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MAKING URBAN REGENERATION INCLUSIVE THROUGH NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

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FOREWORD

In 2021, URBiNAT organised its first Webinar Series focusing on “Solidarity Economy for urban regeneration in times of uncertainty”, gathering partners from the URBiNAT consortium, members of its scientific commission, and researchers from the Centre for Social Studies (CES). The three-day event engaged all partners and cities working on Social and Solidarity Economy issues, with the goal of sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices. Presentations and discussions specifically addressed challenges related to the integration of Solidarity Economy principles within urban regeneration projects. This publication aims to enrich the academic conversation surrounding Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) by establishing a connection with Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and its operational strategies and principles. The objective is to explore a promising intersection that could amplify the impacts observed in the most recent forms of nature-based urban regeneration. For example, SSE, as a component of inclusive urban regeneration design, supports the enhancement of civic and citizenship awareness through political participation, fostering a sense of belonging to the local community, promoting an understanding of the interdependence between humans and nature, and fostering a virtuous cycle of abundance by encouraging the retention of generated wealth within the community itself.

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INTRODUCTION

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One of the significant issues of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is its relationship with environmental protection, and its emphasis on the human-nature interdependency. This environmental perspective is highlighted in the nature-based solutions (NBS) that are defined by the European Union as answers supported by nature which are cost-effective and, simultaneously, provide environmental, social and economic benefits (European Environment Agency et al., 2021). Moreover, the argument that the NBS need to go beyond environmental issues and must respond to social and economic challenges is underlined in several international agendas and in the literature (Remme and Haarstad, 2022; Dumitru et al., 2020; van der Jagt et al., 2022). There are two main arguments underlying expected to be further developed in future scientific outcomes.

The first one is that market-based conventional models have not been able to reduce the social asymmetries. The same applies to those generated by the usual urban regeneration projects. The past decades have broadly demonstrated the unsustainable effects of the perspective based on capitalist accumulation and expansion. This capitalist model commodifies natural resources but does not make the distribution of its benefits accessible. The second argument has to do with the very concept of substantive economy (Polanyi, 1957) on which URBiNAT has been grounded. According to the substantive concept of the economy, the economic dimension cannot be split from the social perspective, in such a way that the economy cannot constitute an isolated sphere, it needs to be concerned with the environmental impacts (Laville, 2018).

In this context, the environment is an issue that cannot be dissociated from the social and economic dimensions. This does not mean to focus exclusively on recognising Nature as a provider of economically valuable environmental functions. It means otherwise that the economy must not take advantage of social and environmental imbalances for its own benefit. The same applies to the green solutions that should not be designed uncoupled from social and economic justice concerns. The implementation of NBS *per se* can deepen social inequalities in disadvantaged and vulnerable contexts if they require forced evictions or one-sized compensatory measures. Environmental gentrification has subordinated equity to profit-minded development and deepened economic disparities (Checker, 2011).

These are the main reason why the SE (including both its political and economic dimensions) has been associated with the NBS debate¹, as proposed by Caitana et al. (2023). What the authors are proposing is the application of the SSE lens in NBS to bring it closer to its

¹ According to the United Nations Inter- Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE), the SE is a viable solution to re-balancing economic, social and environmental objectives. Cf. <https://unsse.org>

transformative ambitions. It is essential for the sustainability of NBS. This association between SSE perspective and NBS recognizes the SSE as a principle and as a practice. As a principle, SSE is based on a different economic logic, where profit and accumulation are not the ultimate goals, but rather the production of goods and services adapted to the public interest and common goods (Laville, 2018; Singer, 2018; Hespanha and Santos, 2016). As a practice, it assumes a double dynamic of democracy and solidarity (Laville, 2018), through associativism and cooperativism, as spaces for a non-monetary economy, democratic management and political participation. All these SE elements contribute to the socio-economic adaptive capacity of the NBS.

The Marseille Manifesto (IUCN, 2021)² also includes business impacts which, among other points, encourages all sectors to consider NBS, in order to transit to a nature-positive economy, and also recommends investments in nature that advance social justice and inclusion, given the pre-existing inequalities. Other recent advances around the concepts combining NBS and economy, such as nature-based economy, are still to be a future opportunity to assume a critical position, in relation to the business performance and the inequalities often exacerbated by conventional business models.

In our perspective, the SE expands some dimensions of the NBS, contributing to an inclusive urban regeneration, and suggesting four main aspects. First, from an economic perspective, and considering a substantial influence on the segregation of the territories, the SE questions the naturalisation of certain inequalities and requires equity in relation to common goods and NBS benefits. Second, from the perspective of nature-place, there is an interdependent relationship between SE and nature, either in respect to a fairer and more conscious production and consumption, or in relation to the proximity between the rural and urban contexts, which implies a sustainable environment. Third, from a socio-cultural perspective, the democratic management form enhances the political capacity of communities, generates new forms of sociability and urbanities, thus creating a differentiated community and social space made up of citizens. Lastly, in relation to the public urban space, the SE expands the functionality of commons (territories), diversifying the ways in which citizens use them, therefore, revealing a strong territoriality and connection with the physical and material elements of the urban space.

The URBiNAT project, funded by H2020 programme and coordinated by the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, has been testing this NBS expansion, namely, by proposing a broader theorization of the NBS, which integrates nature inspired solutions, such as the territorial and technological ones, i.e. comprising projects and infrastructures, together with participatory solutions and social and solidarity economy (SSE)³ practices, including

2 The Marseille Manifesto, created during the IUCN Congress, encourages the different sectors to invest in nature, to create sustainable jobs and accelerate the just transition; respect and engage communities, especially indigenous people and youth; reform the financial, economic and regulatory systems; and adopt the circular economy approach, as a solution to the preservation of the global commons (IUCN, 2021).

3 While social economy is closely linked to formal organisations, democratic in their form of action, with the purpose of collective objectives and social, environmental and economic benefits, solidarity economy, on the other hand generates more visibility to the economic community-based initiatives, including informal initiatives, based on co-managed and self-managed initiatives, which is more difficult in the social economy.

processes and services. It reinforces the positive integration between the physical structure and the intangible dimension and values of the public space, which happens through the dimensions of participation and SE.

Since 2018, URBiNAT has been promoting innovative practices of inclusive urban regeneration, through the co-creation (co-diagnostic, co-design, co-implementation and co-monitoring) of NBS in public spaces, with citizens, public actors and other local agents, to connect social neighbourhoods or disadvantaged residential areas between them, and with the rest of the city. The implementation of healthy corridors, made up of NBS, in seven European cities⁴, aims at demonstrating that the community-driven processes, combined with participatory governance, can enhance the resilience of communities. This perspective is aligned with the UN-Habitat guidelines (2015), which advocates that the policies, plans, designs and implementation processes should be reviewed and improved, for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities and territories.

Regarding the commons perspective, the SE has a great potential to ignite the recovery and reappropriation of the territories in the green public places, through collective actions and self-organisation of citizens and other stakeholders. Within these URBiNAT green public places, commons are produced and shaped (Rieiro, 2023), namely, those community-based values and environmental needs (protection of territories, seeds, water and soil). The greater the dynamics of social cohesion, the lower the risk of environmental degradation and social exclusion. It is not only a physical reappropriation, but also a political and symbolic one in relation to common meanings for the neighbourhoods.

Moreover, the SE connects, in many aspects, with URBiNAT's approach to human rights and gender⁵, in the framework of the development of healthy corridors in the public space of social neighbourhoods (URBiNAT, 2021). In fact, the challenges addressed and the responses devised in the field of SE cover the guiding principles that compose URBiNAT's rights-based approach: from the problematization of the multidimensional and intersectional cause of inequalities in the urban space (*inclusivity; 'do-no-harm'*); to the realization of the social well-being of vulnerable individuals and groups, through opportunities of strengthening social relations, autonomy and economic conditions (*applying all rights; non-discrimination and equal access*); as well as considering new models of governance aimed at community development, by influencing public policies, and through the empowerment of people for social change (*participation and access to the decision making process; accountability; transparency and access to information*) (URBiNAT, 2021; Dorronsoro & Nunes, 2018).

These aspects also echo URBiNAT's approach to human rights and gender as part of the conceptual construction of the healthy corridors (URBiNAT, 2018; URBiNAT, 2019), assuming

4 URBiNAT is a project funded by European Union (EU) that focuses on urban regeneration in seven European cities: Porto (Portugal), Siena (Italy), Sofia (Bulgaria), Nova Gorica (Slovenia), Nantes (France), Brussels (Belgium), and Høje-Taastrup (Denmark). URBiNAT's community of practice include observers in Iran, Brazil, China, Oman, Japan, and Cyprus. URBiNAT's community of partners consist of an international consortium made up of 28 partners, from 15 countries, and gathering local public authorities, experts, practitioners, companies, research centres and universities.

5 Our thanks to Nathalie Nunes for her contribution as co-coordinator of the project and who has been coordinating the Human Rights and Gender issues within the URBiNAT.

health as a fundamental right, based on the WHO's definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1946), and which focuses, in particular, on the social dimension. Also, a corridor of inclusion, considering the city space for and with all, which means inviting citizens, within a diversity of backgrounds, to be at the centre of a co-creation process, recognizing their specificities and taking measures to reduce the barriers that hamper the participation of priority groups under more vulnerable conditions, as well as acknowledging and challenging the lines that structure divisions in the social fabric of the city.

In 2021, URBiNAT organised its first Webinar Series⁶ focusing on “Solidarity Economy for urban regeneration in times of uncertainty”, gathering partners from the URBiNAT consortium, members of its scientific commission and researchers from CES. The three-day event was aimed at involving all partners and cities working on socio-economic issues to share knowledge, experience and best practices in SE, together with the Research Group on Solidarity Economy - Ecosol/CES, including international network dedicated to the solidarity economy agenda, as well as URBiNAT's sister projects. Presentations and discussions have particularly addressed the challenges related to the introduction of SE in the framework of urban regeneration projects. As strategy, the webinars privileged diverse themes that contribute to the SE debate and reinforce its robustness, moving beyond the market-based debates.

In sum, the speakers of this webinar series have demonstrated that the association between the SE and urban regeneration can be analysed from different perspectives. This publication gathers texts based on the communications carried out exploring these perspectives. In the first text Pedro Hespanha invites us to analyse the neighbourhoods from a complex perspective, not ignoring the organic modes of the neighbours, how they run their lives and interact with the market while integrating various forms of community participation and SE. Luciane Lucas dos Santos reflects in the second text on material constraints of minority women due to unbalanced policies and decisions relative to the production of space and landscape design. She highlights that SE contribution for a socially-oriented urban regeneration and the role of women in animating the other economic dynamics. One aspect of this community-engagement and widely included in SE debate is the appropriation of the commons, themes discussed in the third text of José Castro Caldas. The common pool resource discussed by the author focuses on mixed regimes in which the community defines how the common resource may be appropriated. But they do not participate in the definition on what is to be done with the goods appropriated. Within the market debate, the inequalities have been a central point of the SE frame.

The fourth text shows one of the most relevant topics of the global and SE agenda, food waste. Andrés Spognardi brings us the solutions developed by supranational institutions and grassroots organisations. The fifth text, elaborated by Marco Acri, demonstrates the inputs from circular economy to heritage conservation. Despite SE pursuing a sustainable environment, the circular economy approach recently has pointed out concrete measures and

⁶ This webinar was an occasion to update and expand the results of webinars held in 2018 regarding the foundations perspectives of Social and Solidarity Economy, under the project task 1.2.

practices for reuse, recycle, refurbish, etc. The case of Rijeka, within the CLIC project provides evidence on its new environment oriented viewpoint. In the sixth text, Nathalie Vallet and Mhohamed El Boujjoufi propose a tool for measuring the socio-economic impact of NBS within the healthy corridor. The innovation is the evaluation based on intangible values, almost always disregarded in conventional metrics. Such application would benefit both the evaluation of the impact of the SE nature-based solutions and the components of the SE can contribute to identify the intangible values. Beyond that, the seventh text focuses on practices, namely the social currencies and solidarity markets. José Fernández-Pacheco discusses the place of social currencies in a society where the money is created majority by private banks, producing unsustainable social effects. In this sense, the authors confirm the revolutionary capacity of the currencies into the solidarity economy framework for empowering the community in economic aspects. Finally, in the last text, following the practice repertory in URBiNAT, the NBS related to the SE are situated into the healthy corridor. As pointed out by the speakers Ana Ferreira, Nathalie Roguez-Villette and Nadezhda Savova, the implementation of solutions in each front-runner city gathers advances and challenges inherent to the participatory process.

Finally, the dialogue between the SE and the NBS reinforces the impacts of the solutions, at the same time that it revitalises the theories and practices around the NBS, as demonstrated during the webinar series. The SE as an element of inclusive urban regeneration design, for instance, supports the amplification of civic and citizenship sense, through political participation, the feeling of belonging to the local community, awareness about the interdependence between humans and nature, as well as a virtuous circle of abundance, by encouraging the permanence of the wealth generated in the community itself.

The webinar series programme design involved URBiNAT's partners who work on the SE theme and the members of the research group Ecosol/CES, in order to broaden the reflection on multiple possible perspectives. In this respect, it is with great satisfaction that this publication is promoted to contribute to the scientific reflection on NBS, by associating the theme with the SE and its practices. The objective is to open up a promising field of intersection that could leverage the impacts generated in the most recent forms of urban regeneration based on nature.

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INCLUSIVE AND DYNAMIC URBAN REGENERATION OF DEPRIVED HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGH SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Urban regeneration of deprived housing, like other modes of territorial intervention, can not only neglect or ignore how neighbours run their lives and interact with the market economy, but also must integrate in a participative way the various forms of solidarity economy that exist or may exist on the ground. At a time of continuing crisis, urban neighbourhoods have reinforced their organic life, by creating their own, poor but effective, responses to these crises. Everywhere, community gardens, food markets, agri-food short-circuits, exchange fairs, 'time banks', social currencies multiplied. Through solidarity economy initiatives, disadvantaged social groups may take into their hands the solution for their problems. Distinctly from other modes of social intervention based on philanthropic solidarity, these initiatives involve, collectively and autonomously, those who are in difficulty by agreeing on priorities, sharing resources and helping each other.

KEYWORDS

solidarity economy; urban regeneration; deprived neighbourhoods; civic involvement; democratisation of economy

1. THE URBINAT AGENDA: SOME STRATEGIC GOALS

Solidarity economy is a concept that is being enforced due to its capacity to capture the most meaningful aspects made invisible by conventional economic knowledge, such as the inseparability between the economy and the social, political and institutional contexts that mark human livelihood, the subjectivity of actors, the diversity of social and political participation or the ways of mobilising and using scarce resources.

In a very broad definition, the solidarity economy encompasses economic practices based on associated work, democratic management and peer to peer solidarity. These practices are rooted both in the forms of popular economy or workers' cooperation that resisted the commodification of work and in the recent forms of seeking alternatives to the dismantling of social rights due to welfare state retrenchment or the abusive extraction of non-renewable natural resources and the unsustainable consumerism. In both cases, what makes the difference is the people's willingness to solve in a collective way problems that each of them

alone cannot and to forge a new economy concerned with the common good and with the defence of threatened ways of life¹.

Therefore, degraded urban neighbourhood regeneration policies, like other modes of territorial intervention, can not only neglect or ignore how neighbours run their lives and interact with the market economy, but also must integrate in a participative way the various forms of solidarity economy that exist or may exist on the ground.

We can easily find in the project several guidelines that may confirm the presence of these issues as strategic goals: to promote social cohesion and well-being; to address the specific needs of vulnerable social groups; to regenerate built space distinctly from the city planning cannon; to involve citizens in a co-creation process, from co-diagnostic to co-design; to empower the residential communities; to expand the concept of NBS in order to integrate social and solidarity solutions

2. AN INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO THE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Recovering the old assertion of a founding father of urban sociology, “*neighbourhood is a locality with sentiments, traditions, and a history of its own*” (Park, 1915) we may define urban neighbourhoods as a set of complex socioeconomic and emotional relations, instead of a mere space for living.

Economic relations and social relations are not separate spheres in the daily life of the community. Consequently, labour occupations, as well as decisions about basic livelihood, are largely dependent on the rules and the moral and civic values that prevail in the community. Hence, socioeconomic relations are marked by a high level of common interest, reciprocity, and trust, despite its informality. Resulting from attributes such as inter-knowledge, role transparency, and shared life experiences, community initiatives are strongly based on solidarity ties.

The term solidarity refers to horizontal, symmetrical and democratic ties, uniting people as equals, which makes this democratic solidarity distinct from the solidarity based on the values of charity, altruism or philanthropy. Corporate ethics, corporate social responsibility, social entrepreneurship and social volunteering are the most common expressions of this other type of asymmetrical and paternalistic solidarity.

Coexisting often, and having both a relevant role to play, the genesis, philosophy, and trajectory of these two forms of solidarity are quite distinct and to some extent competing.

¹ It is important to observe that those actors who develop new economic practices may not identify them with the name solidarity economy. There are several reasons for this dissonance between “the name” and “the thing”: first, due to the relative ambiguity of the concept of solidarity strongly appropriated by institutions of a philanthropic or religious nature; second, due to the recent emergence of new terminologies whose differences are difficult to grasp (civic economy, collaborative economy, sharing economy, circular economy, and so on).

3. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: STRENGTHS AND LIMITS

The solidarity economy is about economic practices based on cooperative work, democratic management and peer-to-peer solidarity. Rooted in strong networks of sociability, solidarity economy initiatives have adjusted to new contexts and resisted the adverse integration by the market economy or the state social policy. Joining together powerless groups and social movements, it allows for more fair, sustainable and humane alternatives to capitalism.

Being a common strategy for better living, solidarity economy is an opportunity to improve the living conditions of, and to move forward emancipation in deprived urban neighbourhoods.

Additionally, the solidarity economy entails a powerful transformative role that may operate as a tool for the social recognition and empowerment of marginalised social groups.

This dimension, which is not always assumed as such, represents a strong willingness to transform the conditions of life, by democratising the economy and enlarging the public space. It manifests itself in different ways: i. as a resistance to a system of social and economic relations that favours the position of those who have more resources and more power; ii. as a new meaning for the democratic space, by increasing the deliberative power of individuals and their right to the city; iii. as a very diverse range of practices of political expression: protest against abuses; demands for justice, self-resolution of community problems, grassroots movements, struggle agendas, pressure on institutions to be recognized (Laville, 2016).

That way, the initiatives of solidarity economy may assume simultaneously the condition of a space for associative life and collective deliberation, operating as schools of democracy, poles for the defence of the public interest, and drivers of civic involvement; as a project of democratisation of the economy, forged by economic practices aimed to solve people's daily life problems and based on the creation and dissemination of a democratic and participatory culture; and as communicative spaces – developing citizens' abilities to sustain debates, to solve conflicts or to establish consensus among individuals with diverse values, interests, and identities (Enjolras & Steen-Johnsen, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is easy to recognize that cities have become, today and throughout the world, the spaces of the greatest social contrasts, more dramatic forms of exclusion and more intolerant and violent segregation. Unable to absorb migrants trying to escape poverty, the city became a highly dualized territory, subjected to different urban processes and based on a very unstable equilibrium between its affluent and modern component, the elites strongly linked to world capitalism, and its component of miserable and primitive retreatants left behind by this same world capitalism. It is this internal disconnection of cities in an increasingly globalised world that constitutes the great puzzle for an emancipating conception of the city and the great challenge for the projects of an advanced democracy, such as those of solidarity economy.

How it is possible for human beings of such a distinguished condition and with destinies so contrasted to live side by side without generating a process of rupture or generalised social conflict? The question is very complex to be answered here, but some issues must be considered in a project like URBiNAT. The first is the "naturalization" of inequalities and social apartheid as traces of urban culture. Understood in the broad terms defined by Simmel (1903/1971) in his essay on *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, urban culture is generated in a context marked by rapid and unpredictable changes and by the intensity of the *stimuli* that continually bombard individuals. The trivialization of social inequalities and poverty seems to have anaesthetized the emotions and feelings of injustice, making them insensitive to the dramas of those who suffer. The second is the risk of insecurity felt by the affluent layers of the urban population which generated a series of control measures to keep the population without resources at a distance. A social apartheid sanitary belt may operate through the urban planning, road and transport systems, surveillance of the private property, and residential condominiums; through the policing of the affluent areas of the city; but also through the logic of the market itself - the more expensive areas of commerce, housing or recreation keep the population without resources at a distance. A third issue concerns the dialectic of exclusion, a process by which excluded population tends to create divisions within themselves, often based on ethnic criteria, often depending on their location in the city or simply based on the football team they support, which generates problems for the members of the community and, in particular, for women (Willis, 1977). A process that continually accentuates marginality and condemns people, at best, to jobs without a future and, at worst, to hopeless inactivity (Young, 1999, p. 13)

4. A PUBLIC POLICY FOR SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IS NEEDED?

Public policies for solidarity economy are the result of the institutional recognition of its positive role in making communities and territories more autonomous and prosperous.

In this sense, several objectives may be present, such as training people for new initiatives through university-based incubators and through appropriated technologies, valuing local knowledge; reducing bureaucracy in the processes of recognition of new initiatives; encouraging the development of solidarity-based financial systems; promoting local development through the solidarity economy initiatives; training local development agents able to articulate community initiatives with municipal and regional policies; creating opportunities for solidarity economy initiatives through public procurement policies.

Some countries recognize the existence of the solidarity economy and offer some support to their initiatives more or less exempt from obligations.

Nevertheless, it is questionable whether a broad recognition of solidarity economy is sufficient, or whether there is a need for more specific policies to assist its development. Based on experience, rules and regulations may be seen, on the contrary, as an obstacle to the free development of these alternative economic initiatives, by reducing their heterogeneity or forcing them to associate with market-oriented forms of business. Definitely, institutional recognition is an ambivalent process that implies, at the same time,

the submission of solidarity economy initiatives to “systemic integration” and “only partial recognition of its instituting power” (Laville, 2018, p. 261).

Taking this into account, the rule of trade should be based on dialogue and collaboration between state agencies and solidarity economy organisations, with state agencies, be they local or central, recognizing community initiatives and respecting their collective nature without trying to institutionalise or co-opt them. The financial burden for the state shouldn't be an excuse, because a small amount of investment may solve a fair amount of essential needs according to the hierarchy of needs in deprived neighbourhoods.

Moreover, the state can play a very positive role, for example, by adjusting fiscal rules, or de-bureaucratizing access to services or accepting community forms of fundraising and credit allocation, aiming to prevent collective indebtedness to commercial banking.

5. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AS A KEY DRIVER FOR URBAN RENEWAL

Quite often the implementation of projects of urban renewal faces serious difficulties when the community seems not to be interested or to be reluctant to be involved in the projects.

Maybe we need to give a positive sense to this resistance. The resistance to technical proposals and financial aid, supposedly good and uninterested, should act as a warning sign to detect and prevent negative effects for the neighbourhood that promoters were not aware of. Sometimes resistances are due to a communicative failure such as the use of an unintelligible discourse filled with technical jargon or unfamiliar terms that favour neither dialogue nor the generation of trust; sometimes, the memory of past interventions that harmed the community or made its life more difficult is the hidden reason for resistance. In any case, it is crucial to prevent that time pressure serves as a reason for authorities to minimize the resistance, to confuse doubts with obstinacy, or to postpone the resolution of problems until when the intervention has become irreversible.

At a time of continuing crisis, urban neighbourhoods have reinforced their organic life, by creating their own, poor but effective, responses to these crises. Everywhere, community gardens, food markets, agri-food short-circuits, exchange fairs, ‘time banks’, social currencies multiplied. As Caffentzis and Federici observed, this construction of common goods and services represents a crucial means of survival (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Through solidarity economy initiatives, disadvantaged social groups are taking into their hands the solution for their problems. Distinctly from other modes of social intervention based on philanthropic solidarity, these initiatives involve, collectively and autonomously, those who are in difficulty by agreeing on priorities, sharing resources and helping each other.

The vital role of the solidarity economy in unlocking better health and well-being in urban planning projects is broadly recognized by reference institutions. It is the case of United Nations that asserts that small grassroots and community-based organisations “provide a key contribution, supporting local authorities in identifying needs and priorities, raising public awareness, ensuring continuity in long-term objectives of urban and territorial plans, and strengthening community participation for local buy-in and local knowledge on process and

place” (UN-Habitat & World Health Organization, 2020, p. 7). The Global Social Economy Forum, held in Montreal 2016, reaffirms its commitment to international solidarity in facing the new challenges that face humanity through public action for a more equitable world, and the establishment of enabling international agenda for the future” (GSEF, 2016)

Many academic studies confirm this role of solidarity economy in urban planning and renewal, some of them observing that public support is needed to counteracting social exclusion as low-income groups appear to experience more difficulty in participating in this process (Ubasart, Rafols & Vivas, 2009; Laville & Jané, 2009; Citroni, 2017; UCLG-LT, 2017; Wahlund, 2019). More recently, facing the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, the urban poor and their grassroots organisations have demonstrated a strong resilience (Recio, Thai & Nguyen, 2020; UNTFSSE, 2020).

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INCLUSIVE URBAN REGENERATION AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: BRIEF NOTES ON POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS REGARDING MINORITY WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This article briefly debates the role that solidarity economy might play in the context of urban regeneration. It reflects upon some characteristics of the everyday economy and points out the material constraints minority women might face due to unbalanced policies and decisions relative to the production of space and landscape design. Departing from some key ideas in community economies, solidarity economy is presented as a valuable popular technology to bring already-forgotten aspects of the everyday economy to urban regeneration processes. Bearing this dialogue in mind (between solidarity economy and urban planning), the paper intertwines two issues: the idea of a socially-oriented production/use of the space and the collective doings in the neighbourhood. Adopting a feminist and intersectional approach, I argue that a gender-inclusive approach in the design of nature-based solutions is needed, taking into account 1. the contribution that the solidarity economy may give to a socially-oriented urban regeneration and 2. the role women have played in animating other economic dynamics and building up social bonds in the territories.

KEYWORDS

urban regeneration; solidarity economy; gender-inclusive approach in urban planning; minority women; black women; environmental justice

1. INTRODUCTION

Solidarity Economy should be assumed as a stretchy concept, in which we can find very different and creative economic arrangements, collectively organised, according to social, cultural, and economic contexts. These forms can refresh the public space, strengthen the social bonds in the communities, constitute forms of guaranteeing the provisioning and foster people's autonomy - this latter one of the most important features. Given that women constitute the majority of citizens involved in solidarity economy arrangements, it is reasonable to expect that the solidarity economy, when associated with the idea of more

inclusive urban spaces, will contribute towards one of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, namely, gender equality.

To briefly address these diversified contributions, I propose to debate four short key issues which not only shed light on the solidarity economy framework but also evince the role it may play in the urban-setting. In fact, the Solidarity Economy may be of interest for public and third-sector actors, and what is more, for communities to foster agency in the territories and to promote urban revitalisation. It means that Solidarity Economy matches well with architecture, urbanism and design projects concerned with social justice.

A range of approaches relative to the production of spaces could be a nursery for a fruitful dialogue between the economic, the social and the environmental dimensions in a progressive way: from participatory and community architecture projects (Hofmann, 2014; Sandin, 2013; Cho & Kim, 2016; Otsuki, 2018) to critical perspectives on urban planning and housing policies (Maricato, 2009; McGuirk, 2014; Moassab 2013); from the recognition of cultural and local knowledges as baseline assumptions for the designing of solutions (McGuirk, 2014; Moassab, 2016) to the co-design of nature-based solutions (Silva, Ferreira & Nunes, 2021). In this age of diversity and migration flows all over the world, concerns with environmental and social justice will also require from us, instead of ready-made solutions, the proper recognition of other rationalities in residential construction, in the organisation of space, and in the handling of locally available and scant resources. Furthermore, these agendas will demand, more and more, the participation of the citizens to whom housing or urban regeneration policies are addressed.

Despite not being a common word in architecture vocabulary, Solidarity Economy may be considered an urban-friendly concept for two reasons. Firstly, because solidarity economy principles - self-management, equity in resources and outcomes distribution, collective organisation/collaborative arrangement - are usually present in popular architecture projects (Moassab, 2016; Lucas dos Santos, 2018). Secondly, because participative and sustainable urban planning could benefit from citizen-led economic arrangements inasmuch as economy of proximity matches with environmental concerns. It is worth mentioning that the Solidarity Economy is compromised with people's autonomy to outline tailor-made solutions for contextual problems. It means that SE contributes to resizing marginalised and impoverished groups' participation in the public space, that is, in the decision making process on local issues.

In this essay, I argue for a broader scope of concepts usually employed to be the baseline for intervention projects, be they associated with environmental or economic issues. Four key concepts regarding the economic dimension will be tabled and briefly questioned. Following this section, I outline some brief notes on how Urbinat Project can intertwine Solidarity Economy, urban revitalisation goals, and cross-cutting concerns, some of them related to the heterogeneous women that make use of the public spaces.

2. A BRIEF LOOK AT THE EVERYDAY ECONOMY

The first key issue to be tabled has to do with the very concept of economy. We have understood economy as a synonym for market. But the fact is that the economy encompasses what makes our material life possible. One can consider, for instance, the remittances (in money but also in goods) by family members to support someone abroad. It is part of the economy for sure but, at the same time, it does not have anything to do with self-regulated markets. The same could be said about reciprocity mechanisms through which goods could be given to someone for having helped another community member to harvest crops or build a house. These are some examples of the everyday economy particularly connected with provisioning, demonstrating that no less important for the economy are the non-paid provisioning services. Some relevant contributions to this debate have been made by feminist scholars working on community economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Lucas dos Santos, 2018), economics of care (Folbre, 2015; Ferber & Nelson, 2003), or solidarity economy (Guérin, 2004; Hillenkamp, Guérin & Verschuur, 2014; Osório-Cabrera, 2016; Matthaei, 2010), as well as by institutionalist economists (Reis, 1998; Castro Caldas, 2010).

Another aspect to bear in mind is that of the economy's complexity. The economy should not be reduced to math formulas and abstraction. In fact, abstraction may materially distort the real conditions (constraints, possibilities and mutual help) people deal with to organise their daily economic life. We have been in the face of institutional arrangements which affect the effective economic dynamics, as shown by institutionalist scholars (Reis, 1998). Consequently, from a Polanyian perspective, economy should be seen as a plural phenomenon; that is, not only the market should be considered as part of the economy, but also reciprocity, redistribution and householding, which are principles of economic integration likewise. Unfortunately, householding, which brings us back to the domestic domain, is usually ignored or sub-represented when economic innovation is debated - particularly the role played by women in reconnecting economy and society through creative forms of redistribution (besides the State) and reciprocity. We will come back to this issue when intertwining solidarity economy and the reshaping of the public spaces.

The second key issue is concerned with the idea of fighting against poverty and marginalisation. We are used to considering economic inequality as the main problem to be solved. On the other hand, we are most likely to be fighting against the consequence rather than the cause. Commonly taken as a situation that management solutions can solve, poverty should be framed otherwise as the result of different social inequalities impacting a body simultaneously - by this I mean, ethnicity, race, gender, class, nationality. Environmental racism and environmental injustice (Pulido, 2017; Harper, Steger & Filcak, 2009) may illustrate how impoverishment, shortage of public equipment and racial segregation have been intertwined within urban areas. In fact, black and poor people (but also Roma people in Europe) are the ones who have been gated in devalued areas with high levels of toxic waste and landfills, as well as in the absence of cultural and social equipments and basic services. If we are thus concerned about reducing poverty we should be attentive to the social hierarchies which underlie the context of economic inequality.

What does Solidarity Economy have to do with overcoming marginalisation and social inequalities? First and foremost, it is worth tabling what this expression means, regardless of the context. By valuing the communities' and peoples' own knowledge, Solidarity Economy could be understood as collective economic arrangements - that is, community-led initiatives - devoted to production, consumption, savings, distribution and trading activities, in urban or rural areas. Solidarity economy arrangements also bring to the scene other dimensions of the economy, namely the reciprocity, the redistribution and the perspective of provision.

Consequently, the Solidarity Economy should not be taken as a mere form of trading. It might respond to different goals: fighting against poverty, stimulating different patterns of consumption or reducing environmental impact related to long-distance trade. Some keywords have been tabled: autonomy, solidarity (in the sense of proper distribution of opportunities and assets), shared management (decision making process is collective) and associationism (a group of citizens who gather to do something for their own collectivity or for the community at large). Solidarity economy arrangements should not be confused with the support organisations who, in different places, help them develop. Despite the differences, it is worth recalling that these support organisations, many of them as part of Social Economy, play a key role by fostering citizens' autonomy as well as community creativity to think of its own problems.

A third key issue refers to typologies when we refer to these community-based economy. Categories may vary according to the contexts. However, the concern regarding the use of the space associates the Solidarity Economy with the idea of reshaping and re-democratising the landscape along the cities, groups that are usually forgotten in the urban planning being stimulated to make use of the public spaces. Among these initiatives usually found in European contexts we stress: consumption groups (vegetable baskets), short proximity services (parental nurseries/kindergarten), short supply circuits, community ovens and kitchens, edible gardens, community gardening, community repair shops, complementary currencies for exchanging goods and services at solidarity fairs, fair trade, community-based revolving savings. Different contexts, otherwise, will signal the incidence of some categories rather than others. In the labyrinth of names referring to very close and even contemporary concepts, some ideas have been brought to the surface - circular economy as one of them. It is thus worth recalling some intersections between Solidarity Economy and Circular Economy towards sustainable societies. Just an example: in community-led exchange fairs, it is common that collective earnings are guaranteed for future needs by means of waste collection trade.

It leads us to the fifth key issue - the connection with the territory and the environment. There are many economic solidarity initiatives in the European context devoted to fostering articulation between citizens in the neighbourhood, develop an economy of proximity, reduce mass distribution impact, and reinvigorate public spaces. I could recall many examples, but I will focus on two possible formats by stressing the role in urban and peri-urban contexts. The first one is the set of short supply chains. They are economically important to the territory for reducing the environmental impact of long-distance freight transport and dependence on large stores. However, they are also crucial for articulating consumers towards different

patterns of production and producers, in turn, towards a different level of consumers' compromise on seasonal crops.

The second format to which I would like to call for special attention is the case of complementary currencies, particularly the transition currencies, such as Bristol Pound and Lewes Pound in the UK. Complementary currencies may be used for different purposes, such as to pay for voluntary work, increase participatory budgets, stimulate exchanges of goods and services amongst people within communities, support some income transfer programmes or stimulate different patterns of consumption amongst children and youngsters through a pedagogical use of complementary currency. Functioning as a Transition Currency, it is possible to measure "the size of the local multiplier, i.e. the number of times the currency is used to mediate transactions before it is taken out of circulation" in order to build "greater resilience and strength into the local economy" (Cato & Suárez, 2012: 106-108). It means that complementary currencies may help us understand the dynamics of the local economy and, in doing so, foster local policies to promote "self-reliance and resilience" (Cato & Hillier, 2010 as cited in Cato & Suárez, 2012, p. 108), important features to Smart Cities.

Much more could be said about social currencies and their social applications, but I choose to end with another example connecting solidarity economy and environmental issues: edible gardens. A community-based edible garden is an example of how urban greens corridors and social bonds may be gathered. Although Solidarity Economy is not a panacea, it may be a keyword for achieving different goals: encouraging people to find their own ways to face resource scarcity, re-evaluating the knowledges of communities and social groups, enhancing environmentally suited consumer behaviour, and, mainly, fostering peoples' autonomy.

3. INTERTWINING SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND URBAN REVITALISATION REGARDING WOMEN: BRIEF NOTES

Women are usually the ones who most value and make use of solidarity economy arrangements. Despite this tendency, solidarity economy is still little informed from and by a feminist perspective. The same can be said about mainstream architecture and urban planning.

Using feminist lenses to reinterpret the use of the public spaces (and the very idea of urban regeneration) means to challenge, first and foremost, the prevailing senses of gender roles in the public space. These senses have forged the way women are expected to make use of the city, affecting the full enjoyment of their mobility right. In fact, aspects such as urban mobility, safeness and suitability regarding specific needs are continuously neglected since an androcentric view of the public space still prevails in cities. In addition to it, the heterogeneity of women facing a set of different constraints remains undervalued in the urban regeneration plans. This is the case of women that belong to minority groups such as immigrants, low-income workers, Roma communities, Afro-Europeans, Muslim communities, transgender people and non-sheltered homeless people. A socially-oriented urban regeneration should be concerned with the underrepresentation of minority bodies in the landscape production.

It means to reflect upon the asymmetries that interfere in these women's conditions of moving and providing themselves with well-being. In terms of environmental issues, a socially-oriented urban regeneration should pay attention to the way the unequal environmental burden partition in the cities affects minority women, particularly black women. They integrate communities who have been gated in devalued areas. Consequently, they have particularly dealt with spatial segregation, lack of public transport, lack of proper public lighting systems, to name but a few. Additionally, as demonstrated by a study in the US, black communities are known to face higher rates of exposure to certain pollutants and harmful toxins in comparison to white communities (Howell, Pinckney & White, 2020). The concept of reproductive justice has thus been an urgent issue regarding urban plans and landscape production, being directly associated with the concept of environmental justice. By reproductive justice we mean "the right to have children; to not have children; and to form and raise families in safe, healthy communities" (Howell, Pinkney & White, 2020, p. 1). And the assumption of healthy communities implies the discussion on living environments.

Black women face a set of constraints in their everyday life. They are usually distant from important public facilities and deal with the lack of public day nurseries in their living environment, with further disadvantages. According to a report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2018), housing segregation in Europe is a daily problem experienced by Afro-European women, causing employability constraints. As a conclusion, we might argue that the racialisation of the spaces is a Gordian knot to be urgently cut through inclusive urban plans and nature-based solutions.

Solidarity Economy may be of help in this process of returning the city to all citizens, minorities included. It might be done by requalifying the use of public spaces, recovering, for example, their capacity of providing low-income citizens with community-based solutions on provision. That is the case of edible gardens or the community-led repair shops along the cities. Similarly, solidarity fairs for exchanging family surplus production can be a tool not only for reinforcing the social bonds and the sense of belonging but also for creating hubs of mutual help within the neighbourhood. Care issues - a challenge for racialised migrant women who are mostly employed in low-paid jobs in the care sector (Roig & Brilling, 2014) - could be shared by neighbours. Black women could benefit, for example, from local cooperatives (mom-coops) and parent-led nurseries or make use of time banking and social currencies to amplify their support network. What turns initiatives such as these into solidarity economy arrangements is the set of characteristics they present: citizen participation in the decision-taking process, shared management, collective doings, mutual help and forms of collective supply to deal with individual scarcity.

Valuing forgotten aspects of the everyday economy in urban regeneration processes is another way of intertwining a socially-oriented production/use of the space and the collective doings in the neighbourhood. Reciprocity and redistribution, on one side, and householding, on the other, are economic dynamics that have been undervalued in the shaping of urban spaces. Commerce, in turn, has been oversized. Solidarity Economy might play an important role by helping socially-oriented urban regeneration to balance these dynamics in the production of the space and the landscape as it stimulates the social bonds and the sense of belonging within the cities. In other words: solidarity economy promotes

activities and initiatives that give equal weight to reciprocity, redistribution and provisioning as that one attributed to the market. Since women have been in the forefront of these other economic dynamics, by animating them in their own communities, it can be said that a solidarity economy can contribute to fostering gender-inclusive perspectives both in the production of space and in the co-design of nature-based solutions.

To conclude, Solidarity Economy can play a decisive role in projects compromised with new approaches on spatiality and community bonds. In European countries, however, solidarity economy projects have been mostly designed by literate medium classes, concerned with sustainable consumption models. Despite the relevance of medium classes' awareness and adhesion, it is now time for us to rethink the contributions Solidarity Economy may give in such a way that women and minorities in European countries can rescue, by themselves, their decision-making power and symbolic autonomy. Since minority groups are the most affected by environmental hazards and the lack of basic services and assets for provisioning, it is time to intertwine alternative community-led economic initiatives and projects compromised with social and environmental justice.

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NOTES ON THE COMMONS AND THE MARKET OR THE VIRTUES OF IMPURE ORDERS¹

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ABSTRACT

There are only two principles of social order – *separation* and *command* – to the exclusion of any alternative possibility. Separation refers to a view of society as a collection of self-contained atomistic entities, and, on the other hand, command refers to the subordination of individuals at the bottom of the hierarchical ordering of society. Therefore, neoclassical economics do not shy away from normative presuppositions. The moral point views separation as superior, liberating, and command as undesirable, oppressing. Separation is taken by economics as the ideal reference point that ought to guide institutional design, and, on the contrary, the command as an imperfect substitute to be adopted by necessity only whenever the “market fails”. The commons, as we know it in Portugal under the form of Baldios, was, and it is still where this institution still stands, a mixed provision regime involving association in appropriation of the common pool resource and a family economy geared towards self-provision and very often also market provision overlapping the commons. In mixed provision regimes involving association in appropriation and markets in provision, an overlap may be observed of association in appropriation and separation in provision. In this mixed institutional setting the community defines *how* the common resources may be appropriated by its members but refrains from determining *what* is to be done with the goods appropriated.

KEYWORDS

Commons; association; market and regimes

1. INTRODUCTION

A feature of economics as it emerged from the neoclassical synthesis in the nineteen fifties is a stark dichotomy between goods, associated with which is a similar dichotomy between governance regimes featuring private goods, governed by private property exchanges in a market setting, in opposition to public goods, governed by a hierarchy (Ostrom, 2010).

¹ A tribute is in order in respect for the use of the term and concept of impurity borrowed from Reis (2009).

Implied in this dichotomic categorization of goods and governance regimes is the acknowledgement by Economics of only two principles of social order – *separation* and *command* – to the exclusion of any alternative possibility (Lopes & Caldas, 2015).

Separation refers to a view of society as a collection of self-contained atomistic entities, whose choices and actions are understood by reference to subjective desires and beliefs that are unaffected by the presence of others, and whose interactions are merely commercial, self-interest seeking. Command, in turn, refers to the subordination of individuals at the bottom of the hierarchical ordering of society, the surrender of their autonomy, and the attribution of the prerogative of making decisions and enforcing them to authoritative individuals on the top.

In this respect neoclassical (and Austrian) economics do not shy away from normative presuppositions. From the moral point it views separation, the market, as superior, liberating, and command as undesirable, oppressing. In practice, separation is therefore taken by economics as the ideal reference point that ought to guide institutional design, and command as an imperfect substitute to be adopted by necessity only whenever the “market fails”.

This is the framing of discussions on the commons since the debate was initiated by seminal papers published in the end of the 1960s. In one of those papers (Demsetz, 1967) we find a tale of natives of the Labrador Peninsula in the seventeenth century dilapidating their hunting common pool of resources under the pressure of greed. In the other, more famous, paper (Hardin, 1968), we are led to picture cattle breeders under the influence of self-seeking motivations increasing their herds beyond the regeneration capacity of the common pasture. In both cases the outcome is tragic for the populations, and in both, solutions are advanced for the tragedy. But while in Demsetz the solution is separation – the delimitation of family private hunting territories internalising the social costs of hunting and thus inducing restraint and prudence in individual hunters, in Harding case, where fencing is infeasible, the solution emphatically recommended is command – “mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon.”

2. ASSOCIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE

Association, conceived as voluntary action of individuals towards common goals, involving a balanced assignment of rights and duties among all concerned and presupposing the capacity of individuals to communicate, identify common goals, frame the action context in ‘we’ terms, conceive themselves as part of a team and commit to act accordingly (Lopes & Caldas, 2015) is one alternative to separation or command excluded as impossible or underrated in neoclassical economics.

Recently however this view has been challenged from within economics. Elinor Ostrom stands out as the most influential of those challengers. In a fifty-year intellectual journey grounded in abundant empirical research which is described in her Nobel Lecture, Ostrom (2010) established not only the possibility but also the enabling conditions for sustainable cooperation in the use of common pool resources, that is, the possibility of association as an alternative either to separation or command.

She and her colleagues analysed cases both of success and failure in the use of common pool resources and distilled a number of institutional design principles associated with success cases, namely: (a) the existence of clear boundaries between legitimate users and nonusers of common pool resources and larger social-ecological systems; (b) the existence of rules of appropriation and provision rules distributing costs proportionally to benefits; (c) the existence of collective-choice arrangements allowing for the participation of all in making and modifying rules; (d) the monitoring of user's compliance with rules and of the condition of the resources; (e) the practice of graduated sanctions for rule violations, starting very low but becoming stronger if a user repeatedly violates a rule; (f) the existence of rapid, low-cost, conflict-resolution mechanisms; (g) the recognition by the government of the rights of local users to make their own rules; (h) the organisation in multiple nested layers of governance activities when a common-pool resource is closely connected to a larger social-ecological system.

3. THE TRAGEDIES OF PURE ORDERS

Ever since the seminal papers of Demsetz and Hardin were published the evocation of tragedies became associated with discussions on property, use and governance regimes. While the tragedy of the commons still stands as the most influential and mindframing, a tragedy symmetrical to Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons – the Tragedy of Anticommons – has recently emerged out of the work of Michael Heller (1998) stating the possibility of underuse of a resource when too many owners hold a right to exclude others from use of the resource.

A moral modality of such tragedy – we may call it the Tragedy of Separation – had already been noted in passing by Hardin, and much latter by Anderson (1990) when the first wrote that “[e]very new enclosure of the commons involves the infringement of somebody's personal liberty” (Hardin, 1968, p. 1248) and the second (Anderson, 1990, p. 195) elaborated on the notion that “some freedoms can only be exercised in spaces over which no individual has more control than others” ... “public spaces of free association among equals”.

Command, in turn, has long been the target of a long liberal tradition which has denounced it from every possible angle as inefficient in respect to providing goods and securing prosperity, detrimental of innovation and, first and foremost antithetical with the overriding moral value of individual liberty.

Tragedies have also been evoked in connection with association related to the fact that preconditions for association, for instance in the use of common pool resources, as noted by Ostrom, rely on the existence of clear boundaries between legitimate users and nonusers, that is, on the exclusion of strangers to the community, or worse, may result as morally corrupting when associative motivations are directed against others external to the community.² Other tragedies of association have also been evoked when associative

² David Hume famously wrote in 1742 in *Of the Independence of Parliament*: “Honour is a great check upon mankind; but where a considerable body of men act together, this check is in a great measure removed, since a man is sure to be approved of by his own party for what promotes the common interest, and he soon learns to despise the clamours of adversaries”.

governance regimes degenerate into either command or separation – authoritarian hierarchies or quasi-markets – under the pressure of institutional isomorphism.

No type of order, be it separation, command or association, thus seem to be immune to the possibility of tragic outcomes and the historic evidence of such tragedies is abundant calling for explanations.

In neoclassical economics the causes of observed dysfunctionalities in use, provision and governance regimes are attributed to inconsistencies or incompletenesses which may stem either from material constraints or institutional defects. Inefficient or even tragic outcomes are viewed as resulting from the difficulty of assigning property rights in such way that the consequences of choice and action, negative or positive, always affect or benefit, not third parties, but only those involved in the related production decisions and market transactions. Even when perfect assignments of property rights seem to be impossible due to physical constraints the task of the neoclassical economist is to devise institutions that may approach the ideal assignment of consequences to decision making entities having property and markets override all other types of institutional arrangements. Such type of explanations therefore relate tragic or dysfunctional outcomes to natural or institutional limitations to the scope and reach of separation. The problem in this view lies in the impurity of the social order and the solution is its purification.

The point scarcely explored, however, is that the proclivity to tragic outcomes may be a feature not of impurity but the reverse. Rarely if ever in the real-world orders stand alone in pure form but coexist in overlapped layers. The commons, for instance, as we know it in Portugal under the form of Baldios, was, and it still is where this institution still stands, a mixed provision regime involving association in appropriation of the common pool resource and a family economy geared towards self-provision and very often also market provision overlapping the commons. In this mixed use and provision regime the requirement of command imposed by Hardin as a precondition for the sustainable use of the commons appears as non-existing, artificial. In the commons as they stand in the real-world appropriation is regulated by impersonal and universal norms, but decisions on provision are made by autonomous decision-making units. The regime is impure in that it combines on the one hand, association in appropriation, and, the other, separation in provision. The linkage of the fate of individuals and their families to the overall state of the commons and their autonomy in searching the best means to make the most of the available resources features as a strong cement connecting and composing self-seeking motivations and public concerns and may partly account for the long story of success of the commons in several geographies and cultures.

In this light, reminiscent of Polanyi's (1944/2001) critique of market society as distinct from a society in which markets are embedded in a broader and plural institutional setting, the proclivity to tragic outcomes of different orders may reside not on their plurality and potential inconsistency or incompleteness but in attempts made at purifying them under the hegemony of any single principle of order.

4. THE VIRTUES OF OVERLAPPING ORDERS

Arguing the virtues of overlapping orders over pure ones engages not only critiques targeted at the proclivity to tragedy of pure orders as above outlined, but also reasons to assert that impure, overlapping orders may be superior both in moral and practical terms. Part of Ostrom's work developed in collaboration with Vincent Ostrom related to polycentric orders points in this direction (Carlisle & Gruby, 2017).

Polycentry in the work of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom refers to complex forms of governance with multiple units of decision making, each operating with some degree of autonomy in multiple scales or jurisdictional levels (e.g., local, state, and national). While the overlapping orders evoked in the present pages to connote impurity may differ from the concept of polycentry in that the orders may coexist and overlap on the same scale, some of the discussion on polycentric orders remains relevant and inspiring.

In these brief concluding notes we highlight both the moral dimension of impure orders and the practical advantages of impurity advanced in the literature on policentry.

In mixed provision regimes involving association in appropriation and markets (or the family) in provision, an overlap may be observed of association in appropriation – use of the resource and contribution to its maintenance under rules set by the community – and separation in provision – production for family subsistence or the market. In such a mixed institutional setting the community defines *how* the common resources may be appropriated by its members but refrains from determining *what* is to be done with the goods appropriated. At least in theoretical terms the institutional setting allows both for the pursuit of a shared goal in cooperation with others – the maintenance of the common resource – and the self-seeking quest for the best valuation possible of production either through the market or in family use. Conflicts between the private and public spheres which may possibly arise are to be addressed in the frame of the rules established by the community. Arguably, individuals in such impure institutional settings would be socialised into apprehending the *shared value* of resources maintained in association which is dependent on other people also enjoying it, and the *use value* they attach to goods which is connected to the freedom to dispose of them at will (Anderson, 1990). The institutional setting would thus tend to nurture in individuals both prudence in their private sphere, and the disposition to engage in collective action in their public or civic capacities. It is in this sense that the moral superiority of impure orders may be claimed.

Advantages of impure orders suggested by the literature on polycentry relevant for the present discussion include their adaptive capacity, permeability to accountability, and mitigation of risk potential. One implication of the existence of multiple decision-making units with some degree of autonomy overlapping the commons is that the exploration of the resource is performed in parallel by multiple users possibly in diverse forms contrary to the alternative possibility of uniformity induced by command. The parallel exploration would result in diversity within the system enhancing its adaptive capacity. As highlighted by research on complex-adaptive systems, parallel exploration when combined with

information transmission and learning, facilitates innovation to cope with change (Carlisle & Gruby, 2017).

A second implication of the relative autonomy of decision-making overlapping the commons is that the possibility of its degeneration into authoritarianism or appropriation by power figures is countered by the plurality of concerns and the distribution of power allowed by relative autonomy. As stated by Carlisle & Gruby (2017, p. 14) impurity “may actually enhance accountability because it may be more difficult for parochial interests to capture multiple levels of governance”.

Thirdly, and not less important, the diversity within the system allowed by the parallel and decentralised exploration of resources enables both diversification and redundancy avoiding that local failures at some points of the systems result in overall systemic failure.

We thus see that against the present trend to purify society under the hegemonic rule of the market, spelling disaster, not only a broad scope of theoretic possibilities are conceivable but await exploration and testing by citizen initiatives.

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BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN SOLUTIONS TO FOOD WASTE: A COMING CHALLENGE FOR CITY LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

After decades of neglect and invisibility, in recent years the problem of food waste has climbed to the top of the global agenda. In this short essay, I focus on the solutions developed by supranational institutions and grassroots organisations, suggesting that city leaders may eventually become mediators between the potentially conflicting demands of these two distinct sets of actors.

KEYWORDS

food waste; top-down approach; bottom-up approach; city leaders

1. INTRODUCTION

According to FAO estimates, around one third of the global food production is lost or wasted every year (Gustavsson et al., 2011). Discarding such a large amount of perfectly edible food while millions of people are struggling to meet their basic nutrition needs is, of course, ethically problematic. At the same time, producing food that will not be consumed imposes a significant burden on our already strained natural environment, leading to CO₂ emissions that contribute to global warming. On this dimension, the scale of the problem is extraordinary: it has been estimated that if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest greenhouse gas emitter, just behind the United States and China (FAO, 2015)

Without delving further into the social and environmental implications of food waste—which I believe are well depicted by the rough estimates provided above—, in this short essay I will concentrate on the actions that are currently being put into place to mitigate the problem. More specifically, I will distinguish between two types of responses proposed by two distinct sets of actors: bottom-up solutions, carried out by social activists and grassroots organisations loosely identified with which we might call “the social and solidarity economy” (Utting, 2015), and top-down solutions proposed by supranational institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union. The crux of my argument is that the combination of both types of solutions may create mutually-beneficial synergies, but also frictions that may be particularly detrimental to the transformative potential of grassroots anti-food waste initiatives.

To develop this argument I have structured the discussion in three sections. In Section 2 I discuss the nature of the problem, characterising large-scale food waste as the natural outcome of the current, deeply institutionalised food production and consumption system. In Section 3, I distinguish between bottom-up and top-down approaches to food waste, stressing their existing complementarities and potential frictions. Section 4 concludes the essay with a brief note on the role of city leaders in the battle against food waste.

2. THE NATURE OF THE FOOD WASTE PROBLEM

Food waste should not be interpreted as the result of a malfunction in our food production and consumption system. To put it simply, we as humanity do not produce large amounts of food waste because some critical part of our food system is not working properly. The reason why we produce a massive amount of food waste is because the system has been configured that way. The configuration of this “waste-prone” food production and consumption system is the outcome of an evolutionary process that has taken decades and that is intrinsically linked to the development of capitalism. As historical sociologists have noted (Evans et al. 2013), food waste emerged as a large-scale problem in the aftermath of the Second World War. At that time, the introduction of new technological developments in farming and manufacturing was matched by a process of rapid interconnection between countries, allowing an unprecedented increase in food production and distribution. In a new environment marked by abundance, food waste not only stopped being a concern for consumers but also, and more importantly, became an economically profitable practice for producers and distributors. Instead of being regarded as a serious problem, food waste became just another variable of the producers’ and distributors’ utility functions. This process, in turn, triggered a negative self-reinforcing dynamic. After decades of naturally wasting food, a variety of waste-prone elements of the food production and consumption system have become institutionalised. Today we have regulations, infrastructures, technologies, supply networks, markets, and even consumer practices that encourage the waste of food.

3. RESPONSES TO THE FOOD WASTE PROBLEM

Assuming that large-scale food waste is the result of deeply institutionalised practices and processes implies that the problem cannot be tackled through partial adjustments to the current system. Producing and consuming food in a socially and environmentally responsible manner requires a systemic change, encompassing a broad range of institutions and actors at local, national, and transnational level. In line with the literature on socio-technical regimes (Geels, 2002; Smith et al. 2005; Seyfang et al., 2007), the transition towards a more sustainable food system must be understood as a long-term endeavour that can take generations to complete.

THE BOTTOM-UP APPROACH: SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY INITIATIVES IN PORTUGAL

Although the food waste phenomenon is not new, its construction as a social problem is fairly recent, beginning in the 2000s with the leading role of social and solidarity economy players. In the case of Portugal, the issue entered the public agenda in 2009, when the country was in the midst of a deep economic and social crisis (Matos & Spognardi, 2021; Spognardi & Matos, 2023). At that juncture, a social entrepreneur —António Costa Pereira— began a campaign to sensitise the public opinion and call public authorities into action. In 2010, he started an online petition asking for the revision of health regulations that prevented the donation and redistribution of food surpluses. Within days the petition gathered thousands of signatures, eventually prompting the government to review existing food hygiene and safety protocols, and ultimately paving the way for the emergence and development of a number of anti-food waste social and solidarity economy initiatives.

A year later in 2011, the same social entrepreneur that initiated the online petition founded in Lisbon the Zero Waste Movement, an organisation aimed at coordinating the collection and redistribution among people in need of the food surpluses generated in the food retail and service sectors. Around the same time, also in Lisbon, was established another organisation with similar characteristics called ReFood. Over the years, these models have been replicated in Portugal and abroad, creating a propitious environment for the emergence of new and innovative grassroots solutions to the food waste problem. One of the most emblematic is perhaps Fruta Feia (“Ugly Fruit”), a consumer cooperative that purchases and sales (for a reduced price) fruits and vegetables that are rejected by retailers because of they are too small or have shapes or colours that do not match the expectations of the average supermarket consumer.

THE TOP-DOWN APPROACH: SUPRANATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PARADIGM

As I mentioned in the introduction, in addition to the above discussed grassroots responses to the food waste problem there is also a top-down approach put forward by supranational institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union. The genesis of this approach is perhaps best traced to the already quoted 2011 FAO’s Report on “Global Food Losses and Food Waste” (Gustavsson et al., 2011). The idea that about one third of the food production ended up in the trash garnered the attention of politicians, scholars, and the media, rapidly pushing the problem to the top of the international policy agenda. Reflecting the increasing public concern, the year 2014 was declared by the European Parliament as the ‘European Union year against food waste’. A year later, in 2015, the United Nations set the goal of halving per capita global food waste by 2030¹ and the European Commission established a dedicated platform, encouraging state members to take concrete measures to tackle the problem (European Commission, 2015).

¹ See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The steps taken at international level have exerted a considerable influence on national policy frameworks. Complying with European directives and recommendations, in 2016 the Portuguese government set up the National Commission for Combating Food Waste, a specialised body which has since devised a comprehensive action plan to deal with the problem (CNCDA, 2019).

COMPLEMENTARITIES AND FRICTIONS

The backbone of the top-down approach developed by the European Commission and adopted in national policy frameworks across Europe (Portugal included) is the notion of “circular economy”, defined as a dual-loop regenerative system “in which the value of products, materials, and resources is maintained for as long as possible, minimising waste and resource use” (Malinauskaite et al., 2017, p. 46). Unlike single loop linear economy—where materials are used once and then discarded—the circular economy keeps used materials and products in the overall cycle.

At first glance, grassroots anti-food waste initiatives seem to fit perfectly well into the circular economy approach. By redistributing and/or reselling food surpluses that are otherwise sent to waste, the above discussed social and solidarity economy initiatives (the Zero Waste Movement, ReFood, and the Fruta Feia Cooperative) create a circular, dual-loop regenerative system. On a closer look, however, top-down and bottom-up responses to food waste are based on different philosophical underpinnings. The circular economy—certainly a step forward towards sustainability—promotes greater efficiency in the use of resources but does not necessarily challenge one of the main sins of capitalism, namely “overproduction”. Within the wide and heterogeneous universe of the social and solidarity economy, on the other hand, there are actors and organisations that pursue more ambitious, transformative goals. At least some of the grassroots initiatives engaged in the battle against food waste may be ultimately aiming at transforming the current food production and consumption system, and not at simply improving the efficiency of the system we have.

4. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS: A COMING CHALLENGE FOR CITY LEADERS

Available estimates suggest that the largest amount of food waste is produced at the end of the food supply chain, at retail and final consumption stages (Stenmarck, 2016). As urbanisation increases rapidly across the globe, cities are becoming the largest consumer—and thus the largest waster—of food.² As it might be expected, this trend is turning cities into key actors of the global battle against food waste, placing a colossal responsibility on the shoulders of local authorities. With all likelihood, city leaders will be exposed to increasing demands from actors promoting bottom-up and top-down solutions to the food waste problem. In this complex scenario, the challenge for local authorities will be to balance potentially conflicting interests, making sure that top-down measures (such as, for example,

² According to some projections, by 2050, cities will consume over 80 percent of the global food production (Swilling et al. 2018).

available funding and support for the circular economy) do not undermine the full transformative potential of grassroots anti-food waste initiatives.

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MERGING URBAN LANDSCAPE REGENERATION AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Decades of inputs to the heritage conservation doctrine permitted to move from a monument oriented perspective to a more holistic one. The concept of landscape, culminating in heritage studies in the historic urban landscape approach, made once more clear the need to consider a wider set of variables that refer to tangible and intangible. In parallel, increasing concerns on climate change also affected the urban environment, looking at cities as major negative and positive contributors to global sustainability and adding a strong imperative for the preservation efforts. A contribution here is given by the circular economy movement, which rediscovers the intimate sustainability of heritage making by assuming a new environment oriented viewpoint. This subject was inspected by the CLIC project in different urban and rural contexts. This paper will introduce the case study of Rijeka and highlights some of its findings.

KEYWORDS

historic urban Landscape; circular economy; heritage management; governance; circular business models

1. INTRODUCTION

The international movement on heritage conservation that started at the beginning of the 20th century was mostly moved by the devastations caused by the conflicts and the recognition of the impossibility to replace the losses, with a consequent impoverishment of the socio-cultural and historic capital of humanity. The idea of heritage was not starting at that very moment, as the Grand Tours of the 19th century tell us, along with the witnesses from the past of masterworks, such as the Seven Wonders, or acclaimed monuments and works of art by outstanding authors and civilisations. However, the destructive wars and their nationalistic thrusts alerted the international community at the point to establish specific agency, as UNESCO and its connected educational body, ICCROM, devoted to heritage and knowledge. Nevertheless, alongside the conceptualisation of conservation (Brandi, 1963/2000; Carbonara, 1997; Dezzi Bardeschi & Locatelli, 1991; Jokilehto, 2017; Marconi, 1988) and its motivations, there had been always an evident difficulty in its political

justification and application, due to restricted financial resources and to other development pushes, especially modernisation and globalisation. With an “official” beginning in 1931 with the ICOMOS Charter of Athens, that was mostly oriented on monuments, the doctrine developed including sites, groups of buildings and more, being enriched by contributions on cities and landscapes, also benefiting the environmental sciences development. The contributions of the 70 especially, on historic cities and typological conservation (Astengo, 1958; Cervellati, 1977; Cervellati, 1991; Conzen & Whitehand, 1981; Cristinelli, 2013) finally identified the crucial node in heritage management: considering the city as an entire heritage site, valuing the traditional tissue and its historic development, introducing environmental, socio-economic criteria in urban regeneration (Lichfield, 1988). The theories on space and place (Relph, 1986; Tuan, 2011), on genius loci (Norberg-Schulz, 1992) and urban tourism (Russo, 2002) aligned with the debates at ICOMOS, UNESCO among others moved a larger “working” community, enabling preservation efforts to be more solid and convincing. Very significant moments in the urban preservation history have been the Vienna Memorandum (UNESCO, 2005) meant to stress the importance of a harmonious dialogue between new architectures and historic towns, the launch of concept of historic urban landscape approach (Dobričić & Acri, 2018; Bandarin & Oers, 2012; UNESCO, 2011) emphasizing the multi-criteria mind-set in urban heritage regeneration, adopting a community aware perspective inherited from Landscape Convention (COE, 2000) and the recent report on the role of culture in urban sustainability (UNESCO, 2016). However, today we need to heavily reintroduce an old concern, climate change, which became “THE” priority in the global people’s shared agenda, and we should do this in the awareness of the impact on cities at stake. The occasion comes from the circular economy that, through its principles of application and increasing social endorsement, is opening up new scenarios that are beneficial both for sustainability and for heritage preservation, should there be any latent discrepancy between the two spheres.

2. THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The circular economy is defined as the opposite, and in the response to, the linear economy. That has characterised most of our recent history, and based on extraction, production and waste: as such it is called linear because it heavily depends on a linear production process that relies on (almost) infinite available natural materials and infinite (almost) (number of) places of waste disposal. The circular economy (MacArthur Foundation, 2021; Potting, Hekkert, Worrell, & Hanemaaijer, 2017) seeks to reintroduce the waste into the production process, through a hypothetical never ending cycle with a diminishing need for natural raw resources (Figure 1).

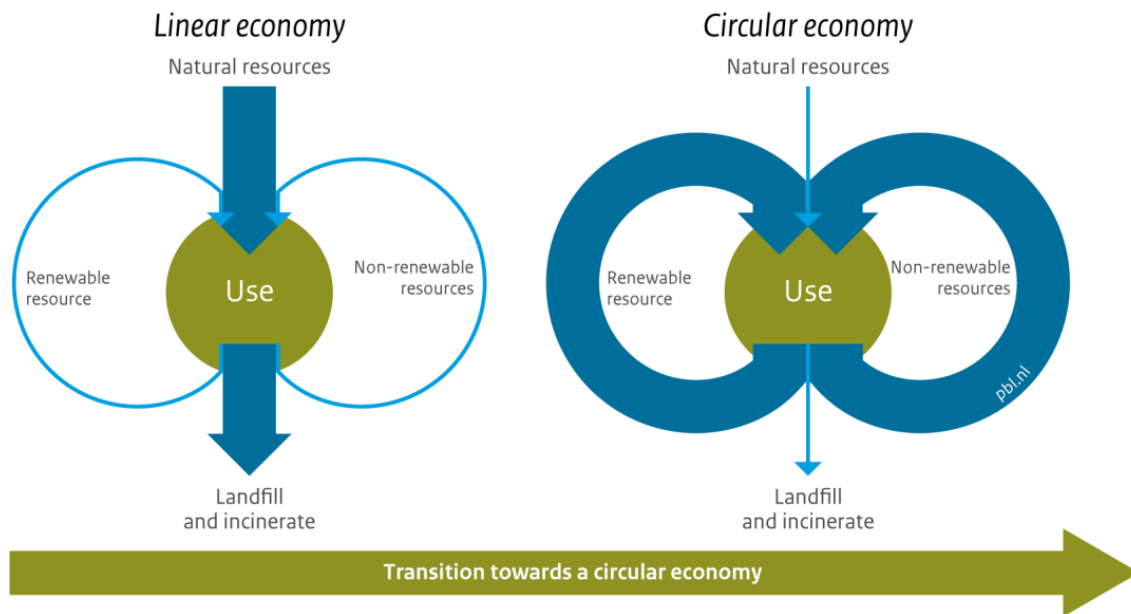


FIGURE 1: LINEAR VS CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Source: Potting et al. (2017, p. 9)

This approach evidently reacts to the global environmental disasters such as excessive mining, plastic oceans, deforestation, etc., and opens many more fields of applications. Born in fact on an original recipe of 4R, reduce, repair, reuse and recycle, that was rapidly extended by the international community of experts and practitioners to many more declinations (RLI, 2015; Potting et al., 2017) that include the concept of refuse, rethink, reduce, re-use, repair, refurbish, remanufacture, repurpose, recycle and recover, in a gradient line proportioned to the degree of circularity (Figure 2).

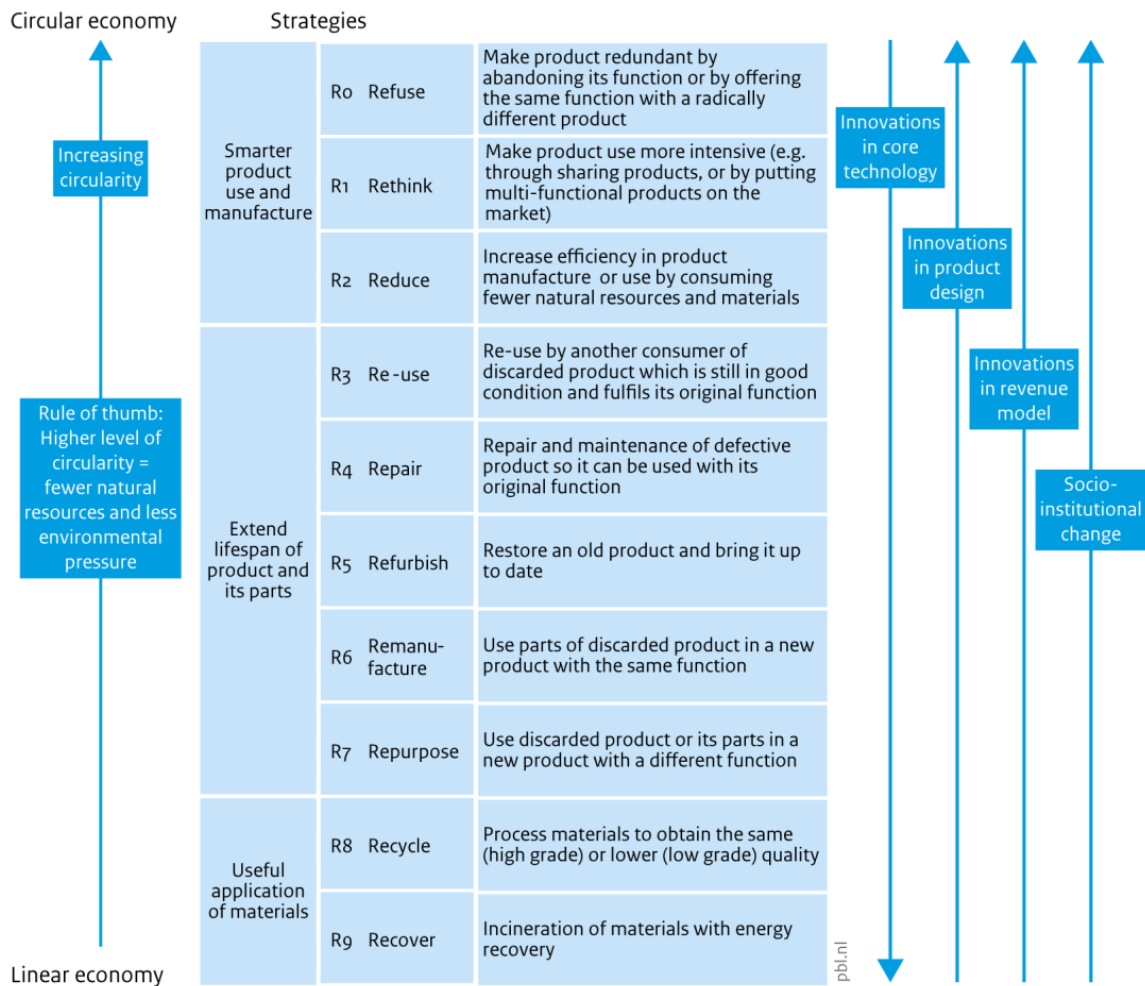


FIGURE 2: THE CIRCULARITY STRATEGY IN THE PRODUCTION CHAIN

Source: Potting et al. (2017, p. 5)

The wave was immediately taken into the urban metabolism debates (Thomson & Newman, 2018; Wolman, 1965) that occurred already during the economic boom. Beyond the waste and water management as primary topics, other relevant fields of application exploded from the Pandora vase, endorsing some virtuous practices already in place in many advanced cities. The growing attention to many aspects of environmental sustainability immediately impact the construction sector (ARUP, 2016; European Commission, 2014, 2015) and the manufacturing crafts, with promising evolutions for the recovery of built heritage and cultural landscapes, as grasped by a recently funded Horizon2020 project named CLIC, *Circular Models Leveraging Investments in Cultural Heritage Adaptive Reuse*. Such a project moved the focus on the relationship between cultural heritage, its reuse and how this may be connected to circular economy, in specific by creating conditions (or suggestions) for new employment opportunities. Linking cultural heritage adaptive reuse, historic urban landscapes and circular

economy permits looking to the past and how heritage was generated (Dobričić, Jokilehto, & Acri, 2019; Fusco Girard, 2019, 2020), as well as highlighting numerous declinations in the built environment that look far beyond the energy adaptation of historic buildings (Foster, 2019, 2020). For example:

- The design phase, when transformation is designed, planned and financed. It is a step of conception, where circular economy enters in its principles in the designer mind and is actuated in the designed purposes, thus listing the kind of solution, the materials, the sources and the manufacturers and their provenance. This should also include the retrofitting solutions.
- The building materials sourcing, that includes new materials, recycled or remanufactured ones. They may come locally or from any distance, and be natural as well as synthetic, depending on the pursued degree of circularity.
- The building phase, where ideas and materials come to a concrete form depending on the actors implied. This step may foresee, in addition, adaptation, conservation, maintenance.
- The use and operation of the asset, which should be, to be circular, the most used possible and the most multifunctional possible, keeping in mind that socially benefitting destinations are welcome (i.e., open to socially weak segments, elders, unemployed, migrants, etc.).
- Demolition phase, which may occur differently as selecting and repurposing everything or dismantling without separation.

Such a look into the past is also beneficial when dealing with nature-based solutions (NBS), understanding easily how in history evolved groups could adapt to nature, including its secrets in the built environment. Conservation architects and specialists are aware of the intrinsic circularity in heritage as a guiding principle in most traditional production processes, with an interruption due to globalisation, that gradually inverted the value-cost relation labour-materials. The making of our built heritage has always been dealing with efficiency, namely maintenance, reuse, repurpose, recycle, etc. Simple and complex objects and their parts have always had one or more life cycles. The pre-global traditional historical construction sites were based on the rationality of use, consumption and maintenance, drawing on a constant creativity to assure functional and aesthetic effectiveness and economic efficiency. Therefore, the majority of our global heritage in its tangible and intangible components, has been generated in line with what we call today circular economy: what today we impose as km0 was once an unavoidable condition, what today we impose for reuse, was automatically reused or repurposed for lack of available low-cost alternatives: such constraints in the past have generated diversity, which is today the essence in the definition of “heritage”.

In this sense, the circular economy is itself a “re-structured” concept of the pre-industrial and pre-global economy, rather than a genuine innovation. As seen, the operational principles of the initial hierarchy of the few R’s have subsequently increased, including shorter reactivation cycles as redesign, restructuring, repositioning that are known in the conservation sector.

This is also because the doctrine of conservation is openly devoted to extending the life of a unique or limited and representative heritage, in its form, its materiality, its intention, a reason for emphasis on authenticity, integrity (Acri, Dobričić, & Jokilehto, 2019; ICOMOS, 1994; Jokilehto, 2006) and genius loci (Markeviciene, 2008; Norberg-Schulz, 1992). Adopting a circular responsible behaviour with respect to use on heritage is to re-establish the practice that generated it, based precisely on the optimization of materials and products, work and logistics. In the awareness of a new contemporaneity of historical practices, what imposes such an effort on us with respect to the past, regardless of the new circular ethics, is the recognition of the intrinsic qualities which, compared to the past, are based above all on the concept of irreproducibility.

Such relationships with the built environment may be expressed in numerous forms and extensions. It is not merely about reusing materials or adopting a maintenance imperative, but also about efficiently and respectfully using the urban fabrics (i.e. 24 hours per day through multifunctional uses), opening them to socially large benefits, using them to feed local markets and crafts, etc. In a way, the same exercise required by the nature based solutions to be sustainable beyond the evidence.

3. THE CASE STUDY OF RIJEKA: ADOPTING A CIRCULAR URBAN HERITAGE SEEDING

The exercise of the CLIC project was performed in different ways in its pilot sites that included Rijeka in Croatia. Rijeka is a dynamic city, EU Culture Capital in 2020, that is facing a transition phase from its former socialist economy to a more liberal one, so finding the right compromise in reducing traditionally advanced social services and favouring entrepreneurial actions from the society: such transition mostly focuses on limiting the devastating impacts of liberal market, that is by definition depending on the previously described linear economy. The city holds a rich history that dates back to the Illyrian age with strong presences of the Romans, the Croats, the Austro-Hungarians and the Italians: all the populations passing through Rijeka left witnesses of their presence, witnesses that today compose an exceptional heritage. The present image of Rijeka tells of a former industrial city that had developed this destination during the last 60 years of the Socialist Yugoslavia. The industrial heritage of the city occupies much of its land, often offering outstanding spaces for socio-cultural regeneration. In fact, the City of Rijeka has pushed to include in its territorial analysis in CLIC three case studies that are part of its industrial history, as the Galeb Ship, former strategic diplomatic headquarters of the Yugoslav president Tito, the former Bernardi Factory, converted into a socio-cultural HUB, and the Energana, former power plant of the inner industrial neighbourhood (Figure 3).

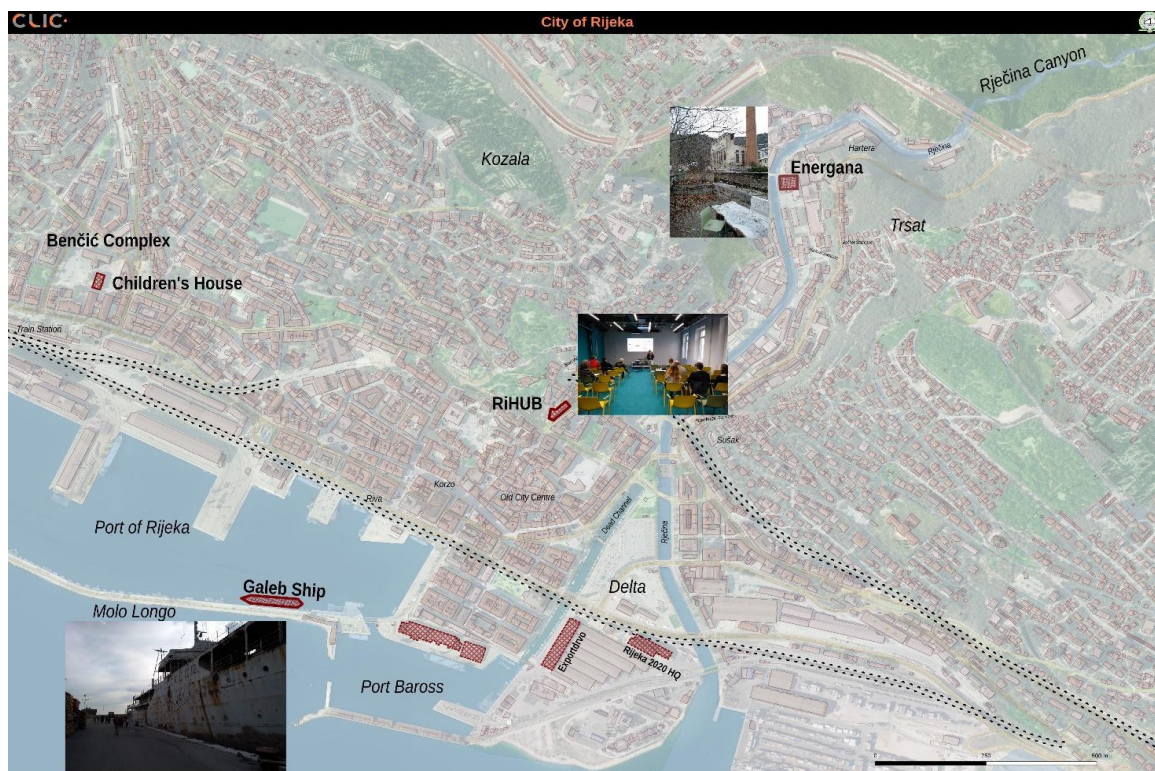


FIGURE 3. STAKEHOLDERS WORKING MAP OF RIJEKA WITH MAIN CULTURAL ASSETS TO BUILD A CULTURAL CORRIDOR, CLIC PROJECT

Source UNG, Marco Acri.

The challenge was initially to investigate forms to implement the principles of the circular economy in the three pilots, while the working group, composed by University of Nova Gorica, ICHEC Business School, ICLEI Europe and the City of Rijeka were concerned about the ways to take a more holistic, integrated approach capable to address also the challenges of the historic urban landscape. A first contribution in this perspective came from an investigation locally about the cultural assets of the city as perceived by people. This investigation was based on the perception mapping approach, which relies on the evaluation of cultural assets in an urban context as derived by the 5 senses. On the results of this first evaluation, a second evaluation was done with the local stakeholders that highlighted similar results, with clearly much more inputs about the strategic development in the city and its history. Briefly, the main identified axes to work on the city have been:

- Revitalise the city River Rijecina and Canal, and regenerate the city waterfront, presently fully abused by unsustainable practices, as uncontrolled parking;
- Give a boost to the conservation of the inner cultural heritage, also rediscovering some cultural assets that are almost fully hidden, as some archaeological areas are and have been, the historic step ways of the Austro-Hungarian period, the mills along the Rijecina;

- Regreen the city, especially in the center, where there are very few traces of nature and ecosystems regardless of the fantastic climate of the gulf;
- Improve accessibility, by removing cars, pedestrianizing, reducing pollution, and finding alternative mobility.

These main axes of interventions had an important geographic concentration along the Rijecina River, from its valley to the sea. This peculiarity made the University of Nova Gorica team immediately think about the concept of the Corridor as matured in URBINAT, but with a completely different connotation, the one of Cultural Corridor.

Once defined in its border, the cultural corridor of Rijeka should have been characterised by two leading principles: the practices of circular economy and the heritage-HUL regeneration. This meant that, in a very precisely defined area, a new aesthetic/heritage community would have had to experiment and practice the circular economy applied to heritage regeneration, by producing conservation, valorisation activities, actions, businesses. As such, the cultural corridor of Rijeka appeared immediately as a possible common pool resource, as defined by Elinor Ostrom in her governance theory (Ostrom, 1990), as well as a model for the implementation of circular economy in HUL. As a model, its actuation asked for potential implementing tools, to enable the change and inspire participation.

4. A CIRCULAR ACTIONS CATALOGUE

The consistency and extension of the corridor in Rijeka was defined in the middle of the participatory process, involving stakeholders and representations of the citizens. The recognition of such space, developing in a circular movement from the historic harbour towards the Rijecina valley and back through Energana and Rihub, but also touching important other spaces to be redeveloped as Delta, Port Baross, ExportDrvo. Considering the progress of works in the Bencic area and a specific activity performed by University of Nova Gorica and ICHEC School in the Bencic complex, lately hosting the Children's house, the Dječja kuća, also this new museum quarter was included in the corridor through a cross movement passing by the main pedestrian street of the city, the so-called Korzo. Such updating, of the corridor took additional visions regarding the existing circular activities of the city of Rijeka and of the local citizens in the urban space, feeding the cultural ferment for the urban revitalisation during the Culture Capital 2020 year. Such updating by including new existing forms of urban revitalisation inspired the creation of some possible tools for the implementation of the corridor in the long run, all included in the CLIC Local Action plan for Rijeka that was released to the EU. Such tools include:

- The Urban Seeding Workshop (Acric, Dobričić, & Debevec, 2021). The idea of a situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) workshop came to offer a practical experience to the citizens and stakeholders of Rijeka in co-designing and co-planning the corridor in terms of proposed activities and regenerated spots. The initial plan was changed to organise a specific business workshop for the Bencic complex, in parallel with a tender for the selection of the hosted activity, and transformed into a specialists and young entrepreneurs oriented collaborative activity. The action has been to generate new, low-cost intervention ideas for the corridor and its cultural and natural assets,

that could be easily implementable and transferable. The participants, young professionals and students at their latest stages of research, were so divided (due to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency) into smaller interdisciplinary groups, each focusing on parts and themes of the corridor. The workshop developed in different sessions, with the support of experts providing theory and case studies from the literature. Several interesting proposals, that could not find practical implementation due to the pandemic, were submitted to the municipality as good wills for the immediate future. The commitment of the City of Rijeka gave hope that attempts will be made once the situation is over, including the repetition of the initiative in the future also considering the participation of the local university.

- Benefitting of the CLIC experience and of the expertise of the university of Nova Gorica in Open Education through the international initiative named Open Education for a Better World, another tool used for the implementation of the corridor was an open course, merging cultural heritage adaptive reuse and circular economy in urban contexts. Such a course, designed on the basis of the main contents of CLIC, aimed at offering the basic knowledge about the field, to inspire new generations in creating sustainable, culture and environment oriented initiatives and businesses. The course is presently in draft version in English, given the multilingual skills of the inhabitants of Rijeka.
- Manuals for historic urban landscape regeneration. These manuals were not yet produced, but are in the coming agenda of the actors involved. They consist of simple reference guidelines that could accompany citizens in the understanding of the intrinsic qualities of their built and natural environment, also introducing basic maintenance and care principles. This activity was considered necessary due to the consistent changes in the urban landscape provoked by the globalised wave of products in the construction industry that is replacing the specificity of the historic city. In addition, this tool is necessary to augment the awareness of different uses of the historic city, making it more sustainable and more resilient.
- A flexible catalogue of circular practices in historic urban landscape regeneration. Given the relatively new topic, circular economy, and the difficulty to make an immediate connection with the built environment sector, a comprehensible and slender list of tested activities and actions was necessary. Such a catalogue is meant to inspire the audience by providing examples, with theoretical descriptions, of practices in Europe, including Rijeka itself. Such catalogue considers the different scales of applicability of circular economy, as previously described from the work of Foster (2020). In particular, there should be considered:
 - Building and materials scale, that include the activities that work on the dismantling and repurpose of cultural heritage elements, parts of materials. A very good example was provided during the Urban Seeding Workshop by the ROTOR DC company in Belgium, an architect-led organisation that applied circular economy in the deconstruction process (Figure 4).
 - Object scale, that refers to the already existing practices of secondhand markets that promote exchange, reuse and repurpose of existing objects or elements.
 - The Urban scale, that is meant to highlight the socio-economic activities that connect space to people, to generate the place. Here several practices are

proposed, including the participatory practices that were used in the project, as the cultural mapping through perception.

- The urban scale refers to infrastructures, including the governance actions by local authorities and stakeholders that enable and coordinate bottom-up initiatives.

BUILDING & MATERIAL SCALE



FIGURE 4: EXAMPLE FROM THE CATALOGUE, CIRCULAR PRACTICES ON MATERIALS AND BUILDING SCALE.
 Source Source UNG, Marco Acri.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Circular economy is a relatively new concept, because it attempts to transform into a practice what was normal in a relatively recent past. The problem is being able to remove the globalisation and standardisation pushes and pressures that promise, deceptively, a more comfortable existence. Circular economy in cities is fundamental, given the global density of urban population and the consequent need to improve the metabolism of cities for an almost full resilience. Circular economy is applicable in different forms in cities and urban regions, not only through waste and water management initiatives, but also in the building and culture sector. Moreover, the building and culture sector may be leaders in this change, given that all our European heritage was made based on circular practices. We need to facilitate the spread of the circular economy in daily practice, by awareness raising initiatives and also practical implementations at all levels, horizontally and vertically in the city. This paper showed that some forms are possible, by adopting possible models, such as the corridor and the common pool resources, and applying many tools. The highest achievement is in changing citizens' minds about new forms of living in the city, that are respectful of the coexistence of different living beings with history and nature and mostly in a future, resilient perspective.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Marco Acri is senior lecturer at the University of Nova Gorica, where he coordinates international activities in the field of built heritage. Marco is a conservation architect with specialisations in urban management and heritage interpretation. He worked as a professional in conservation and management projects with different organisations, including UNESCO, WMF, IMED. His present research interest concentrates on governance of historic urban landscapes with focus on commons and sustainability.

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EXPLORING WAYS TO MEASURE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NBS: THE USE OF THE SROI

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the intermediate research results of WP 5.4 within URBiNAT¹. The focus of this work-package is on the use of relevant and meaningful socio-economic impact indicators within NBS/HC urban projects. After recapitulating the central research question (1), we summarise the main results of our first research activity, being the realisation of an explorative literature study. Subsequently we present a short description of the ROI as a traditional indicator (2), the misfit of the ROI with the fundamental nature of NBS/HC projects (3), the SROI as an alternative and more relevant indicator (4), reflections on the practical use of the SROI in NBS/HC projects (5) and a summary of the future implementation challenges of the SROI within URBiNAT (6).

KEYWORDS

socio-economic impact; social return of investment (SROI); nature-based solutions (NBS)

1. INTRODUCTION

Let us start with the recapitulation of the central research question of task 5.4 within URBiNAT project: What is the socio-economic impact of urban projects and specifically of nature-based solutions (NBS) / Healthy Corridor (HC) projects – combined in a joint HC - on the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods? How can we assess and measure this impact?

¹ WP 5.4 started in January 2021.

In view of the general project outline URBiNAT, we add 2 special concerns to the central research question:

- How can we include the socio-economic impact of the spatial and architectural features of an NBS/HC in the assessment: what about the socio-economic impact of the architectural concept, design & design process, construction & construction process, investments & the investment process?
- How can we include the socio-economic impact of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) organizations that are active or intensively involved within a NBS/HC: what about the socio-economic impact of their presence, contributions, activities and investments?

To find answers to all these questions, we consulted the discipline of economics and the *subdisciplines* of strategic management, public and social profit management, and management control systems. The consequence of this consultation is summarized in this paper.²

2. THE ROI AS A TRADITIONAL INDICATOR TO MEASURE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

Within the discipline of economics, the traditional indicator to assess the socio-economic impact or added value of an economic activity (e.g., a project, an investment) is the so-called Return on Investment (ROI). The traditional nature refers to the high face-validity of this indicator amongst economists and to a long and world-wide tradition of being used. As such, nearly all economists consider the ROI to be a useful and valid indicator, although some of them have formulated various critical reflections (Hall, 2014).

When considering these reflections, three major features of the ROI are highlighted:

- The ROI relates the financial incomes to the financial costs (i.e., all financial incomes divided by all financial costs). Thus, the ROI measures the *relative* instead of the absolute profitability of an economic activity. This feature is generally considered to be a realistic and strong feature of the ROI indicator;
- By only and solely taking the *monetary* consequences of the economic action into consideration, however, the ROI makes a limited assessment. This feature is considered to be a weak spot in the ROI as not all consequences of an economic activity have a direct and/or immediate monetary value (e.g., the created knowledge and gained economic insights of an action will perhaps generate monetary revenues, but only in the long run or the far future);
- The use of the ROI is highly influenced by the neoclassical ideology within the discipline of economics. This is an ideology explicitly based on the ideal of the free market that maximises only the return for investors of capital (i.e. by means of a maximum profit), not of labour (i.e. two important production factors within

² The results of the associated literature study are reported in two WP5.4 working papers.

economics). Therefore the ROI takes only financial or monetary consequences of an economic action into consideration. What is or cannot be expressed in monetary terms, has no influence on the profit, is therefore of no economic value and does therefore even not exist. This feature emphasizes that the ROI is certainly not a neutral - objective? - indicator, although some economists and especially the neo-classically inspired economist do attribute an objective status to the ROI.

3. THE MISFIT BETWEEN THE ROI AND NBS/HC PROJECTS

The information summarised in the previous paragraph raises the question: Is the ROI a “good/appropriate” method – indicator – to measure the socio-economic impact of (public/SSE) urban regeneration projects and of NBS/HC projects?

After all, the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods in order to revitalise that area as perceived in a material and mental way by inhabitants, visitors and users, cannot entirely be expressed in monetary terms, let alone in merely “objective” data. Perceptions are often without any monetary value or clear financial frame of reference (e.g. feeling yourself “part of the city”, feeling yourself “respected”, being “happy” and “motivated to participate, contribute, produce and consume”, etc.) and unavoidably highly subjective. Thus, the socio-economic impact of NBS/HC projects is too complex to be measured in a valid way by the ROI.

Another consideration related to the previous one, concerns the outspoken public (i.e., initiative, and high involvement of local governments) and social profit (i.e., involvement of SSE) nature of NBS/HC projects. The actual income of public and social profit activities can seldom be expressed entirely in monetary terms because consumers or users of public and social profit goods do not always buy them on a market in return for a price paid (i.e., monetary income). When calculating the ROI, income, and benefits therefore risk to be highly underestimated – or even absent? - and the respective NBS/HC projects seem to generate considerable – only? - costs.

Finally, the outspoken ideological rationale of the ROI raises problems for NBS/HC projects in which mainly public and social profit organisations are involved. Both types of organisations have their own identity in which reassuring financial profitability (i.e., stake of the investors of capital) is not at all a key issue, on the contrary. Their broad societal orientation and likewise created added value (i.e., for all citizens, irrespective of their economic status), even prohibits them of considering only financial returns when considering the socio-economic impact of their activities. Consequently, the ROI does not fit their actual identity and reason of existence, often emphasised in their strategic mission statement.

In short, we might conclude that the ROI is not an appropriate indicator for NBS/HC projects because it neglects and underestimates the socio-economic benefits that have no explicit monetary value. These non-monetary benefits are however essential in NBS/HC projects, as they are often largely realised by public and social profit (SSE) organisations that have a broad societal focus.

4. THE SROI AS AN “APPROPRIATE” ALTERNATIVE FOR THE TRADITIONAL ROI

This brings us to the subsequent question: does the economic and management literature suggests an alternative indicator to be used that is more related to the fundamental nature of NBS/HC projects? The answer is affirmative. Since the beginning of the 21th century the literature suggests the use of the so-called Social Return on Investments (SROI) (Flockhart, 2005; Lawlor, Neitzert and Nicholls, 2008; Arvidson et al., 2013; Purwohedi and Gurd, 2019).

This SROI has been suggested and elaborated mainly by social profit organisations (including SSE organisations) when legitimising their reason of existence to neo-classically inspired policy makers (Carnochan, et al., 2014; Manetti, 2014). This legitimisation implies proving their efficient and even profitable economic performance by means of methods and criteria used within the profit sector. So, although the identity and ambitions of both sectors are fundamentally different, contemporary policy makers demand nonetheless that social profit organisations use these profit and thus monetary performance indicators to justify their existence, just as these policy makers also demand this from their own public sector organisations. If proof cannot be given, policy makers consider government support to be highly disputable and/or privatisation necessary (i.e., activities of SSE organisations should be transferred to and taken over by profit organisations). As such, the use of the SROI is clearly a *defensive* but vital performance indicator in a dominant neo-classical world order.³

In general terms the SROI mainly tries to make non-monetary benefits visible (Cheung, 2017). Thus, the SROI looks for instance for monetary proxies like generated cost savings (e.g. thanks to the installation of a public water cleaning system, families save on their medical treatment budget as they are less ill, or save on their food budget as they can eat fish caught in the local pools. Consequently, these savings create an additional income for the families that can be spent to improve their overall life-standard and socio-economic living conditions e.g., renting better houses, paying for better education, increasing their mobility, getting a proper job).

Additionally, the SROI also appreciates and incorporates *process*-related benefits in measuring the socio-economic impact (e.g., thanks to the co-creation process of the water cleaning system, family members enjoy a personal growth and feel themselves more affiliated with society what may stimulate them to actively take part in the further development of the entire society and the overall growth of socio-economic well-being).

³ One would expect that the recent COVID-19 pandemic and many other previous economic incidents (e.g. the economic crises in the '70s and '80s, the bank crises at the beginning of the 21st century, global warming due to escalating industrial growth, the negative side-effects of economic globalisation which is a neoclassical ideal) indicate that the neoclassical world order has reached its limits and needs to be replaced by a new economic paradigm. However, many contemporary policy makers – certainly right wing and centrist politicians - consider the neoclassical paradigm with its mythical profit sector and free market principle still to be the best and even the only economic pathway forward.

5. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SROI IN NBS/HC PROJECTS

The obvious next question is: how to use the SROI, and in particular how to use it within NBS/HC projects?

Although a thorough and in-depth literature study is the subject of other working-papers and publications within the URBINAT project, we can say in this paper that the SROI in general consists of 2 activities (Lingane en Olsen, 2004; Scholten et.al, 2006; Lawlor, Neitzert, and Nicholls, 2008; Nicholls et al.,2012; Krlev, Münscher, R. and Mülbert, 2013):

- On the one hand there is the realisation of the so-called SROI Analysis. This is a process of 6 phases in which particular features (e.g., the scope, the perceived strengths and weaknesses, the experienced ethical issues) of the NBS/HC projects are systematically inventoried, described and evaluated by the different stakeholders involved. Using complementary techniques like interviews, focus group debates and observations, the SROI Analysis resembles closely the general process of doing social qualitative research.
- On the other hand, there is the gradual calculation of a so-called SROI Metric. This includes generating in a creative manner proxies for non-monetary benefits. So, the SROI metric indicates with one numeric variable how many Euro's of socio-economic added value is generated by 1 Euro of investment in the respective NBS/HC.

Taken together, the SROI actually registers, evaluates generates a chain of subsequent and interactive (socio-economic) actions, effects and transformations made by all NBS/HC stakeholders involved. This creates insights into the so-called Theory of Change (TOC) that represents the total socio-economic impact during the entire life cycle of an initiative like a NBS/HC project.

6. CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SROI IN THE NBS/HC PROJECTS OF URBINAT

The previous paragraphs bring us to the next and last question of this paper/presentation: Is the SROI already a hands-on and well elaborated/documentated (new) concept and assessment method for urban regeneration projects and NBS/HC projects in particular? Or do we still encounter important implementation problems and challenges?

In contrast to the previous question, the answer is now not affirmative, and we clearly encounter some considerable challenges (Jönsson; 2013; Krlev, Münscher and Mülbert, 2013; Millar and Hall, 2013; Maier et al., 2015). According to us, the related challenges for the NBS/HC projects within URBINAT are twofold:

- In literature, a fully elaborated generic SROI assessment method is still under construction. Intermediate research results, pilot studies and experiments realised by other researchers in other types of projects can however inspire us to elaborate a SROI instrument of our own. This instrument will be constructed and tested by means

of in-depth case-study research realised in the 3 frontrunner cities of URBiNAT, and partially in the 3 follower cities of URBiNAT;

- This inevitable tailor-made case-study approach makes the comparison between different NBS/HC projects, however very difficult if not impossible. Only intra-evolutions of the SROI within a particular NBS/HC can be realised, which might presumably frustrate certain stakeholders (e.g. neoclassical inspired policy makers) who want to associate (policy) consequences for future actions (e.g., in what NBS/HC will we continue to invest?).

Setting up these case-studies and constructing inductively an SROI instrument to evaluate the socio-economic impact of NBS/HC projects within URBiNAT, will be the focus of our future research activities.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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SOLIDARITY MARKETS, SOCIAL CURRENCIES AND THE PUBLIC SPACE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I delve into the process of creating a solidarity economy-based community currency, exploring how it serves both as a method of payment and a catalyst for fostering social inclusion and fairness. Nowadays, the creation of money has been based on private hands, where only 3% of the money circulating nowadays is created by national banks. The other 97% is created by private banks based on the debt and their “cash reserve ratio”. Money creation is based on debt and it is created mainly by private banks that are far from having social or environmental principles. Therefore, there is need for a different type of money. In this way, the Social or Local Currencies are tools created and used by communities, municipalities, groups and individuals in order to facilitate exchanges of products and services or knowledge. Solidarity markets and Social Currencies experiences are revolutionary spaces where mutual help values and solidarity are at the core. The Social or Complementary currencies practices also bring the opportunity of empowering the citizenships in Economic concepts and models and also allow understanding of how Global dynamics and conventional money works and how the economy based on unlimited growth system can create unsustainable processes and social inequalities.

KEYWORDS

social currencies; solidarity markets; public space

1. PREVIOUS REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) speaks out clearly and eloquently. Its conclusions reassure us that we need to abandon capitalism if we want to reduce the effects of Climate Change, we need to reset the system and we need to do it now.

For decades we have been listening to those expert voices that claim that the constant growth proposed by capitalism was a fallacy that has been damaging not only our ecosystems (Seers, 1969; Daly & Cobb, 1994; Sanpedro & Berzosa, 1996), but also putting into suffering countries and communities for the sake of the Capital.

Conventional money itself is designed to contribute to this situation. Money creation is based on debt and it is created mainly by private banks that are far from having social or environmental principles. On the contrary, the majority of the bank system is based on crediting the sectors that are related with activities linked to war or ecosystem destruction (Kennedy, 1998). Some of the reasons why this is happening are based on the banking system and the poorly banking knowledge or consciousness that population is allow to have, starting from the point that the “Economy” taught on the schools and faculties is still based on nineteenth-century principles, as authors like Max-Neef & Smith (2011) claims.

2. WHAT IS MONEY AND WHAT ARE SOCIAL AND COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCIES?

In orthodox economics it is usual to find manuals that talk about the triple function of money: 1) as a means of payment, 2) as a reserve of value and 3) as a unit of measurement. However, for our purposes, we also intended to highlight some of the dark corners and the injustices to which its use as money-debt contributes in the current system. But we will quote professor Bernard Lietaer to emphasise and give an answer to the question: “What is money?”

According to Lietaer’s definition, money is “*an agreement within a community to use something - almost anything - as a means of payment*” (Lietaer, 2001, p. 40). Actually, from the disappearance of the golden patron, creation of money has been based on private hands. In fact, only the 3% of the money circulating nowadays is created by national banks, the 97% is created by private banks based on the debt and their “cash reserve ratio”, where they can create and lend money under the “promise” of devolution of a previous loan. This process can be repeated infinitely, by each of the commercial banks in the world, and the smaller the cash reserve, the more loans can be made. Therefore, banks can create up to 99 times the amount of the money supply deposited in it.

Regarding this “debt-money”, Lietaer & Belgin (2011, p. 34) point out: “money and debt are literally two sides of the same coin” since commercial banks have been the main creators of this money supply (Lietaer and Belgin, 2011; Martín Belmonte, 2011; Hirota, 2012). The creation of “bank money” implies that there are always debtors in the system so that money is in circulation.

As we can observe, creation of money and complementary currencies are also linked to private dynamics since big corporations often offer vouchers and discounts to their clients (such as Ticket Restaurants, Flight vouchers, etc.). From this logic and perspective, it comes to the debate about the possibility of money creation linked to communities, local administration, organizations or institutions.

From Lieater’s definition, money is a tool. Social or Local Currencies are tools created and used by communities, municipalities, groups and individuals in order to facilitate exchanges of both products and services or knowledge. They are attached to a series of objectives, elements and values (solidarity, cooperation, sustainability, among others) that separate and differentiate them from conventional currencies. It is a mean of exchange with values that

differ from the conventional money and are mostly designed to solve some of the inequalities and global challenges created by conventional currencies and their nature related to exponential, and delusional, limitless growth.

As Blanc (2011) points out, there is still no internationally agreed typology and/or nomenclature for alternative monetary creation that is shared by academics and activists. We agree with the author that this lack of terminological consensus in no way hinders the innovative dynamic that structures this type of experience. On the contrary, this categorical flexibility facilitates innovation and the advancement of this type of alternative economy instruments.

Blanc (2011, p. 4) himself argues "that building a typology requires first to state the precise objectives of it; different objectives may lead to different typologies" and each alternative project has its own objectives. This is why it is so important to have a clear definition of the objectives before creating any complementary currency in a project with multiple stakeholders and municipalities, we need to adapt to the context, the resources and the needs to be addressed.

Another typology offered by the author defines an ideal categorization based on a triple confluence of elements that he has structured using Polanyi's (1944/2011) definition of the three institutionalised behaviours that characterise social relations and institutional dynamics as a frame of reference and guiding principle: exchange, redistribution and reciprocity.

This categorization is often redefined as: Market (Exchange), State (Redistribution) and Community (Reciprocity), the State being understood as any form of Public Administration, i.e. state, regional and/or municipal.

This triple definition of the nature of relations proposed by Polanyi -and widely used in the Social Sciences- serves Blanc (2011) as a conceptual basis on which to structure the aforementioned typology according with two other elements: 1) the type of project justifying the monetary creation and 2) the type of promoter and designer of such currency.

With respect to the first element, the author defines three types of projects according to the priority on which the monetary articulation is based: "1) a Territorial project, primarily centred on a geopolitical space; 2) a Community project, primarily centred on a pre-existing community or an *ad hoc* community; 3) an Economic project, primarily centred on production and market Exchange activities" (Blanc, 2011, p. 6). Thus, Territory, Community and/or Economy structure one of the axes of the classificatory matrix (Table 1).

In addition to the proposal made by Blanc, we find some other monetary classification. One of them is from Llobera (2015), which articulates the triple typology monetary division (A, B and C) depending on whether the complementary currency is backed by a conventional fiat currency (euro, dollar, etc.) or is backed only by the community trust and in what gradient it does so. This typology harbours common elements with that of Blanc (2011) also in the definition of the agent promoting the currency or the objectives of the currency.

Table 1: Ideal-types of currency schemes from Blanc (2011)

Nature of projects	Space considered	Purpose	Guiding principle	Denomination (english, spanish, french)
“CCs”				
Territorial	Geopolitical space (territory politically defined)	Defining protecting and strengthening a territory	Redistribution of political control	Local currencies/Monedas locales/Monnaies locales
Community	Social space (pre-existing or ad hoc community)	Defining, protecting and strengthening a community	Reciprocity	Community currencies/Monedas sociales/Monnaies sociales
Economic	Economic space (production and exchange)	Protecting, stimulating or orientating the economy	Market	Complementary currencies/Monedas complementarias/Monnaies complémentaires
Outside “CCs”				
Territorial	Sovereign space	Sovereignty	Redistribution of political control	National currencies/monedas nacionales / monnaies nationales
Economic	Clients of a for-profit organization	Profit	Purchasing power capture	For-profit currencies/Monedas para lucro / Monnaies à but lucratif

Source: Blanc (2011).

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIAL INCLUSIVE CITIES THROUGH SOLIDARITY MARKETS AND SOCIAL CURRENCIES

Sustainable Development Goals are full of weaknesses as regards definition, as well as with contradictions related to our objective of facing the systemic crisis and the real collapses we will have to cope with in the short and the medium term. They are, definitively, insufficient and I dare to say that they are due a reasonable transition. They are pointing a bit far from the degrowth scenario that we need to construct as societies. Nevertheless, they are the

existent conceptual and holistic framework to drive some of the policies and raise population concerns about what kind of societies are building, inequalities of the economic system and the patriarchal structure we are based on.

The creation of sustainable and social cities is part of the objectives and the social currencies and solidarity markets has a role in addressing this objective (Fernández-Pacheco & Llobera, 2021; Lenis et al., 2020) and to contribute in the creation of more resilient cities since they hold the core values and they are, in fact, a tool to contribute to a Socio-Ecological transition to face collapse and inequality.

Solidarity markets and Social Currencies experiences are (R)-evolutionary spaces where mutual help values and solidarity are at the core. As some authors mention (Seyfang & Longhurst, 2016), and from our own research and evaluation, social currencies have been a space to re-think about how individualistic values, linked to neoliberalism, take us to isolation and unplug us, not only from our neighbours and community, but from Nature and from the Ecosystems we depend on to live. Social or Local currencies experiences, as well as Solidarity Markets, have the potential to contribute to the explicit the needs of our neighbours, to empower our sympathy to the rest of the community and increase the social capital (Seyfang & Longhurst, 2016; Fernández-Pacheco, 2017;) as well as the caring values as a citizen. (i.e. “Cuidados” or “Caring Citizens” was one of the definitions we gathered from our research). They can offer possibilities on a “health and well-being” level through the care of dependent people in societies where the system is not reaching them. The Japanese currencies (Lietaer, 2004; Kobayashi et al., 2020) as well as the current Time Banks or the Local Exchange Systems, are offering services of caring and health providing that are meaning essential tools are available for vulnerable families with dependent members, contributing to a response of the question of professor Hespanha (2020) about ‘how to re-Organize a vulnerable country’.

As far as Democracy and the empowering of the community in participation dynamics, these community experiences are usually bottom-up processes that involve citizen discussions and important debates in order to decide principles, core values and participative dynamics. This process also requires decision-making processes and voting to decide about any particular issue within their own process or project. From our observations and research, not all the processes are best practices of communication or internal organisation, but these dynamics are providing the base of Democratic practices. They are acting as Schools of Democracy (The vote of the majority) in some of the experiences or, even, as a space to experience Sociocracy (consensus decision-making). We could say, that these Social and alternative economic experiences and working as a New and Inclusive Agoras (*ἀγορά*) and are becoming “Participation Living Labs”.

To be involved in Social or Complementary currencies practices also brings the opportunity of empowering the citizenships in Economic concepts and models. At some point, part of the process of understanding how the currency works allows us to understand how Global dynamics and conventional money works and how the economic based on an unlimited growth system can create unsustainable processes (Environmental Footprint, devastation of ecosystems, etc) and social inequalities.

As mentioned in Fernández-Pacheco & Llobera (2021), local and complementary currencies have also a role to play in the “GloCal” dimension, they provide a space for reflection on the hegemonic economic model since they articulate, from the local dimension, a space for global construction aligned with the SDGs and with local strategies of the Social and Solidarity Economy in order to face Climate Change and present collapses. In the words Llobera (2015, p. 15):

(I)n re-location lies one of the keys to the longed-for sustainability that continued growth has made impossible: the reduction of energy consumption and Greenhouse Gas emissions (...). Environmental sustainability and greater economic harmony are opposed to globalization.

People who participate in these processes receive a precious Re-Socialization on Economics and Ecology and a Re-Location of practices that are essential to the Socio-ecological Transition.

These Re-location of practices is based on the fact that solidarity markets and social and community currencies are usually involving agroecological projects and local farming experiences on them, so the Local and Short Circuits consumption are empowered by involving the community on these alternative economic experiences. These tools, on a local scale, contribute to reduce the impacts derived from large globalised systems of food production and consumption by reducing the Carbon Footprint linked to them.

Social Currency projects with a small scale as “La Mola” (created in 2017 in Madrid) are not only linked to ecological agriculture but also is also involving community composting processes in Hortaleza neighbourhood that allow to “Close the Loop” and create Virtuous Circles since they organic waste, gathered by the families and the community, is used to fertilise the land that produce the vegetables and fruits that are feeding them. The social currency, on this case, is used to promote and empower the gathering of the organic waste and the composting process so it could be one of the Currencies of Transition that Bendell & Greco (2013) described on his book “The Necessary Transition”.

Although affected and slowed down after the COVID-19 situation and the economic crisis, La Mola currency created over a period of three years (2017-2019) the equivalent of 9.000 € in the neighbourhood and it has been contributing to the strengthening bond between the citizens through the activities linked to the community composting processes. The participants and families involved in the separation of the organic waste are in touch with each other, organised through the associations they are proposing events to teach how to compost and for sharing the compost as well as solidarity markets along with the ecological farmers and agricultures that are also using the organic waste to make the compost.

Even if the post-covid situation left the currency on stand-by, the experience it's been a seed and a learning tool for the rest to come. As stated by Zambrana (2018), La Mola, has been an educational tool for the neighbourhood as far as Economy is concerned, as well as an inspiring experience for currencies as the “Irati” that is still working and promoting

Composting and nano-plastic recycling in the north of Spain¹. At the same time, these two experience has also inspired European projects as ESCUTA² (Erasmus+ 2020-2023) where students from universities of Portugal (Universidade dos Açores) and Spain (Universidad de Extremadura) are working on a Community Development project that through the participation of the citizens and the university community are going to implement a social currency project that promote the management of organic waste though Community Composting.

The strengthening of the relationship between the members of a neighbourhood or a community, as well as constructing territorial identity are some of the benefits of including these experiences in the community. Nevertheless, we cannot forget they are also contributing to the managing of the waste, they are reducing the municipal waste and contributing to global needs, as the European Union is promoting and encouraging the municipalities to do it from 2008 (Directive 2008/98/EC) as well as United Nations through the SDG (Goal 12).³ These international organisations have settled different scenarios to achieve in 2030 and future decades, scenarios that we cannot postpone longer.

4. COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCIES AND LOCAL ECONOMY

Going further the community building and thinking of economic resilience and Local Development, using Local Currencies as a project supported by the local municipalities have some advantages. From Lietaer & Kennedy (2010) and other authors (Llobera, 2015) and taking into account examples such as the WIR (complementary currency working in Switzerland from 1934), there are numerous potential benefits of the use of complementary currencies for local economic dynamization as we summarise in Table 2.

The role of the municipalities is essential in these processes and can benefit from having these socio-economical strategies working on their territories. The designing of a strategy where including a complementary currency, social and solidarity markets as well as promoting new exchange models and ways of production and consumption, can bring benefits to the Local municipality as far as socio-economic resilience is concerned through the empowerment of the social capital (Putnam, 2000) among the population.

It is on this scale, at this time of systemic crisis (Max-Neef & Smith, 2011; Stahel, 2013; Izquierdo Vallina, 2005) when factors of a socio-community nature linked to "Social Capital" as defined by Putnam (2000) become more essential, especially when the global economic processes linked to the financial economy and globalisation enter into crisis and we need to face the effect of the global collapse from the local dimension.

1 Cf. <https://mancomunidad-irati.es/>

2 More info about the project in <https://escuta.com.pt/>. See also <https://twitter.com/ErasmusEscuta>

3 Cf. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>

TABLE 2: POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCIES FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DYNAMIZATION

Benefits
1. Protection against external cyclical disturbances in the economy (financial crises).
2. Revenue raising
3. Retention of liquidity in the community / Fixing wealth in the territory of influence.
4. Acceleration of exchanges – currency circulation
5. Building customer ties (Loyalty) – Community Bonding – Identity Strength
6. Promotion of other forms of trade
7. Reduction of the production and consumption chain
8. Reduction of the carbon footprint (CO2).

Source: Own elaboration

5. SOME CONCLUSIONS TO KEEP ON BUILDING THE ROAD TO ECO-SOCIAL TRANSITION

Nature-Based Solutions implemented in projects like URBINAT, or other related, must always include critical reflection about the Socio-Economic system we have been socialised with. We would not be talking about Nature-Based if we had included environmental elements and ecosystems interdependency into the economic framework; additionally we would have removed Colonialism and Patriarchy from our mindsets. However, the truth is that we have a long road ahead to create alternative scenarios far from these elements and that “walking” that road requires to be conscious first. As we have shown in this chapter, Community and Social Currencies, the values that sustain them, as well as the processes that they promote, made them an appropriate tool to start the discussion about the socio-economic system as well as other forms of alternative socialisation aligned with equality and real sustainability.

The NBS projects that include Community and Local Currencies on its dynamics will allow the citizens to understand about economy and the money creation, because it is not worth it and contradictory useless to keep on creating “Green Solutions” if on the other side of the coin we are nurturing a system that destroy ecosystems and keep on promoting inequality and the colonisation of the North over the Global South.

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THE HEALTHY CORRIDOR AS A PLACE FOR SOLIDARITY-BASED PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) practices related to NBS have been implemented in the three frontrunner cities: Porto, Nantes and Sofia. The process was started by identifying the main difficulties, challenges, and needs and then developing the solutions with the citizens, local institutions and all the local actors (co-creation process), in order to achieve a list of solutions that could respond to the local problems. In Porto, the “community based on the management of urban gardens” and the “Solidarity Market” have been the main focus under the healthy corridor implementation. In Nantes, the Social and Solidarity Economy has been gaining more and more representativeness in private jobs and the Ecosolies is the main promoter of the SSE, organising events, conferences, and workshops. Beyond the municipal coordination that reinforces the public authority role in fostering SSE locally. The strong experience of Bread House has strengthened the SSE in Sofia, focused in the private and public sectors, and assuming that the bread is a symbol of peace and justice, and this symbol can become an empowerment instrument. The strategy of SSE in these three cities is based on the local economy and also includes the development of the territories with a particular focus on urban and deprived areas.

KEYWORDS

social and solidarity economy; nature-based solutions (NBS); urban gardens; solidarity market, public policies; healthy corridor

1. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN PORTO

The intervention area (Campanhã) in Porto is very green but it is very limited in terms of access, and it is an area where people face a lot of difficulties. Therefore, the inhabitants become isolated in terms of socio-economic conditions. For this reason, Porto Municipality is now requalifying the area in the three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. This area was chosen because it has some of the main municipal social housing and some of the main schools of the area, and the citizens are facing a lot of social and economic challenges. In this way, the URBiNAT Project could not be developed without taking in account these institutions and without involving the residents in these neighbourhoods.

The URBiNAT project in Porto is structured in four parts: co-diagnostic; co-design; co-implementation; and co-monitoring of the solutions implemented. To move from co-diagnostic to co-design the citizens were engaged to undertake territorial analysis, acquire socio-economic data, behavioural mapping, and participatory activities, in order that we achieve a local diagnostic and truly know the real situation of this area.

The process was started by identifying the main difficulties, challenges, and needs, and then developing the solutions with the citizens (co-creation perspective), local institutions and all local actors, till achieving a list of solutions that could solve the problems were identified. The solution was categorised in a consistent way in terms of technical, financial, and timing feasibility. Then it was constructed a list of possible solutions that could be developed inside the URBiNAT, but not all the solutions implemented will be materialised in an urban project. Most of the solutions will have social characteristics and they will be implemented inside the area, but they will have impacts beyond that. The material solution includes building an urban garden or building an amphitheatre for different activities, for example, sports and leisure initiatives, and solidarity markets, which have more social and solidarity dimension.

Along the co-design stage (from 2020 to 2022) the participants reviewed the catalogue and co-created Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) proposal to be implemented under the healthy corridor (HC) namely: “Community Mobile Kitchen” which is an urban farm that the municipality manages; a community based on the management of urban gardens; “Solidarity Market”; and support structure to the oriental city park to support different initiatives in this area.

To consolidate the Solidary Market, people from the craft and organic farming areas were invited to participate, considering that their products are produced in a sustainable way, without chemicals, and using traditional methods. The craftspeople are from many different regions and not just from Campanhã, which in turn is the parish with the most social housing in Porto (13 social housing buildings), one of the reasons for choosing Campanhã is due to the social difficulties that still exist in this region. The Market also has an area dedicated to children and cultural entertainment. The aim is that the Solidarity Market will be visited by all the people from the city and surroundings (cf. Image 1).



IMAGE 1. SOLIDARITY MARKET IN PORTO, 2022.

Source: Carlos Barradas.

Nevertheless, during the event “The co-production of solidary practices between the University and the Community” organised by CES in June, 2022, some difficulties were discussed between market organisers and experts from Ecosol Group. Some difficulties mentioned, such as in attributing a “value” to the products by the exhibitors since the definition of the Solidarity Market does not approach this activity as a business or with the spirit of only buying and selling, but having as its main purpose being the interaction and creation of relationships between the interested parties. Other important difficulties highlighted were the customer retention and promotion of the Market, as it is estimated that only 10% of the inhabitants of Campanhã are aware of its existence.

Several solutions were pointed out that the platform cooperativism could be an alternative to reach customers by building a network. Another alternative would be thinking about Cultural Mapping, see what is tangible and intangible, and have a business card or platform for the Market. The questions that arise in this case are: should we rethink the name “Market”, given that it implies a place where we will buy and sell, which calls into question the concept of Solidarity Economy? What is the support of public entities since a public space is being used? Does the concept of the Market imply stepping out of our comfort zone? However, the market is not just a monetary exchange, encompassing, in addition, the interaction between the stakeholders and the SE, in turn, regulates these exchange interactions between the stakeholders.

2. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN NANTES

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) represents 16% of the private jobs in Nantes Metropole, with 36,000 employees in 2,819 companies of whom 85% are associations. In 2001 was developed a specific strategy for SSE and in 2002 it was created the Ecosolies Association, a cluster promoting SSE and supported by Nantes Metropole. The first event of the Ecosolies was in 2006 and gathered 570 companies of SSE and 30000 visitors on the 3 days of the event. However, in 2014 the scale was changed and Solilab (incubator) was created. In 2015 the roadmap was co-constructed with the actors of the SSE with a renewed ambition to meet the expectations and needs of the inhabitants of Nantes, and contribute to local economic development, creating jobs. Finally, in 2017 it was created the SSE Nantes Factory and Ecosolies offered their services and their incubator resources.

The Ecosolies was created in 2002 and its first network counted on 600 members, including 300 companies, and representing nearly 5000 jobs in the Nantes region which cooperate to develop and promote the SSE. Its main goal is the promotion of SSE such as events, conferences, and workshops. The strategy of SSE in the local economy also includes the development of the territories with a particular focus on urban policy districts and suburban areas. The Ecosolies has a social entrepreneurship incubator to support the feasibility study and launch of social and/or environmental enterprises, an accelerator to support the change of scale of SSE enterprises, and support services such as tailor-made training, opportunities to respond alone or together to public contracts or calls for projects, and mentoring. Finally, the initiative factory, which identifies the need and the search for a project, needs to be mentioned.

Ecosolies (a physical place to the public/ SOLILAB) is former industrial wasteland of 9000 square metres dedicated to many activities of the SSE. It is a place for experimentation and a laboratory for social and environmental innovations. It is a third place, a concept developed in France, where you can put together many activities, and a place of encounter, thus, people can meet and put together all the areas of mixing the different dimensions of the social life, including private and public sectors. It includes a venue rental, offices, co-working, storage space, canteen, and a large second-hand shop.

The existing initiatives or the NBS corridor in Nantes Nort are: (1)CUB - do it yourself place with equipment for all inhabitants, created in 2000, doing specific activities to improve homes or renovate some parts of homes such as the walls painting; (2) Brico Mobile is an experimental device that moves around and makes available different tools so people can also access and learn all these things; (3)- Food market "la Bourgeonnière" which was co-constructed with the inhabitants and opened in September 2013; the aim is to be a place of meeting for citizens and there are many occasional activities that are carried out by local associations (cf. Image 2); and (4)- Etiquette: a place for clothes exchange.



IMAGE 2. URBINAT TECHNICAL VISIT, DECEMBER 2019, NANTES NORD.

Source: [Nantes Nord, Dec. 2018 | Flickr](#)

The Vegetable Gardens are solidarity gardens in Nantes created during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, which had the initiative to use the public garden to produce vegetables and fruits. The project was experimented with in May 2020 after the first lock-down and it was coordinated by the green spaces unit of the municipality, replacing flowers with vegetables to be distributed to the most vulnerable families of the city.

There are two plots in the healthy corridor in 2021, one called “inhabitant” which is coordinated by the social and cultural Centre Boissière. It is maintained with the inhabitants and the vegetables harvested by the inhabitants will also go to the food distributions. The

other plot is called “gardener” and it is maintained and cultivated by the municipality’s gardeners and it will also host educational events for the schools of the healthy corridor on the themes of gardening and biodiversity. The vegetable will also be harvested by the gardeners and entrusted to the structures in charge of food distribution. It is possible for new inhabitants to join the project.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the existing challenges and also the existing opportunities for a SSE as an alternative solution for old and new problems.

3. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN SOFIA: THE BREAD HOUSE AND FARMERS’ MARKET

The work that has been done in Sofia (Bulgaria) is focused on the private and public sectors and how the Bread House can empower people, considering that the bread is a symbol of peace and justice, and how this symbol can become an empowerment instrument.

Community Bread Making sometimes sounds something normal if people have not experienced it because people may think that they would make bread at home. However, when experienced in a very mixed community where you can meet unknown people or people you will not meet because you would have a lot of prejudices towards them, the Community Bread Making is amazing, because the experience of everybody around the same table making bread together is extremely powerful (cf. Image 3). What is crucial is the mix of different arts and forms.

The main focus in Sofia is The Community Cultural Centers and Network of the Community Centres, to find out if the government is financing these centres and if they have big networks. There is a huge network in Bulgaria (4,000 of them) and the idea of community baking came from realising that people, especially those who come from low-income neighbourhoods, have fears and inhibitions which prevent them from doing arts, because they think they are not good at them, or that subjects like art, theatre, music, and dance are for the high social classes.

The urban regeneration implies believing in the community spaces and the Bread Houses are a type of a Community Cultural Center. The main idea is that when inviting people to bake they always show up, but when inviting them to make theatre they will not show up, because everybody likes to bake bread and they think it is simple. That is why people come, including rich, poor, or people with disabilities, physical or mental problems, blind people, from all walks of life. Therefore, the main point here is that baking creates art which is an aspect hidden from people.



IMAGE 3. THE URBINAT PROJECT PARTICIPATED IN A WORKSHOP AT THE BREAD HOUSES NETWORK IN SOFIA (BULGARIA), ON 26 JANUARY 2019, DURING A MEETING OF ITS PARTNERS. BREAD-MAKING FOSTERS COOPERATION AND COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE ACROSS CULTURES, PROFESSIONS, AND AGES.

Source: Rune Strunge.

There are two methods involved in this process. The first method is called Theater of Crumbs, because people are like little crumbs of the bread inside the theatre performance. The second is an additional method that involves music called Kitchen Music, which creates music, theatre, drawing, and acting with only kitchen utensils like pots, pans, jars full of seeds, but without telling people that they are making art. So, this is how people are getting involved and coming to the Bread House. On the other hand, Bread Therapy is officially certified as a new type of art therapy and a lot of art therapists around the world are being trained. An

interesting aspect is the participation of men in the bread making, because women and children are the ones who participate the most. There is also work with refugees in Bulgaria, and it is amazing the participation of men, because when working with refugees it is difficult to get the men involved in such activities, thus it is very intergenerational.

There are three types of initiatives in the Bread House: 1. A program that any NGO can develop. Therefore, even when an NGO does not have any space, there are trained persons at the organisation or an individual that can start organising events even in the streets. Initially they started baking in the streets of Harlem in New York with policies and gang members. Thus, it is a street fair type of event, and any organisation can do it; 2. Create a Community Space or a Community Centre, because it is important to have public spaces especially in cold countries. So, in this case it is developed a social enterprise model where there are a lot of paid services. One of the best paying services is the team building, called Bread Building, which involves events like birthday parties, family therapy or family bread. Many companies pay a good amount of money for team buildings. There are also many services for free that were created for people who cannot pay, for centres or for people with special needs, done at least three/four times a week and even sometimes twice a day therapy. The key of the Bread House, that is, what really makes it happen, is trying to mix people who otherwise will not mix with others. For example, a centre for people with down syndrome would be promoted in social media to bring people together. Therefore, this helps the growth of social inclusion and social revitalization, because it joins together people who have never touched or spoken to a person with down syndrome, and making bread together they would become friends for a lifetime. Thus, the key is the mix of different people; 3- the most sustainable option, which in turn is related to the SSE, is the bakery. It was proven a model of a Social Bakery in Sofia in 2014 to test the model. They started with 3,500 euros, which is a small amount for a bakery, and now they have 15 employees and 30 people trained through it, including orphans, disabilities and people with trauma and depression. In this way it is both a Training Centre/Community Centre and a Bakery, and there is a space in the community centre where events can be held. There is a need to encourage the cities to try and fund such initiatives.

In the perspective of the SSE, it generated a Social Capital also called Community Creative Capital. Creativity creates a special type of capital bonding people. Now the goal is to train people online through a platform called Bread Therapy and promote the game called Bakers Without Borders in order to connect people around the world and help them connect to their communities.

Farmers' market (FM) is another initiative that has been implemented in many neighbourhoods in Sofia. It is an alternative food network which supplies shorter delivery circuits of farmers' products to local communities by direct interaction with farmers. FM allows the connection of inhabitants of bigger cities to land and fresh and good quality tasty food of healthy origin, thus leading to healthier lifestyles and new social networks and relations. Therefore, this initiative raises people's awareness on nature-friendly farming practices, having an additional social value as a community event that may bring additional elements. The farmer-consumer cooperatives bring together farmers and work as a platform allowing farmers meeting and organising farmer market events. In this way, monthly farmer

market fests in the centre of Sofia have become the new attraction, contributing to boost a healthier consumer identity, and providing a new cultural and social space for encounters, and shared identity. The Hrankoop Cooperative has led the process in Sofia.

The participation process in the FM involves five stages: co-diagnostic, co-selection and co-design, co-implementation, co-management, and co-monitoring. The main advantages of the FM are the followings: the model can be easily adapted in each urban environment that makes it ready for replication, by integrating local specifics; resources for its organisation are to be found in any location (urban or rural); and the FM scale depends on local potentialities and the organisation ability.

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The presentation given by **Ana Ferreira**, **Nathalie Roguez-Villette**, and **Nadezhda Savova-Grigorova** at the seminar Solidarity Economy for urban regeneration in times of uncertainty (2nd, 4th and 7th of June) has been summarized by rapporteur **Ronize Cruz**, Junior Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES) in the URBiNAT project and PhD candidate at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra (FEUC).

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