



YORK ST JOHN-ERASMUS
SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY
ECONOMY CONSORTIUM

Enhancing studies and practice of the social and solidarity economy

A reference handbook

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Chapter 8: Universities and ecosystems

Promoting a culture of
social entrepreneurship



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

2. Practical cases

2.1 The University of Northampton – an Ashoka Changemaker university

2.2 TECSOL-UFPEL, Brazil: Incubation of solidarity enterprises and social technologies in the south of Brazil

2.3 Evergreen Cooperatives, Ohio, USA

2.4 Connecting Communities - a collaborative project between universities, schools and social enterprises, Sheffield, UK

2.5 Institute of Work and Production (ITP) at the National University of Cuyo, Argentina

2.6 Changemaker Credit Union, University of Northampton, UK

2.7 How entrepreneurial is your HEI? European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Universities and ecosystems

Promoting a culture of social entrepreneurship

“Higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills and values needed to create a just and sustainable future”

(Cortese 2003)

1. INTRODUCTION

Curtis (2015, citing Gosling and Gower, 2012) argues that the values of higher education institutions (HEIs) should be based on a notion of *radical independence* - that the organisation should not be swayed or influenced by its funders. It does not matter whether those funders are private philanthropists (in the medieval university), the state (in the nationalised public sector university) or students paying fees (in the new marketised environment). What is important is the notion of providing selflessly for the good of another regardless of external criticism and constraint; the idea that no matter who pays for the institution to exist, the information it creates belongs to all and the assertion that all ideas and decisions are open to challenge and investigation conflict strongly with stakeholder capitalism.

Under stakeholder capitalism, the organisation's values are driven by its stakeholders - the institution itself is supposedly *values neutral*, using language such as *efficiency* and *what works*. Under stakeholder capitalism, the organisation does not choose its values and these are rarely discussed (Nixon, 2008).

The following literature review by Sorina Antonescu (2015), an independent researcher, was written for the Social and Solidarity Economy project.

Historically, the role of HEIs has been to challenge the dominant issues of their times such as religious, socio-cultural, or science-related. At the same time, earlier generations were centred on answering profound questions. These centred on the pursuit of knowledge for a better understanding of the surrounding world and the power of natural elements, at a time when technological breakthroughs had yet to take advent. The purpose of scholarship was to not so much the acquisition of knowledge per se, but rather reaching the core of a problem and the subsequent at-

KEY QUESTIONS

Which strategies for social and solidarity economy curriculum innovation have worked in different geographical regions?

How can the university lead and facilitate cross-sector collaboration for local socio-economic development?

How can university staff play a key role in the creation of a social enterprise ecosystem, both within and outside the university?

tempt at finding ways to solve it (Blewitt and Cullingford, 2004; Cortese, 2003; Lozano, 2011)

Today, the hegemony of subjects is greater than ever, with new subjects, fields and areas of specialisation enriching the prospectuses of universities across the country, yet one cannot help feeling that the presiding concern for universities lies in the accumulation of knowledge per se rather in the same way that society has an insatiable thirst for accumulated wealth as framed by an economic system where infinite growth lies at the core of human well-being and poverty eradication.

Universities tend to be conservative, having the tendency to self-replicate and relying on reductionist thinking. Lozano et al. (2011, p.10) define reductionism as “the analytical dissection of a thing into its ultimate component parts, followed by regeneration through the re-assembly of its parts”, continuing that this runs contrary to the notion of holistic thinking. As Cortese (2003, p.16) points out,

interactions between population, human activities, and the environment and strategies, technologies, and policies for a secure, just and environmentally sustainable future are among the most complex and interdependent.

ent issues with which society must deal. These issues cross over disciplinary boundaries.

While this may well be the case, the current learning framework of universities lacks the degree of cross-disciplinary collaboration in its learning, teaching and researching that is required to instil a sustainable mind-set for visionary and innovative leaders, business people, economists and other prominent roles in society whose ability to think, act, form links and foster effective solutions beyond their designated fields is so urgently needed to trigger system-wide behavioural changes.

As long as learning remains fragmented and the faculty unresponsive to other learning approaches except the ones which rest on long-established incentives such as tenure, research and professional practices (Cortese, 2003) transdisciplinary collaboration remains challenging to implement within university curricula, research, operations and outreach.

Cole (2003, p.30) envisages a sustainable campus community as

... one that acts upon its local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems. It actively engages the knowledge of the university community to address the ecological and social challenges that we face now and in the future.

An unprecedented level of intra-university collaboration is required to kick-start or ... to strengthen the efforts towards implementing sustainability in university curricula, operations, research and outreach. While there is no clear cut way to go about this process, there seems to be a consensus in the relevant literature that emphasizes the need for a committed and centralised university management, an effective system of organisation that enhances communication between academic, administrative and teaching staff and

students, in conjunction with spreading responsibility throughout the institution.

Curtis (2015) argues that the university can make society more equal and just through the values and decisions of its graduates. The debate on values then becomes re-centred on what values that the university wishes to develop in its graduating students, and thus into social entrepreneurship that is created. He offers some suggestions:

- **Co-creative** - willing to share knowledge and experience rather than assume, and assert, expertise and control
- **Co-operative** - working together for mutual advantage rather than personal gain at the expense of others.
- **Curious** - committed to 'questioning answers' as well as asking questions
- **Conscientious** - able to apply the most robust research & knowledge creation techniques available to a given situation
- **Compassionate** - committed to changing society through the least oppressive means possible

Through a series of practical cases, this chapter examines the practice of universities, or individuals within universities, in nurturing the social and solidarity economy and in developing the eco-system in which this can thrive and contribute to the just and sustainable future articulated by Cortese (2003). The examples come from Europe and North and South America and deal with

- curriculum and research;
- the university's role as a key player in local development; and
- the values underlying university's actions as an organisation with the potential to nurture a people-centred economy

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2. PRACTICAL CASES

2.1 THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON – AN ASHOKA CHANGE-MAKER UNIVERSITY

Rational objectives

- To identify key strategic paths for building a culture of social entrepreneurship within higher education.
- To consider how a subject discipline could be applied to promote social change.
- To understand the importance of transdisciplinary to achieve social change.

Experiential objective

- To consider the importance of higher education in nurturing people to address issues affecting their well-being and that of their communities and wider society.

Context

In Feb 2013, after a period of self-evaluation, audit and interviews by AshokaU, the University was recognised as one of 22 Universities in the world for its focus on social enterprise and innovation and the first university in the UK to be designated as a *Changemaker Cam-*

pus. The University is the first in the UK to be awarded this honour, and one of only 22 in the world to receive the designation.

To gain this status, the University had to demonstrate that it had a broad based commitment from its students, staff and senior management to *spot social problems, and know what to do to tackle them*. Previously focusing on social enterprise, the objective shifted from creating social enterprises to focusing on the creation of a new generation of problem solvers. The students at the University may never start a business or a social enterprise, but they will go on to change their place of work, their neighbourhoods, their communities. The change in terminology to Changemaker recognised that not everyone at the University wanted to start a new organisation, and the recognition that making positive changes in society doesn't always needs a new company or charity. It could simply be changing people's behaviours, or changing policy or law, and is very importantly based on eliciting behaviours based on the AshokaU values.

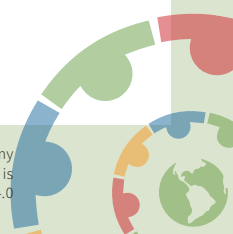
Changemaker values

The character of the University of Northampton is based on these (modified) Ashoka Changemaker values. Our objective is to establish how learning and teaching at the University supports and embeds these values in our students.

- Believe they have a responsibility to make positive changes in society
- Believe they have the power and resources (tangible and intangible) to make a difference
- Take initiative to bring about innovative change, local and systemic
- Work with others to maximise impact, working in groups and networks
- Know and live authentically according to their values
- Practice empathy; by entering, by a willed use of the imagination, another person's world without judgement.

The aim is that graduates from the University of Northampton are not just good employees, but they are outstanding and innovative employees capable of addressing complex real-world problems with integrity and compassion.

Changemaker became a series of initiatives, projects, enterprises, events and activities (collectively known as **ventures**) developed by staff and students aimed at making the world a better place.



Content

There was a deliberate choice to have no department to deliver Changemaker on behalf of the University and nobody had time allocated to deliver the initiative. Changemaker was a deliberately grassroots activity that was developed with strategic support.

The starting point for every student arriving at the University is the **Changemaker LifeHack**. This is a quick diagnostic tool that gets the student thinking about their passions and interests and signposts them to the dozens of activities and services that the University, Students Union and the town already provide. They can create a personalised action plan.

Thereafter, there are two co-curricular routes that can be taken. Employability+ is a points-based system for students to develop their employability skills and experience. The **Changemaker Certificate** (also open to all staff) operates alongside that as an online resource to help the participant turn their passion, experience or interest in social issues into a viable venture or solution, and experiment with it whilst at University. The student can flip between Employability+ and the CM certificate. They start at any time, and complete on graduation. The Changemaker Certificate was launched formally in Changemaker Week 2015, and quickly gained over 180 participants, including staff, students and community members.

A Changemaker venture addresses a “specific inequality, social injustice, form of oppression or deprivation, over and above the normal mission/objective of the institution/team, inclusive of the voice and efforts of those benefiting from the initiative” and covers one or more of the following themes: health & wellbeing, safety and resilience, equalities and inclusion, environmental sustainability, financial literacy/economic inclusion, or lifelong learning and skills. The venture does not need to be a business: it could be an event, an activity, a demonstration, a prototype, a policy, or a change of behaviour.

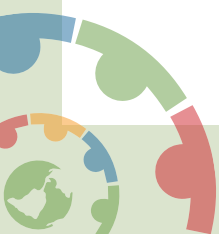
Here are a few examples of the alumni of the Changemaker Certificate, showing their journeys, and highlight where Advancement might help to increase the

numbers and scale of the social impact of the participants

- Abi is a business student. She sees that her brother and mum are struggling to understand his homework and realises that there is no service that connects parents, pupils and teachers around homework. She presents an idea of Homework Hub, and receives £500 initial funding to explore the idea more. She implements the Homework Hub website and gets lots of interest from schools to develop and implement her initiative. When she graduates, she has to get a job and therefore Homework Hub is not developed.
- Ahmed is a Somali student. He wants to help his children with their English homework, but he doesn't know what 'synthetic phonics' is and how it works in Arabic. Ahmed devised a plan for a website to explain through Arabic how synthetic phonics works and how parents can help their children.
- Paul is responsible for the environmental performance of the University. He wants to recruit students into working with landlords to improve insulation in their houses to reduce the costs to the student and reduce the carbon footprint of the students. He works with the Students Union and with AshokaU support won £250k for the PlanetToo project.

These are just a few of dozens of staff and students who are working on the Changemaker Certificate, developing their initial ideas about and experiences of social problems into solutions that are well researched and have experimental evidence of success.

The ambition of the Changemaker Certificate is to engage all students and staff in exploring and developing solutions to social problems, becoming the UK's largest 'social innovation funnel'. A future step to implement that vision is a Challenge Fund that supports the Changemakers to implement their idea, especially after graduation. This fund could be a mix of funding or mentorship from our alumni and philanthropists, but effectively gives a year for our best graduates to implement their plans.



Developing Changemaker across the institution

Student Union

Planet Too Week introduced hundreds of new and returning students to the sustainability project, designed to create pro-environmental behaviours and reduce the carbon footprint of its members.

Science and Technology

Environmental Science students volunteer with a range of local wildlife and conservation organisations and also gain experience of undertaking environmental audits within social enterprises and other businesses

Library & Learning Services

The Library and Learning Services department have been working with two Northampton-based organisations, Olympus Care Services and Diversiti UK, to provide placements for people who have been struggling to find work. It will initially offer experience to two people of working in the library, one from each organisation, and would hope to extend this if the pilot is successful.

They have run successful reading groups for organisations in Northampton for some time including at the YWCA, and a Women's refuge. Groups are facilitated by Library and Learning Services staff and hosted and supported in the community. They also continue to work with local schools on a project called *Story Seekers*, which gives students the opportunity to promote reading in a school setting.

School of Social Sciences

The Division of Psychology is engaging with the University's AshokaU Changemaker agenda by offering a new first year undergraduate module in positive psychology. The core study area for this module is the 'Values in Action' catalogue of virtues and character strengths. One of positive psychology's central tenets is that well-being can best be achieved through the development of positive character strengths. This contrasts with more traditional approaches in psychology that seek to target pathologies and deficits. Positive psychology's 'Values in Action' character strengths

resonate totally with the Changemaker + values and behaviours. As a result, this new module will be used to platform our employability and Changemaker agendas for first year students.

Students will encounter a number of different topics from a positive psychology perspective. These topics include stress and resilience, health and happiness, work satisfaction, spirituality, relationships, and optimal performance and achievement.

School of the Arts

Several projects across media, fashion and product design which will culminate in an exhibition called *'Change 'maker'* in May at Northampton museum and art gallery.

The School is undertaking two funded projects about 'making' as heritage - narratives of value, meaning, identity from objects, making, dialogues and community.

They will be running two symposiums in the UK hosting delegates from India and Turkey bringing together arts, media design and engineering academics and industry to explore and debate the above issues. Students across the globe will gain an understanding of the importance that each other's disciplines can play alongside an awareness of how to be a Change 'maker'.

Lessons

The research has shown that the University of Northampton's journey has not entirely been the result of rational strategic planning, but the result of under-the-radar activities of some, the personal experience of others and the positioning of the University in the widening participation agenda. 'Guerrilla activity', working under the institutional radar has been fundamental to the developments in the University. However, the new strategy has shifted this approach, legitimating those activities and permitting new ones. Developing an infrastructure that further legitimises this autonomous activity, rather than quenching the passion, will be critical. Doing so depends on the defending the independence of ideas that underpins the University.



Questions for discussion and action

- Describe how your university activities are informed by the values of its mission.
- How you use your subject discipline as a Changemaker, using the definition of this above?
- How could teachers and staff become involved in *spotting social problems, and knowing what to do collectively to tackle them?*
- What are internal and external factors that promote or inhibit a Changemaker mindset within your university?
- What can you and others do about it?

Written by Tim Curtis, University of
Northampton in collaboration with YSJ
Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium

2.2 TECSOL-UFPEL, BRAZIL: INCUBATION OF SOLIDARITY ENTERPRISES AND SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE SOUTH OF BRAZIL

Rational objectives

- To identify the impact of coordinated and innovative action by a university to address a pressing social issue.
- To consider potential roles of the university as a key player in its community.

Experiential objective

- To assess the importance of questioning the mission of the university and to re-defining the role of university staff and students.
- To consider the impact on stakeholders: students, teachers and other members of the local community of taking action with a social purpose.

Context

Technological incubators of popular cooperatives (ITCPs)

Technological incubators of popular cooperatives (ITCPs) grew up in Brazil as a response from the university sector which was looking for effective social action at a higher education level to face a huge crisis of unemployment in the mid-90s as a result of the neo-liberal policies. These policies were put in place, in turn, as a response of the State to the international debt that had come about at the beginning of the 80s. Unemployment, poverty and violence – always together – represented a challenge to the formulation of public policies.

The macro-economic debate on the subject was polarised between the supporters of the free market and its critics. The former maintained that it was a period of transition in terms of the means of production undergoing a change in which the old jobs were disappearing whilst the new sectors, more technological in nature, were growing. The critics of the model claimed that there was a growing concentration of earnings and wealth which was bringing about the disappearance of productive sectors without the corresponding jobs being created in the 'new sectors' leading to structural unemployment.

A large proportion of the unemployed simply moved over to the informal sector of the economy with small (better described as micro) family businesses, almost always unstable, informal and precarious. A smaller proportion went over to depend on economic support from relatives, neighbours, religious institutions and occasionally the State. Others, to a lesser degree, moved over to the illegal economy: drugs trafficking, prostitution, robberies, kidnapping, etc.

Alongside the debates and all that happening, collective economic initiatives appeared in different places and in different ways. These were born out of people's need to carry on earning enough to live on. This was all very varied: rubbish collectors who got together in cooperatives, small rural producers who got together to market their products, dismissed workers who occupied their factories and demanded their property on the grounds of it being owed to them by the business, and families who were settled during the agrarian reform who got together in a cooperative to be able to produce and earn a living, networks of consumers who tried to reduce the cost of day-to-day living.

Many academics questioned the role of their institutions. Did the technology generated by scientific research contribute to a society that was materially more comfortable and fairer for all? Or did the technology bring about social exclusion and the concentration of capital? And what would happen if the university, or at least part of it, turned its back on producing people 'for the market' and it set about preparing people to take charge of their own businesses as part of collectives.

At the end of 1995, whilst a national solidarity campaign to reduce hunger called upon the university community to action, in the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, a group of lecturers, technicians and students proposed a course of action from the university community to combat poverty by empowering workers excluded from the jobs market economically through a university outreach programme aimed at advising committed groups in terms of training and development of work cooperatives.



The proposal was to set in train a university action plan that would involve teams of educators (teachers, technicians, students) who, working in an interdisciplinary way, from economics and administration, from organisational psychology and social work, from engineering and law and all the areas necessary to make up a social enterprise, might arrive at a programme of learning that would allow workers who had been socially excluded, in a collective way, to gain access to the market of goods and services in an independent and self-managed way.

From this, 102 university popular cooperative incubators (although they were not called as such) were set up in Brazil. There are two distinctive networks which each involve about 45 incubators and, from 2003, these are financed by the public purse. Discussions on methods of implementation have become more profound, based on this developing experience. Examples of incubation can now be counted in thousands and incubators are an effective and recognised part of the organic movement of social economy in Brazil with support from the executive commission of the Brazilian Forum for Solidarity Economy.

Content

Interdisciplinary centre for social technologies and solidarity economy (TECSOL) of the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEL)

TECSOL-UFPEL is a small academic unit set up in 2010 and put together by lecturers who were already previously working with solidarity economy enterprises. Two of them (including the author of this paper) already came with considerable experience gained from working in the cooperative incubator of the Catholic University in the same city.

Pelotas is part of the State of Rio Grande do Sul. With over 350,000 inhabitants, it is in the extreme south of Brazil, 250 km from Porto Alegre, the city in which the first World Social Forums were held. It is an economically deprived area with a very mixed racial make-up where there are large numbers of people of African descent in the poorest urban districts and, at the same time, descendants of German emigrants from the late 19th century and who now find themselves as small rural producers facing increasingly challenging financial situations. The local elite, which enjoys a strong position in the university, is linked to landowning families who are descendants of the first Spanish and Portuguese settlers to the region.

De-industrialisation in the 90s has hit the local economy very hard with the closure of tens of businesses in the food and metallurgical sectors. The spread of the standard American production model (large areas of monoculture and capital intensive – the so-called ‘green revolution’) has displaced thousands of agricultural workers in the rural areas which has given rise, in the north of the state, to what is called the ‘Movimien-

to de los Sin Tierra’ literally ‘the movement of the dispossessed’.

The TECSOL-UFPEL was born under a set of national circumstances very different to those of the first ITCP. The anti-cyclical economic policies of the governments of the Workers Party (PT) lowered the rate of unemployment and the number of solidarity enterprises stopped growing. However, the solidarity economy continues to be important above all in relation to rural production of alternative products. There are significant groups of agro-ecologist producers who face increasing challenges of organisation and logistics whilst urban demand for organic products continues to grow. Besides, the region has received a significant number of support packages for agrarian reform which need support in order to turn into successful undertakings to keep the hopes for agrarian reform alive. At the same time, there is a growing quest, on the part of the young, for models of social organisation (including economic organisation) which are based on values which are egalitarian, participative, sharing and sustainable. From this, a few new social enterprises are taking shape.

The hope of TECSOL, whilst it continues to work very closely with the economic solidarity centre of the Catholic University of Pelotas is to narrow the gap between ecology and solidarity. That is to say, to work as a matter of priority with groups (cooperatives, associations, collectives, informal groups) of small agricultural producers to consolidate in the region a centre of agri-

ecological production and social technologies linked to sustainability. At present, 7 lecturers and 15 students from 8 different disciplines are part of TECSOL.

The projects that have been developed to date are linked to our priorities. Although enterprises are being incubated on an individual basis, at this moment in time, the most important thing is the Virtual Trade Fair which is a 'local fair trade circuit'. That is to say, an initiative that brings together a network of solidarity enterprises with a network of groups of ethical/responsible consumers. The key is that this relationship, which is necessarily determined by an organic structure, is managed in a cooperative/shared way by the collectives that constitute it.

Social technologies: the concept and a practical case study from TECSOL

The idea of 'social technology' has been developing in Brazil from the decade at the start of the century. The concept arose to describe a range of initiatives carried out by different social agents (NGOs, social movements, public research centres, university groups and others) who shared in common a search for technological solutions that were accessible from a technical and economic perspective. The development of certain 'shareware' technologies, that is to say, open access and free to use were already known and such software is perhaps the best example.

However, there are other important examples: agroecology, herbal medicines, rainwater harvesting devices in communities with shortages, etc. As well as the 'hard' sciences, the 'soft' sciences have developed important technologies: adult literacy programmes, micro-finance and others. The method of incubation of solidarity enterprises is also a technology.

At the end of the 90s, a group of Brazilian researchers set about describing and designing scientific research studies which embraced principles linked to a new type of social agreement on knowledge creation. The Social Technology Network (RTS Brazil) has defined it in this way:

Social technology includes products, techniques or repeatable processes, developed through interaction with the community and which represent effective solutions for social transformation. It is a concept which refers to an innovative development proposal taking into account joint participation in the process of organisation, development and application. It is based on the shar-

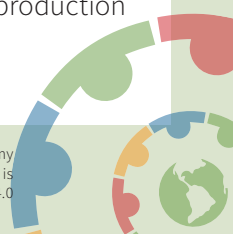
ing of solutions to problems linked to the need for food, education, energy, housing, income, water resources, health, environment, etc. Social technologies can bring together popular knowledge, social organisation and technical-scientific knowledge. What matters essentially is that they are effective and applicable, celebrating social development on a wider scale.

The problems of solidarity enterprises demand solutions that have been arrived at in a collective and negotiated way which can be used by all.

Some years ago, there were problems commercialising solidarity enterprises in the region. They rarely managed to penetrate the usual routes. There were limitations of scale. There were problems of trust on the part of the business community. Many groups did not have the legal registration that is normally required. The homemade production had high costs which meant too high prices for consumers.

As a result, in 2008-9, the solidarity economy centre at the Catholic University (where the author still works) decided to launch a network of solidarity enterprises in order to address the problems with alternative solutions. After a dozen study meetings and discussions, the enterprises decided to set up an association which would bring together a very diverse group of collectives: farmers, artisans, fishermen, dairy producers, seamstresses, growers of ornamental plants, etc. There were 23 enterprises which brought together 550 producers/workers. The *Associação Bem da Terra* was born. The first initiative was to put on a fair exclusively for solidarity economy which was to take place every month, where the goods were not provided by individual producers but through solidarity groups. However, this alternative was very limited and, although the results were quite successful, there was a great deal to be improved upon.

Meanwhile, there was a significant growth in the number of 'ethical/responsible consumers'. The evidence for this was the organic markets, vegetarian restaurants and shops specialising in regional produce. However, these outlets appeared to be reserved for high income social groups barring access to these markets not only to the poorest but also trained workers who represent the bulk of the population who are the link between political activity and consumption (teachers, students, public workers, bank workers, etc.). How then could we marry together solidarity production and responsible consumption?



In the last decade there has been a proliferation of 'responsible consumer groups' (GCRs using the Spanish acronym). They are like consumer cooperatives dedicated exclusively to responsible consumption. There are few of them in number and very small. They do, however, represent a clear social innovation. The transaction costs are slashed thanks to the collaborative organisational practices and the use of open software management tools. Purchasing is carried out on a weekly basis on the internet and the total weekly orders are passed on to the producers who deliver the products on a set day of the week. The consumers themselves take responsibility for dividing up the orders and managing the whole process.

These experiences offered a mirror image to ours: the GCRs were/are a consumer organisation; *Associação Bem da Terra* was a producers' organisation. It was necessary, therefore, to make an effort to bring together the 'lost' consumers in an association and link them to producers. At the end of 2014, la *Red de Consumo Responsable Bem da Terra* (the 'Bem da Terra' Responsible Consumer Network) was launched for the sale of solidarity economy products.

This has called for a tremendous effort on the part of those involved in the university. It was necessary to contact people who, in different contexts (NGOs, unions, churches and universities, etc.), might be interested in bringing together groups of responsible consumers and, straight away, provide them with the information and the training necessary. It was also necessary to plan all the logistics necessary for the product distribution, pricing structure, etc. bearing in mind that the usual conventional business practices could not be replicated given that the prices would be out of the reach of the consumer that they were intending to attract. It was necessary to put together a range of offerings in such a way that the consumers could find a wide range of products, saving time and money at the same time as carrying out their responsible purchasing. It was also fundamentally important to seek the support of local workers' unions (banks, teachers, metal workers, workers in the food sector, etc.) for many reasons: financial, political and organisational.

But the most difficult thing was to set up a structure in such a way that from the outset the consumers would take ownership of the process. In this way, the incubation process would later be successful in transferring

the management to the collectives of producers and consumers.

Finally, the Virtual Fair Bem da Terra took off in December 2014 and is at a stage of consolidating itself economically. The building stage of the co-management of producers and consumers has begun. The results are very positive and both groups are positive about the initiative.

The concept of social technology is applied thus: it is a question of finding a solution to a social problem (the commercialisation of enterprises) which was arrived at in a collective way, using popular knowledge and technical scientific knowledge, introducing small changes to a previously developed and freely available technology: responsible consumer groups using internet platforms to manage solidarity enterprise. The result is what we are calling the 'local fair trade circuit'.

4 Conclusion: TECSOL and the role of the university

It is not necessary to underline the value that the students' participation has in the process of academic training. From start to finish, from the planning to the execution, they have been directly involved. The teaching materials are open to scrutiny: either they are validated by the experience or are interrogated in the classroom.

The experience of self-management – in TECSOL itself and in the Fair – will stay with them calling into question what type of relationship they will have in the future in relation to the environment, to workers, to the different ways of organising labour and management, to consumers.

Of course, the university outreach efforts also call for a great deal of research. At every step along the way there is knowledge that has to be treated in an interdisciplinary way. When there are no answers to a question or when there is no ready solution to a problem, it is important to find them through research. We are not talking here of research that is carried out in offices or laboratories but in action and interaction of the social groups that are involved.

Universities, above all the public ones, owe a huge debt to their societies. Whilst they are financed by the taxes that we all pay, they only benefit a small proportion of the people. Not all can access university and

the research that is produced normally does not address the reality of the most disadvantaged who are the ones who most need the knowledge.

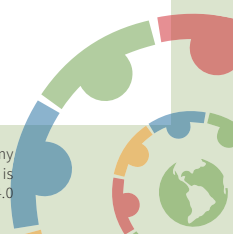
The technological incubators of the popular incubators uphold the principles that were at the heart of

their creation: to bring together teaching, research and outreach in an interdisciplinary way for the benefit of the greatest number of people, helping to create knowledge with and for the workers for a society that is fairer, more supportive and sustainable.

Questions for discussion and action

- What can or should a university do to promote fair work in a community?
- Discuss the following comment by the author of the case study in relation to your own context: “Universities, above all the public ones, owe a huge debt to their societies. Whilst they are financed by the taxes that we all pay, they only benefit a small proportion of the people”.
- What could be done in your university to enable organisations in the social and solidarity economy gain access to markets?
- Together with university students and staff organise a social economy fair, and explore whether the social enterprises could offer goods and services to the university as part of its procurement.

Written by Antonio Cruz, TECSOL-UFPEL, in collaboration with York St John-Erasmus Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium



2.3 EVERGREEN COOPERATIVES, OHIO, USA

Rational objectives

- To understand the challenges universities face when procuring goods and services from organisations in the social and solidarity economy
- To analyse why social problems become entrenched in a specific economic model

Experiential objective

- To understand the power of appropriate cross-sector collaboration in tackling entrenched social issues.

Context

Professor Simon Denny from the University of Northampton, UK, has identified an important role for universities: delivering local economic growth and social inclusion. The University has launched the £1 billion challenge for UK universities to spend £1 billion from their £7 billion spending power in businesses that promote social value as well as supplying the needs of the university.

What is social value?

“Social value” is a way of thinking about how scarce resources are allocated and used. It involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract and looking at what the collective benefit to a community is when a public body chooses to award a contract. Social value asks the question: “If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?” (Social Enterprise UK, 2012)

This is a welcome and very ambitious target. However, it can be a challenge for universities to find social enterprises and cooperatives that can supply their needs. Could a local social enterprise provide all of a university’s stationery needs, or catering services, for example?

Content

Can universities lead the way in social value procurement? Let’s look at Cleveland, Ohio!

Universities can be laboratories for a new kind of economic development Ohio, Cleveland, USA, has tackled this very problem. Here’s the Evergreen Cooperatives story:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zU8_ofpPyQ



Launched in 2008 by a working group of Cleveland-based institutions (including the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and the municipal government), the Evergreen Cooperative Initiative is working to create living wage jobs in six low-income neighborhoods (43,000 residents with a median household income below US\$18,500) in an area known as Greater University Circle (GUC).

The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative has been designed to cause an economic breakthrough in Cleveland. Rather than a trickle down strategy, it focuses on economic inclusion and building a local economy from the ground up; rather than offering public subsidy to induce corporations to bring what are often low-wage jobs into the city, the Evergreen strategy is catalyzing new businesses that are owned by their employees; rather than concentrate on workforce training for employment opportunities that are largely unavailable to low-skill and low-income workers, the Evergreen Initiative first creates the jobs, and then recruits and trains local residents to take them. (Evergreen Cooperatives, n.d.)

Vital to this model are the so-called *anchor organisations*: the local universities, hospitals, local government, that will not leave the area as economic conditions change. These anchor organisations work together to develop cooperatives to supply their needs. Each dollar spent on these goods and services stays in the local area and benefits the community. For example, the Evergreen Cooperative Laundry

serves the local hospital. The model has been inspired by Mondragon Corporation in Spain.

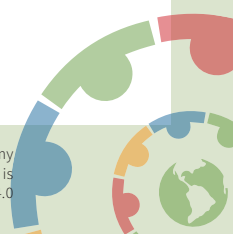
Could universities lead consortia of anchor organisations and mentor, coach and incubate new businesses which will supply their needs and provide highly democratic, worker-owned organisations? A culture of nurtured entrepreneurship for meaningful work creation within universities could be a win-win.

Questions for discussion and action

- In what way is the work provided by the Evergreen Cooperative different from that of corporations?
- What organisations are there in your locality that could be considered anchor organisations?
- In its role as an 'anchor organisation' what can the university do to promote local development? Note some ideas, ranging from small scale and easily achievable to large scale and long-term.

References

- Evergreen Cooperatives (n.d.) *About the Evergreen cooperatives* [Internet]. Available <http://evergreencooperatives.com/about/> [Accessed 20th July 2015].
- Social Enterprise UK (2012) *The social value guide* [Internet]. Available <http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/advice-services/publications/the-social-value-guide> [Accessed 20th July 2015].



2.4 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES - A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES, SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, SHEFFIELD, UK

Rational objectives

- To understand the potential of cross-sector collaboration for mutual benefit.
- To consider links with organisations in relation to curriculum innovation.

Experiential objective

- To be aware of the potential mutual benefits resulting from well-planned activities and placements related to social enterprises.

Context

Connecting Communities is a new project that in its pilot year has been managed by the Sheffield Enterprise Pipeline being funded through UnLtd, the Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs and registered charity; and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The partners on the project are: Sheffield Hallam University (lead partner), Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield City Council, The City College, and Sero Consulting Ltd, a multi-disciplinary team that specialises in education and enterprise.

The project aims to raise awareness of the importance of social enterprise with students of all ages in Sheffield and develop a sustainable, national model. It aims to do this through using the creativity of young people to help solve the business challenges of local social enterprises.

www.connectingcoms.co.uk

Content

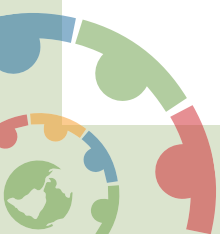
As Sheila Quairney, Head of Enterprise at Sheffield Hallam University, and lead on the Connecting Communities project, explained, "Our vision is to develop, pilot and evaluate a collaborative model of curriculum development and community support. It helps students of all ages to understand social enterprise".

The project has so far involved 5 social enterprises, around 340 students from 5 primary and 4 secondary schools, and 30 University and College students. It ran in 3 phases until July 2015, co-ordinated by a graduate intern. The innovative solutions from the school students are developed-by university and college students working in teams, and then carried through to implementation by a summer placement student in each social enterprise.

Connecting local schools, colleges and university students with local social enterprises, it is a mutually beneficial project where students are presented with real business challenges to address through project-based learning, and local organisations benefit from innovative and fresh ideas to address the challenges they face.

It is the first project of its kind to be trialled in the UK, and is acting as a pilot for future expansion, both in terms of the scale of the project, and for rolling out across other cities around the country. The project has been a roaring success, and has had an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from all involved.

The project lends itself to being an easy template for other organisations and cities to take on, as it is clearly structured in three phases. The first phase introduces the business challenges to secondary and primary school students, to harness their young and creative minds, building on enterprising skills and culminating in project presentations just before the winter holidays. The second phase brings in university and college students to take the ideas generated in phase one, and turn them into practicable business plans. Before in the final phase, a university student will take on a summer placement with one of the social enterprises, to implement the project and to bring everything full cycle. From challenge to ideas generation; to configuration and implementation, and of course, celebration and recognition!



Some examples of the organisations involved in the project are:

Whirlow Hall Farm Trust

Whirlow Hall Farm is an educational and environmental charity which teaches children and young people about farming in their working farm. Farm tours help primary age children learn about where food comes from and how farm animals are reared.

However, in a world where education has become target oriented and language, maths and science take priority it is difficult for schools to justify visits to the farm. Also, some schools don't take children on trips if there are costs involved. The farm staff know that they have a rich learning environment which would benefit children, but are finding that schools are not prioritising these kinds of visits.

Business challenge faced



The challenge was for students to come up with ideas about how to demonstrate the educational opportunities they can offer to school children to attract them to the farm, perhaps with a new marketing solution, an information pack, or some other creative solution.

Schools involved: Sheffield Springs Academy and Norfolk Community Primary School.

Connecting Communities worked with a group of year 10 students from the Academy. Supporting them were thirty Year 6 students from Norfolk Community Primary School who had two sessions with the Connecting Communities team and produced some ideas for the Whirlow Hall Farm business challenge. These ideas were passed on to and developed by the Year 10 students. These ideas were then taken by university and college students who turned them into a business plan for Whirlow Hall Farm. A student on placement at the Farm developed these into an interactive IT package to advertise what the Farm has to offer in terms of educational benefits and curricular sessions.

The Cathedral Archer Project

The Cathedral Archer Project is a day centre for homeless and potentially homeless people in Sheffield. They work with clients to “support them from chaos to stability”. They offer crisis support, emergency clothing, phone and computer access and a postal address. They also offer medical support and health and well-being activities. Basic skills training is offered, alongside budgeting advice and help with jobs searches.

Business challenge faced

To design a fund- and awareness-raising pack that could be used in schools and give suggestions for an information pack for teachers and pupils to help them learn about homelessness and support the activities of the Cathedral Archer Project.

Schools involved: Sheffield High School and St Marie's Catholic Primary School.

Onboard Skatepark



This organisation started as a private company providing a space for skateboarding and BMX biking. Soon they realised they offered significant training and mentoring

opportunities for young people who are not in work, education or training ('NEETS') so they refocused and became a social enterprise. They now run 6 week programmes for young people that cover aspects such as work placement, bike workshops, recycling, CV building. The programmes have enabled them to work with young people who felt they had little purpose or had got on the wrong side of the law.

Business challenge faced

As the Skatepark is indoors, business is highly weather-dependent. The task for the students was to design

business/marketing strategies to address the significantly lower levels of attendance in the spring and summer months when the weather is better. This will support the sustainability of the organisation.

The students worked on how to increase the revenue in spring and summer, through marketing, events and broadening the spectrum of the activities offered at the skate park.

Schools involved: UTC Sheffield and Limsfield Junior School.

How has the cross-sector collaboration worked and been managed?

The CC project involved working across all sectors of education –primary, secondary and tertiary – and for the first time ever, linking students of all ages with local social enterprises.

Regular communication with and raising awareness of the different operating restraints of each of these sectors helped to manage and in some cases, positively confound expectations. The project helped to redress previous issues that some of the social enterprises with working with universities in particular, and strong project management was a vital part of this.

The social enterprise eco-system

One notable thing that came out for the social enterprises, which was not expected, was that it created an opportunity for them to network and build relationships with each other, building on their existing support networks within the community.

Impact on individuals/organisations

An example of impact is that one of the placement students has come away from the project intending to set up her own social enterprise. Another example is of the impact the project had at one of the schools; at Ecclesfield School the project was working with a group of students with special educational needs and who do not normally get the opportunity to work on a project with such responsibility attached. The ownership they were given led to a huge increase in their focus and confidence, and their teacher was surprised at how much they had achieved in such a short time. Four out of the five placement students continue to volunteer in the social enterprises.

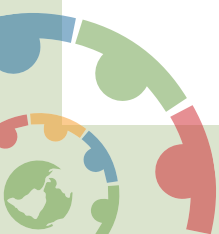
The future

Looking to the future, Connecting Communities aims to build on its successes, refining the model so that it can be embraced by other cities both nationally and potentially internationally, aiming to reach as many young people as possible, and to help inspire the next generation of social entrepreneurs.

Questions for discussion and action

- In your opinion, who benefitted from this project? How?
- Does a project like Connecting Communities have a place in the school/university curriculum? If so, what are the potential benefits to students' learning?
- How could placements in social enterprises enhance the curriculum and experience for university students?
- Which social enterprises can you identify that would provide placements for students for mutual benefit?

Created by York St John-Erasmus Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium in collaboration with Sheila Quairney and Francesca Rolle, Sheffield Hallam University, UK



2.5 INSTITUTE OF WORK AND PRODUCTION (ITP) AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF CUYO, ARGENTINA

Rational objectives

- Identify strategies to enable universities to work towards curriculum innovation within studies of social and solidarity economy.
- Recognise the key role of the university to make the field of social and solidarity economy relevant within local and regional development.
- Learn how the university could facilitate cross-sector collaboration for economic local and community development.

Experiential objective

- To assess the value of cross-sector collaboration facilitated by universities.

Context

Mendoza, Argentina: Economic change through academic, professional and political exchange

The economic crash: before and after

Argentina has seen huge economic change in recent years. In 2001, the country suffered a debilitating crisis following a series of reckless borrowing agreements with the International Monetary Fund and, especially after the mass privatisation of the 1990s, the population was left in a dimly insecure situation: 27% were unemployed and half were living below the poverty line. In response, thousands of workers left without jobs, in hundreds of businesses across the country that had been forced to close, joined together to take co-ownership of their workplaces – most of them factories in various manufacturing industries – in a vast cooperative movement known as *fábricas recuperadas*, ('reclaimed factories') which succeeded and continues to grow today despite initial obstacles from government and previous owners. Others took a different initiative; a distinction arose, Roberto explains, between the words 'work' and 'job' (both *trabajo* in Spanish): a 'job' is a kind of work no longer available to

all, so people had to create their own 'work'. Whereas before the crisis there were three million microentrepreneurs among an economically active population of 16 million, these now numbered five million, the extra two million mostly women forced into starting small businesses to support their families. In addition, the value of the peso plummeted (it still has not recovered, standing at around one-tenth of its pre-crash worth) and a widespread bartering market grew up around the country.

Content

"As a public university," asserts José Perlino, "we have a very important social role." Indeed, José and his colleagues in the Institute of Work and Production (ITP) at the National University of Cuyo (UNCuyo), find themselves the axis of a growing social and solidarity economy in the Mendoza province of Argentina. In their efforts to make visible the workings of the third sector by drawing together its academic, professional and political elements, they are also managing to make the sector more credible.

From the cooperative to the classroom: a two-way exchange



Professor Roberto Roitman, General Secretary of the Institute of Work and Production

It is the linking of these three aspects that is the innovation and success of their work. ITP is pushing for more representation of social economic practices on courses at the university and in 2009 ran a course in Social Economy for which there was a very high take up and a great deal of enthusiasm among students. Alongside this, Roberto Roitman, general secretary of ITP and Economics professor at the university, runs a social economy module each year as part of the general Economics undergraduate course. The course is in contrast to the mostly mainstream approach the Faculty adopts in teaching economics. As part of this teaching unit, he invites people who work in the sector to talk to students, giving them practical insight and a link to the tangible impact of what they are studying. José tells me that when they open the doors to these people, the reaction from the students is very positive; many come to them afterwards asking about internships in the sector, which ITP is well-placed to organise. “This contact makes them realise that they take part in the social economy themselves, and it is not on a small scale, not the poor working for the poor.” Universities can be very elitist, he replies, when I comment on how much he and his colleagues seem to value the link between the academic and the ‘real world’. “Organisations are not made in the university; they are made in the street, learning from their mistakes.”



At the ITP with José Perlino (left)

Courses for those working in the social economy

And the link works both ways. The Institute runs training courses and workshops open to all that eventually allow people with much experience in the sector but no relevant qualifications to obtain accreditation from the university recognising and ‘rubber-stamping’ their knowledge and experience. These training sessions

also help towards what José describes as one of the key aims of his programme: capacity-building. “We work mostly on organising supply, grouping entrepreneurs together, increasing the scale and improving the quality, providing certification. And basically ensuring they have the means of providing to the state, which makes up a huge part of all purchases.”

Completing the triangle: political backing

Indeed, the state is now obliged to make at least 10% of its purchases from social enterprises, thanks to the Social and Solidarity Economy Law passed in Mendoza in 2012. In 2009, the ITP helped to form the first Mendoza Social Economy Forum which brought together organisations from the sector from across the region. Five years on, the Forum has taken place seven times and is making tangible steps towards a greater representation of the social and solidarity economy. The 2012 Forum welcomed 160 organisations and was held in conjunction with the second

Towards an Alternative Economy forum attracting interested parties from all over the country, including representatives from the national government. As well as holding workshops and talks, the Forum also provided an opportunity to discuss the introduction of a provincial law that would give official backing to the growth of the sector – hence the political aspect of their work. The law was passed shortly afterwards and a council was set up to ensure its implementation. This panel is made up of seven members: three from organisations within the sector (representing cooperatives, microcredit unions and familial agriculture respectively); three from the provincial government (one each from the social development, agroindustry and schools departments); and one academic, a position currently held by Professor Roitman. José explains that a principal role of the council is to “work with government members in charge of buying to make sure they know the law and their obligation, and also that they know why it is important to work with the social economy, because the cultural change is very slow.” This observation extends to the general public, it seems: “If we all bought 10% of what we buy from social enterprises it would be a huge change,” he suggests.

The culture of micro entrepreneurship and the bartering economy in the country are indicative of the

three key aspects, according to Roberto, in what is a relatively thriving social economy in Argentina. The first, he says, originates with indigenous traditions, notably that of *minga*, which translates roughly from Quechua as ‘reciprocity and solidarity’. Around 10% of the population of Mendoza is of indigenous Bolivian origin (the proportion is much higher further north) and he suggests that they have long influenced local economic attitudes, especially to farming. He cites the influx of Europeans towards the end of the 19th century as a second influence, bringing with them the new idea of formal cooperativism; the first mutual in Argentina was established by Italians in Buenos Aires and the first cooperative by Jewish immigrants in the Entre Ríos province 1890. Thirdly, and most urgently, the 2001 crisis affected economic attitudes, perhaps irreversibly. “Cooperativism helped overcome previous challenges,” says Professor Roitman. “But now there are new challenges and we need new solutions. People have begun to realise that capital is at the service of economics and economics is at the service of people.”

The ‘prosumers’: challenging the norm

One such person was Pablo Ordoñez. Before the crisis, he had owned two businesses and was director of a youth centre for 13 years. He describes the crash as a ‘calling’: the economic collapse alongside his vocation for social work called for something new. “The Argentine economy at the time of the crisis was a long way from being social,” he says. “It was something not even the President or the Finance minister had any say over.”



El Arca: Bruno Zangheri (vice president); Pablo Ordoñez (president) and Charles Hanks

So, nine years ago, he founded El Arca, which he describes as a ‘socially managed business’ though in a limited legal paradigm it is simply a ‘non-profit organisation’. The aim of the organisation is to join together producers and consumers, who are often the same people, he points out: small producers for whom the crisis and the rocketing inflation that came with it were disastrous, principally those working in textiles and food, but also in services and in crafts; and consumers from families to local businesses to large companies. So, I try to clarify, his team of around ten working at El Arca is a kind of intermediary between the producer and the consumer? “Definitely not.” He is firm on this point. Rather, they are working to bridge the gap between producer and consumer, as producers and consumers themselves, to create a solidarity network of producers and consumers – ‘prosumers’ he calls them. He is not one to be satisfied with limiting or dichotomous denominations, apparently. “We wanted to establish ourselves outside the norm, somewhere that joined together the educational, the social and the typically economic.”

The educational aspect, he explains, involves providing “permanent learning spaces, not just for producers but also for consumers. The idea is to work on the concept of the conscious consumer, fair trade, responsible production – hence this community of ‘prosumers’.” All sorts of people have gotten involved, he says. “People who already have a good understanding of these ideas, as well as people who are recently discovering the power they have in the instant of producing or buying a product, and the advantages that breaking with the model of producer and consumer as two separate worlds can have.” This all-inclusive ethos extends to the private sector, too; El Arca has, for example, a contract with Arcor, one of Argentina’s largest food corporations, to provide clothing to wear in their factories.

Linking to the future

The aim is for “the greatest possible intersectoral link”, says Pablo, as much in his role as President of the Social Economy Forum as that of El Arca’s President. This link also embraces, of course, the public sector. He is lukewarm about the new law, describing it as a “valid tool but not perfect”. He does, however, highlight an important distinction from ostensibly similar laws elsewhere in the country: others have been developed by the government and passed onto the ‘prosumer’;

this one has been developed from the bottom up and is being implemented accordingly, with producers, consumers and academics all being given a voice, and one the government seems keen to listen to. José explains to me how they are starting to convert these broad links into practical benefits. The stipulated government 10% will come in part from graphics and other smaller purchases, but they aspire to more. “Our idea is to organise buying for school canteens, as well as hospitals and health centres. Also within textiles, for all the sports teams in the province for example. These are just two areas into which the government puts a lot of money but at the moment it all goes to a few businesses.” Another job of the council is to create a register of social enterprises in the province and, from there, a catalogue which will be available not only to relevant government departments but also the general public, allowing producers greater visibility and consumers greater awareness – the empowerment of the ‘prosumer’.

And at the ITP, determined to keep juggling as many balls of social enterprise opportunity as possible, they are looking to improve provision within the university.

Much of the food in the canteens is already sourced from social enterprises, and now they are trying to create microcredit opportunities for student entrepreneurship, as well as extend their training programmes. “And we buy a bag of vegetables here in the ITP once a week,” José adds, proving his money is where his mouth is, quite literally.

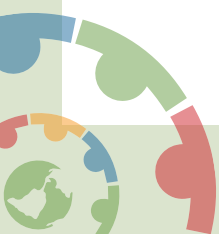
Towards an alter(n)ative economy

“There is talk of moving towards an ‘alternative’ economy,” Roberto muses. “But perhaps more accurately what we are aiming for is an ‘alterative’ economy.” The difference is subtle but important, and indicative of what ITP and the Social Economy Forum support: what is needed is not just a change of economic ideas but economic ideas capable of bringing social change. It is an active, inclusive, socially empowering outlook. “When we buy from social enterprises, we’re buying something else,” José asserts, speaking on behalf of an ever-wider community. “We’re paying for jobs, for people to stay in their homes, for a product that has value in its origins. We arrive at the source. We remove the middle man.”

Questions for discussion and action

- How could your university make the social and solidarity economy more credible?
- How could your university promote and facilitate a multi-sectorial table with key stakeholders to work towards strengthening the university as a player in community development?
- How could the university offer a space to link producers and consumers within the social and solidarity economy?
- What could you do to promote social and solidarity activities in your own university, such as time bank, bartering fairs, prosumers learning labs?

Written by Charles Hanks based on interviews at Jorge Perlino and Roberto Roitman, Institute of Work and Production and National University of Cuyo, Argentina; in coordination with the YSJ Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium



2.6 CHANGEMAKER CREDIT UNION, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON, UK

Rational objectives

- To understand the difference between a credit union and a bank which operates for the profit of shareholders
- To consider the role of the university in promoting inclusive and ethical practices in its day-to-day operations

Experiential objective

- To consider the potential of the university to go against the 'mainstream' in its community life

Context



Credit unions are non-profit financial social enterprise mutual organisations set up by members with something in common to benefit their community. The Changemaker Credit Union at the University of Northampton, UK, offers staff, students and alumni an alternative way to save, as well as the opportunity to apply for small affordable loans. It ensures that all staff, students and ex-students have access to ethical, responsible, and affordable financial services. Regulated and approved by the UK Financial Conduct Authority, it is a university-based financial cooperative owned by its members: the savers and borrowers themselves.

The University of Northampton and the Northamptonshire Credit Union joined forces to provide a financial services package for all students and staff of the university.

As explained to members:

As a member of the credit union you are a shareholder and have a say in how it is run. This means you are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting and can be elected to become a director of the organisation. Unlike many other financial institutions, there are no external shareholders, so the money received by Changemaker Credit Union is recycled for the benefit of members.

The advantages are common to all credit unions and include:

- Ethical, local savings, with no external shareholders to support flexible savings from £1 a week or £5 per month.
- Annual dividends paid to members based on profitability of the Credit Union.
- Flexible savings schemes to help plan for special occasions and day to day expenditure.

Link to social and environmental ventures

The Changemaker Credit Union is also linked to the University's Enterprise Club. The University applied for a grant to provide loans of a maximum of between £500 - £3000 to 10 students a year for a venture. The venture must show evidence of the appropriate sustainable business ethics and the plan has to have a focus on enhancing and improving environmental sustainability. Match funding is required to apply for the loan, which is managed by the Changemaker Credit Union.

Sustainability

The experience of credit unions in general suggests that approximately 5% of money will be lost through bad debt annually. The capital of the Credit Union is replenished through interest payments paid by borrowers (approx. 2%). The University of Northampton's Students' Union also has a commitment to replenish the fund through fundraising activities, thus ensuring the funds and loan book value remain in perpetuity at the level contributed by the grant funding.

Questions for discussion and action

- What are some of the benefits and potential challenges of the Changemaker Credit Union at Northampton?
- What difference would it make to have a credit union at your university?
- Find out if there are any networks of credit unions which the university could collaborate with.
- Launch a consultation to find out if staff and students would be interested in having a credit union, and to promote the understanding of these alternative non-profit financial services.

Material from University of Northampton and case study created by York St John-Erasmus Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium.

2.7 HOW ENTREPRENEURIAL IS YOUR HEI? EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

Rational objectives

- Become familiar with an online tool to assess the entrepreneurial culture of higher education institutions.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the institution through the tool as they assess their efforts to become entrepreneurial and innovative educational bodies.
- Access case studies showing good practice from a range of European HEIs as well as practical guidance notes to bring about change.
- Assess your institution across seven dimensions associated with entrepreneurial HEIs including: leadership, human resources and incentives, teaching and learning and impact.

Experiential objective

- Increase the entrepreneurial potential of your HEI using a step by step approach tailored to your institutions particularities.
- Be aware that the organisational shift towards a holistic entrepreneurial culture requires a continuous interaction of the three economic systems: private, public and social.

Context

The conference “Universities developing social enterprise through cross-sector collaboration” was organised by York St John University in September 2015 to mark the end of the three year Erasmus Mundus project called “Strengthening the studies and practice of the social and solidarity economy in higher education”. Juliet Edwards, a policy expert on higher education and entrepreneurship from the European Commission’s Directorate-General for education and culture, was present.

Her keynote address emphasised the role higher education institutions play to achieve two of the Commission’s strategic objectives: employment and growth. The commitment of the University is latent in the first goal, insofar as it is responsible for preparing professional young people with an entrepreneurial spirit. She stressed the importance of cross sector

collaboration to offer students studies that include practice in businesses. She also drew attention to the commitment of the European Commission to offer exchange programmes for students and teachers in different parts of Europe, facilitating the social and professional mobility needed for the vision of a cohesive and economically competitive Europe.

She emphasised the importance of social enterprises in realising the objectives of the Commission in three areas: social, economic and environmental, which explained the Commission’s interest in learning more about the potential and the limitations of the model and economic system encapsulated by the term social and solidarity economy.

Juliet Edwards presented an online tool that the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission has created with the Local Economic and Employment Development Forum (LEED) program of the OECD. The purpose and usefulness of the tool is to support higher education institutions in carrying out changes and organisational transformations to implement or further develop an entrepreneurial culture at a holistic institutional level.

Content

The tool presents seven key areas considered vital to any HEI that wants to be entrepreneurial and innovative; Leadership and Governance

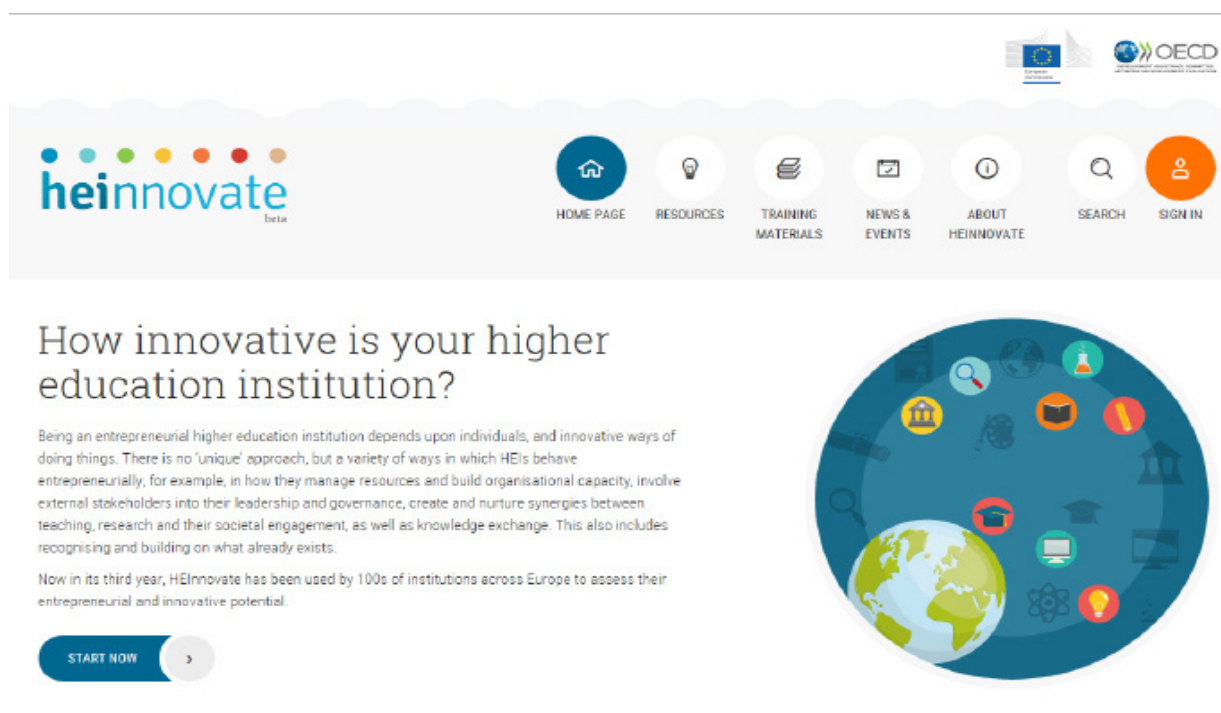
- Organisational Capacity: Funding, People and Incentives
- Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning
- Preparing and Supporting Entrepreneurs
- Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration
- The Internationalised Institution
- Measuring Impact

The principle characteristics of this tool can be summarised as:

- Each of these areas (or dimensions) consist of a series of statements which the user rates according to the relevance that it has within their own institution.



- The user can pick and choose which areas to complete.
- Once the user completes those areas they are interested in and submit the assessment, tailored results and case studies are generated providing guidance and ideas.
- The tool can be used by individual or groups: administrators can generate a group survey and compare the results between departments and faculties.
- It is completely private and autonomous. The results belong to the user and cannot be accessed by the European Commission or the OECD.
- The tool is not intended to set standards or to position the universities that use it, nor is it meant to be used to establish comparisons between institutions. No ranking, no benchmarking.
- The tool is free to use for all institutions and individuals working in higher education
- There is no registration or other cost.
- Downloadable resources for planning workshops and further development activities.
- The tool can be found on the following web page: www.heinnovate.eu



Questions for discussion and action

- Explore the tool and see what it can offer your institution.
- What determines whether this tool is used by the faculties and departments of your university?
- Which protocols would be relevant before, during and after applying the tool within the faculties or departments?
- How could the results be disseminated and exploited to bring about change in your institution?
- How could your university contribute to the development and improvement of this tool?
- Develop a strategic plan for the implementation of the HEInnovate tool, for short, medium and long term use with the personnel of your faculty or department.
- If you wish to share the result of evaluation self-assessment carried out by your institution to support other universities, contact the York St John-Erasmus Consortium: socialeconomy@yorks.ac.uk