



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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## Introduction and About the handbook



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# Introduction to the handbook

In 2012, a Consortium led by York St. John University (UK) and involving the Centre for African Studies at the University of Oporto (Portugal), Mondragon University/ Mondragon: Innovation and Knowledge (MIK) in the Basque Country (Spain) and the Cuzco National University of San Antonio Abad (Peru), was brought together to carry out the research project “Enhancing Studies and Practice of the Social Economy in Higher Education”, funded by the European Union’s Erasmus Mundus programme. In 2014, the Centre for Higher University Studies at the Greater University of San Simón (Bolivia) joined the consortium.

The website of the project is <http://www.yorksja.ac.uk/socialeconomy>

The aim of the project has been to try to understand the social and solidarity economic system. The intention - and it was an ambitious one - was to take a broad view, an international view, to find crossovers and tendencies that would enable an understanding of this reality at a macro level, but never to lose the richness and specifics of each region. Although we were from different professional fields and different countries, we had clear vision and common objective: “to make the social and solidarity economy visible within the curricula both within our own institutions and of other institutions interested in the subject”.

With this in mind, one of the practical objectives of the study has been to create a handbook about the social and solidarity economy which takes the thinking and the practice into account from three geographical regions: Europe, Africa and Latin America, in order to promote curriculum innovation in higher education.

This handbook is the result of the collaborative efforts of many people committed to the social and solidarity economy, from various countries and continents; the reader will see this reflected in approaches to the theme coming from Europe, Africa and Latin America. From this, different styles and approaches are apparent in the literature reviews, case studies, teaching activities and documental evidence that make up each chapter. This gives the handbook a richness and versatility that allows it to be used in many contexts. The reader will come across these differences, illustrating lives

running in parallel towards the same goal: to imagine and build a human and solidarity economy, with and for everyone.

We should point out that our aim was never to generalise our interpretations of the information gathered from different geographical areas. We hope instead to create knowledge that is dynamic and dialogical on the theory and practice of the social and solidarity economy and on social capital.

## Specific objectives of the study

The purpose of the work has been to understand and know the nature and the practice of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) through a study of its organisations in the geographically diverse areas of the project. This is with the aim of promoting curriculum innovation within the field within higher education. The specific objectives are:

1. To make known aspects of study and practice, which in our view, must be present in all curricula about the social and solidarity economy:

Ways of knowing (epistemology) and values: how is knowledge generated and validated which constructs a particular economic paradigm? What are the theoretical assumptions, beliefs, and values of the social and solidarity economy? (Chapter 1).

Identity, profile and territory: how can the identity of the social and solidarity economy on an international level in the geographical regions of the Project? (Chapter 2).

Ways of working: what factors, internal and external to the organisations, influence their ways of working? How do their ways of working reflect and put into practice the values and principles of the social and solidarity economy and what are the challenges of this? (Chapter 3).



Professional competences: what is different about the education and training of teachers and students for social entrepreneurship and social innovation? (Chapter 4).

ICT – effective practices: which effective practices can be replicated in the use of social media and community radio to achieve the objectives of the social and solidarity economy (Chapter 5).

Social capital: how do organisations in the social and solidarity economy generate social capital? How can these organisations exercise influence in employment, social and environmental policies? (Chapter 6).

Social responsibility and transformation: what is specific about the social responsibility and social transformation of the organisations of the social and solidarity economy? (Chapter 7).

Universities and ecosystems: practical cases. How can universities offer a favourable ecosystem towards promoting a culture of social entrepreneurship and social innovation? (Chapter 8).

2. To show the role of women in the governance and processes of participation in the social and solidarity economy.

3. To enhance the role of higher education institutions in facilitating intercultural dialogue between academics and members of the organisations of social and solidarity economy from different geographic regions; and so to promote innovation in the curriculum based on cognitive diversity and drawing on existing practice in the field.

## Methodology

The methodological approach to the study has been that of phenomenology, which assumes that reality resides in the mind in the way that the

individual perceives and experiences it. Knowledge can be discovered through the exploration of human experiences.

The following methodological assumptions have guided the study and the construction of the handbook. (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). The approach has been:

- Ontological, seeking emancipation and a move away from reductionist and mechanistic approaches and oriented towards making people aware of the values of reciprocity, trust and solidarity. It also aims to raise critical and dialogical awareness of the role of every individual and organisation in a world where sustainability depends on everyone assuming their duties and responsibilities, and understanding that our lives are linked to one another and to nature itself.

- Ethno-methodological, concerned with how people make sense of their everyday world through their everyday practices. It seeks to understand people's lives and concerns in their own terms.

- Symbolic interactionist: meanings are continuously being constructed and the social context in which actions occur is highly important. This approach emphasises that the individual is in a social context and that it is not possible to understand the individual without reference to this social sphere. Within this social interaction there is a commitment to understand the other's perspective.

The proposed objectives were achieved through an exploratory and descriptive approach, since the intention of the project was to understand the contexts and the people acting under the criteria of social and solidarity economy organisations.

The decision was made by the Consortium to deal with criteria for identifying organisations in the social and solidarity economy, rather than a definition of such organisations. The members of the Consortium





decided to work according to criteria rather than definitions. This approach was considered more conducive to understanding the diversity of the organisations: relying on definitions would run the risk of distancing ourselves from the organisations we wanted to reach and fully understand within their specific contexts. This approach has given enough space for the members of the Consortium to accommodate diverse opinions and continue towards the project objectives.

The methods used were quantitative and qualitative corresponding to different phases of the study.

1,025 organisations from within the social and solidarity economy participated in the project. These were from:

- Africa: Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and San Tomé;
- Europe: Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom;
- Latin America: Bolivia, Mexico and Peru.

The data collected from contact with these organisations has given insights into the nature and profile of the participating entities within the locality of each partner university and its geographical reach. Part of this information is reflected in dialogical section of Chapter 2 of the handbook. The data was collected in three languages from the questionnaire (in English, Spanish or Portuguese, depending on the region in which it was applied).

In addition, interviews were conducted with numerous people working within the social and solidarity economic system. These were used to create the practical cases of the handbook. The use of interviews as a method for gathering data was an interesting learning process and in the final section here will reflect on what we learned.

There were three crucial stages in the project. The first stage was in the design of the semi-structured interview questions. The questions needed to be open-ended enough to not lose the richness of

the experiences within each geographical region, but structured enough to enable commonalities and differences to be drawn out. Each partner sent proposals which would reflect the specificity of their region and context. This needed to produce meaningful data from organisations as diverse as associations of coffee growers in the Andes of South America to the manufacturing cooperatives of the industrialised Basque County in Spain. As a consortium a single guide was developed from this to be applied to all regions.

The second crucial stage was in the application of the interviews. Working with networks was essential in the UK; in Africa, contact with NGOs and other social and solidarity economy organisations was how we reached individual actors; and in Latin America, there was participation from students of Economics and Anthropology at the National University of San Antonio Abad in Cusco, Peru, and postgraduate students at the Greater University of San Simón in Bolivia. Working with students was extremely important; a different world was opening up before them where the practice of values such as solidarity, trust and reciprocity were possible, coexisting efficiently with the market. It was also exciting to see the transformation process in students and teachers as they began to discover the reality of the world, beyond academia, where before economics there are people.

The third crucial stage was a personal challenge for the members of the Consortium. As already stated above, the members come from different countries, different perspectives and academic positions, and from different disciplines. Therefore, attempting to build a discourse that could reflect the reality of all was not easy. It involved a long process of agreements and disagreements which eventually led to the integration of the results of the field work in different models. In these models each partner can see his/her own context reflected. These are the results which we present.

And beyond the results, as a team we are left with the experience of having been a part of a collective





where cultural barriers between ‘north’ and ‘south’ peers, is possible.  
were erased and where, if we are able to sustain the  
essence of being human, dialogue between peers, as

## References:

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000) *Research methods in education* (5th edition). London, Routledge.

Savin-Baden, M. & Howell Major, C. (2013) *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Abingdon, UK, Routledge.





## ABOUT THE HANDBOOK



The handbook is intended to provide relevant information to higher education institutions and other educational settings interested in including the study of the social and solidarity economy in their curricula. We are keen to avoid giving instructions on what the social and solidarity economy is and how to teach it; we know the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ involve an iterative and dynamic process of social construction between teachers, students and members of organisations in the social and solidarity economy.

We aim to encourage the university community to question its role in teaching, researching and outreach into the social and solidarity economy. We also seek to prompt a redefinition of the ethos and mission of universities based on an axiological framework, in order to face the challenges in their own communities and in a globalised society.

The handbook is structured in eight chapters in which we aim to outline the complexity of the topic. **Chapter One** looks at the principles and values underlying the social and solidarity economy as a system. The **second chapter** investigates the identity and profile of social and solidarity economy organisations, in order to then look at their ways of working and what differentiates them from other sectors in **Chapter Three**. In the **fourth chapter**, we tackle the competences, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in constructing a curricular framework for the teaching of the social and solidarity economy from an axiological perspective based on the concept of phronesis (practical wisdom). The matter of the effective use of social media and community radio as essential tools for the visibility, strengthening and sustainability of organisations is the subject of **Chapter Five**. **Chapter Six** is an analysis of social capital as vital to the existence of the organisations that we are focusing on. In **Chapter Seven**, we reflect on responsibility and transformation processes within these organisations and in the environments in which they operate, but also on the transformation that occurs in each individual. Finally, in **Chapter Eight**, and through practical cases, we look at the university and the role of the university community in creating - within

and outside the university - an ecosystem for social and solidarity economy organisations. The handbook is supplemented with online resources: videos and other material which complement the chapters. These resources will be updated and developed over time and users of the handbook are invited to send their own additional resources for inclusion.

Most chapters have the following structure (although there are variations in chapters 1, 4 and 8):

**1. Introduction**, with the key questions guiding the content of the chapter and a glossary of basic terms;

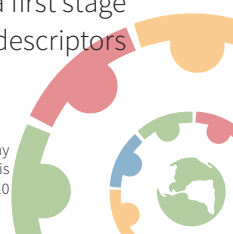
**2. Literature review** for each of the regions covered (Europe, Africa and Latin America). In contrast to conventional handbooks focused on methods and techniques, this handbook aims to provide some axiological and cognitive frameworks for the focus of the chapter for each of the regions of the project (Europe, Africa and Latin America). Referencing these publications has been in accordance with York St John University’s interpretation of Harvard referencing;

**3. Dialogical section** in which a model is presented which reflects what has been validated through the interviews and direct interaction with members of organisations in the social and solidarity economy that captures the result of transdisciplinary work reflecting the reality in each of the three regions is presented;

**4. Practical cases** to show aspects of the reality of social and solidarity economy organisations and exemplify theoretical points and issues raised within the chapter, with questions for dialogue and proposals for action;

**5. Teaching activities** which could be applied in the classroom;

**6. Competences framework**. Chapters 1-7 have a competence framework corresponding to a first stage for teaching staff. The competences have descriptors





and activities to develop these areas. The interaction between the tutor, the student and the social entrepreneur is crucial in the development of these.

## **Ideas for using the handbook**

This section gives suggestions of the diverse ways in which the handbook could be used in the classroom or to inform curriculum design.

### **1. Following the chapters sequentially:**

A course could be developed based on the eight chapters in the sequence in which they are presented. This course would begin with the knowledge and values which underpin the social and solidarity economy, with pedagogical models based on the empirical study carried out, also using the practical cases and pedagogical activities which can be developed within the university and other educational settings

### **2. Extension of the review of literature, emphasising the new creation of local knowledge:**

The literature review does not claim to be exhaustive. It can be complemented by the student or tutor from different perspectives and theoretical frameworks arising from the social and solidarity economy.

This work can be sent to for consideration in the second version of the manual, for the blog or as an online resource to accompany a chapter: [socialeconomy@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:socialeconomy@yorks.ac.uk)

### **3. References from different geographical areas:**

Analyse the references used in the manual focusing on:

- Number of references used

- Origin of the authors

- Use of grey literature for the preparation of the chapters

- Use of the internet

- National, regional or local references added and an analysis of their contribution to the literature review.

Results can be sent to for consideration in the second version of the manual, for the blog or as an online resource to accompany a chapter: [socialeconomy@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:socialeconomy@yorks.ac.uk)

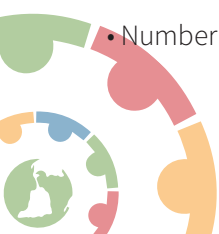
### **4. Pedagogical models for the study, analysis and research of social and solidarity economy organisations:**

Various activities can be designed from the analysis of the models presented in the dialogical sections of the handbook. Also, other models can be created that complement these according to the reality of the social and solidarity economy organisations in the region.

### **5. Practical cases:**

If the practical case presented in the handbook comes from the country where the university is located, follow-up and further exploration would be interesting. Contact members of the Consortium for information if appropriate. People featuring in the practical cases could be invited to the university to speak about their work or lead a workshop or other event.

Other practical cases could be created, based on interviews and dialogue with members of organisations and movements in the social and solidarity economy. Once these activities have been initiated, the Consortium can be contacted to put you in contact with other universities doing similar work and can share outcomes and evaluations of this.





([socialeconomy@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:socialeconomy@yorksj.ac.uk))

These activities can be disseminated and shared via the project blog.

## **6. Pedagogical activities:**

Having carried out some of these activities, please share the processes and outcomes through the project blog or other collaborative platforms. Contact the Consortium about this at the email address given above. Also, please share other educational activities which develop critical understanding of the social and solidarity economy and address dilemmas within it.

## **7. Competences:**

Each chapter of the handbook (except 4 and 8) has its own competence framework. Teachers may include these as standards of teaching and learning; starting with the teachers themselves, before using the activities with students. A diary can be used to record other competences which have been developed while working on the self-evaluation activities.

## **8. Online resources:**

Other online resources could be developed to complement the studies and practice of the topics covered in each chapter. Which videos in any of the three languages of the handbook could be recommended for the website? What audio visual materials can be created to capture the actions that respond to the appropriate chapter?



# Social and solidarity economy (SSE) handbook

## Pedagogical framework

### Chapter 7 and 8: Social responsibility and transformation (SRT) /Universities and ecosystems

What is SRT and how is it activated in organisations/universities?

- Literature review
- 1 pedagogical model based on interviews with SSE organisations.
- 8 practical cases to analyse with proposals for action.
- 1 pedagogical activity.
- 16 competences and 8 activities to develop them.

### Chapter 6: Social capital

How do SSE organisations generate social capital?

- Literature review
- 1 pedagogical model based on interviews with SSE organisations.
- 3 practical cases to analyse with proposals for action.
- 1 pedagogical activity
- 26 competences and 8 activities to develop them.

### Chapter 5: ICT - effective practices

What effective practice in the use of social media and community radio can be identified?

- Literature review
- 1 pedagogical model based on interviews with SSE organisations.
- 4 practical cases to analyse with proposals for action.
- 2 pedagogical activities.
- 32 competences and 6 activities to develop them.

### Chapters 2 and 3: Identity and profile/ways of working

How does the identity organisations mark out the ways of working of SSE organisations

- Literature review
- 1 pedagogical model and statistics about the profile of 1025 organisations
- 9 practical cases to analyse with proposals for action.
- 3 pedagogical activities.
- 47 professional competences and 13 activities to develop them.

### Chapter 1: Ways of knowing (epistemology) and values

How does my professional practice reflect the values of the SSE?

- Literature review
- 3 practical cases to analyse with proposals for action..
- 2 pedagogical activities.
- 16 competences and 11 activities to develop them.

### Chapter 4: Professional competences

Education and training based on phronesis.

