how I can contribute, but left it there", stopping short of supporting the next phase of concretizing and manifesting ideas by developing solid financial and organizational foundations. "They learnt where it was working developmentally for people" (Interviewee 7). As a result of this learning, they recently started another iteration of the program with a clearer distinction between these two phases (first: doing the inner work and clarifying ones contribution; second: translating the inner change into real change projects), as well as a clearer role for the Impact Hub to focus especially on the second phase of supporting people to make their ideas tangible. This indicates different stages in the personal dimension of taking responsibility for contributing to a better world, which need to build on each other and be supported in different ways at each phase.

The **importance of the inner dimension** of change is fundamentally related to the ability to take responsibility for others and the world and to step beyond re-enacting patterns of domination and destruction. As one Impact Hub global member described it:

> "There's also tons of research about this: like, here's the psychotic CEO profile, they've done zero personal work, but they are in charge of thousands or thousands of people: those profiles are all over our humanity. So how do we stop the patterns that are reinforcing death and degradation in our world? That's only going to come from the personal work of people who recognize that they would like to change into different patterns and have different behavior. And that is all very personal work. That came probably from not addressing your relationship with your mother or father, its very deep, its very personal. And if people have no place, and they're totally fragmented and not able to do that in their lives, it will just

continue. We are not taking full responsibility for our humanity if we don't actually consider those things and history will repeat itself." (Interviewee 7)

This illustrates how people's personal capacity to take responsibility is something that needs to be developed through deep personal work.

This topic of "taking full responsibility for our humanity" and the required capacities to do so also came up in another interview with a facilitator, therapist and artist, or "ecosystem steward" (a term she prefers over "facilitator"). She shared how a personal "calling to support change" surfaced for each of the partners involved in the SIRCle project[17] that she is involved in, which aims to develop a curriculum and compass for social entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs to develop "life sustaining cultures". She explained this calling as *"a sort of evolutionary impulse: we're feeling that the world, how we evolve as a humanity, is at an important point, where we feel called to find other ways of being, and of impacting, of acting out of challenges and crises, to develop response-ability*: to develop *the ability to respond*" (Interviewee 1).

This re-articulation of the notion of responsibility in terms of *response-ability* seems quite crucial, in the sense that a more constructive and generative attitude towards responsibility underlies how social innovators relate to the transformation in the world and their own possible contribution to that process.

She further explained that responsibility "is a very charged term" that can feel quite heavy for many people, as it comes across like a burdensome duty or obligation that is placed upon our shoulders: "But we try to see it more as a capacity to answer to the challenges we face and as empowering people to develop those capacities. So instead of a duty, we see it more as an invitation" (Interviewee 1). The question of course then arises: which capacities specifically need to be cultivated or developed in order to be able to respond? Here she mentioned a few such capacities:

> "One element is to have trust in ourselves, in our own inner knowing and ability to act. Another important one is the knowledge about collaborative processes and the ability to *lauschen* [listen], to really hear another. That can be quite challenging, to really get somebody else at a deeper level beyond your own preconceptions. Also I see the importance of feeling intuitively what a good decision would be or where a project wants to go, what the right kind of response would be for a given situation. That's also related to the ability to 'see through' a situation: so what's beyond it, what's really at the core? For example, sometimes a crisis is not that bad but finally an invitation to change. This also requires the ability to not to get taken out of your center because of a crisis, so staying centered. I mean, not to fall into a panic attack, because there's a crisis, but noticing it and giving it space to relax."

These capacities, including effective collaboration, trusting, listening, feeling intuitively, and responding constructively to crisis or failure are closely related to the practices and ways of knowing many of these social innovators use to support and engage in learning processes on individual and collective levels. Some of these practices are described in following chapter.

Practices for inner transformation

Many of the SI initiatives we studied integrate various kinds of practices or processes into how they work within their organization, so as to integrate learning in the form of inner transformation in

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[17] See for more info: http://www.sircle-project.eu/: The SIRCle Project was born in a close collaboration between the Global Ecovillage Network and the Findhorn Foundation and brings together a diverse range of organisations from Austria (Plenum), Belgium (AEIDL and Still Consulting), Romania (Asociatia Romania in Transizie), Spain (Altekio) and Portugal (FFCUL).

transformative social innovation theory

their efforts. Here just a few that came up in the interviews with practitioners from some of these initiatives, Impact Hub and Transition Network, as well as some insights from an organizational change consultant on how this applies to other organizations as well.

In the **Transition Network**, "inner transition" is one of the core elements of their transformative efforts, which they are trying to "embed in all that we do at Transition" (Interviewee 2). For instance, some of the organizational roles and practices that were mentioned include:

The "inner transition coordinator", who works on supporting and coordinating activities of local initiatives around transition on personal levels and group levels. Inner transition is oftentimes one of the core themes local transition initiatives engage in and the network also offers trainings specifically focusing on this topic.

A "keeper of the heart", who takes care of the wellbeing of group members during meetings, by paying attention to keep up the energy levels, making space for celebration of successes and appreciation of contributions, or respond to tensions gracefully.

Someone who is responsible for "healthy groups", who supports the wellbeing of Transition initiatives in terms of the way members collaborate with each other, deal with conflict, clarify roles and maintain personal motivation. Related to the latter, Transition Network also developed a "health check" self-assessment tool for teams to evaluate how they're doing as a group and search for support if needed on elements where their group is less developed.

A "being meeting" organized every month to work with conflict, involving "extended check-ins" where people don't talk about daily practicalities, but investigating how people are feeling in the group and their frustrations and wishes. By getting a better shared understanding of "where people are at and how to collaborate better", this practice supports the internal, relational dimension of the group's cohesion and thereby supports their capacity to act collaboratively.

A "consent process" used to make decisions, whereby objections to proposals are seen "as a gift", in the sense that they bring in valuable information about how a proposal could be improved to serve the common purpose of the group and match the needs of those concerned. This move away from consensus to consent-based decision-making is common to quite a few ecovillages and Transition Towns, as well as Impact Hubs, who are disillusioned by the downsides of never-ending discussions and frustrating veto-interventions (characteristic of consensus) and look for more trustful ways of arriving at collectively agreeable outcomes. This consent practice involves an inner shift away from a position of dis/agreeing to a proposal according to whether one personally approves of it (as in consensus), to seeking a proposal that best meets the larger purpose that the group is trying to serve, giving less attention to the individual's preferences.

Among the **Impact Hub** network, attention to the personal dimension of change is catered to by some of the following practices:

"Fuck-up Nights" are organized by many Impact Hubs as a sort of "personal reflections exhibition", where a "safe space" environment is created for individual entrepreneurs to show their vulnerabilities and share their failures for personal and collective learning. The related support process for people's personal development "relates very clearly to their successes and consistent effort over time" and effectively "closes the gap between the professional and the personal" (Interviewee 7).

Personal reflection and change processes supported by the team and integrated into annual planning: One of the Impact Hub global members shared an example of how she had recently made

a big leap in her own development, thanks to having "a very strong internal process and a team that held my internal process". The internal process involved applying various "strength-finder tests" for finding out her strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggestions for underlying reasons and areas to focus her contributions, whereupon "I made an inventory of what I can contribute and what's holding me back. And then all of that goes into our yearly planning process." Essentially, this "integrated process" combines professional achievement and personal learning goals in the planning of the team, with clear feedback and group support mechanisms for developing along both lines simultaneously.

"Powerful questions" to bridge the professional to the personal and transpersonal dimension. The Impact Hub global team uses Holacracy as a governance form, whereby each person holds multiple roles simultaneously that shift over time and people can chose which of their roles to dedicate their attention to at any particular moment. One example of a powerful question the Impact Hub global team uses for deciding which of their roles and activities to commit to is: "where do I feel energized? which role do I want to energize in this moment?". They use this self-reflective question to attend not just to the strategic priorities of the team and the organization but also the internal processes the individual is going through and use both reference points to decide which steps to take next. It's also used as a reflexive feedback mechanism, when people do not find a role energizing, in which case they ask: "what does it mean about the role? Then there is a reflection to the organization level and certainly back to you. So is it a matter that the role needs to change or that you need a new role or a combination of both. [...] It's also a little give and take and learning to balance what the organization needs and what energizes me. [...] We have a continual process of doing our very best to match what the organization needs with people who are energized by those roles." (Interviewee 7)

A core focus, that appears to be shared by many of the initiatives and the interviewees that are part of this investigation, seems to be on **authentic and collaborative ways of being and working** on individual, team and organizational levels: this involves, for instance, more respectful, transparent and holistic forms of collaboration and communication, where individuals are invited to integrate their personal authentic selves with the professional demands of the organization and the purpose or societal contribution it stands for. In this sense, there seems to be striking similarity to the "Teal" organizational paradigm that Frederic Laloux describes in his book *Reinventing Organizations* (2014). He suggests that this paradigm is the latest to emerge in a long evolutionary developmental process of organizational paradigms in human history (which he color-codes), from tribal clans (Red), to hierarchical control-seeking administrations (Amber) in state and church, to rational progress-oriented business organizations (Orange), and egalitarian and inclusive kinds of business or non-profit organizations (Green). This new, Teal paradigm, to be seen as emerging across organizational sizes and types, including private, public and non-profit, is characterized by an emphasis on

- "self-management": giving maximum decision autonomy to individuals and teams, instead of power hierarchies of control and domination.
- "evolutionary purpose": a collectively felt *raison d'être* of the organisation, emphasizing a social benefit at its core, instead of profit maximization being the bottom line.
- "wholeness": authenticity and vulnerability, welcoming the often excluded personal, intuitive, feminine qualities of individuals in addition to the otherwise dominant professional, rational and masculine qualities.

Interestingly, one of the interviewees, an organizational change consultant and process facilitator also touched on this **paradigmatic shift**, in relation to the above-mentioned developmental perspective:

> "I'm also working with phases of development: I call myself a development consultant: this idea of helping organizations understand what phase of their life they are in and trying to facilitate change from one phase to another phase, and trying to create awareness on how organizations can better understand what might be the crisis that they're living and that the crisis is really an opportunity for tackling another level of organization and another development level. [...] (Interviewee 3)

He further explains how the ability to shift organizational paradigms and to see crisis as an opportunity for such a shift, are closely correlated to the individual development of those involved in the organizing, which is again very much in line with Laloux 2014). He continues:

> "there's a shift of paradigm behind it: you cannot just use chose another tool or model and trust that will change everything. So there's really a need for people to change and to shift internal paradigms. And that takes time, it's really a slow process. [...] just because the world is changing rapidly doesn't mean that the big big change in our personal models, our mindset, will happen that quickly" (Interviewee 3).

> "[...] at the level where the real change, the bigger changes happen, at the level of narratives, at the level of worldviews: that is slow and humble work" (Interviewee 4).

Naturally, this internal change process, to the extent that it in fact involves a paradigmatic shift, doesn't happen from one day to another. However, a growing number of people and organizations seem to recognize the significance of such a shift, as indicated not just by the popularity of Laloux's book. The interviewee explained that he and his colleagues have seen growing numbers of people signing up for trainings on more authentic and collaborative relationships in the workplace. He also pointed out a generational shift, of especially younger generations increasingly seeking purposeful organizations that offer more meaningful workplaces than purely profit-driven ones: "people are more and more willing to work with purpose: so the purpose that they have in their life, they want somehow to see that happening in the company, in organizations they are working with". In response to this, many companies are faced with the question: "How to understand their identity beyond just making profit?" (Interviewee 3). In trying to respond to such questions and challenges, he emphasized the need for organizations to "pay attention to themselves". Once they engage in such self-reflection collectively,

> "they start to reveal themselves to themselves and then they can decide how to adjust. And this intelligence, this capacity to make different adjustments: is really necessary in a very rapidly changing world. We cannot rely on models, concepts of others anymore. We need to learn how to read life processes and organizational processes and try to make adjustments by ourselves. [...] So just creating space and time for themselves to look at their group processes, their relationships, and their identity, is really helping them"

So inner transformations, in terms of developing enhanced self-understanding, shifting identity, and developing new capacities and behaving differently, hence apply not just to an individual level but also to an organizational level. How these inner transformations or paradigmatic shifts can come about and what they involve are deeply related to new or different ways of knowing.

Ways of Knowing

One recurrent theme related to inner transformations seemed to be the notion that we need to become able to accept and work with the fact that **not knowing and uncertainty** are important elements of learning and innovation processes that need to be honoured and embraced, instead of

rushing too quickly into solutions in an attempt to reach clarity. Additionally, there seems to be an element of letting go to some extent of acting based on what one personally wants and sensing into what an organization or, generally, "the system" as a whole want. The interviewee from the SIRCle project explained how the collective of partners in this project experienced this:

> "we're asking ourselves: where does SIRCle want to go? And that's also a very different approach, a big shift in how we go about creating or bringing forth something, to ask how: 'does *it* [original emphasis] want to come into the world?' That's very different than saying 'I want to bring it into the world.' We have an *Ahnung* [a hunch / rough sense] what it can be and we're trying to stay in this place of not knowing until we have more clarity, more sense of what it wants to become. To stay in that unknown is part of that process. [...] It's also about staying comfortable with not knowing and the complexity of not knowing. It also means trusting that the system knows and you just need to allow the system to be heard by you: to clean the filters and trust your knowing. And then of course you also need to go beyond listening and putting things into action, while still realizing we're in that sensing" (Interviewee 1).

Another team member of Impact Hub global spoke to a similar point related to what she feels is emerging as a new way of knowing or acting that people are learning about, in relation to transformative innovation:

> "I feel it's about working with opposites: there's this need for results and this need for going deeper inside. Going forward and stopping to reflect. What I see emerging is a growing awareness that it's not one or the other, but about how you balance them and sensing when which is most serving in the moment." (Interviewee 6)

The following quote from the book *Labcraft* (Tiesinga & Berkhout, 2014) which one of the interviewees co-authored together with a group of other social innovation lab facilitators, during a four-day Book Sprint[18], illustrates a similar point: "Innovating thus requires that we refrain from trying to converge too quickly on an answer. Rather, we need to allow time for consecutive phases of exploring and evaluating, diverging and converging" (p. 28).

So one common feature of new ways of knowing is related to **emergent processes** of change, related to complexity, uncertainty and plurality of perspectives, as well as balancing the need for practicality and reflection. The interviewee from Impact Hub global described this in terms of how she is searching for:

> "being open for emergence, at a deeper level. Because there is a Lot of theory, practices to collaborate and co-create, but once there is the doing part, once you start engaging different stakeholders, different members or makers: it needs to be at a deeper level. There is no clear road ahead. It really needs to be hosting the space for emergence: what is there needed in that moment. There is no person to know it in advance. As capacity building team we are not providing any knowledge top down but offer the space for this emergence to come out. Its a lot of listening, letting go of assumptions and seeing what is really emerging in the moment and acting on that. That's my learning practice: balancing between moving forward and stopping to understand what is needed in that moment" (Interviewee 6).

This search for **"deeper levels"** was also a recurrent theme in the interviews and the group call, in the sense of deeper levels of learning and responding to changing environments or societal

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[18] See: https://www.kl.nl/nieuws/kennisland-contributes-to-booksprint-on-social-innovation-labs

challenges. One interviewee framed his search for depth in relation to a perceived superficiality in the "hype" and "naivety" of social innovation discourse, especially related to "the politics of it all" where he sees initiatives and uses of the term as "oftentimes not transformative at all, but just piecemeal change [...] rather minimalist in its scope". In response to this, he is focussing "more and more on the learning and the deepening of change processes, because at the end of the day that's where its decided whether something will change or not. And I don't think that there is a lot of attention for it" (Interviewee 4). When asked about what exactly more depth means for him, he responded:

> "it's actually very easy to set up a small project, it's not easy, but we know how this works, and there is a lot of existing knowledge long before people talked about social innovation and how to do that. But it's a whole different ball game to start thinking about how do you actually change society on deeper level. And when you get to those kind of questions, you also get to the way you facilitate processes or the way you handle things or the way change processes happen in general."

Especially this need for **skillful facilitation processes** for enabling deeper learning were mentioned repeatedly as crucial conditions for enabling transformative social change processes. Especially to support the learning of people already have much experience of engaging in social innovation activities, "To create the settings, the skills and the qualities to deepen the learning of those who are already doing it, that takes a lot deeper approaches" (Interviewee 4). The following extract from an article he referred to (Schulman, 2013) acknowledges and offers some suggestions for addressing the need for such deeper learning:

> "If we want deep systemic change, we also need deep and ongoing learning. Deep learning is more than information sharing. And it's more than networking. It's about critical reflection—the kind of reflection that helps you to identify your underlying assumptions about what you do and why, and leads you to try on and live out some new perspectives. We find that it's pretty difficult to engage in critical reflection when we're in a "selling" and "persuasion" mode—that is, the mode we're often in when we go to social innovation conferences, meet funders, and reach out to potential partners and colleagues.

A comment by another interviewee, from the hOurworld timebank network, illustrated this need for getting out of a "selling and persuasion mode" in order to get to a level of depth where critical reflection and shift of perspective or assumptions can take place. She referred to this as a shift from "expert to essence", which is a phrase they also use in their trainings and dialogues with people (Interviewee 5). She explains:

> expert, to me, is all in the head: it's a shadow: it's kind of wearing clothes as a barrier. [...] It's very confining, if you're an expert, you think you know everything but it's very isolating: because then you need to live up to being the smartest person in the room, you have to know all the answers. When we get out of that and we go to essence, which is: well, who am I? Then you're really speaking with your authentic voice, you're speaking from your heart without pretense, you have the freedom to expand your thoughts, to wander, to explore, to be creative, and you're also available to take in the energy from the person or the people that you're speaking with. [...] If we're in the essence of it, and we're not needing to be so tired by being pretentious: coming in with 15 books and saying hey, let me read you, let me outsmart you with all of my facts and prove myself adequate. If we just come in and say: guess what, this is who I am, who are you? Then we can get real really fast.

This correlates well with some suggestions that were offered for how learning processes would need to be facilitated for generating this level of depth:
- "a strong <u>personal</u> dimension: like the things we know from Theory U and so on"

- "space and also skills to deal with <u>vulnerability</u>: *you have to be able to confront yourself and each other with very inconvenient truths.*"
- *a <u>setting</u> that's very often not there. […] some of the most transformative things that I have experienced, being part of a transformative process, was for example in nature! But I see very little in the SI community about why that's important.*
- "*smaller conversations, the <u>intimacy</u> of them […] being in a small groups of friends with good food and good wine, having a dialogue, where people are actually listening to each other without noise distractions.*
- *Accompaniment over <u>longer periods of time</u> […] where you get the more seasoned SI practitioners and SI facilitators together for a longer time […] and also the relationships built up during that time, those are lasting things.*"

Another condition that was mentioned was the notion of **creating space** for insights, innovations and change to happen, without forcing or making the change oneself. Next to giving space in terms of a physical space, like the coworking space in an Impact Hub, this also applies in a non-material sense to a personal, organizational and even societal level. Some illustrative quotes for each of these levels are offered below:

<u>On a personal level:</u> "We are serving, we're channels of something much larger that wants to express itself. […] It's similar to when you're in a constellation: you need to allow it to happen through you. The question is if we resist from fear or if we can surrender to it. It's about us to see how much space we want to or can give that: if we are ready to surrender to that. Instead of blocking it and believing that things will stay as it is" (Interviewee 1).

<u>On an organizational level</u>: given the time pressures and accelerated rhythm of most organizations, especially companies, "creating space and time for themselves to look at their group processes, their relationships, and their identity, is really helping them" (Interviewee 3).

<u>On a societal level:</u> "what I have learnt, what was really impactful for me: is that it's not what you do that's really important but it's the space you can create for the change to emerge, for things to happen. That's why I also try to understand better the role the role of a facilitator. Because somehow, the really big metaphor: I think we are giving birth to another kind of, level of consciousness. So giving birth is a really painful process and we have to work on our internal edges and create these external edges that are these innovation processes and innovation organizations. So for that we really need to be brave, to trust that we are really giving birth to something that's not known. And that we have to build it ourselves and develop ourselves new models, because the current models are not working. […] What I can relate on what is happening globally is that we need to create space for change to happen, not just make change ourselves. There's really an inheritance that we have about command and control: we try to make the world change by changing the world ourselves with our hands, not understanding that change already wants to happen and if we just are willing to let change happen we are helping much more efficiently the new world that wants to emerge to happen. In my work I try to do this: Create space for understanding, for consciousness, and to the life, the processes that want to reveal themselves, and trying to help people let the new come. Because it's really painful when you have something that you don't know… willing to emerge from you. To relate to that impact [on oneself] of new things coming is really hard. I see myself like a person [Midwife] that helps the new to be born: helping this new consciousness to be born. I myself am in this process, I'm not saying 'I already passed this, I'm ready, my consciousness is evolved'. It's not that. But what I'm facing is that this is a collective process, and we have to somehow do it together. Not at the same time, but each one in their own time, and their own rhythm, but somehow we need to pay attention to what is willing to happen among us" (Interviewee 3).

Reflections about the Process

Lastly, a few reflections on the process of this engagement with practitioners may serve to illustrate, among other things, the role for science to be itself actively involved in these processes of inner transformation. Below some responses to my question about how they experienced being invited in this process through the personal interviews, reading the collection of quotes and insights from these interviews that I sent them afterwards, in preparation for the group call, and lastly the group call itself. Some also referred to the implications this may have for the TRANSIT final conference.

> "I didn't know how to feel at the beginning, what to expect, I had a lot of unclarity. Sometimes I have to hold a bit this feeling of being a bit uncomfortable not knowing what is the purpose of the call, what is the next action and so forth. But I've learned through my journey at my work that that's exactly how most of the time things go in work, in life, in societal transformation. Most of the time we just don't have that clarity, we just need to hold the space and bring the right people, or the people we want to invite, in the conversation and we have to sense a lot, there's a lot of sensing what is there. And I think this call was a reflection of this. I trust that this is ok for now, for where we are. I think this is a good reflection of how learning happens: it's a lot of 'I don't know, I'm sharing this, I'm sensing this, what else is there'. And in the end things emerge in this way. 'In sensing, in finding what is common, what is the red thread.' This process is sometimes a bit uncomfortable from how we are used to do business or how we do the projects we care about, but this is a good representation of how reality is."

Another participant mentioned that he felt like the call was like a
> "Warm bath [...] that all of us are looking for a level of depth, [...] looking for these deeper dimensions. It's very nice how everyone in his own words or based on their own work or practices are trying to formulate insights and questions around that. That made it really pleasurable to read and also made me look forward to exchanging some more."

> "I love the choice of words I'm hearing. Instead of co-hosting, its co-holding, [...] a conversation about 'vulnerability', a 'warm bath', 'mid-wifing'. It's beautiful language because its heart language and that's such a wonderful surprise and delight to meet people who are all using heart language, leading with heart language instead of head language, I think that's what makes this fresh and authentic for me."

In response to this comment about choice of words, another participant stated:
> "I call this 'resonance work'. This is a way of co-creating and bring that into existence, being conscious of how we chose these things, written or oral, is actually quite magical and somehow not understood by all of us." In her personal interview she also mentioned how she sees this quality of resonance of words: "It has much to do with what's behind these kind of words, this is much related to what we have lived through, how we have experienced and *beladen* [loaded/charged] that term. Every word has a certain *Ladung* [load/charge]. It's about what co-resonates with how we use the words. About the patterns that resonate with them: words are receptors for belief systems, or philosophies to attach themselves to."

The comment further below was related to a passage from one of the interviews, who stated:
> "I think there is an Interesting meeting going on: science is meeting spirituality, somehow, they are getting more close to each other, I think. For instance, Rudolf Steiner created this "spiritual science", he called it. And it's really interesting, because in my opinion we cannot fully understand the world by just rationality. We need intuition too; it plays a very important role with rationality. We don't have to choose one or another, both are important. But in a way our Western education really privileged more the rational thinking, the

rationality. That really damaged somehow our brain, because we never developed the other side of the brain."

She hence described this process itself as:

"It's a spiritual science, [...] I feel like we're blending, and weaving and allowing the head and the heart to go together, and that's what I'm hearing in this language from everybody, I'm hearing more right-brain, more intuitive, more heart-centred language as the norm, and not as something outside. And that's so encouraging. It means everything to me personally. Because I don't do well with [...] statistics, statistics, you should, here is fact, this is how it works, there's one way, here's the answer, follow this, read this paper, do this formula. I can't live that way, I'm very rebellious about that. So being in this community right now with all of you where everyone is using heart language, it's such a gift, it makes me so high, thank you. It makes me think that that's going to be the vibration of the conference, its gonna invite people into that. And for me that's transformation, that's how we get to transformation. Its setting free all the constraints, and restraints all around us, all the boxes and just flowing freely and allowing information and ideas and creative juices to go. [...] It seems to me that the conference would do well by more listening and processing, than lectures and experts telling us what we need to know. We've had a lot of that, I would try a different way."

"I resonate very much with that; I have a hard time with conferences. I live from what wants to emerge, and being holding space for that together with everybody, not making a distinction between the hosting team, and the participants and the guests or however different groups. So being present and listening to what wants to emerge. This is for me the container within which transformation is happening, transformation cannot be induced, you can only set the container for that."

Also, a few comments were offered as evaluation of how the process was facilitated on my behalf:

"You do it beautifully, how you host, how you bring together, how you make sure information is there in time. Just be yourself and that comes across, it's between the lines as well"

"I'd say there were three things you did really well [...]: 1. You've approached people with some interesting questions, that relate to their practice, not 'your' theory. 2. You then in the interview enabled exploring deep questions in a skilful and emphatic way, turning a conversation into a little transformative experience and 3. Then following up with rigour (the write up and this call) of the kind that generative processes need."

Another comment that was made by one of the interviewees is also fitting here:

"What I appreciate, what I thank you for. At this stage in my life, and this work that I believe in, that's really soulful work for me, It's all about the essence, all about the real, real issues, not the surface. I enjoy this stage of my life where I have conversations that are very authentic and they go straight to the heart of things. And you asked questions that led immediately to 'who am I? Why do I do this work? What is it all about?" You didn't ask the surface questions, about, well, what's your budget, how long have you been in existence, do you have staff support, you know, those are framework questions and you can get those off our website. You asked essence questions, and I really appreciate that. I heard myself answering the way I wanted to, I was sharing really who I am and my belief system. [...] Asking really the in-heart questions to people is a much more expedient way to have a dialogue. And you did that very well, and you've been very patient in allowing me time to complete sentences and complete my thoughts. You've been very gracious, and I really really

appreciate your generosity, because often people have 25 questions and they need to get them all in, and they go 'yes yes, very good, ok' and they don't really listen to what you're saying because they want to get their list. They're also actually looking for answers. They already have pre-designed answers, questions and answers. And you gave me the space to identify who I am and why we're doing this, and that's very spiritually mature" (Interviewee 5).

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that all participants seemed very grateful and energized by participating in the group call, in particular also by getting to know each other and sensing a commonality of values and worldview. They stated a high interest in continuing to participate in this process and enter into more specific questions and topics.

Conclusion

The interviews and peer reflections in the group call offer some initial framings for understanding the layers of depth related to inner transformations in relation to transformative social changes. They spoke to the significance of cultivating the inner dimension in addition to one's professional work, as a source of the outer changes in the external world; the invitation to develop response-ability, as a capacity, rather than an obligation for responding to the world around us. A few practices some of these social innovators or facilitators use in their work were mentioned, as possible examples of a paradigmatic shift in organizational modes of working and collaborating, with particular importance for authenticity, trust and a sense of purpose. This showed how inner transformations are not just related to the inner dimension of individuals, but also the collective interiors of organizations, in terms of their identities, relationships and processes. A few common elements of the various aspects of facilitating transformative ways of knowing that enable an inner transformation, or paradigmatic shift of identities, consciousness and worldviews, were suggested, involving: working with uncertainty in situations of complexity, creating space for emergence, inviting people on an intimately personal level in a supportive context, letting go of control and collectively shifting into an attitude of trust and response-ability in the face of crisis and pain, as well as developing the appropriate methods to support these processes. Lastly, some reflections of participants about engaging in this research and peer-learning process itself highlighted the significance of choice of words for creating a field of resonance, a level of conversation that people can deeply relate to and thereby connect to each other authentically. This leaves us with some open questions for the role of science in current transformative social changes, regarding a possible integration of science and spirituality, rationality and intuition, the head and the heart. How this can actually manifest in further research processes and conferences is yet to be explored.

5. Insights on Social Learning for Transformative Social Innovation Practice (input for practice brief and learning tool)

By Isabel Lema, University of A Coruña

5.1. Insights on social learning for transformative social innovation

The TRANSIT project aims at developing a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation (TSI), through a combination of interdisciplinary theoretical development and empirical research on a series of case studies of social innovation initiatives. To achieve an understanding of how the phenomenon of social innovation contributes to transformative change, we combine a systemic perspective with a micro-theory of change, informed by social psychological perspectives that can bring an understanding of human agency and processes of individual and collective empowerment that are key to understanding how societal change comes about. In TRANSIT, we define social innovation as "changing social relations, involving new ways of thinking, doing, organizing and framing" (Haxeltine *et al.*, 2015). But how do these changes happen, what drives them, and what is the role played by different actors in these processes? In order to answer such a question, a psychologically-informed understanding of processes of change within social innovation initiatives and in their interaction with the wider social context is needed.

Learning in general has become a buzzword within academic, practitioner and policy-making circles. The literature on social learning currently spans several academic disciplines (e.g. philosophy, psychology, sociology, educational sciences, organizational studies, environmental management etc.), and there has been a proliferation of overlapping and sometimes contradictory definitions of the concept (Reed et al., 2010). However, in spite of such proliferation of analyses of social learning, a critical review of the literature permitted identified three key problems that impede conceptual clarity: confusions between the concept of social learning and the methods or conditions necessary to facilitate it; between the process and the outcomes of social learning; and little distinction between individual and wider social learning (Reed et al., 2010). In order to differentiate between the processes or mechanisms of social learning and their effects, and to bring further conceptual clarity, the authors propose a definition of social learning as "a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units or communities of practice through social interactions between actors within social networks" (p.4-5). This definition provides a good starting point for explorations of social learning processes in contexts of social innovation. However, we further argue that in the context of transformative social innovation, social learning goes beyond a change in understanding that becomes situated in wider social units, to include a change in the quality and type of relations among actors, which encompasses changes in collective meanings/understandings, the reshaping of identities, and new rules and norms of interaction.

Embedding social learning as a key area of questions and research in TRANSIT case studies

In TRANSIT, our interest is to focus on how social innovation initiatives and networks engage in efforts to bring about radical societal change. Social learning is thus approached within the context

transformative **s**ocial **i**nnovation **t**heory

of such efforts, with two different foci: first, understanding how SI initiatives and networks come to know what they need to know to effectively engage in efforts toward transformation, or, said differently, the nature, characteristics and consequences of social learning processes that lead to transformative agency; and secondly, the ways in which they attempt to promote social learning for wider societal change, beyond their immediate membership, and the understanding of processes through which wider social learning leads to the diffusion of social innovations and thus to the transformative impact of SI initiatives/networks.

The TRANSIT project develops an analytical framework for the study of social learning in the context of transformative social innovation that is grounded in the literature and enhanced through the analysis of empirical research carried out in WP4 of the project. A deductive-inductive approach was adopted to the analysis of the empirical data gathered in the 20 case-studies (leaded in the WP4) conducted in two phases: Batch I (12 case-studies were conducted in 2014) and Batch II (8 case studies conducted in 2015). Research work included a transnational social innovation network and at least two local social innovation initiatives (Jørgensen et al., 2015). The analysis of the empowerment of (networked) actors, the processes through which they gain the capacities towards influencing the co-evolutionary process of transformation revolves around four crosscutting themes: governance, social learning, resourcing and monitoring (Jørgensen et al., 2014, chap. 6).

TRANSIT analyses the relationship between social learning and transformative agency in social innovation, thus also connecting to and supporting the process of theory development carried out in WP3 (Haxeltine et. al., 2016). This was done through a working paper on "The role of social learning in transformative social innovations" (see section X or chapter….)-, in which the following specific questions were explored: what types of social learning are necessary and through which methods is social learning achieved, in order for SI initiatives and networks to exhibit effective agency; and what are the mechanisms through which social learning contributes to the construction of transformative agency?

Exploring the role of social learning in individual and collective agency in the Third Integration Workshop

The relationship between social learning and transformative agency was also explored through the Third Integration Workshop on "Motivations, relations and transformations: the role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation". The workshop (held in the University of A Coruña, the 8th and 9th of June 2016) focused on the question of what drives the quest for social innovation and how social learning contributes to the creation of new social relations (involving new ways of thinking, knowing, doing and framing). Three main themes were introduced for discussion: 1) **the role of social learning** in achieving transformative impact; 2) Processes through which **new social relationships** are established and contexts that foster satisfaction of basic psychological needs; and 3) **the quest of motivations** in transformative social innovation ambitions.

The workshop consisted of a combination of invited lectures that nourished TRANSIT discussions with novel perspectives; a number of paper presentations by TRANSIT researchers and two invited European researchers from the European projects GLAMURS and BIOMOT; and a series of group discussions that aimed to provide useful practical insights on social learning.

The first session started with the inspirational lecture of Peru Sasia (leader of the creative movement in Spain) on agency in processes of personal and collective change. TRANSIT researchers then presented empirical results from the study of social innovation initiatives and networks in three different paper sessions on social learning for TSI, individual and relational transformations in social movements and motivations for social change. Paper presentations were enriched with contributions of researchers from projects focusing on intrinsic motivations for environmental

activism (Ferdinando Fornara, University of Cagliari, Italy) and the role of temporal autonomy in wellbeing (Tony Craig). Finally, we invited Professor Kennon Sheldon (University of Missouri, USA), an expert on the topic of motivations and satisfaction of basic psychological needs, to provide input on psychological processes explaining motivations in organizations and initiatives striving for social change.

The workshop was also designed to provide answers to practical questions and thus also further understanding on what types of learning tools SI initiatives would find useful. With this aim, we also invited a number of social innovation practitioners and local activists to participate in the sessions and introduce – in the discussion forums- their own questions based on their practical experience in social innovation projects. The first discussion forum focused on strategies to enhance learning for transformative agency. The second session provided input on the topic of social relations and new societal arrangements in TSIs. Dialogue between different TRANSIT researchers and SI practitioners enhanced understanding of how social learning fosters new social relations, contributes to feelings of empowerment and leads to SI initiatives creating contexts that support satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

The workshop generated insights into the types of motivations that members of social innovation initiatives display and ways to promote autonomous forms of motivation, which in turn lead to persistence, creativity and wellbeing. Participants also reflected on the types of relational transformations SI initiatives pursue and through which means. Researchers analysed the role of theories on and processes of internal transformation that would generate the conditions for new ways of being in the world and in relationships, thus contributing to behaviour and systemic change; and the relationship between social learning and empowerment. The workshop also provided insights into the role of inner transformations in transformative social innovation, as theorized and facilitated by SI initiatives..

The exploration of the relationship between social learning and transformative agency will further be pursued in TRANSIT through an analysis of how the database of critical turning points built in WP5 (see deliverable 5.3) can contribute to deeper understanding of these issues. WP5 qualitative meta-analysis will provide extended knowledge about how TSI initiatives deal with internal and external difficulties as well as take advantage of new circumstances or contextual changes.

Insights into shaping social learning in ways that are conducive to conditions for effective agency

Shaping learning environments to promote motivation

Understanding how agency is constituted in social innovation initiatives requires an account of what motivates the search for societal change and how alternative ways of knowing, doing, framing and organizing are co-produced in TSI. Such understanding can also provide tentative explanations of how successful social innovation initiatives in different contexts, and contribute to explaining the trajectories taken by different social innovation phenomena. Recent research on self-determination theory (e.g. Ryan & Deci, 2000) has brought substantial empirical support to the existence of three basic psychological needs universally shared by human beings (relatedness, competence and autonomy) and the relationship between their fulfilment and wellbeing, on the one hand, and human growth processes (or self-actualization) on the other. We have argued elsewhere that autonomous forms of motivations are maintained if basic psychological needs are satisfied in a social innovation initiative (Haxeltine et al., 2016). It has been previously signalled that SI initiatives learn to shape their contexts in ways that support such need satisfaction (Reznickova & Zepeda, 2016; Zepeda, Reznickova and Russel, 2013).

One of the main insights on the motivations to participate and to start an initiative we find is the need for relatedness, for connectedness with equals. In order to favour this relatedness, initiatives strive to create good climates that promote camaraderie and friendship, enabling in many cases spaces for celebration and driving pleasant sharing activities that serve to keep the project alive, attract new members, maintain motivation and reinforce group cohesion. Besides, spaces/contexts that enable physical encounters, the sharing of meaningful experience with like-minded others confronting the same difficulties in other places and the establishment of trust, also seem to be conducive to social learning.

Our findings indicate that a search for higher autonomy, understood as the need for coherence or alignment between one´s values and interests and one´s actions, is definitely a motivating factor for SI practitioners to join the initiatives and maintain high levels of commitment. SIs constitute a facilitating context for autonomous living when they are able to create spaces where practitioners feel free to start, conduct or participate in meaningful projects that make a difference and contribute to them developing a sense of mastery, thus bringing satisfaction to both the need for autonomy and the need for competence. Successful initiatives provide spaces where members can "bring their skills and talents out" including leadership, thus experiencing a high degree of autonomy.

Social learning also leads to initiatives developing expertise on how to create the conditions for the satisfaction of the need for competence, emphasizing local knowledge and expertise, which in turn generates possibilities for action that are experienced as empowering. For instance, SI initiatives create environments that enable active engagement and provide opportunities for experimentation. SI initiatives are presented as placeholders for attempts to transform utopia into reality (e.g. creating heterotopias of new ways of living, doing, organizing, etc.), thus counteracting helplessness feelings and encouraging collective efforts and efficacy, Motivation is sustained by experiencing challenge and the impact of actions (collective competence), which in turn leads to feelings of empowerment.

However, beyond these important learnings, a series of difficulties still remain and are shared by many initiatives in their efforts to attract members and ensure high levels of motivation for involvement:

- Difficulties to achieve wider participation in management and decision-making processes of a majority of members. Many initiatives confront the fact that even when their membership

is substantial, many members participate only in limited ways. Intensive participation leads to burn-out for some of the volunteers and undermines motivation.
- Difficulties to reach wider proportions of the middle class and youth, and changing cultural models/lifestyles: gaining public support (increasing the number of members, associates or supporters); and gaining social influence.
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Shaping learning contexts to promote relational changes

We have argued that agency relies on the capacity for purposive action and the capacity to imagine new ways of being, new relationships and new ways of doing. Changing social relations is at the core of social innovation and social initiatives have developed insightful learning on how to create appropriate learning contexts for experimenting with the creation of relations of a different quality. They create experimental spaces for developing new kinds or modes of social relations (e.g. proposing new forms of community living; the "humanization" of economic relations, egalitarian decision-making processes, etc.). Also, SI initiatives facilitate new types of relations through the experimentation and co-shaping of the rules governing the organizations. These new governing relations are based on democratic principles, mutual understand, empathy and individual learning.

New social relations are forged in contexts and spaces (e.g. collective projects, learning activities, physical encounters) that permit or intentionally promote free interaction and interchange of ideas, as well as common reflection on values, goals and strategies. Enabling spaces that facilitate face-to-face encounters contributes to the experience of empathy, which leads to more egalitarian or collaborative relations between actors (re-framing existing relations). Such collaborative relations involve trust-building and sustained cooperation which are supported by strategies to develop new identities that unite rather than divide.

As we observed in the case of Slow Food, the SI initiative facilitates the creation of experience of emotional connections between different community members, of solidarity around a set of commonly-shared goals and of trust which supports collective action. Such "conviviality" enables the shaping of ideas and agreements and the creation of affective bonds which reinforce the pursuit of common good. These emotional experiences occur in both internal and external contexts, such as the (international) networking spaces that transnational networks organizes (conferences, forums, meetings). Social learning in these inspiring contexts leads to the conception of common identities fuelled by a sense of communion with others sharing the same values.

Social innovations are grounded on personal relations and "face-to-face communication" that contribute to the building of group identities and consolidate national and international networks. Besides, in order to achieve their goals (e.g. change the economic or financial systems) SI initiatives intentionally forge new relations with external organizations and institutions through the creation of networks and alliances. In order to pursue their goals, social innovation initiatives learn that they have to effectively engage with public institutions. However, the challenge is how to do that "without losing their identity", in terms of not compromising their principles and core values.

However, there are significant tensions and barriers that often compromise relational transformation. Internally, communication barriers, individual attitudes or behaviours (self-interest/egoism), conflictive leaderships, unrealistic ego-expectations are aspects to take in consideration. Externally, societal conditions sometimes pose significant challenges to the normalization of these new relations Practical knowledge and tools on developing inclusive learning environments that enhance trust-building, common identities, solidarity, empathy and collaborative attitudes among members are regarded as useful by practitioners.

transformative social innovation theory

Strategic/political learning and its relationship to effective adaptation to a dynamic socio-material context

Strategic/political learning contributes to the initiatives´, ability for effective action in their efforts to pursue their goals.. Strategic learning for transformative agency includes the capacity for strategic relationship building in terms of shaping alliances with a wide range of actors and playing an intermediary role in bringing together previously divided actors (e.g. bringing new impulse to common sustainability projects, mediation, etc.).

Strategic/political learning also leads to the refinement of effective strategies for influencing existing institutional relations. One important learning for social innovation practitioners is related to the need for gaining reputation and legitimacy, by maintaining a certain level of purity of their principles. Credibility involves being coherent, maintaining a consistent discourse and demonstrating viability of proposed alternatives. It also means establishing strategic relations with actors such as mass-media in ways that contribute to gaining reputation and, on occasions, political impact.

SI initiatives also develop lobbying capacities in order to become a relevant actor in the political sphere. For example, SIs have learned to launch political campaigns to appeal to politicians´ commitment to ethical/sustainable practices or have gained expertise in lobbying institutions in order to include their demands in the development of new legal frameworks.

However, initiatives struggle with identifying the best ways to gain political influence. Achieving relevance and consolidating their position as an alternative is a desirable ambition for most of them. However, this cannot involve compromising their principles and core values (e.g. becoming "too big"). Supporting strategic/political learning with examples of different pathways to achieve it and the benefits and disadvantages of each path could be a worthwhile pursuit.

Social learning and empowerment

Within TRANSIT, we have adopted the view of empowerment as the instrumental subset of agency (Alkire, 2005) and have argued that it relies on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which supports the development of autonomous motivation and thus the carrying out of behaviour that is self-determined, as well as outcomes such as wellbeing, creativity and commitment, which are essential for innovative ideas to arise in SIs (Haxeltine et al., 2016; Reznickova & Zepeda, 2016; Zepeda, Reznickova and Russel, 2013). Empowerment can be considered the actual ability to carry out effective action towards goals that are freely chosen and are important to a person or a group. Such ability relies on the sense of individual or collective power to carry out goal-targeted actions, and is supported by the experience of achieving impact. This entails the capacity to reflect upon and adjust courses of action as well as to persist in front of obstacles and failures.

Empowerment can be considered the actual ability to carry out effective action towards goals are freely chosen and are important to a person or a group. Such ability relies on the felt sense of individual or collective power to carry out goal-targeted actions, and is supported by the experience of achieving impact, which entails the capacity to reflect upon and adjust courses of action as well as to persist in front of obstacles and failures.

Our findings indicate that SI activists experience a sense of personal power when they contribute to their communities in meaningful ways, when they experience they bring change to the places where they live, or feel they can make the difference. The projects carried out within the framework of SI initiatives, are considered laboratories of empowerment. Experimenting and learning how to achieve impact is seen as a key source of empowerment or, alternatively, as a way to counter helplessness or disempowerment.

Enhancing transference of ideas between multiple actors

TRANSIT findings point to the relevant role of certain learning actors -called "inspirational leaders and visionaries"- in contributing to social learning both within and outside the initiative. Those actors contribute to the transference of ideas and practical knowledge between different projects and initiatives.

Empirical research allowed us to identify a second type of social learning actors: those experienced activists that travel to or visit **other projects**, **or start a new one, carrying their knowledge and experience with them, enabling the interchange of experiences**. **Both key learning actors also generate new sources of knowledge such as books, handbooks, Webs/blogs, "Ted Talks" or documentaries who bring forward their discourses of change or visions of the future and assume an educator role in wider communities.**

The importance of leaders (and pioneers) in motivating, engaging and learning processes has been also discussed in the third integration workshop held in A Coruña. Practitioners consider that social innovations are led by highly committed volunteers that sometimes seem to be "superheroes" that assume personal responsibilities and sustain the project over their shoulders. However, practitioners and researchers also perceive as a risk the fact of making the innovative project unsustainable in the long term if organizational conditions do not evolve over time and projects renovate their structure and leaders.

Participants also highlight the importance of analysing the different types or styles of leadership in SI initiatives, and how this influences the culture of the initiative. TRANSIT case studies seem to suggest that two types of leadership styles tend to be successful: the inspirational type and the facilitator type. Although initiative members sometimes feel uneasy when talking about leadership, the relationship between styles of leadership and initiative culture is worth exploring further.

Shaping social learning contexts to promote inner transformations

SI initiatives purposefully promote an attitude of constant reflexivity regarding one's values and behaviours, and their relationship to transformative change. Some of them endorse a vision of internal individual transformation as a stepping stone towards the generation of a new society. The Slow Food movement, Transition Network and the ecovillage movement are examples of social innovations that propose a "cultural inner transformation" from individualism to more cooperative and convivial lifestyles. Collective transformation towards a new 'we-culture' also includes the ongoing transformation of every single member 'from a rough to a gentle individualist' (Peck 2005). The importance of the inner dimension of change is fundamentally related to the ability to take responsibility for others and the world and to step beyond re-enacting patterns of domination and destruction. Such personal changes also involve changes in organizational practices (e.g. consent process to make decisions, seeing objections as a gift, dealing with internal conflict etc.).

Reflexive learning needs adequate environments. Many of the SI initiatives we studied integrate various kinds of practices or processes into how they work within their organization, to integrate learning in the form of inner transformation in their efforts. Inner transformations seem to occur in learning emotional spaces imprinted by atmosphere of trust and openness *that contribute to* emotional and personal growth (e.g. Ecovillages and Transition Towns "forums" to work on emotions appear as a fundamental precondition for social learning). A number of SI initiatives have created intentional spaces for the facilitation inner transitions, organizing meeting for dealing with conflict, assigning specific functions to actors (e.g. "inner transition coordinator" or "keeper in the heart" roles in Transition Towns).