Narratives of change:

How Social Innovation Initiatives engage with their transformative ambitions

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Abstract

Numerous initiatives worldwide aspire to contribute to social change towards more sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies. In this paper, we approach their underlying theories about transformative change as 'narratives of change', broadly defined as sets of ideas, concepts, metaphors, discourses or story-lines about change and innovation. Such narratives of change reveal, amongst other, why the world has to change, who has the power to do so and how this can be done. A literature review supports this notion and helps assembling a method to reconstruct and analyse narratives of change concerning context, actors, plot, the production of narratives and their perceived role in social change processes. Following this method, and using interviews, participant observation and relevant documents as input, the narratives of change of three social innovation initiatives are constructed, namely Ashoka, the Global Ecovillage Network and RIPESS.

Having been selected for their transformative ambitions, these three narratives acknowledge that social change is necessary. Their comparison led to three main insights, namely the great variety that exists in terms of the framing of the world, the driving actors and the actual change process. It also revealed the great importance that social innovation initiatives accord to narratives and stories and the different ways they engage in shaping societal discourses. Lastly, narratives of change are not just 'stories out there', rather they recount the theories of change which are practiced and acted upon by the very social innovation initiatives which propagate them.

Keywords

Narratives of change, Social innovation, Transformative change, Theories of change, Counter narratives, Discourse shaping

Research Highlights

- Proposes a method for reconstructing narratives of change and analysing their content, production and (perceived) role in social change.

- Empirically explores the theories of change of three social innovation initiatives: Ashoka, Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and RIPESS (Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy), their practices of producing these and the role they assert to narratives in social change processes.

- Distinguishes three ideal-type narratives of change: (1) "Entrepreneurs will save the world", (2) "Dominant institutions need to be challenged" and (3) "Communities rely on themselves".

1. Introduction

Social innovation is *en vogue*. Both public and scientific discourses herald its effectiveness in dealing with current societal challenges and flatter its ability to bring about desired changes. Former EU president Barroso, for example, stated that "*if encouraged and valued, social innovation can bring immediate solutions to the pressing social issues citizens are confronted with*" (Hubert 2012:vi) and the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) argues that social innovations provides an effective way to 'empower people' and 'drive societal change': "*at a time of major budgetary constraints, social innovation is an effective way of responding to social challenges, by mobilising people's creativity to develop solutions and make better use of scarce resources*" (BEPA 2010: 7).

Social innovation initiatives come in innumerable forms and sizes, usually tailored to a particular context or fit for a certain issue. Like the grand policy narrative outlined above, these initiatives have their own theories about what is at stake and how change can be brought about. While some, for example, hold the idea that it is through reconnecting with communities and localities that our world will become a better place, others focus more on the necessity of institutional change. Further, the explicit reflection on such theories of change[1] may be more or less central to an initiative's activities.

In this paper, we approach these ideas about transformative change as 'narratives of change', broadly defined as sets of ideas, concepts, metaphors, discourses or story-lines about change and innovation. Such narratives of change shared by social innovation initiatives reveal, amongst others, ideas about why the world has to change, who has the power to do so and how this can be done. Such storylines about change may be formal or informal, uniform or inconsistent across participants. More often than not, social innovation initiatives play on the ability of words to convince individuals, unite groups, frame reality and evoke imagination: stories do not simply recount experiences but open up novel ways of looking at things and new possibilities for action. They reflect and at the same time create reality (Davies, 2002) and are "*drawn from social, cultural and, perhaps, unconscious imperatives, which [they] at the same time reveal*" (Andrews et al. 2003: 8). For these reasons, stories play an instrumental role for many social innovation initiatives in challenging and confronting dominant norms, values and beliefs and in devising alternative futures. By using a narrative approach to study theories of change, we aim to gain insight into the theories of change around which social innovation initiatives organise. As such our main research question is: What are the ideas and stories about how the world changes ("narratives of change") of social innovation initiatives, how are these narratives conceived, and what is their (perceived) role within societal change processes?

Narratives of change can be considered part and parcel of social innovations, defined as "*change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing*"[2] (Haxeltine et al. 2015: 16; cf. Moulaert et al. 2013, Howaldt and Knopp 2012) in at least two ways. First, narratives of change convey alternative ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing, and they promote social relations supporting these. Second, they not only convey but also *constitute* alternative ways of framing the world. We argue that 'narratives of change', as (shared) ideas on

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[1] We refer to theories of change in the common sense way of theories about change. As such we do not refer to the concept of 'theory of change' rooted in development studies and evaluation literature (Stein and Valters 2012, Intrac 2012, Taplin and Clark 2012).

[2] Objects of social innovation can be ideas, objects and/or activities (Haxeltine et al. 2015: 16).

how change can be brought about, make for a relevant and interesting object of enquiry *en route* to a better understanding of transformative change. Many initiatives aspire to contribute to transformative change, and these aspirations inspire actual projects and activities. Gaining insight into how such aspirations are created and shared contributes to our understanding of how social change is driven. As such, unravelling the narratives of change of social innovation initiatives draws us into their understanding of the world and helps questioning and elaborating our own scientific theories of change and innovation.

Methods

Based on a review of relevant literature on narratives and narrative analysis we outline a method that allows to capture ideas about transformative change in narrative terms. Empirically, we draw on interim outcomes of the EU-funded research project entitled "TRANsformative Social Innovation Theory" (TRANSIT; 2014-2017). This project aims to build a theory of transformative social innovation studying the ways in which social innovation initiatives interact with other forms of (transformative) change (Haxeltine et al. 2013, 2015, Avelino et al. 2014, Pel and Bauler 2014). TRANSIT includes the study of social innovation initiatives, namely social innovation networks and their local initiatives which (1) represent transnational networks operating across

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Textbox 1. Introducing three social innovation initiatives

Innovators for the Public (Ashoka) is a global organisation with operations in 37 countries worldwide. Since 1980, Ashoka is carefully identifying and selecting high-profile social entrepreneurs who become Ashoka fellows and thereby gain access to funding and the Ashoka network. By now there are around 3000 Ashoka fellows in 70 countries. Through continuous innovation in its organization, programs and the playing field, Ashoka currently aims at catalyzing societal change by equipping people with system-changing potential with the required changemaker skills, resources & networks.

The **Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)** is a global grassroots network of more than 500 ecovillages grown out of the eco-movement and increasingly includes traditional villages. Besides the global network, it includes five regional networks (Europe, Africa, Asia/Oceania, North America and Latin America) and several national networks. GEN promotes social, economic and spiritual aspects of sustainable living and encourages local community empowerment for regenerating social and natural environments. Its members meet at annual conferences, interactive internet platforms and educational events.

Founded in 1997, **RIPESS (Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'économie Sociale Solidaire)** is an intercontinental network set to promote the 'social solidarity economy'. Aiming for alternative forms of economic relations, the network seeks to empower civil society actors, aims to alter the prevailing relations between governance actors and 'institutional logics', and to better meet social needs than is done by present social constellations. It does so through promoting and slightly reinventing alternative yet well-known institutional models (cooperatives, associations, networks). Next to and often complementary to these longer-existing models, there are also new practices and models developed and promoted (e.g. alternative forms of finance or employment such as sheltered workspaces, various co-financing schemes, and forms of sharing economy). RIPESS aims for structural and worldwide change in the existing economical or developmental system, and starts from the diagnosis that there are systemic imbalances to address (Poirier 2013).

Europe and Latin-America, (2) work on social innovations, and (3) have transformative ambitions and potentials, hence allowing for a cross-national and cross-regional empirical analysis of social innovation in relation to transformative change.

In this paper, we focus on three of these networks, namely (1) Ashoka - a global network of social entrepreneurs; (2) the Global Ecovillage Network - a network of ecological intentional communities, and (3) RIPESS - a network of networks and political movement for the promotion of solidarity economy across the globe (see Textbox 1 for an overall introduction of the cases). Our assumption is that these cases show a maximum variation (cf. Flyvberg 2006) in terms of their narratives of change. For these cases, we distinguish between different kinds of narratives of change, namely 1) local narratives of change (narratives of change on the level of the local initiative), 2) network narratives of change (narratives of change on the level of the network) and 3) societal narratives of change (narratives of change on the level of society, e.g. social economy). We thus acknowledge that each local initiative has its own narrative and that even within one initiative or network narratives might diverge. The main focus in this paper is on the master-narratives[3] at the level of networks. For the reconstruction of the narratives of change of these three networks, we relied on data that was gathered through interviews, participant observation and document review as part of the TRANSIT focus on transformative social innovation.

Structure of the paper

The following section discusses relevant literature on narratives and narrative analysis and forms the basis of a method for reconstructing and analysing narratives of change. In section 3, we reconstruct and analyse the narratives of Ashoka, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS). Our analysis focuses on the content of their narratives of change, including the context (why is change considered necessary?), actors (who is or should be driving change?) and plot (how is change occurring?). We then move on to dissect the ways in which narratives of change are produced and discuss how and to what extent narratives are seen to play a role in transforming the world before we conclude the paper (section 4).

2. Narratives of change – a literature review

Narrative research is a broad interdisciplinary field with a number of schools based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions. For the task at hand, we take a constructivist approach to narrative analysis because it allows tracing the social production and exploring the role of narratives in societal change processes beyond the straightforward analysis of narrative content. The aim of this review section is twofold: first, we review existing literature and second, we establish a method for reconstructing and analysingnarratives of change. We cluster the review along the three parts of our research question: 1) narrative content, 2) social production of narratives and 3) their role in social change processes.

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[3] We rely on the less restrictive definition of De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008b) of master-narratives as theories of change that we find articulated in various forms and at different instances, rather than on Roe's (1994) more specific conceptualisation of meta-narratives in the policy context.

Our working definition of narratives of change as 'sets of ideas, concepts, metaphors, discourses or story-lines about change and innovation' subsumes different linguistic devices. Like this, we purposively stay open to other understandings of discourses and narratives. As put by Davies (2002: 11): "*the boundary between narrative and other forms of discourse is simply not sharply marked off. Features characteristic of narrative, such as temporal sequencing, change and closure may be found in other discursive forms (a sonnet, for instance, or an essay) and stories may be found that lack key narrative features*". While Davies refers to narratives as a form of discourse, Hajer (1995: 56) posits that discourses are "*a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena. The key function of story-lines is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of a problem*". He defines a discourse as "*a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities*" (ibid: 44). Building on these somewhat contradictory definitions, we consider narratives of change to be a particular discursive form which positions actors in a context and orders events or activities in (temporal) sequence towards a goal or future.

2.1. The content of narratives of change: context, actors, plot

We use the concept of narratives of change to get a sense of how social innovation initiatives perceive (changes of) the world and their own role therein. As such, we are interested in the content of their stories about change. Researchers have distinguished different elements of narratives to be considered in a content analysis. By way of example, Fischer (2003, building on Burke 1945) suggests to distinguish agents, act, scene, agency and purpose. Studying these allows us to answer the following questions: Who does what, when and where? How was it done? And why? Altering this for our purposes of analysing narratives of change, we suggest that important elements are: 1) how is the status-quo and a desired goal/future to-be described (context), 2) who is considered to be involved in changes (actors) and 3) how is change occurring (plot).

Context in narratives

As suggested above and elsewhere (cf. Benford & Snow 2000), narratives have a role to play in sense making and the construction of meaning. Frames have been presented as 'simple narratives' which outline problems, diagnose causes and suggest solutions (Roe 1994). Narratives of change can be considered to contain such simpler narratives, or narratives within narratives, describing undesirable developments in the past, problematic present situations as well as attractive future scenarios. In other words, narratives describe past, current as well as future states and position them in space (where) and time (when). Thereby, the scene it set and justification is delivered for the activities carried out by various actors, including the social innovation initiatives.

Actors in narratives

We take actors to be agents that perform acts – these can be human or non-human. Analysing actors in narratives allows an understanding of who engages in activities furthering or hindering desired societal change. In narrative analysis, we can distinguish between actors, the roles that are ascribed to them and how they are represented. An analysis of power relations in societal change processes by Avelino and Wittmayer (forthcoming) is based on the following actor

categorisation: firstly, actors are clustered according to the following sectors: government, market, community or Third Sector and secondly, actors are considered at different levels of aggregation: sectors (as outlined), individual (e.g. social entrepreneur, citizen) or organizational actors (e.g. firm, municipality). This distinction proved useful and informs the analysis of actor types occurring in the narratives discussed here.

While actors are referred to in different roles, such as citizen, they also play a particular part in the actual narrative, e.g. protagonist, supporter, antagonist, beneficiary, powerholder (cf. Greimas narratological model in Basten 2012). Actor roles can also be described in terms of cultural archetypes, such as hero, anti-hero, and underdog. In terms of representation, Basten (2012) suggests to distinguish between round and flat characters, where round characters are represented as complex, with nuances and capable of learning, while flat characters are simple, stereotypical and strictly defined. In addition to actor types, the particular parts they play in the plot is considered in our analysis.

Plot in narratives

With plot, we refer to the actual storyline: how do events and activities lead from the current to a future situation, i.e. the desired end-goal of actors' efforts described as a changed context. The plot is thus creating an element of sequencing – one of the main criteria of narratives. Generally speaking, *"narrative is taken to mean a sequence of events in time"* (Berger 1997, quoted in Andrews et al. 2003: 3) and contingency is a "*fundamental criterion of narrative*" as "*stories demand the consequential linking of events or ideas*" (Salmon and Riessman 2008: 78). Narratives provide important devices for ordering temporal sequences, which has been argued to be an important source of agency and reflexivity, i.e. the capacity of "*breaking with the dominance of the past over the future*"[4] (Lissandrello & Grin 2011, citing Beck et al. 2003:12). The plot, in other words, describes how current givens are or can be challenged and transformed including a different set of social relations involving new understandings, practices and institutions. This sequencing of events and activities occurs against the contextual setting (when and where) and explains how this setting is (to be) changed.

2.2. The social production of narratives

A constructivist approach to narratives implies understanding them as socially produced. It requires paying attention to the socio-cultural context and structural conditions, as well as the actual interaction through which a narrative is produced. In the 'social interaction approach' to narrative analysis, narrative accounts are contingent on time, space, interlocutors, previous talk and action. As such they are momentous co-constructions of narrators and audience. Narratives are considered relatively stable and habitual and, at the same time, emergent and situational responses in a given setting. Thus, narratives cannot be abstracted from their context (neither from the immediate social nor from the wider societal) and are always attached to broader discourse activity (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008a).

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[4] The notion of breaking with the dominance of the past over the future does not imply that some (or many) initiatives do not aim to preserve current or even reinstate past social relations. It does, however, capture the practical relevance and performativity of narratives of change in imagining a different, more desirable future (see also section 2.3 The role of narratives in social change processes).

The epistemological challenge, then, is that all narrative data is situational and interactional. Ideally, narrative analysis shifts reflexively between the local micro-context and the 'master narrative' recurring across a variety of contexts (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008b). Following this view, our focus on 'theories of change' shared by collaborating social innovation actors requires examining the 'master narrative' that we find articulated in various forms (oral, written, or in (moving) images) and at different instances. Although different narrators, settings, media and audiences impact on the content, delivery and reception of stories, overarching storylines emerge that are sufficiently coherent for analysis.

2.3. The role of narratives in social change processes

Narratives can be understood as stories about and productions of social life (Davies 2002). They draw upon and contribute to a variety of social macro-processes, such as the legitimisation of knowledge or action, "*the inclusion or exclusion of social groups, the enactment of institutional routines, the perpetration of social roles, etc.*" (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008a: 382). Broadly speaking, literature distinguishes between three different (albeit related) roles that narratives can play in social change processes: narratives 1) trigger imagination, 2) are expressions of (counter) cultures and 3) are resources for empowerment.

Telling narratives about the past, means tapping into as well as transforming cultural and individual memory. Most work on narratives focuses on the past (biographical) or present (experience, meaning), with an emerging focus on the future. Such narratives about the future evoke imagination, invite us to think 'from what is to what if' (cf. Sools 2012) or 'what next might happen' (Shotter and Katz 2004 in Sools 2012) – as such they help to open the black box of what we think is possible. Narratives have the capability to extend a given culture, its norms and restrictions and as such are crucial for creative potential and "*the most powerful device to subjunctivize the world*" (Brockmeier 2009: 228). Practicing agency through narrative imagination means probing one's "*action possibilities*" (Holzkamp in ibid: 227) and to open up to the "*hypothetical, the possible, and the actual*" (ibid: 228). Narrative imagination is then a fundamentally social enterprise. Drawing on Iser, Brockmeier (2009: 228) asserts: "*The point of narrative fiction in this context is that it articulates the human capability to permanently undermine cultural norms and restrictions. It demonstrates that the mind interprets meanings as possibilities of action that reach beyond its own limits*".

Connecting narratives to the broader context and societal change, Wilce jr. (2007: 123) argues that "*culture shapes the narratives in which the self emerges. Yet culture is process. Cultures have always been in motion, and narrative facilitates this movement*". Thus the narratives created by social innovation actors about the world that they live in as well as the ways in which these are constructed are deeply informed by the cultural values and assumptions that they at the same time reveal. However, this quote also points to the role that narratives can play in social change processes. Changes in stories at a specific level have consequences for stories at another level. As argued by Rappaport (1995: 796) "*the narrative approach spans levels of analysis. It explicitly recognizes that communities, organizations and individual people have stories, and that there is a mutual influence process between these community, organizational, and personal stories*". By developing and sharing their narratives, social innovation actors connect their work to the broader context and engage in (co-)creating societal narratives. In this vein, Davies (2002: 25) talks about 'counter-narratives' as instrument through which social movements "*struggle against pre-existing cultural and institutional narratives and the structures of meaning and power they convey*". Counter-narratives in this understanding "*modify existing beliefs and symbols and their*

resonance comes from their appeal to values and expectations that people already hold" (idem) – as such they also appeal to human imagination.

This imagination can be understood as a "*form and practice of human agency*" (Brockmeier 2009: 227). Especially, researchers focusing on personal experience and sense making see narratives as "*ways of expressing and building personal identity and agency*" (Squire et al. 2008). According to Hall (1982), movement actors – to which social innovators can be counted – are deeply involved in "*the politics of signification*", i.e. the production and maintenance of meaning. Following this, narratives can be viewed as resources and as tools for individual and collective empowerment. As put by Rappaport (1995: 796): "*we are led to help people to discover their own stories, create new ones, and develop settings that make such activities possible – all activities consistent with the goals of empowerment*". Empowerment is enhanced when personal life stories are sustained by the collective narrative and vice versa (cf. Davies 2002; Riessman 2008, Rappaport 1995)

2.4. A method for reconstructing and analysing narratives

Our assumption is that through narratives of change of social innovation initiatives we gain insights into their ideas about why the world has to change, who has the power to do so and how this can be done. As such, our main interest lays in particular elements of narrative content, namely context described (lending purpose to actors' activities), actors involved and the plot (how activities unfold). Being aware of the power and performativity of storytelling, we also enquire into the narrative practices, i.e. the production of narratives, in the different initiatives and into the role social innovation actors themselves accredit to stories they share.

Based on the literature review, we suggest a method for reconstructing and analysing narratives of change of social innovation actors including their production and their alleged role in change processes. Not every narrative of change might display all the elements of the method; there is the possibility that only fragments exist. For each element of the method we suggest a number of empirical questions as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Method for reconstructing and analysing narratives of change

(1) Content of narratives	
Context *Why?* *(When?)* *(Where?)*	How is the context constructed in the NoC under study? - What past and current problems and societal challenges are framed in the NoC? - What desired future or goal is described, lending purpose to proposed actions?
Actors *Who?*	How are actors constructed in the NoC under study? - Who are the individual, organisational and sector-level actors driving and/or hindering change?
Plot *How?*	How is the social change process said to unfold in the NoC under study? - What events, experiences or activities lead to the desired future and in what sequence? - Which activities by the initiative and other actors are driving and/or hindering change?
(2) Role of narratives	
How is the role of narratives in general and specifically in social change processes perceived? - What role do social innovation actors ascribe to the narrative they share and narratives of others?	
(3) Production of narratives	
How were/are the NoC's under study produced? - What kind of ideas, concepts, metaphors or discourses are included or alluded to in the narrative? (Is the concept of "social innovation" used explicitly?)	

-	What visual aids are used to support ideas, concepts or metaphors used?
-	What kind of narrative practices does the initiative engage in?
-	How central are narrative practices to the activities of the SI-initiative?

On the basis of the suggested method, we reconstructed the 'master narratives' (cf. De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008b) of the narratives of change of Ashoka, GEN and RIPESS on the network level (see Appendix 1-3). We thus focus on the most commonly found narratives across the network and compare these along the main elements of the method.

3. The Narratives of Change of Ashoka, Global Ecovillage Network and RIPESS

Using the method, we can analyse the narratives of change of Ashoka, GEN and RIPESS (see Appendix 1-3 for the full narratives) in terms of their content, the role narratives play for the SI-initiative and their production.

3.1. Content of narratives of change: context, actor and plot

The narratives of change by RIPESS, Ashoka and GEN show a very different understanding of how the world changes. **RIPESS'** narrative describes the world as struggle for dominance, where the underdogs (in this case various concepts of a social solidarity economy) have to unite to challenge and overcome the adversary (the neo-liberal economy and world order). This is a political framing, showing a strong favour for collectivism and collective action. The state and governmental actors are seen as powerful actors who can be an ally. **Ashoka**, on the other hand, perceives the world as constantly changing with increasing speed. Therefore, it sees the need to equip people with skills to deal with this constant change (which is considered neither good nor bad). In this process, solutions are said to emerge for some problems that are well-known and for others that are only beginning to be understood. In their understanding, an individual – empowered through the right skills, network and (financial) support – can make the world a better place. The market is seen as an ally for the social entrepreneur, while needed systemic changes are part of the realm of the state. For **GEN**, the change starts with personal change by the individual within a supporting community. There is a strong focus on 'being the change you want to see in the world', starting with oneself and one's community, including daily lifestyle and spiritual growth. The underlying philosophy is an explicitly holistic one, where body and mind, society and planet, are seen as inextricably intertwined, thus making it inherently impossible to 'heal' one without 'healing' the other as well. As such, the approach to change is one of building new communities from scratch, based on a holistic life philosophy. It is also generally believed that such holistic communities can give rise to alternative markets (based on e.g. 'gift economy') and alternative government structures (based on e.g. 'sociocracy') which could and should alter existing markets and governments.

Defining contextual problems vs. pointing out activity areas
RIPESS' narrative has a quite distinct framing of the current context regarding the detrimental consequences of economic globalization and the neoliberal world order. The narrative by GEN also describes developments that are considered problematic, namely human alienation from nature and overly anonymous, technocratic and system-dominated societies. Ashoka however, refrains from a specific problem framing and focuses on supporting changemaker activities in general domains that are considered to require attention, such as education or health. Overall, it appears that Ashoka focuses more on solutions than on problems and offers a more optimistic perspective on current state of affairs.

In any case, contexts described or activity areas defined, both justify and lend purpose to the networks' activities. RIPESS aims levering out the alleged 'natural laws' of the current economic system by experimenting with and showcasing liveable alternatives. GEN does not believe in waiting for governmental action and instead promotes the design and implementation of pathways to a sustainable future by empowered individuals and communities. The narrative of change that the GEN is referring to is at the same time their action strategy: to build a network of resilient communities that is not easily affected or hit by negative developments of the macrosystems. They prefer to rely on 'human-scale' systems, because they can overlook, design and influence them. Ashoka focuses on individual changemakers that find bold and ingenious solutions to problems that may only be on the verge of shaping up and not clearly defined yet. Although the network establishes problem areas that need addressing, it trusts the intuition and capacity of the individual to find a way to see problems that lead to "out of the box" solutions.

Primacy of specific actors: the individual vs. the collective
Ashoka focuses on individuals as social entrepreneurs and changemakers. In this narrative, other actors (whether individual ones such as experts or advisors or organisations such as universities or foundations) serve as support for the social entrepreneur in finding solutions. The focus is on the achievement of the individual: even after Ashoka changed their narrative to focus on 'everyone a changemaker' (as opposed to the one-in-a-million individual), this 'everyone' is still *every individual*. The GEN narrative zooms in on the individual and its personal needs and desires that ought to be met sustainably. The narrative pays equal attention to the community that requires commitment and contributions by every individual but also exists to support the individual on its path to inner transformation. RIPESS on the other hand, focuses mainly on (regional, continental, international) networks as uniting different forms and actors of a worldwide social solidarity economy. It also includes collective actors such as groups of citizens, Third sector organizations and socially responsible government (by exception social entrepreneurs or ethical banking) who practice the solidarity economy. As such, RIPESS is focused much more on collective and institutional actors.

Plotting the change: getting from "here" to "there"
The strategies for change that feature in the different narratives follow from the contexts defined and the actors identified. In that sense, the three narratives of change are coherent and outline approaches that involve proving established systems wrong (RIPESS), practicing alternative habits (GEN) and implementing tailor-made solutions (Ashoka). Therefore, Ashoka's narrative revolves around building an enabling environment for the social entrepreneur. RIPESS argues for experimenting with a variety of alternative forms of social solidarity economy who unite vis-à-vis the established market order. GEN advocates inner, individual healing and strong communities who collectively and everyday practice sustainable living on the ground.

These diverging change strategies plotted in the three narratives translate to varying dissemination activities which shows how narrative assumptions impact on actual activities: while RIPESS carries its ambition to foster broad political debate into the media and lobbies with international governance institutions, Ashoka aims to showcase and celebrate the successful entrepreneurial changemaker by delivering public speeches. GEN stresses that ecovillages cannot be 'islands' but need to facilitate change in the social and regional context, mostly by hosting meetings and educational events that enable citizens from across the world to experience ecovillage life and to witness first-hand that an alternative community life is possible.

In terms of time frames across which changes are said to unfold, all three narratives focus on the necessity to act now for a desired future. Time and ongoing change processes feature quite

differently in the three narratives, however. While Ashoka considers the world to be in constant flux and holds the belief that times of unprecedented change are yet to come, GEN and RIPESS consider current systems to be static, yet leading to undesired environmental changes. For Ashoka the only way to impact on the change that is upon us is training everyone to be a changemaker and to engage in ongoing innovation because social systems are currently too slow to adapt to our changing environment. GEN emphasises the need to start building alternative pathways in the present that, amongst other, incorporate and reinvent past sustainable practices (e.g. handicraft skills), so as to enable a sustainable and radically different future. Intergenerational learning is an important aspect for doing so.

A commonality of all three narratives is the central role of networking in achieving change. This observation has a methodological reason because all three cases include social innovation initiatives that consist of global networks and local manifestations. It is, however, striking how much emphasis is paid to the importance and power of networking. For GEN empowered individuals in intentional communities profit from global exchange that goes beyond the place-bound practices. Ashoka views networked support for the individual social entrepreneur as crucial for success and RIPESS organises congresses for representatives of its various member networks to discuss shared values, principles and assumptions without streamlining these into a singular, shared vision.

3.2. The Production of Narratives of Change

Looking into the production of narratives, rather than only at their content, allows us to scrutinize how and to what extent the SI-initiatives reproduce and/or challenge the social context which they criticise as part of their narrative of change. Resonating with the literature that emphasizes the context-dependency of narrative practices, the practices around the production of theories of change in the three SI-initiatives follows the recipe of success suggested by the narrative itself. Thereby, the narratives draw from and at the same time create the context matching their activities.

RIPESS, who critiques individualistic and competition- and market-based economic principles on a number of issues, seeks to replace the hegemonic neoliberal paradigm with a variety of solidarity-based economic forms or variations. In line with this notion, RIPESS welcomes broad experimentation and attempts to involve everyone in the construction of central story lines. This process is particularly challenging because the networks involved in this umbrella network are rather diverse. To date, RIPESS lacks a centrally co-ordinated story and hosts a variety of views or 'theories of change'. It does, however, try to align or join forces between diverse and divided narratives by working collaboratively towards a shared perspective on alternative economies (cf. RIPESS 2015). The production of such a shared perspective is a joint activity. RIPESS is inclined towards direct democracy and truly shared declarations – taking into account that they are to represent a very broad set of networks and organisations, and should not reproduce the exclusive tendencies they criticise.

GEN typically makes use of community-led participatory methods and deliberation for shaping the narratives of the network, involving not only all regional networks, but also each ecovillage and each individual who is present at the network event at that time. Besides formalized general assembly meetings, network gatherings are typically characterised by a great deal of small-group discussions, one-on-one conversation, singing, meditation and dancing. These rituals are not only seen as necessary 'relaxation', but as intricate part of creating a shared vision and strategy. Core imagery of the GEN vision includes green environments, community life and the planet. The

butterfly recurs in GEN's logos (See Figure 1), accompanied by the slogan "*if nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies*" (GEN website 2015). The transmuted caterpillar captures the notion that change is possible, already occurs and requires collaboration just like the cells of the caterpillar need to cooperate to re-cluster and form the beautiful butterfly.

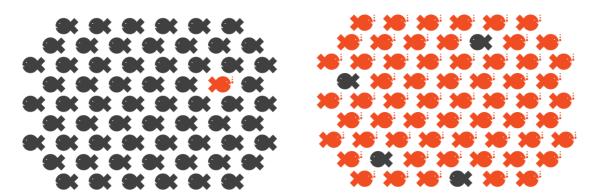*Figure 1. Logos of GEN and its regional networks, with a recurring images of the butterfly*

Ashoka focuses on individual social entrepreneurs with world-changing ideas and its central narrative is also predominantly lead-authored by a single individual, Bill Drayton, the CEO and founder of Ashoka. He developed key elements of the Ashoka narrative of change (such as the social entrepreneur as system changer carried by a network of fellow combatants supporting him in spirit or kind) which are then adopted by country offices worldwide. These central notions even outlived a significant reorientation of Ashoka's narrative and approach from the 'one-in-a-million social entrepreneur' to an 'everyone a changemaker' vision. For communicating their vision they also use images such as Figure 2. Other elements such as the notion of an "ecosystem for social innovation" that originated and has become particularly prevalent in Germany are constructed more locally.

In short, the networks' practices around the production of narrative elements such as concepts, storylines or images are inspired by or even in line with their ideas about how change is to come about: individually orchestrated or collectively performed. Which other actors are considered important for change to occur can be teased out by tracing the engagement strategies and communication outlets the different networks choose to spread and further their ideas.

The **Ashoka** network produces a wealth of communication materials (e.g. reports, presentations, brochures, concept papers and articles), organises conferences and delivers public speeches. All of these efforts are focused on the discursive construction of the need for as well as the identity and role of social entrepreneurs and aim at the mobilisation of actors around this discourse. As outlined in the Ashoka Magazine: "*We work on creating more understanding and support for social entrepreneurs in Germany [...]. We do this in the following way: Through the newsletter,*

presentations and at conferences we propagate the idea of social entrepreneurship and of self-determined engagement." (Ashoka Germany Magazine 2013). Despite initial reactions of disbelief and ridicule, universities were also mobilised as key allies in the legitimization of the emerging social entrepreneurship discourse (Interviewee 2).

Figure 2. How do you know you have changed a system? (Source: Ashoka 2013)

The **GEN** also provides numerous communication materials (e.g. website, videos, books, brochures) and organises or attends meetings to explain its mission and approach. In line with the network's notion that change needs to be lived and experienced, conferences, summits, festivals, tours and courses are offered. During the latter, much attention is paid to the practice of storytelling, which is often explicitly used as a facilitation method.

RIPESS publishes regular newsletters and charters at four-yearly conferences aimed at facilitating exchange between different, otherwise fragmented, social movements and strengthening the awareness of their members for being part of a broader movement of a social solidarity economy. The political voice directed at the outside world is shaped through their website, contributions to political debates in the media, and scientific publications on the social solidarity-based economy (Hiez & Lavilluniere 2013, Higelé & Lhuillier 2014, Kawano 2013). These publications provide political philosophy, ideological framing, evidence base and argumentations for the various activities implicitly or explicitly undertaken as solidarity-based or social economy.

The narrative practices of the different networks echo their theories of change. Ashoka celebrates the ingenious individual, determined to make a difference. Communication efforts aim to convince others of this notion and at the construction of a benevolent surrounding for social entrepreneurs or 'changemakers'. The GEN focuses on 'sharing the experience and best practices', a goal that nicely aligns with the organisation of gatherings and courses or workshops for the curious.

3.3. The Roles of Narratives of Change

For all three SI-initiatives, narratives play a considerable role in their efforts to influence social change processes. For RIPESS it is a central element of their existence: they provide a narrative on social solidarity economy to align fragmented social movements. Ashoka promotes the narrative on 'social entrepreneurs' and Ashoka Germany, which is very involved on the European level, came to understand 'framework change', i.e. altering how people perceive the world as their main activity. Finally, for GEN, the creation of 'a new story' for alternative community living is at the heart of its core mission.

The three SI-initiatives do however differ in the functions that they ascribe to their narratives. For RIPESS, their narrative is a counter-narrative (cf. Davies 2002) directed to break the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, which is considered the key problem. The lack of solidarity economy, in other words, is attributed partly to discursive structures and dominant beliefs – to which political voice and alternative discourses are necessary remedies. As illustrated in their Global Vision: "*It is very common for the social economy to be conflated with the solidarity economy. They are not the same thing and the implications of equating them are rather profound. The social economy is commonly understood as part of a "third sector" of the economy, complementing the "first sector" (private/profit-oriented) and the "second sector" (public/planned). (...) The solidarity economy seeks to change the whole social/economic system and puts forth a different paradigm of development that upholds solidarity economy principles.*" (RIPESS 2013). It is also the framing in terms of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses that makes political parties like Podemos (Spain) and Syriza (Greece) and various "New Left" political movements interesting allies to RIPESS – more than many actors operating under the social innovation banner, which is considered to be at risk of reproducing prevalent entrepreneurial-productivist views on alternative social practices.

For GEN, on the other hand, narratives trigger imagination and open up a new possible future. An illustration of this is the New Story Summit (organised October 2014), focused on creating a new story, as communicated on the website of this event: *"As we change our story, we change our world. We humans find our way by story. Our stories shape us, hold us and give meaning to our lives. Every so often it becomes clear that a prevailing story is no longer serving. Now is such a time. If we do not create a positive, realistic picture of the future, we will not live into it. [...] This visibly accelerating disintegration of the story lived since the industrial revolution can feel overwhelming. Caught in this apparent helplessness, contemporary narratives of the future oscillate between blind denial and apocalyptic devastation. Neither will help us live the transformational Great Turning that is still - though maybe only just - within our grasp"* (Findhorn website). Next to an internal role, the narratives also serve to role of motivating the "*people on the ground in the single ecovillage who might often forget that they are part of a larger movement*" (Interviewee 4) and vice versa, the single narratives by different ecovillages are needed to promote solid stories of change, according to GEN president Kosha Joubert at the international GEN conference in 2015.

Finally, for Ashoka narratives are resources for empowerment in that they engage in producing and maintaining certain meanings (cf. Hall 1982). Ashoka claims to directly influence what stories people tell, or assumptions they hold, about how the world works and what the role and power of individuals is in changing it. Very specifically, they empowered the 'social entrepreneur' as a changemaker. The construction and invention of the latter identity is key to Ashoka: "*Social entrepreneurs have existed throughout history, but the identity is constructed. The historical achievement of Ashoka over thirty years is to have created an identity and a term for something that was happening in our societies, for something that has always been in our societies. You can look back over 100 years to Maria Montessori, for example; but then it happened accidentally*" (Interviewee 1).

The considerable role that the three SI-initiatives attach to narratives and discourses shows in their strategy for system change. All three SI-initiatives relate to broader societal narratives with regard to economic alternatives. They are involved in coining and developing the narratives on social entrepreneurship and the social economy (Ashoka), individual and community transformation and the construction of shadow systems (GEN) and the solidarity economy and economic globalisation (RIPESS). Especially RIPESS and GEN, but also Ashoka refer to general or global developments to provide justification and problem framing: neoliberalism, individualism

or capitalism. Contextual macro-processes that narratives of change pick up on include social, cultural, environmental and economic developments. In doing so, justification and meaning is given to proposed change strategies and, at the same time, these grand societal discourses are strengthened. For example, RIPESS addresses relentlessly market failures and ethical implications of the current economic system, thereby challenging another prominent societal narrative, namely the "there is no alternative" story.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we reconstructed and compared the narratives of change of three different SI-initiatives in terms of content, the processes through which narratives are formed or negotiated and their perceived role in social change processes. This analysis led to a number of insights into the theories of change of social innovation initiatives. In the following we highlight three of these insights as well as additional questions and challenges that emerged.

Firstly, the analysis shed light on the wide variety of narratives of change of social innovation networks. This obviously has methodological reasons, as we opted for a maximum variation in our case selection. However, it is also indicative of the highly diverse nature of the field of social innovation and in the ways that context (past developments, current situation and desired future), actors and plot (strategy and activities to arrive at the desired future) are framed. In fact, three ideal-type narratives emerged ranging from "Entrepreneurs will save the world" and "Dominant institutions need to be challenged" to "Communities rely on themselves". Further empirical analysis could feed these master-narratives back to the social innovation networks and see how they resonate with individuals that are part of the network as well as with other or differently nuanced narratives that are prominent at the local, regional or global level of the network. Other analyses bearing interesting insight could focus on clusters of social innovation narratives. The narrative perspective helped in teasing out details that are easily overlooked when studying initiatives' mission statements or action plans. For example, their understanding of the world as a "playground for entrepreneurs", "a power imbalance between dominant and alternative economies" and "a beautiful setting for spiritual and sustainable communities" is revealed by studying how the context is depicted in their stories. In other words, structure and agency manifest themselves in the stories and each narrative recounts a different set of interactions that leads to transformation.

Secondly, a striking commonality has become apparent across the social innovation initiatives, namely the importance they accord to stories. Many of the initiatives are profoundly aware of the power of discourse and make 'discourse shaping' and the propagation of counter-narratives or future imaginaries strategically part of their activities. Additional research could tease out how narratives of different social innovation initiatives relate or interact, how notions travel between different scale levels (local, regional global) and how the networks' alternative narratives of change challenge dominant societal narratives. A central insight of this paper is that narratives of change disclose the assumptions social innovation initiatives hold about challenges societies are faced with, how the world needs to change and what their role in these transformations can be. A reflection on and systematic comparison with prominent scientific narratives of change, e.g. transition theories or social innovation concepts, could enrich our theoretical understanding of societal change with insights from people practicing change.

As a last insight, we would like to highlight that narratives of change are not just 'stories out there', rather they recount the theories of change which are practiced and acted upon by the very social

innovation initiatives which propagate them. That Ashoka is focusing on the social entrepreneur, GEN on communal living and RIPESS on institutional change is part of their theory of change and part of their actual practices. The theories of change are guiding their actions and these actions are informing the theories of change. In that sense, (narrative) practices that help spreading alternative views, ideas and practices are used by the networks to increase their transformative potential – also strategically vis-á-vis dominant and institutionalised notions and practices.

In closing this paper, which involved the reconstruction and deconstruction of three narratives of change, the question emerges what the action strategy for research and practice of societal transformation can be. A suggestion is to view this paper as inspiration for "narrative experimentation". Related approaches exist in the form of vision building, scenario development and backcasting. Story writing and the explicit development of narratives of change may form a creative approach to the imagination of alternative futures and new social relations as well as a reflexive tool to rethink implicit and explicit ideas and practices of societal change.

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Appendix 1: Narrative of Change of Ashoka

Ashoka refrains from defining specific societal challenges and trusts in the capacity of social entrepreneurs to adequately sense and respond to the social problems they see as relevant. As put by the Ashoka Europe Leader: "*If you want to find interesting new responses to social problems you have to shed the view through the problem lens. We're open to any solutions wherever they come from even to problems we may not have defined yet. One of the most interesting contributions of the network is to be a predictive network for changes that are about to happen*" (Interviewee 1). However, theme clusters of different social issues are distinguished, such as Civic Participation, Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, Human Rights (Drayton, 1997 in Matolay et al. 2015).

Bill Drayton, CEO and founder of Ashoka outlines that in the future, a "*generation hence, probably 20 to 30 percent of the world's people, and later 50 to 70 percent, not just today's few percent, will be changemakers and entrepreneurs. That world will be fundamentally different and a far safer, happier, more equal, and more successful place. To get there, we must end the infantalization of young people. They and the rest of us must enable all young people to be fully creative, initiatory, and powerful changemakers. We must also build the wisest possible financial and other institutions so that, as these young people become adults, the new citizen sector will draw them fully into an 'everyone a changemaker' world.*" (Drayton 2006: pp). Ashoka holds that a world of exponential time is coming, as the speed of change, interaction and information flows is considered unprecedented. We therefore need to adapt quickly by creating the supportive institutional structures for social innovations and fostering the individual capabilities of social entrepreneurs and changemakers.

Ashoka clearly focuses on specific individuals as change agents in society: "*We can no longer expect all the solutions to come to us but we have to empower people to be active problem solvers. If you want to do that where else would you start but with the most powerful citizen problem solvers, social entrepreneurs.*" (Interviewee 1). Social entrepreneurs are considered as a specific kind of people: "*Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry.*" (Ashoka, 2015 in Matolay et al. 2015)
Certain criteria (pattern-changing new ideas, creativity, entrepreneurial quality, ethical fibre, social impact) must be met by these key entrepreneurial individuals in order to be selected as Ashoka Fellows[5]. These criteria are standardized across the world and have remained the same throughout Ashoka's existence. However, they are often misunderstood: "*People sometimes say Ashoka looks for the best social entrepreneurs. That's not true. We look for a particular kind… those crazy innovators who are willing to bet their lives on something that can eventually be huge. That's a tiny section of the total social entrepreneurial field but, hopefully, a powerful one*" (Interviewee 1)*.* While Ashoka first focused more on these high-profile social entrepreneurs, it more recently expanded its understanding of changemakers to potentially everyone, because a single person with a good idea and the right strategy, support and networks is believed to have an unprecedented impact on a global level. This is related to the assumption that people today are "*healthier, better educated, better networked, with more time available to them (this is not just us, but all over the planet)*" (Interviewee 1).

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[5] Ashoka Fellows are specifically selected social entrepreneurs, who receive funding, access to networks and trainings by Ashoka.

Regarding support, Ashoka seeks collaboration with diverse actors, mainly individual experts or supporters in business or law, but also partner organizations like firms and foundations to create ecosystems for innovation. "*From the experiences of over fifty Ashoka Fellows in Germany we know that: 'It takes a village to raise a child.' It requires a village, a neighbourhood of expert professionals, in order to bring social innovations to a breakthrough. We call this village the Machbarschaft. It ensures that social innovators and their organizations of any stage of maturity and scale have access to the relevant experts: strategy developers and impact monitors, funders and ambassadors, co-entrepreneurs and opportunity portals, coaches and legal professionals, experts on politics and the welfare state*" (germany.ashoka.org, 2014).

Ashoka Germany started to engage with the government only in 2008. Since then it also engages in cross-sector collaborations, not just between civil society and business worlds, but also on multiple levels of the public sector: "*If you look at the fact that more than half of the German Ashoka Fellows have government - on any level - as their major funder, there is absolutely no way you can afford not to work with government if you want to make social entrepreneurship successful*" (Interviewee 1).

Ashoka outlines three main activities, namely the support of social entrepreneurs, the promotion of group entrepreneurship and the building of infrastructures for the citizen sector (or ecosystems for innovation) (Ashoka Online 2015[6]). Ashoka defines their impact as: "the system changes that result from the fellows, ideas, and networks we support" (Ashoka, 2013). For the desired change to take place, Ashoka believes that first of all changes need to take place on an individual level: people's assumptions about themselves and the world, and their motivations and capacities to effect social change. Building on this follows the step of connecting social entrepreneurs in enabling support networks, as well as connecting actors across business, social, and (more recently) governmental sectors to build a supportive "ecosystem" for social innovation. This involves institutional changes in funding and legislation, as well as cultural changes in shared beliefs, values and norms.

Besides this focus on the individual, systemic change is also a key target, since only those social entrepreneurs are selected as Ashoka Fellows who can demonstrate that their idea is not just new but also has the potential to change a system, "*It has to have relevance to solve a social problem at scale*" (Interviewee 1). As such the three outlined activities are based on "5 Pathways to social systems change ('revolutionizing a field')" (Ashoka Fellow Changing Systems 2009 in Matolay et al. 2015):
   - Market dynamics and value chains: redefining interconnections in market systems;
   - Public policy and industry norms: changing the rules that govern our societies;
   - Business-social congruence: transforming the meaning of private versus citizen sector;
   - Full inclusion and empathy: integrating marginalized populations;
   - Culture of changemaking: increasing the number and capabilities of people who are social problem-solvers (culture of changemaking and social entrepreneurship).

Related to the fifth point, an additional element was suggested by an interviewee, namely "framework change": "*We've come to understand that what we did all along through electing Fellows and creating these networks and platforms, [...] was help people shift how they saw the world [...] we have become more conscious that that is our function, that probably the single most powerful thing we can do [...] is change how people see their role in society where everyone has a potential*

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[6] https://www.ashoka.org/approach

role. [...] We've become more explicit about this function. We think now about framework change as what Ashoka is about, whereas we used to think of Ashoka as about finding, electing, and supporting changemakers and making them successful." (Interviewee 1).

Appendix 2: Narrative of Change of GEN

For GEN, the problems of the world are grounded in a fundamental alienation and disconnectedness from nature, from others and from ourselves. Ecovillage activists perceive modern society as too anonymous, technology-dominated and ruled by non-transparent systems. 'GEN international' has a strong focus on reconciliation between the global North and South and indigenous cultures are highly appreciated as existing alternatives to the Western culture of 'disconnection'. Collaboration in communities is seen as the main principles to 'heal' this disconnectedness, reconcile different cultures and support a more holistic worldview. In local ecovillage life, members intend to give space for 'natural' collaborative developments to reconnect and harmoniously integrate individual needs, community requirements, and ecological responsibility.

GEN places a strong emphasis on communities as drivers of change by encouraging citizens and communities to design and implement their own pathways to a sustainable future instead of leaving this up to the established governments. According to GEN's philosophy, the world can be changed by a sustainable, resilient, supportive, equal and free community culture. Each ecovillage member is seen as an important creator of this community culture; be it as leader, account manager, garbage men, cook, mother, or child. GEN intends to raise the awareness that everyone has the choice to act egoistically or collaboratively to make a difference. Everyone invests free time to engage for the ecovillage and beyond for a sustainable world. While there is a great variety of different approaches, ecovillages generally invest a high amount of time in intensive communication methods to solve conflicts and to consciously work out infrastructures, governance and community rules to form these resilient communities of change. Personality work is experienced as supportive to realize this community culture (e.g.non-violent communication). The individual as a social active being is seen as the main actor and ecovillages want to be more empowering places than traditional villages and cities. They have created governance structures which instead of blindly following rules, put 'people first'. Members can negotiate individually, for instance in terms of duties, financial contributions, and living space and there are hardly any non-negotiable rules. Several ecovillages run own schools which mostly apply individually-oriented education methods. Ecovillages teach their members to fully take responsibility for their actions and requests. Every individual is seen as his/her own master of change: If we change our ways of thinking, we can change our emotional experience of the world and we are able to act differently and this can have a powerful impact (compare Interviewee 5). In one of their sayings they emphasize the importance of the individual level: "*Changing the world one heart at a time*" (Interviewee 4).

A GEN member living in Findhorn ecovillage tells: "*We do a lot of sharing: Being heard and sitting in a circle; Some people and guests say it is the first time they ever feel really heard; it is a very open-hearted atmosphere; a lot of people go away completely transformed.*" (Interviewee 4)
GEN believes that social change has to start from within each individual: Ecovillage members start in their daily personal lives to act more consciously, trying to realize sustainable ways of living and supporting communities. With a holistic perspective on social life, economy, and ecology,

ecovillages have generally started with a common ground and common property that aims at just and collaborative forms of governance as well as responsible land use, restoration and agriculture. The narrative of change that the ecovillage movement is referring to is at the same time their action strategy: to build a network of resilient communities that is not easily affected or hit by negative developments of the macrosystems. They prefer to rely on 'human-scale' systems, because they can overlook, design and influence them.

Ecovillages believe that profound change needs time. Their strategy does not directly relate to any societal developments but rather follows a long-term approach of cultural change by starting with small-scale transformation experiments (Kunze 2012) as holistic, vivid and solid examples. Related to individual life, change occurs in ecovillages from early childhood on in the form of 'forest kindergartens', the ability to move freely in the village and see their friends. Some ecovillages run a free village school. The majority of ecovillages in Western countries are found by adults between forty and fifty who purchase a piece of land to move there and fundamentally change their lives. Ecovillage living is increasingly popular for elderly people. For instance, two third of the joining requests to the popular ecovillage of Schloss Tempelhof are peopled aged 60+. They observe that young families do not have the time to found an ecovillage, while elders have the experiences and the necessary money to start such a project. Schloss Tempelhof members turn the tables by educating elders how to found such an ecovillage themselves. Also young families discover the advantages of ecovillage living while young adults in the twenties are rather rare or merely temporary guests in ecovillages.

Concerning space and place, ecovillages are probably one of the strongest place-based and place-focused initiatives. Their spot of change is the real physical place and the natural environment as 'stage' for human activities. GEN aims to relate in its ecovillage design courses to each participant's specific cultural, social and ecological environments. The crucial entry point to start an ecovillage is the purchase of the land or at least the right to use the land according to their values. The ecovillage flagship projects are based on a legal form of ownership which safeguards the 'spot of change'. This legal form is often a foundation and shall insure a sustainable land use, affordable housing, collective ownership and the prevention from speculation. Nevertheless, GEN president Kosha Joubert observes a shift in the ecovillage approach from ecovillages as newly founded communities to ecovillages as traditional villages which entered a process of transformation by retrofitting of existing structures (Interviewee 3). She further explains, "*GEN started off as 'islands' of a new culture and experiments of the future. Today we live in a different world. Awareness has risen dramatically. Many of the concepts that GEN was using 10 years ago are currently mainstreamed and used by politicians and in the corporate world. Today GEN aims not to create islands but to transition society to resilience. And we are searching for the role that GEN can play WITHIN that. [...] – seeing ourselves as part of a society wide dialogue.*" (Interviewee 3)

Appendix 3: Narrative of Change of RIPESS

RIPESS considers the trend of economic globalization and the associated structural imbalances such as exploitation, gender inequality, social exclusion, North-South inequality and poverty as highly problematic issues. Indeed, this network of networks was established as a direct response to these developments, in 1997. Its transformative aim was laid down in a foundational declaration: "*We are taking into account that we are under the hegemony of a development model which shows, both in the North and the South, its limits while destroying the planet and generating poverty, exclusion, and ignores the set of human activities which are of paramount importance for*

the communities, representing thus a threat for the future of mankind; And in an attempt to react to this situation, that we are committed to a process of building a solidarity-based development that questions the concept which reduces and determines the satisfaction of human needs to cut-throat competition on the market and the so-called "natural laws". (RIPESS 1997:1) Against economic globalization and closely interrelated societal narratives such as There is No Alternative (TINA) and the proclaimed 'End of History' after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, RIPESS seeks to demonstrate that other economic practices are possible, and already exist – in which people and the planet are central, instead of capital. RIPESS has not developed a specific future vision, desired end state or preferred economic model – however it is in the process of developing a global vision on the social solidarity economy, an economic model in which the bottom line is broadened to include values of equality, sustainability and solidarity (RIPESS 2015). According to its website, "*RIPESS' mission is to build and promote the social solidarity economy (SSE), which takes into account the social and ethical dimension in all its economic activities. […] It aims at satisfying the needs of individuals and communities rather than seeking to maximize profit or financial gains. Solidarity-based economic units rest upon a model of democratic decision-making and a participatory and transparent management system, which aims at ensuring collective ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of economic activities, as well as ongoing mobilisation and contributions to ensure their success.*" (RIPESS Online 2015[7]).

RIPESS considers itself as "*a network of continental networks that connects social solidarity economy networks throughout the world. The continental networks in turn bring together national and sectoral networks*" (RIPESS Online 2015)[8]. As a bottom-up created political alliance, RIPESS consists not of national RIPESS affiliations, but rather of regional networks of alternative economies, associations, foundations, cooperatives clusters and NGOs. All of them promote different kinds of alternative economies. RIPESS considers itself as a political alliance of dispersed alternative movements, together confronting and developing alternatives to dominant, not solidarity-based and social economic structures. As a political movement and thinking in terms of (very encompassing) hegemonic systems, the RIPESS narrative of change operates with a general frame of (hegemonic) political allies and (counter-hegemonic) adversaries, mainstream and alternative discourses. The overall narrative of change provides an umbrella for otherwise quite divergent ideas on the key agents and driving forces in the desired transformations. Apart from the generally agreed upon importance of empowered groups of citizens, Third sector organizations and socially responsible governments, there is greater divergence within RIPESS on the more market-oriented transformation narratives, such as social entrepreneurship, cooperative economy and ethical banking.

RIPESS does not accompany its vision on a new economic model with specific institutional arrangements through which the values of solidarity-based and social economic practice are to be safeguarded. Rather than a linear development in a particular direction, RIPESS seems to envision a constant struggle waged between a dominant global model (the hegemonic neoliberal order, see earlier) and various dispersed local alternative economies. The network was established to organize the solidarity-based alternatives on a similarly global level (as a counterweight) as the problem (economic globalization) manifests. As a network-of-networks, RIPESS is primarily driving change by constructing a clear, well-articulated and recognizable political voice for a great variety of socially innovative, transformation-oriented local networks and organizations. RIPESS seeks to overcome fragmentation of alternative social forces, considering the unionist dictum that

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[7] http://www.ripess.org/about-us/?lang=en (accessed August 27th, 2015)

[8] http://www.ripess.org/about-us/?lang=en#intro (accessed August 27th, 2015)

'united we stand, divided we will fall'. The aforementioned political voice is currently mainly heard by global organisations on development such as UNRISD (Cf. Utting et al. 2014), and less so, or hardly even, on the levels of the European Union or of nation states. The political voice is supposed to empower the activities of the various RIPESS members. Apart from the political-discursive strategy to establish the existence and feasibility of solidarity-based economic practices, as examples to follow or to facilitate, the RIPESS members are engaged in various concrete projects on the local or regional level: Social enterprises, insertion companies, cooperatives, ethical banks, micro-credit networks, alternative currency schemes, consumer-producer networks, etc. These activities are considered valuable on the local scale – yet according to RIPESS, actual transformation would require more than this 'concrete action', namely alignment between dispersed alternative economies, and a broadly ie. globally carried counter-narrative vis-a-vis the hegemonic neoliberal order.