

On the agency and dynamics of transformative social innovation

TRANSIT Working Paper # 7, November 2016

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613169

About TRANSIT:

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

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About this TRANSIT working paper:

A previous version of this paper has been part of TRANSIT Deliverable 3.3 (July 2016), the second prototype of TSI theory.

Suggested citation:

Haxeltine A., Jørgensen, M. S., Pel, B., Dumitru, A., Avelino, F., Bauler, T., Lema Blanco, I., Chilvers, J., Cipolla, C., Dorland, J., Elle, M., Garido, S., Kemp, R., Kunze, I., Longhurst, N., Pataki, G., Rach, S., Renema, J., Ruijsink, S., Strasser, T., Tawakol, D., Weaver, P. and Wittmayer J. M. (2016) [On the agency and dynamics of transformative social innovation, \(TRANSIT working paper #7\)](#), TRANSIT: EU SSH.2013.3.2-1 Grant agreement no: 613169.

Date: 1 November 2016

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Introduction

This working paper presents a set of propositions about the agency and dynamics of transformative social innovation (TSI) that have been developed as part of an EU-funded research project entitled “TRANSformative Social Innovation Theory” (TRANSIT; 2014-2017). These *TSI propositions* represent first steps towards the development of a new theory of TSI, taking the form of proto-explanations of the agency and dynamics of TSI, based on the bringing together of our empirical observations on TSI (Jørgensen et al. 2016) and our theoretical reviews and theoretical framings (Haxeltine et al 2016).

We suggest to read this working paper in conjunction with the working paper entitled “*A framework for transformative social innovation*” (Haxeltine et al 2016) which presents in skeletal terms the theoretical and conceptual framing of TSI developed in the TRANSIT project. This *TSI framework* builds on sustainability transition studies, social innovation research, social psychology studies of empowerment and other several other areas of social theory to deliver a bespoke theoretical and conceptual framework that is grounded in a relational ontology and which is being employed as a platform for the development of a middle-range theory of TSI. Next we provide a very brief overview of some key elements of the framework, in particular how we conceptualise social innovation, transformative change, and transformative social innovation (see Haxeltine et al 2016 for more detail).

Social Innovation (SI) is conceptualised as a change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing. We approach social innovation as a process and as a qualitative property of ideas, objects, activities and/or (groups of) people. In this paper we use the abbreviation ‘SI’ to refer to SI as a process. We focus in particular on the agency of individuals, initiatives, networks and fields, and how those engage with ideas, objects, activities and (groups of) people that engage in a change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing. We conceptualise a **SI-initiative** as a collective of people working on ideas, objects and/or activities that are socially innovative. We conceptualise a **SI-network** as a network of initiatives working on ideas, objects and/or activities that are socially innovative. As a general category, we refer to “**SI-agents**” as any collection of individuals, initiatives, networks and/or fields that engage in social innovation.

Transformative change (TC) is conceptualised in terms of institutions and institutional change. Dominant institutions are understood in terms of the dominant ways of doing, organising, framing and knowing, that are established in the *social-material* context (hereafter referred to as the context). Transformative change is then change that challenges, alters and/or replaces dominant institutions in the context. Broad societal transformations such as the industrial revolution, European integration, or the rise of the market economy and ideology of economic liberalism, have historically transformed the context, and these types of transformations form a backdrop to the TRANSIT research; however, in looking for relationships between social innovation and transformative change in contemporary cases we required a more tractable conceptualisation of transformative change.

Transformative social innovation (TSI) can then be conceptualised as a process in which changing social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing, challenge, alter and/or replace dominant institutions in the context. Rather than as a ‘type’ of innovation, we consider TSI as a process that changes existing patterns in the *structuring* of local practices, resulting in varying degrees of institutionalisation as a *TSI journey* unfolds.

Figure 1. A simple 'cognitive map' of our mutual influence model of TSI and a social-material context; also illustrating how propositions on TSI agency and dynamics were developed around four clusters.

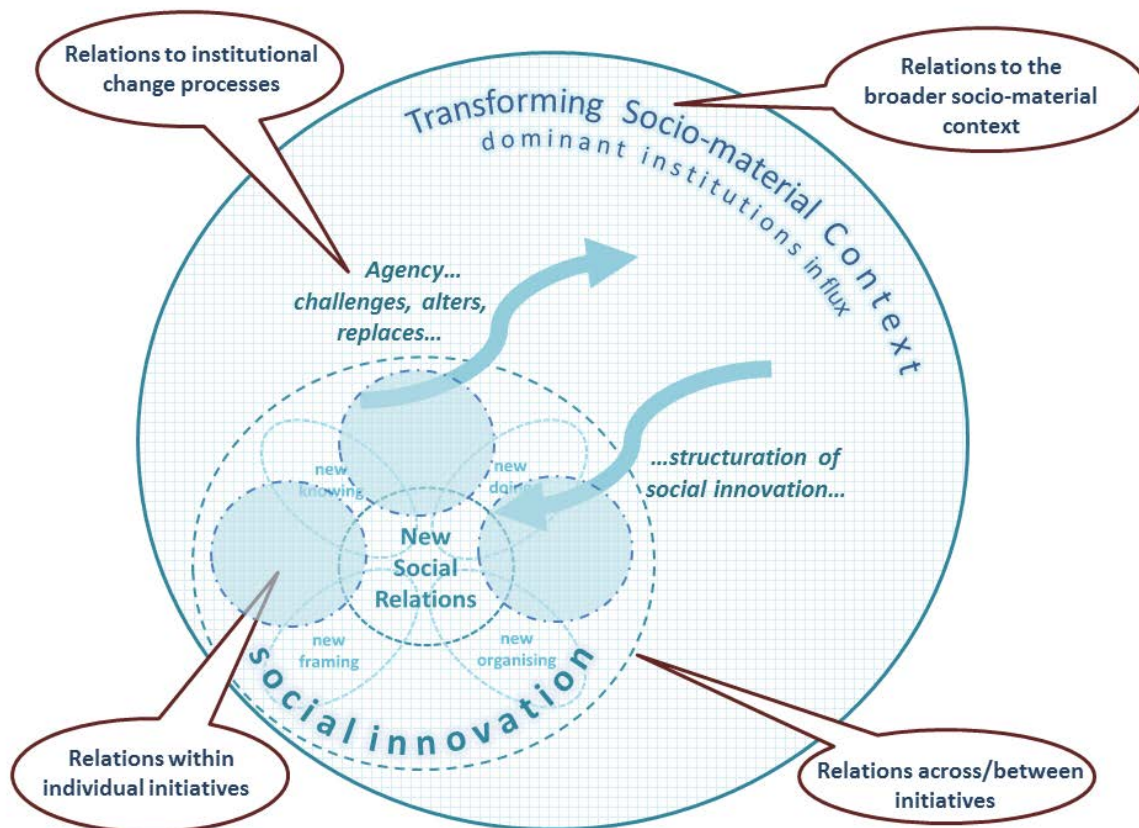


Figure 1 provides a schematic visualisation of the interaction between TSI and the context. TSI processes exist in a dialectical relationship with the context: the TSI-agents involved, and the social relations between them, undergo change. This may, for example, result from voluntary interactions with new partners (such as social impact investors), be due to specific demands imposed upon them by government and judges through legal rulings, or occur as the result of being affected by broader processes of cultural change that enter into or influence TSI projects. TSI processes can be understood as contributing to change in the context, but equally as reproducing the institutional make-up of the context, and, in the case of transformative change, as an emergent property of the context.

The methodology used in developing the propositions is based on a middle-range theory development approach (see Haxeltine et al 2016). The integration of deductive (from literature reviews) and inductive (from completed empirical case studies on 20 social innovation networks¹) insights was facilitated by a workshop held in Copenhagen in May 2016 (see Longhurst 2016). Inspired in part by Fligstein and McAdam (2011), who present their theory of *Strategic Actions Fields* as a set of propositions, we developed the propositions presented in this working paper. The device of developing a set of propositions about TSI provided a pragmatic way to structure a further analysis of the empirical cases. The propositions are grounded in the empirical work but also make use of our theoretical and conceptual framing of TSI, using the

¹ These networks have been studied as embedded case studies both in terms of their transnational networking and in terms of two specific local manifestations (Jørgensen et al. 2015, 2016), see also Table 1 and the TRANSIT website.

language, concepts and framings of the TSI framework (Haxeltine et al 2016). However, gaps and needs for additional theoretical resources were also identified as the propositions were developed. Not all of the cases were used in developing all of the propositions, and table 1 provides both a full list of the cases and a mapping of which ones informed each proposition. The purpose of having just twelve propositions is to provide a synthesising device in the face of the huge complexity of ideas and understandings about TSI. Taken together, the propositions provide a provisional but cohesive statement about what we have learnt so far in the TRANSIT research about the agency and dynamics of TSI; they are not intended as ‘testable’ propositions in a Popperian sense, but have rather been formulated as provisional explanations, based on which ‘testable’ propositions and research questions can be further elaborated.

Propositions were developed for each of four *relational dimensions* implied by the TSI framework as outlined below (see also figure 1) with also a brief statement of the topic addressed by each of the twelve propositions. The ensuing four chapters each focus on one of these clusters.

Cluster a) Relations within individual SI initiatives. How do SIs come about? How do they emerge and perform? Addresses the relations within SI initiatives, including: organisational issues, group dynamics, individual motivations and basic needs, etc. Also addresses how the social-material context enters into micro-level relations through e.g. prevailing norms and values.

- Proposition 1: *On how and why SI initiatives emerge*
- Proposition 2: *On internal tensions and how SI initiatives are sustained*
- Proposition 3: *On the importance of changing social relations within the initiative*

Cluster b) Relations across/between initiatives. This covers what we refer to as ‘networks’ but also cross-network relations. How do different types and forms of SI activity interact with each other? How do they challenge or conflict with each other and their goals? This cluster also addresses the relations within the ‘social innovation field’ of which an individual SI initiative or network is a part of.

- Proposition 4: *On the role of transnational connectivity between SI initiatives*
- Proposition 5: *On the interactions across transnational SI networks*
- Proposition 6: *On the importance of relations to external actors within the SI field*

Cluster c) Relations of SI initiatives to institutional change processes. Addresses the specific types of institutional change processes that SI initiatives are engaged with, but also the (de)politicising aspects of TSI, and, the importance of the relations within the ‘social innovation field’ to institutional change processes. How do SI initiatives and networks engage (individually and collectively) with processes of institutional change? What relations are important in achieving institutional change?

- Proposition 7: *On the interplay of TSI with dominant institutions*
- Proposition 8: *On finding or creating an institutional home*
- Proposition 9: *On the remaking of institutional logics*

Cluster d) Relations of SI initiatives and networks to the broader social-material context. Addresses both the enabling and the constraining relations with a transforming context; here we address how TSI can be explained in terms of historical trends and developments, including but not limited to an explicit focus on how SI initiatives themselves frame, experience and relate to the context. Here we also address how societal crises and chance events may play a role in TSI.

- Proposition 10: *On the social-material evolution out of which TSI emerges*
- Proposition 11: *On the ebb and flow of socially innovative practices*
- Proposition 12: *On the construction of crises and problematic trends*

Table 1. The table shows which transnational social innovation networks were used in developing each of the twelve propositions. Further information on each of these social innovation networks can be readily accessed through the TRANSIT project website (<http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu>).

	Cluster A			Cluster B			Cluster C			Cluster D		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ashoka				●	●	●		●	●	●	●	
Basic Income				●			●			●		●
Credit Unions	●	●	●		●				●	●	●	●
DESI-network				●				●		●	●	
FabLabs				●	●		●			●		
Global Ecovillages Network (GEN)	●			●			●			●	●	●
Hackerspaces					●		●				●	
Impact Hub				●		●		●		●		
INFORSE				●		●				●	●	
Participatory Budgeting							●				●	
Co-operative Alliance			●							●	●	
Living Knowledge				●						●	●	
Living Labs				●	●		●			●	●	
RIPESS				●	●	●			●	●	●	
Seed Movement										●	●	
Shareable							●			●	●	
Slow Food	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●
Time Banks				●	●		●	●		●	●	●
Transition Towns	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Via Campesina		●	●	●	●					●	●	

Cluster A: Relations within individual SI initiatives

Proposition 1. On explaining the emergence of SI initiatives

An important aspect of explaining TSI is to explain the emergence of SI initiatives. *How do innovation journeys start? Why do individuals embark on them and by their perseverance help them to be sustained? And how and why do SI initiatives form, as collectives of individuals with shared ambitions of social transformation? How is SI manifested in interpersonal relations?* TSI theory needs an account of individuals' motivations to embark on TSI journeys in order to serve social and material needs and wishes for emancipation. However TSI theory should not reduce the matter only to individuals' motivations, this proposition seeks to explain how initiatives emerge from collectives of individuals who share common motives, while proposition ten explores how TSI can be explained—at a different scale—as emerging out of the longer-term developments in the historical social-material context.

From the perspective of founding members, SI initiatives emerge as a reaction to current institutional arrangements and trends locking them into certain developments. These developments are perceived as not adequately contributing to optimal human development and the creation of thriving communities that support and enact certain values and principles such as equality, social cohesion, authenticity, autonomy, meaningful social relations etc.. SI initiatives also emerge as a consequence of the identification of an absence of settings/contexts that would support the development of alternatives. The initial set-up of initiatives is thus driven by the desire to replace existing arrangements, create space for alternative ones to exist side by side, or to discover and create new relations, and new patterns of doing, organising, framing and knowing (DOFK), based on different sets of principles and values – thus bringing forth a new vision of individual life, of interpersonal relationships and of community. Some initiatives like ecovillages and Transition towns work on multi-level aspects to create a new system for fulfilling their needs according to values like ecology, self-determination and social cooperation.

To theoretically frame this proposition, we turned to social psychology for perspectives on motivations for joining and maintaining involvement in SI initiatives, and to theories of social identity development and minority influence to understand some of the mechanisms that “glue” these collectives together. As the empirical material pointed to the fact that intrinsic motivation plays an important role, or that finding autonomy, and a sense of “togetherness” or belongingness was deeply rewarding for members (and often a stated reason for engagement persistence), we turned to Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's basic psychological needs and motivations (see Haxeltine et al. 2016 for positioning in the overall TSI framework). SDT suggests that SI initiatives become a viable project (in terms of attracting and maintaining membership) when they are able to provide a context in which autonomous forms of motivation can be sustained over time, which entails supporting environments for the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence. In this case, autonomy refers to the ability to choose one's own acts and to act in line with personal values and identity; relatedness is about feeling an integral part of a group; and, competence is related to the perception of effectiveness in carrying out actions to achieve one's goals and involves a search for stimulation and optimal challenges (Bidee et al., 2013).

Our initial idea, was that the emergence of SI initiatives has much to do with the occurrence of social circumstances in which dominant institutions are not successfully satisfying basic psychological needs. However, after discussions with Kennon Sheldon (a leading proponent of SDT theory) at the TRANSIT Social Learning workshop, it seems that it is problematic to talk about SI emerging from a desire to satisfy basic psychological needs. Two reasons are 1) it is too general to capture the diversity of motivations for founders and very committed members, versus the ones that join but are not necessarily so committed or driven by the same values (e.g. some people join because they want clean and healthy food, not because they believe farmers should not be instrumentalized); and, 2) it leaves out the ideals and values which are a prominent feature of SIs. However, we do find empirical evidence that SIs emerge out of a desire to create a space where *pursuing certain values/ideals/principles and aligning them to practices/behaviours is possible* (and initiatives differ on how ambitious their goals are at the start and in how their transformative goals change over time). Certain values together with the perception of something important being lost or missing in current societal arrangements constitute important moral and emotional drivers for starting or joining SI initiatives. For example, the founders of different Slow Food projects in Spain talk about how they were noticing how products, traditional modes of production, landscapes and biodiversity were being lost and mention how preserving or protecting local culture and “a way of life” that they had experienced as children, was an important motivator for becoming involved.

We also find empirical evidence that both highly committed members as well as those less actively involved *are then motivated to persist in their involvement when being a member of the initiative provides satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence*. Leaders or those with organizational roles often understand this and actively engage new members by providing a context in which these needs can be satisfied. The temporary or continuous absence of such satisfaction can lead to de-motivation, internal conflict over which direction to pursue and/or some members leaving the SI as they perceive that it is changing into a different entity than the one they sought out in the first place. It can sometimes be brought about by contextual pressures, for example the Spanish Credit Union, Fiare, had to become a bank in order to continue providing services.

Both local initiatives and networks understand the importance of preserving the ethos created by their originally established values and actively shape contexts in ways that can allow for the satisfaction of these psychological needs. Initiative members seem to be driven by a frustration and an ensuing ideal to bring about or make possible a new context, which is more in line with their values and beliefs. For example, many Credit Unions started out from the peace movement and the anti-apartheid militancy, from a desire to live with an ethos of responsibility and accountability regarding the use of monetary resources. Specific initiatives appeared when people face the impossibility to carry forward projects that have a positive social or environmental impact and find no support in the mainstream banking system. Creating a space where these projects are possible and moving away from the traditions that go against their values and ethical principles become the main drivers for these initiatives. Alienation with the treatment provided by the traditional system – the logic of profit making embedded in the traditional banking system – motivates mobilization for change.

For the case of Slow Food, the desire for change stems out of a reaction to two factors. Firstly, the “fast food” system – a fast producing food system that destroys biodiversity, unifies flavours, drives food quality down and relies on exploitative relations – with big agri-business having the advantage and farmers being anonymous, instrumentalized and eventually deprived of their land

and means of existence. Secondly, from a motivation to preserve community traditions that are passed down from generation to generation and recover the pleasure around the production and consumption of food. Again, members seem to be motivated by a desire to create possibilities for aligning their own values with their practices. Members also understand the importance of autonomy-supporting relationships. The Slow Food international association allows considerable freedom in the forms of association – thus facilitating considerable autonomy for individual members and local initiatives to organize themselves in ways that correspond with their values and ideals. Generating feelings of belonging and relatedness is also perceived as contributing to empowerment, through the creation of a common sense of identity within the framework of a global movement, and learning from shared experiences.

Besides exploring motivations for joining and staying, this proposition also explores how SI is manifested in interpersonal relationships within initiatives. Enacting new interpersonal relationships is part of the socially innovative character of SI initiatives. Slow Food focuses for example on changing the relationship between producers, intermediaries (e.g. distributors, chefs) and consumers, by calling the latter co-producers and promoting recognition of and gratitude for the role of producers in the food system. Credit Unions focus on changing the relationships between banks and communities in which they exist and facilitate new modes of inclusive community in which social and environmental objectives can be pursued and previously marginalized individuals and groups are considered worthy of financial support and trust – treated as creative and capable of entrepreneurial activity within a framework of shared risks. From a sociological perspective, in some of the initiatives we find new modes of community, operating in a ‘post-individualised’ manner, that aim to integrate individual freedom, self-realization and responsibility, with e.g. a readiness to share possessions and a mutual long-term commitment (Kunze 2012). In postmodern, individualized societies, people join ecovillages or co-housings on a voluntary base, often searching for nature-connected and more communal life styles. It can be argued that ‘postmodern individuals’ living together in community require completely new forms of social structure/s.

Proposition 1. *SI initiatives and networks emerge as actors that come together in attempts to find better ways of pursuing certain values/ideals/principles (of how relationships and communities should be transformed) and aligning them to specific (novel) practices/behaviours. Both highly committed members and less active members are motivated to persist with their involvement when they experience support for autonomy, relatedness and competence as members of the initiative. Establishing new relationships between actors and modes of community are an essential part of the socially innovative character of SI initiatives, and relational transformation processes entail resolving tensions around diverging sets of motivations.*

Challenges for further research: So far, the confrontation with the empirics developed here, draws upon a specific theoretical perspective from social psychology and a next step will be to further integrate this with the TSI framework, which conceives of a relational and social-material social order. This proposition also requires further development drawing on additional SI cases. Finally, our work on this aspect of TSI also implies exploring why individuals do *not* embark on TSI journeys, why they experience difficulties to persevere, and why they disembark. Answers could be developed by greater attention to empirical evidence of other than socially innovative behaviours that emerge simultaneously with the SI initiatives focused upon: one can think of resignation, passivity, retreat into the personal sphere and care ethics-type particularism, cynicism, denial, aggression, etc. This would help to construct a balanced TSI theory, one that avoids being optimistically-biased towards innovation and constructive-collective action.

Proposition 2. On internal tensions and sustaining SI initiatives

While proposition one addresses the emergence of SI initiatives, this proposition addresses the questions of how and why individuals persevere on a journey, stick with an initiative and invest in it over time, or rather disembark. It addresses how initiatives are sustained and maintain their appeal including the internal tensions they must deal with.

We started from the assumption that, the satisfaction of members' basic psychological needs can be considered an internally oriented function of SI initiatives. Over time and after their emergence, SI initiatives develop interactions with dominant institutions and other actors in their social-material context however, for which externally oriented functions need to be fulfilled. One can think of clear and concerted communication, consolidated organisational-legal form, binding statutes and mission statements, clearer definitions of roles or even professionalization, procedures to increase effectiveness and possibly hierarchy to manage a growing organisation. Such organizational implications of striving for impact may distract from the aforementioned 'internal' function of providing a social environment that leads members to experience the satisfaction that attracted them to the initiative in the first place. Such satisfaction is related to, among others, freedom to design and carry out projects, experimentation with and development of new abilities, unstructured face to face interactions, and discussions and sharing of experience. Such experiences contribute to a sense of autonomy, they contribute to the emotional experiences of belongingness, help build a common identity and experiencing a sense of competence and impact. A tension may therefore arise between the internal versus external functions of the initiative, which may increase the more an initiative feels compelled to manage and control its interactions with its social environment. As initiatives change through interactions with the wider context, they will be able to maintain their ability to attract and engage only if they keep delivering on the promise of offering a context in which such interpersonal experiences can take place whilst at the same time also engaging in transformative efforts.

Most of the initiatives seem to value active participation of members and collective decision-making, and work to establish internal governance structures that allow for this. When differences of visions arise, the initiatives attempt to allow space for debate and reaching a consensus about the direction to take. If they do not reach workable compromises, a part of the membership might become estranged and leave, or become less actively involved. Initiatives actively search for ways in which they can promote an active and growing membership, and adapt to external pressures and circumstances by not pushing members away. Initiatives keep a certain degree of flexibility in their internal organization, to allow for a diversity of values, ideas about strategy, and actual practices to fit. This generates the conditions for autonomy support, thus also facilitating collective agency – articulating collective strategies and carrying out actions which most endorse in spite of the diversity of goals, motivations, values and ideas about strategy.

In the case of Credit Unions the recent process through which they have become a bank and merged with the Italian Banca Popolare Etica created tensions for some of the members, who feel that the smaller face to face contexts are being lost (Dumitru et al. 2015). Members also noted that acquiring knowledge on diverse aspects of ethical financing and learning new skills had been among the best motivators, but recent developments have created more pressures for efficiency, with initiatives assigning tasks to members that fit their existing skills. Losing the incentive of learning opportunities was perceived as de-motivating, and when the degree of institutionalization became higher, there was a feeling for some that the conditions that attracted

them to the initiative were gone. In addition, some of the members experienced a sense of losing control over decision-making in the merger, which led some to leave.

Another important internal tension arises when most membership is nominal or only uses the initiative for a particular service but there is a lack of active involvement from most, which leads to burnouts of the few active volunteers and to internal tensions. Active members tend to adapt to this and still keep flexible criteria for membership. They sometimes adopt a strategy of first attracting members by being flexible in requests and allowing each person to find their place, and then stimulate active participation, as members feel welcome, build connections to others and start endorsing the values and the importance of the work. For example, founders and highly committed members Transition Towns Hungary deliberately promote having a good time to potential members and community in general. They engage them through the promise of good food or playing together (both positive emotional experiences), which contributes to the building of connections. Leaders also actively shape a context of internal freedom and flexibility and are careful about focusing discussions away from political positions and clashes and towards common objectives. Leaders naturally understand this and are patient and flexible to also attract more politically conservative Hungarians. They are facilitators – consciously creating these spaces of connection and freedom.

These conditions are less important when the objective that a SI initiative pursues is related to threats to the livelihoods of a particular social group. Being an effective social change agent might take precedence, in such cases, over creating a context for autonomy, positive connection or developing competence. Via Campesina illustrates such a case, in which the fight against agribusiness that affects the material livelihoods of members is the most important motivating factor for staying involved.

Based on the learning from the cases, the idea of a necessary balancing of individual needs with the demands of external contexts is re-stated as a looser understanding of keeping membership motivated. This has to do not only with endorsing the principles of the initiative, but also with having fun and enjoying activities, developing a sense of belonging, experiencing the freedom to try out new things and develop and carry out ideas.

Proposition 2. *SI initiatives can have a sustained operation and impact only if they can handle the tension between keeping their membership motivated (which has to do with their continued willingness to endorse the principles of the initiative, but also with experiencing connection and belongingness, autonomy and having space for being stimulated, and developing competence etc.) and externally oriented ambitions towards achieving transformative impact, which tend to require a degree of formalization and conformity that is not always in line with all individuals' needs or motivations. As SI initiatives grow and develop they encounter different stages which require them to adapt, or develop afresh, new forms of internal organisation and governance in order to survive and prosper.*

Challenges for further research: This proposition corresponds with empirical data on internal governance, tensions and cleavages within SI initiatives and networks, social learning processes, and more generally with data on the developments of SI initiatives over time. One further observation that we find important here is that there is not much data available regarding internal strife and how that gets solved and handled. This is a challenge to be taken up in future research.

Proposition 3. On the importance of changing social-material relations within the initiative

This proposition addresses how what is constituted *within* the initiative actually plays a vital part in the eventual achievement of transformative impacts. It builds on previous work on the importance of changing social relations at the interpersonal level, but broadens it to address changing *social-material relations* within the SI initiative. Furthermore the dynamic that we are interested in, is re-stated in terms of a focus on the ways in which experimentation with, or the modelling of, novel or unfamiliar social-material relations within the SI initiative can in itself be a *necessary precursor* to wider institutional change in the context. The proposition is therewith brought more in line with the overall co-productive perspective on TSI, which conceives of a social-material social order.

First, we need to clarify how we are using the notion of institutions—especially in terms of institutions versus interpersonal relations. Following the TSI framework paper (Haxeltine et al. 2016) institutions are understood here as the norms, rules, conventions and values (Cajaiba-Santana 2014, p46) that structure (both constrain and enable) social relations and interactions (as the established patterns of doing, organising, framing and knowing). We refer to both informal and formal institutions, but note that the distinction may be blurred and fluid in practice (Hodgson 2006). Human interactions are therefore not outside of the realm of institutions, but rather, in many SI initiatives, changing interpersonal relations means already changing institutions. Furthermore, it is important to avoid an implicit assumption that institutional relations are static. Instead, an adequate conceptual framing for developing explanations of the role of SI in transformative change requires that we capture the change-dynamic between changes in interpersonal relations within the SI initiative and the changing nature of institutional relations. It is precisely in the change-dynamic that we wish to address, in a static situation interpersonal relations can be expected to mirror established institutional arrangements, but in a transformative change process, experimentation with new interpersonal relations might provide a step that exemplifies, supports, and even leads to wider institutional change.

We can illustrate this framing of social-material relations with the example *garden sharing*, as developed in the Transition Towns movement. This involves connecting people with no gardens with people who have gardens that they can no longer fully make use of. The gardens can then be used to grow produce. The practice is clearly about changing social relations at the interpersonal level, but it is also about changing the material use of land and artefacts—it needs to be understood in terms of changing social-material relations. Through its impact of providing an alternative food source, (albeit a modest one...) it links to wider webs of social-ecological relations associated with the food sector, locally, nationally and beyond. A focus only on the changing interpersonal social relations in this example would potentially miss important aspects of the story (proximity of garden providers to garden users, state and fertility of the gardens, etc.) and would miss important links to ecology and sustainability. If such an experiment is sustained it can lead to wider implications for social-material relations, for example, a celebrity TV gardener might popularize the idea. Thus, we can clarify that the further uptake of the innovation might be the result of deliberate strategies on the part of member-activists, or it may be the result of the initiative caught up within broader developments in the context.

The case of Via Campesina also provides an example that supports the idea that changing interpersonal relationships is an integral part of changing existing arrangements. In their fight against the injustice of agribusiness, the initiative members started reflecting on how unequal gender relations in families are actually contributing to the same power imbalances. Changing

them from domination to cooperation became a focus in the initiative. The case of Co-Housing also provides clear evidence for this proposition: interpersonal relations need to change for making living together possible. New institutions are created in neighbourhoods, and the city had to change and adapt to accommodate the new reality of co-housing. An important point then is that, in some cases at least, changing social relations *is* institutional change (albeit at the scale of the local initiative).

Both interpersonal and organizational relations are thus a *locus of institutional change*, as the way in which they are enacted contributes to either *perpetuating or changing institutions*. Working towards a synthesis then, we can state that, in attempting to achieve their goals, SI initiatives identify both formal and informal institutions that shape current social relations (interpersonal and organizational) and employ different strategies for institutional change, which can include: enacting new rules of interactions in their interpersonal interactions both within the SI initiative and with other people in the local communities in which they are active (e.g. Slow Food – with friends, family outside the initiative; or more egalitarian relations between producers and consumers based on self-responsibility and trust; Credit Unions – with clients); enacting new rules of interaction between organisations (e.g. TT Hungary – members actively engage in cooperative and non-defensive behaviour with local government officials to break distrust that dominated relationships between government and civil society); engaging in direct lobbying and political action to change specific formal institutions (regulations, policies, laws, position papers etc); and, engaging in educational efforts in order to shape “new” thought or behaviour governed by new informal institutions (e.g. Slow Food through their University of Gastronomic Sciences).

SI actors identify institutions that need to change in order for a new state of affairs to be possible. They often start with an identification of a problem or a dissatisfaction and then develop an analysis that includes defining the institutions that shape current social, political and economic interactions. The practice of new types of interactions includes interpersonal and organizational relations (e.g. between individuals, and between the SI initiative and government bodies for example). Through this practice and confrontation with what works and what does not, they learn and refine both their internal rules, as well as strategies for engagement with relevant actors in the social-material context.

Proposition 3. *Explaining the contribution of the internal relations and dynamics of a SI initiative to its wider transformative impact requires a focus on the social-material relations of the initiative—a focus solely on changing interpersonal relations potentially misses important aspects of causation and is blind to the links to ecological relations and sustainability. The experimentation with, or ‘modelling’ of, novel or unfamiliar social-material relations within the SI initiative and enacting new rules of interaction both within the initiative and outside it (e.g. in the local communities in which they are embedded) are a key part of the process of overcoming dominant social-material relationships. Through constant reflexivity, SI agents engage in, and test out, new relational dynamics and then deploy strategies for achieving a wider uptake of the social innovation, by linking to broader developments in the social-material context.*

Challenges for further research: By practicing (modelling) new ‘proto-rules’ for individual and organizational interaction, and new types and qualities of social relations at the interpersonal human level, SI initiatives are able to both demonstrate what is possible and provide a necessary basis for bringing about change in the wider social-material context. Still to be developed for this proposition is a more comprehensive theoretical framing and grounding in the empirics of the nature, function and importance of changing social-material relations in the networks studied.

Cluster B: Relations across/between SI initiatives

Proposition 4. On the transnational connectivity of SI initiatives

A key theoretical challenge in developing explanations of TSI is to account for the dispersed agency that characterizes current social order and TSI phenomena particularly (cf. Scott-Cato & Hillier 2010 with their compelling metaphor of TSI developing and spreading through 'rhizomic' structures). We have therefore adopted a Jasanoffian co-production framework, and more generally we tap from theoretical sources that are sensitive to dispersed agency and the importance of networked and embedded agents (see Haxeltine et al. 2016). These remind us that TSI journeys are seldom travelled alone, that they tend to be intertwined with many others, and that TSI agency tends to be locally rooted yet also globally connected. An important theoretical issue is then how much TSI agency and TSI achievements can be ascribed to transnational networks (whether as paper tigers and publicity machines or as powerhouses of resources, our co-production framing acknowledges both as productive).

In developing this proposition, we observe that international networking among SI initiatives develops at different stages and for different reasons. In some cases, an international network is created very soon after and springing from the emergence of local initiatives, like with the formation of the international FabLab network (MIT) and the Transition Towns Network (Totnes). In other cases, an international network is created when the participants in an existing informal international networking arrangement find it necessary to create a formal network. This was the case with INFORSE in relation to the Rio-summit in 1992 (in order to make renewable energy more visible at the summit), and the Living Knowledge network of science shops when connections to the EU Commission (and related funding and lobbying opportunities) made it advantageous to create a formal international network. The recent formation of the network of Living Labs had the same type of background as Living Knowledge.

The SI networks studied can be distinguished (in part) based on the (initial) primary focus of the network, which might be on new practices, new narratives of change and framings, new ways of organising, or new (forms of) knowledge or ways of learning, or any combination of these:

- Focused on learning processes: Ashoka, GEN, DESIS, Time Banks, INFORSE and quite some others seem to exchange tools, methods, software – actively engaging in learning processes.
- Focus on discursive/framing dimension: RIPESS has constructed an 'ideological banner' and employed it in re-framing and making (more) visible various social/solidarity-based economic practices. It works at developing identity, stabilizing narratives of change, and creating exposure for activities that are often rather inconspicuous/not recognized as innovative, alternative, or challenging dominant institutions (partly as they have been out there for quite some time already and as such are not evidently recognised as new/innovative). Similarly, Slow Food created a banner, a narrative, for initiatives and involved individuals who became activist and developed transformative ambitions. GEN and RIPESS also undertake mapping – to make the field visible to themselves and to others. Shareable with their 'mapjam' events also do exactly this.
- Focus on knowing/framing dimension: Stabilizing the meaning of the basic income concept, and developing a repertoire of academic arguments and evidence base, Basic Income/BIEN is exemplary for this focus. INFORSE is another good example.

The international networks can play roles at both the international level as lobbying actor, like the role of the international seed movement network, Via Campesina (agro-ecological family farming), Living Knowledge (science shops) and ENOLL (Living Labs). There are also several examples of international networks playing a role at the national and/or local level by providing access to different types of resources (tools, guidelines, access to local experienced actors etc.) and symbolic resources (credibility, legitimacy, reputation – for example starting up a new initiative) – for example Transition Network, Living Knowledge, GEN, Ashoka, FabLabs and Impact Hubs. This does not imply that such resources from an international network play an important role in the development of all local initiatives. The degree to which local initiatives are members of an international network seems also to differ. For example, only a limited part of ecovillages are members of the international network.

Several international networks support the development of new local initiatives. There are different levels of guidance in this development. Some networks expect certain activities of local initiatives (like within the network of FabLabs, the Ashoka network and the network of Impact Hubs) which could be called “guided expansion” of the network. Others apply training and mentoring from more experienced local initiatives to new initiatives adapted to the local conditions without specific demands, like the support for development of new science shop initiatives within Living Knowledge.

Our case studies have also brought forward substantial amounts of relevant empirics on the function of the international networks in facilitating the coproduction and dissemination of new narratives of change. Globally articulated narratives of change, such as those around Slow Food, social solidarity economy (RIPESS), or sustainable energy (INFORSE) act as empowering forces for SI members in different social-material contexts. They have transformative impact in that these networks act upon their narratives, thus put these into practice. However, such narratives can also have transformative impact when they start to be picked up by other institutional actors as legitimate alternatives to the current arrangements in terms of satisfaction of basic psychological or material needs.

The resources in an international network can be highly distributed and mainly be embedded in the network members (e.g. Living Knowledge or INFORSE) or they can be centralized with resources embedded in an international secretariat of some sort (e.g. GEN or ASHOKA). Based on the cases we can articulate the material dimension/s of network formation – with ICT providing a very obvious and crucial set of material agents/mediators, but also methodologies, mappings, tools etc.

Differing degrees of formalisation can also be observed in the international networks. Some of the networks are registered as an NGO, while others manifest as a quite informal networking activity among local initiatives. The networks have widely differing levels of resources in terms of staff, offices, funding (separately from the local initiatives), or whether they carry out distinct activities on their own, etc. For example, at Living Knowledge all the activities are carried out by local initiatives. The network is not a legal entity and has no resources. Some grassroots initiatives may even perceive formalized networking as disempowering, with Hackerspaces being an example. Shareable does exist as a formal legal entity, however all activities are carried out by the members. The formalised part of the network is an office of five people in San Francisco. The Co-housing association on the other hand has offices, staff, financial resources etc. and carries out own activities. Time Banks also have a company at the core, which develops the software that enables the network.

The empowering function of transnational networks is easily assumed, yet it is not entirely evident for typically locally rooted TSI action. Becoming part of transnational SI networks *can* be empowering for local SI initiatives. The emergence of a common identity transforms the meaning of ideas and actions of local SI actors, which leads to empowerment (in the sense of e.g. an increased confidence) for transformative action. Belonging to a global community generates empowering outcomes, such as validation of local strategies for transformation, a higher sense of self-efficacy/competence, support and resilience in overcoming obstacles, which leads to persistence in efforts towards transformation. Learning from actors and initiatives in other contexts plays a big part in this process; the awareness of ideas and action appearing in many different parts of the world provides resilience as a consequence of feeling part of a significant majority. These processes include application of different types of resources developed in one context in other contexts through processes of dis-embedding and re-embedding of concepts, strategies etc. However, the cases also indicate that being part of a transnational SI network is not always experienced to be as empowering as portrayed in the above account. In the Transition Network case, for example, we found (nearly all of) the empowerment and success of local initiatives to be a product of the local context. In this case, there is a ‘sense of being part of a bigger thing’ that is derived from being part of the wider network. However, that sense does actually seem to be less important when it comes to making a tangible difference on the ground. The legitimizing, identity-enhancing, sense-making functions of shared narratives of changes might be important – but other contextual factors can be more relevant.

Proposition 4. *The work that a transnational SI network does covers: i) Facilitating the diffusion and/or innovation of new practices, new ideas, framings and narratives, and new knowledge and learning across the network. ii) Empowering the constituent local SI initiatives to more effectively engage in processes of institutional change in their respective contexts. iii) Exercising power and influence at the level of the transnational network—by directly lobbying (trans-)national governments to change rules and regulations, by building alliances with other societal actors, and/or by securing (or creating) new resources for the network and its members. iv) Being part of a transnational network (that is globally connected but locally rooted) empowers local SI initiatives to better engage with institutional change in their respective social-material contexts (thereby increasing the transformative impact of SI initiatives).*

Challenges for further research: Articulating the work that the transnational SI networks do in TSI journeys is clearly as difficult as it is important. Further challenges for research are to fine-tune the tentative typology (formulated in the proposition above), and to further explain the different ways in which (the different functions of) the network give rise to local and trans-local forms of agency that are intertwined and mutually (dis)empowering.

Proposition 5. On the interactions across SI networks

An important part of TSI agency can be attributed to the relations developing between local initiatives with others through transnational networking. Apart from the various ways in which actors empower each other *within* SI networks, it is also relevant to consider how interaction patterns develop between or *across* such SI networks. The interactions and (partial) convergences between SI networks give rise to emergent ‘*ecologies of SI*’, as Nicholls and Murdock (2012) described the phenomenon. We can roughly distinguish interactions that are mutually empowering and mutually disempowering, i.e. synergistic or interferential interactions (Cf. Pel 2014 on intersecting innovations). Acknowledging the diversity of the networks and their

transformative ambitions (cf. Stirling 2011), the useful idea of a SI ecology should *not* be taken to imply that these are coherent. Ecologies do emerge, but full convergence into some singular transformative ambition would be an exceptional course of evolution.

The interactions across SI networks are theoretically important for the development of TSI understanding—but the coherence and mutual empowerment involved are empirical questions. The proposition reflects our empirical observations of diverse SI networks that arrive at quite complementary strategies and actions, despite having quite different transformative ambitions and narratives of change. Diverse transformative ambitions may align around similar or synergistic actions. Vice versa, aligned transformative ambitions may still give rise to quite different/distinct actions and strategies under the influence of differing contextual factors. Nevertheless we propose that finding commonalities of framing visions and narratives across SI networks is an important stage in how groups of TSI initiatives might achieve widespread transformative impacts. For example, the attempts to create critical mass and unified ideological programs by RIPESS and the struggles with fragmentation and evaporation of the new doing, organising, framing and knowing (DOFK) brought forward. Credit Unions, Time Banks and Slow Food all display controversies over different translations and versions of their new approaches, ideas, practices.

This proposition reflects strategic considerations on the level of the set of 20 networks studied. Does this set of diverse transformation initiatives display smoothly organized mutual learning and the formation of a converging and bundling societal force or “third movement” (cf. Kemp et al., 2016), or does it display a fragmented “re-invention of the wheel” type process, and multitude of movements that only intermittently and coincidentally reinforce each other? Another important theoretical consideration is that the convergences between networks may be planned, but can easily happen ‘behind their backs’ as well. *What strategies do SI networks uphold that drives them to engage in cross-network interactions? Or do these interactions ‘just happen’ to them?* These are typical questions generated from a framing of TSI-agency as relational and distributed.

Within our multiple-case set of 20 networks, the following evidence is particularly pertinent to the proposition. Firstly, there is the example of RIPESS, which has been deliberately constituted to become a network-of-networks. As its acronym states quite explicitly, RIPESS seeks to unite the various initiatives and networks that promote the social economy and solidarity economy. The latter is generally understood as a radicalization of the former, which is seen to have lost much of its transformative potential. The unification addresses how RIPESS seeks to resolve tensions between networks, articulate their convergences and common grounds, and avoid fragmentation within the field of these alternative economies. RIPESS thus unites or creates alignments between initiatives including Credit Unions, Food Sovereignty/Seed movement, Transition Towns, Via Campesina. It aligns with certain social entrepreneurship networks as well, but members are generally a bit suspicious about Ashoka’s individualizing, ‘neoliberal’ way of promoting alternative economies. This latter example then indicates the ‘fine line’ between synergistic and interferential interactions.

A second example shows an emergent pair of quite diverse yet converging SI networks. The Basic Income (BIEN) and Time Banks (TB) interaction indicates how networks can have very different activities and narratives of change whilst converging in some quite particular elements of their transformative ambitions and impacts. BIEN advocates a universal Basic Income that as such requires governmental rolling-out/implementation. By contrast, TB starts locally, through communities that develop their parallel social security practices. However, as TB

institutionalizes, they are realizing new DOFK that in some respects can be understood as being 'in line' with those pursued by BIEN. These two networks converge on the transformative ambitions towards a social security that is uncoupled from wage – even if they are quite different in their concrete actions, and are acting in parallel.

Thirdly, there is empirical evidence of networks that are not so much clustering into networks-of-networks or co-evolving, but rather display porous boundaries and intertwinements with other networks. The local Transition Towns can be seen from one viewpoint as (new) bundles of pre-existing DOFK – many of which can also be found in other networks. So one particular network can play a recombinant role among many networks (with or without their support). With FabLabs, Living Labs, and Hackerspaces: some local initiatives are members of all or several of these networks, some at the same time, and others at different times. Transnational SI networks are not entirely separate entities – the notion of distinct networks is just a (sensible) methodological demarcation that makes case studies manageable and comparable.

Fourthly, there is empirical evidence that helps to substantiate the different resources and networking practices through which the cross-network interaction occurs. These 'modes of conveyance' include: international meetings and fora (cf. Slow Food); generation and dissemination of educational materials (also Slow Food); use of internet and ICT (crucial for some, like science shops, for others just a tool among many, like the seed network, Brighton; links to interesting question about how are the cross--network interactions social-materially shaped?); implicit or deliberate processes of coming to common problem framings / narratives of change; creating joint or linked experiments, pilot projects or demonstrations; creating common platforms for lobbying governments/other institutional actors.

Proposition 5. *Interactions across transnational SI networks are an important feature of TSI processes: they lead to a coevolutionary dynamic between networks, and may facilitate the diffusion and/or innovation of (new) practices, (new) ideas, framings and narratives of change, and (new) knowledge and learning. As well as interaction/co-evolution between networks, we also observe intertwinement and overlap between them. SI networks can empower each other, but they can also disempower—a distinction can be made between synergistic versus interferential interactions. Different SI networks may arrive at synergistic strategies and actions, despite having quite different narratives of change—so synergistic actions may be linked not only to a coherence in narratives of change but sometimes rather to their (implicit and possibly contingent) complementarity. We propose that the potential of TSI to contribute to transformative change is highly dependent on the extent to which individual SI networks are able to achieve a complementarity or synergy with (diverse) other SI networks, especially in terms of the new (systems of) practices and new/altered institutions being proposed (their transformative ambitions), and ultimately including the introduction and consolidation of new values, norms, and cultural forms.*

Challenges for further research: This proposition on the interactions across SI networks can be elaborated and specified further in several ways. A significant part of the empirical analysis is yet to be done. Thus, further study of the connections and intersections between TSI cases is an important challenge for future research. The topic of this proposition could also be developed further by tapping into the literature on social movements and global activism. In any case, cross-network interactions are of clear theoretical relevance to the development of a TSI theory. The interactions across transnational SI networks could be an important feature of TSI for their potential coevolutionary dynamics. They may help to explain how a TSI spreads and gains influence, and how specific SI networks are able to increase their transformative impacts.

Proposition 6. On the importance of relations within the SI field

This proposition adds to the previous two that TSI impacts, and co-produced agency, need to be attributed to networked, intertwined, highly dispersed, 'rhizomic' agency. The partial convergences between networks leads to what we can refer to as *ecologies of SI* (Nicholls & Murdock 2012), which are then in turn embedded in a *SI field*, that may be linked to one or more *social movements*.

We note then the need for three distinct concepts as a basis for explaining how the relations among SI initiatives and networks are patterned within the context. '**Ecology of SI**' (Nicholls & Murdock 2012) refers mostly to the activities and bundles of doing, organising, framing and knowing (DOFK) that, sometimes and to some extent, may converge across networks of SI. An ecology of SI can still be quite heterogeneous. '**SI field**' provides "a concept of the arena of social action" (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, p20), individual and collective action inside fields is necessary to provide a way to: "...understand if a meso-level social structure is emerging, stable, or in the process of transformation. In developing this proposition we use the Strategic Action Field (SAF) notion of Fligstein & McAdam (as outlined in the TSI Framework paper, see Haxeltine et al 2016). '**Social Movement**' refers to quite strong and principled agreement on transformative ambitions, and to deliberate attempts to unify ideologically (into one movement rather than several); can be conceptualized as collectivities working with some degree of organization and continuity to promote or resist change through a mixture of extra-institutional and institutional means (McAdam & Snow 2010). The focus is usually on achieving social change through political change rather than (transformative) social innovation per se.

Similarly to propositions 4 and 5, this proposition follows mainly from the TSI theory development in which TSI is understood to be co-produced and carried by dispersed, networked agency. However, the proposition is informed by the evidence on 'field formation' that has been analysed briefly in the initial synthesis of the case study data (Jørgensen et al. 2016). Obvious examples include the social solidarity economy political movement (RIPESS), food sovereignty movement (Slow Food), maker movement and the social entrepreneurship type initiatives (such as the Impact Hub and Ashoka) and sustainable energy (INFORSE, but also Transition Network). The important aspect of these 'movements' is that they contain, carry and are fed by various SI initiatives – but also contain other actors: activists, protesters, NGOs, governmental organisations, think tanks, businesses, universities etc. Some of our SI initiatives are strongly connected with the surrounding fields/movements, and are the innovative parts of them. Others not so. And in some social movements there is not so much SI going on, even if they're aiming for transformative change as well – transformative action occurs through direct action (such as Occupy), protest, political lobbying, for example.

What relations and resemblance between SI networks and social movements do we observe in the TRANSIT cases? Some of the studied social innovations in TRANSIT are not based in social movements, like science shops and DESIS Labs, although it is not necessarily easy to assess whether a social movement exists in relation to a certain social innovation. For a social innovation like FabLabs, some researchers would probably refer to the maker movement as a social movement, which FabLabs are part of. RIPESS is a useful illustrative example, as it considers itself as a network-of-networks that unites a political movement of alternative economies. This self-identification as political movement takes precedence over the identity as a SI initiative/network: 'social innovation' is mistrusted for the neoliberal connotations attached to it by BEPA, Young Foundation etc. The solidarity economy movement is seen to have evolved out of a longer

tradition of alternative economies, led by ideas of Marx, Proudhon, and Polanyi. RIPESS is active in mapping, charting, articulating and demarcating the various social/solidarity initiatives as they exist in various contexts and across the global North and South. As political movement, RIPESS typically aligns with political movements and Left political parties, such as the Brazilian workers' party, Spanish Podemos, or the Greek Syriza. In further developing a TSI theory, it will be important to make clear analytical distinctions between TSIs and social movements, and to better explain how TSI/SI dynamics intersect with those of (which) contemporary social movements.

Finally, we turn to the interplay of transformation versus capture in TSI dynamics. Pel & Bauler (2015) argue that the (process of the) institutionalisation of social innovation finds itself “in between transformation and capture”: the moment where social innovations are confronted with dominant institutions, this is where it gets really exciting, on the one hand it is the moment where real transformative change can happen, on the other hand it is the moment where SIs can get captured. We propose that not only individual SI initiatives and networks but also entire SI ecologies and SI fields can be involved in a dynamic of capture (rather than transformation) and that it is possible to empirically distinguish both such capture dynamics in the SI field and direct reactions against it. We propose that such a dynamic can enter into any dimension of the diffusion and/or innovation of new DOFK. Transformative ambitions can generally be slightly adapted into less-transformation-oriented narratives of ‘meeting grand societal challenges’, for example. As it has been analysed in transitions studies, ‘regime actors’ work hard to (re)frame narratives of change around global challenges such as energy and climate change in terms that support (sustain) the continuance of dominant institutions. Loorbach (2014) characterises sustainable development as a response to the problems of late modernity that “itself has become part of the problem” (p32), as environmental policies and sustainable development discourse have “*become part of these established regimes and have primarily served to make them a bit less unsustainable*”. Several of the cases responded directly to the aftermath of the great financial crisis of 2008 with attempts to counter responses from regime players, and increase the coherence of narratives of change across civil society (see Loorbach et al. 2016).

Proposition 6. *The interactions and (partial) convergences between SI networks (as addressed in proposition 5) give rise to emergent and potentially synergistic ‘ecologies of SI’ (Nicholls and Murdock 2012). These ecologies of SI furthermore exist within a SI field where the changing relations between the SI networks and other social entities (including social movements) can greatly enhance (or interfere with) the potential for engaging with specific agendas of transformative change. We propose that the potential of TSI to contribute to transformative change is highly dependent on the extent to which a complementarity and synergy in action emerges within distinct SI fields that coalesce around (broadly-framed) global-local challenges. Furthermore, we propose that the dynamic of capture versus transformation (in the institutionalisation of SI) can also play out at the level of the SI field—the ‘capture’ process can involve any of the dimensions of doing, organising, framing and knowing.*

Challenges for further research: There are good theoretical reasons to further elaborate and substantiate this proposition on the formation and co-productive significance of SI fields. This unit of analysis is pertinent to the overall understanding of co-produced TSI, we have learnt theoretically. Moreover, several of our empirical studies into SI local manifestations, transnational networks and their interactions with dominant institutions have brought forward pertinent empirical data that can be revisited with a particular focus on the ‘field’. Finally, it is important to realize that this proposition 6 is necessarily highly intertwined with the propositions developed in ‘cluster C’ in this paper.

Cluster C: Relations to institutional change processes

Proposition 7. On the interplay of TSI with dominant institutions

This proposition develops a view of TSI as having a dialectical relation with established institutions. Institutions are understood as the norms, rules, conventions and values (Cajaiba-Santana 2014, p46) that structure (both constrain and enable) social relations and actions (see Haxeltine et al 2016). Unfolding TSI processes are not fully harmonious and cooperatively shaped journeys, but are pervaded by contestation and struggle. The latter characteristics are inherent to them as they are not SI journeys but TSI journeys and TSI involves attempts to challenge, alter, supplement, or replace established and dominant institutions (Haxeltine et al 2016).

This dialectical relationship with established institutions is understood as an inherently political process. Fligstein and McAdam (2011) describe this two-way relationship in terms of co-shaping processes, involving challengers and incumbents vying for position and influence: both are constantly engaged in moves that they hope will preserve or improve their position in the existing (and evolving) field of social relations. They suggest that: *“These constant adjustments can be thought of as a form of ‘organisational learning’ ...”* (p15) and imply a set of tactics that actors will employ. Incumbents will adjust to the tactics of others, both challengers in the form of SI-actors, and other incumbents. Tactics for challengers include building niches and taking advantage of the crises of other challengers and playing into ‘crises’ and ‘game changers’ (in various guises...). Tactics for incumbents include imitation, co-optation, or merger.

Similar accounts of dialectic relationships in the context of transformative innovation journeys have been formulated (amongst others) by TRANSIT researchers Smith (2007) and Pel (2015). Both theorized these dialectics through an actor-network theory perspective, as ongoing processes of translation. As TSI journeys evolve dialectically through the constant interplay of slight translations and adaptations of SIs, out of SI initiatives’ transformative ambitions and out of the institutional logics of dominant institutions, a certain SI concept will tend to change shape over time, sometimes very significantly. Because of these ongoing dialectics in co-productive relationships, SI initiatives cannot afford to simply stick to their guns (and principles). Rather they, *“must find a way to translate existing rules and resources into the production of local orders by convincing their supporters to cooperate and finding means of accommodation with other groups”* (Fligstein and McAdam 2011: 11). In the face of ongoing dialectical confrontations between competing and mutually challenging translations of SI concepts and practices, SI initiatives need ‘portfolios’ of strategies to guide their interactions with dominant institutions.

The concept of *opportunity context* as developed in the literature on institutional entrepreneurship (Dorado 2005) provides a way of conceptualising how initiatives experience the possibilities for institutional change. Dorado (2005) adapted the concept of opportunity context from the social movements literature: *“Within the social movement literature, it has been argued that the emergence of new social movements depends on taking advantage of openings in political systems that arise from changes in formal or informal political institutions...Dorado has adopted this notion of political opportunity to look at social innovation.”* (Westley et al 2013, p27). Dorado defines opportunity as *“the likelihood that an organizational field will permit actors to identify and introduce novel institutional combinations and facilitate the mobilization of resources required to make it enduring”* (Dorado 2005: 113). Dorado identifies two primary drivers of opportunity context, namely, *“the diversity and multiplicity of organizational forms, and the degree*

of institutionalization” (Westley et al 2013: 27), and she suggests that “*it can be opaque, transparent, or hazy*” (ibid: 27). The concept of opportunity context allows exploration of the key idea that institutional change may be easier to achieve (and may only be achievable) if the conditions, and the timing, is right in the broader social-material context, and that furthermore there is a need for a dynamic perspective that is open to the ways in which SI processes may also have a role to play in directly shaping the opportunity context over time, thereby attempting to co-create optimal enabling conditions for the specific types of institutional change required to realise specific transformative ambitions.

Different types of relationships to established institutions can be distinguished from the Transit cases. Some of the initiatives can be readily identified as aiming to challenge or replace specific institutions, both in terms of their transformative ambitions (embodied in their narratives of change) and in terms of their strategies and actions. Examples here include, but are not limited to, Time Banks, Credit Unions, Transition Towns, and Slow Food. Many of these show combinations of strategies of on the one hand promoting and modelling their own solutions while at the same time lobbying for wider systems change. Basic Income is a good example of a network that calls for a ‘state implemented’ TSI.

Other initiatives that we studied however understand their role as being to manifest or model new arrangements that better suit their own needs (the needs of their members), but without necessarily being concerned about wider systems change (e.g. Hackerspaces, FabLabs, some but not all Ecovillages). Some initiatives seem to start more from basic human values and needs, and aim to fulfil these themselves, not expecting the existing institutions to do that. However, such attitudes towards local versus systems-level transformative ambitions can certainly change over time. The GEN, for example, has in the most recent of its about 25 years of history become more interested in the role that it can play in wider systems change, by e.g. providing paradigmatic examples of sustainable living, by lobbying at the EU-level, or by securing funding for ‘system transforming’ projects and experiments. In some initiatives, with Slow Food as a good example, we observe needs and values based motivations being combined with both local solutions and active lobbying for, and promotion of wider systems change. The Slow Food initiatives refer to much older patterns and human needs: local groups focus on cooking together. However, Slow Food also organises large events and fares; they use existing institutions and, within their remit, create their own space with own rules, while also promoting wider systems change.

Some initiatives also create alternative bundles of doing, organizing, framing and knowing (DOFK), and act to supplement existing institutions, e.g. informal sharing ownership systems and gift economy. In the narratives of change developed by Transition Towns and Time Banks, there seems to be an often implicit assumption that existing institutions will recede when no longer fit for purpose, and that the role of the initiatives is to provide alternatives as ‘SI ecologies’ or ‘shadow systems’ that can better provide for citizens basic needs in the face of external threats.

Some initiatives have – outwardly at least – benign relations with established institutions (e.g. Time Banks and Shareable and Living Labs as cited above). Such accommodative examples then raise questions (for future research) about whether the initiative is SI versus TSI, and the extent to which a dynamic of ‘capture’ may lie behind apparently synergistic relations. In an initiative such as Shareable Melbourne leaders have worked directly with policy makers to develop a vision for the city to become a sharing city: so the uptake of the ‘sharing’ model would lead to a different kind of economy (and arguably systems change) but the municipality has asked the initiative to help with specific challenges. Participatory Budgeting provides another example in which a public institution asks/invites a SI-initiative to come with an alternative. Still to be addressed is the

question: Under which conditions do such 'overt' invitations from public institutions decrease or increase the transformative potential?

An insight arising from the case studies was the need to specify more clearly that often, challenging one thing also means reproducing another. The proposition is not saying that a SI-initiative can either challenge or reproduce an institution – i.e. that anything can happen – the dialectic argument is that it is impossible to challenge an institution without meanwhile also reproducing other elements of existing institutional arrangements. This leads to a central challenge for TSI, namely how to model/create/demonstrate change without simultaneously becoming captured by current arrangements. This leads to diverse dilemmas and choices for SI initiatives at all scales of operation.

TSI journeys are generally not frontal oppositions or zero-sum battles against dominant institutions, nor do they develop in complete isolation from dominant institutions. Other than militant social movements, activists undertaking 'direct action', or guerrillas, socially innovative agency tends to seek or acquiesce into co-productive relations with the dominant institutions that they challenge, and to be more intertwined with them. SI initiatives and networks (and the socially innovative ideas, objects and actions that they promote) have an on-going, two-way relationship with established institutional arrangements: they both challenge them and reproduce them. Through on-going processes of structuration, they reproduce established institutions (across all coproducing dimensions of DOFK), even as they attempt to change them (by challenging, altering, supplementing, or replacing specific institutions, in specific dimensions of DOFK): put differently, SI is active along all, yet innovative only along some of these coproducing dimensions. Actions on the part of SI initiatives lead (most often) to responses from established institutions (that exhibit tendencies towards system preservation and stabilisation, and typically wield more power and influence). The institutionalisation of SI is therefore inherently political and by default is a process in which SI is 'captured' with 'transformation' being the exception (to be explained in terms of contingency/opportunity arising in the context and/or extra-ordinary properties of the SI and/or SI-initiative itself). TSI-agency is possible as existing institutions and resources are used by SI-actors to perform practices in novel ways - resulting in a dialectic of change that leads (eventually) to transformations in institutional arrangements.

Proposition 7. *SI initiatives and networks exist in a dialectical relationship with existing institutions: they both transform and reproduce them. The institutionalisation of SI is inherently a political process in which SI is most likely to be 'captured', with 'transformation' being the exception. To enable and increase the transformative potential of SI, SI-actors need both a range of different (sometimes paradoxical) strategies towards institutions (complying, irritating, avoiding, resisting, compromising, hijacking, exploiting institutional pressures etc.) and to continuously adapt their strategies to changing circumstances, while holding on to original core intentions (of integrity, autonomy, motivation, and transformative ambition).*

Challenges for further research: this proposition opens the way to a more sophisticated analysis of the strategies employed by TSI initiatives in attempting to achieve institutional change, one that addresses how initiatives deal with reactions and counter-strategies from actors supporting existing institutions. A next theoretical step will be to further integrate the concept of opportunity context, and explore to what extent the typology of opaque, transparent, and hazy works for TSI. And to use this framing to further explain the diversity of ways in which SI initiatives are enabled and constrained by the context, and the ways in which they may in turn attempt to influence the opportunity context.

Proposition 8. On finding or creating an institutional home

This proposition addresses an important aspect of the TSI journey, namely that SI initiatives typically emerge in reaction to the shortcomings of dominant institutions, grow from the grassroots and develop informally in relative independence from prevailing institutional logics, but over time this vulnerable existence is difficult to sustain. Institutional theory, social movement theory, governance theory, organisational theory and social psychology all bring forward their own accounts of the various pressures towards formalization and institutional anchorage that SI initiatives are bound to encounter as they strive for the TSI journey to go on – as they strive to find or create a suitable institutional home.

The notion of a *TSI journey* expresses a searching movement. SI initiatives seek to challenge, alter or replace dominant institutions and seek ways to anchor their socially innovative ideas and practices – starting from a situation in which no such anchorage has taken place. The image of the lack of an *institutional home* expresses how they seek to achieve something that they do not have and what the challenged dominant institutions by definition do have, namely permanence, support, secured resource flow, legitimacy and independence from the efforts of individuals. It also expresses the idea that at the start of the journey there is a lack of fit between the needs, motivations and values of participants and the dominant institutional arrangements of the context in which they find themselves.

The metaphor of finding an institutional home can be used both for the perceptions of the membership of a SI initiative and in terms of the actual relations the social-material context in which they exist. So on the one hand it relates to the individuals involved in an initiative and their sense of belonging, and to how they identify with the social-material context in which they exist. And on the other hand, it relates to the systemic embedding of the DOFK of the initiative within the context, and to whether the context responds with accommodative/supportive or repressive/capture reactions (or some combination of both), this aspect then relates to ‘institutional home’ as access to resources, values, political and social legitimacy, and laws and regulations.

A third perspective is how things look from the viewpoint of the dominant institutions: How do institutions see diverse patterns of TSI/SI? Actors representing established institutions see many SI initiatives that are emerging or fading away – how are institutions then responsive to such diversity? From the perspective of some actors in established institutions, the SI initiatives may be attractive for the processes of “institutional redesign” they are championing, and thus become an ally. SI actors may actively seek cooperation with such actors. Even when the world is heavily institutionalised, there may still be an “institutional void”, where dominant institutions are absent, allowing new spaces and new resources to be opened through evolutionary developments in the social-material context, or as the state or other dominant institutions and/or dominant institutional logics recede or fade away.

Both Ashoka and Impact Hub are examples of initiatives that are trying to create an institutional home for entrepreneurs. When social entrepreneurs go to the Impact Hub, they feel ‘at home’. However, both also strive to address resourcing issues and institutional constraints in the social-material context that might otherwise hinder the spread of social entrepreneurship. The Time Banks UK network had to negotiate with the state in order to ensure that Time Banks schemes are able to continue to get exceptions from direct taxation. This case then provides a clear example of how SI often needs to negotiate accommodations with existing laws and regulations

in order to continue the journey, and many of the cases studied provide similar examples. For the DESIS network it can be argued that, both at network and local level, they look for stability, formality, not to fall apart – this is what the metaphor of an institutional home might mean to their membership. Hence the DESIS case helps to question and nuance this proposition, emphasising that finding an institutional home is not necessarily about formalising as a legal entity (which DESIS has not done), but that it can also be about striving to achieve some measure of legitimacy and stability at a more formal level. Hence, the TSI journey can involve successive accommodation-tensions with both formal and informal institutional arrangements in the social-material context.

TRANSIT has developed a substantial set of empirical data on the kinds of institutional homes that SI initiatives create, or find available to occupy, over the course of their innovation journey. Ongoing analysis of our empirics seems to confirm how many of the ‘critical turning points’ in their innovation journeys pertain to the quest for a fitting and empowering institutional home. Analysis thus far brings out at least a basic typology of the ‘states’ that SI initiatives can reach on their quest, and of the ways in which these states are empowering the initiatives:

- 1) **Finding the appropriate hybrid arrangement.** Social enterprises are a key example of the hybrid institutional forms that afford permanence whilst increasing transformative impacts.
- 2) **Falling into Institutional Isomorphism.** Some initiatives fall prey to ‘institutional isomorphism’ (which can be normative, coercive or mimetic) finding no way to create an institutional home that is adapted to their particular transformative ambitions and the psychological needs and values of their members.
- 3) **Homelessness.** Initiatives in this state generally experience lack of resources and vulnerability, but some manage to thrive in deliberately chosen isolation.

Considering that the second state tends to be the end of TSI journeys, the first one sometimes as well and the third seems to be the desired ‘middle ground’ states, further empirical analysis could help to specify particularly suitable institutional homes. Apart from this normative approach, empirical analysis could help to grasp SI initiatives’ shifts between states over time, and their reasons for ‘relocating’ between institutional homes.

Proposition 8. *SI initiatives with transformative ambitions lack an institutional home and a significant part of the TSI journey is about finding or creating it. The lack of an institutional home can be both empowering and disempowering in terms of achieving transformative impacts. It is empowering so long as SI initiatives are still able to negotiate and create new hybrid institutions that support their particular institution-challenging goals. In order to do so, initiatives need explicit political tactics and strategies to deal with the two-way challenge of institutionalizing SI for sustainability, balancing between capture and transformation. It is disempowering when it leaves SI initiatives without continuity in activities or drives them towards wholesale conforming to existing institutions. A number of possible states of accommodation-tension with established institutions are possible: 1) finding the appropriate hybrid arrangement; 2) falling into institutional Isomorphism; or 3) homelessness.*

Challenges for further research: The next step is to further develop the metaphor of finding an *institutional home* into more precise theoretical explanations of the mechanism and processes involved when SI initiatives negotiate, create and otherwise achieve new hybrid institutions and institutional arrangements that support their particular institution-challenging goals. In particular, this involves giving more attention to responses and counters on the part of actors defending/supporting dominant institutions.

Proposition 9. On the remaking of institutional logics

This proposition builds on proposition 7, addressing the question: What are the foundational or precursor steps that TSIs need to achieve before they can start to realise their transformative ambitions as transformative impacts in the broader social-material context? This proposition develops the idea that successful TSIs must transcend the limitations of current institutional logics (ILs) by finding ways to remake them. The formulation of this proposition builds directly upon our definition of transformative change as challenging, altering or replacing dominant institutions. The concept of ILs (see Haxeltine et al 2016) refers to clusters of dominant institutions (i.e. dominant ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing; DOFK) in the social-material context (which can be, for example, state-, market-, community-, non-profit- or science-logic). We contend that SI initiatives can emerge in the context of any IL. We also contend that when SI initiatives emerge, they often operate in a context where there is a/are particular IL/s that dominate/s (which IL dominates in a particular context is an empirical question). The list of state-, market, community-, non-profit- and science-logic are often observed examples in empirical contexts, but there can be other ILs and/or particular combinations or conflicts between ILs in the contexts we study. A SI can develop without necessarily transcending the dominant IL in the context of which it originated. For instance, a market-led SI-initiative can develop new relations, involving new ways of DOFK, which are entirely focused on market solutions. In order to have transformative impact, however, the SI needs to transcend the IL(s) that dominated the context in which it originated. This means that the SI needs to question the dominant IL, contrast it with other ILs, and – above all – critically reconsider how this IL is conditioning/limiting the transformative potential of the SI. We contend that the merging and/or (re)negotiation of different ILs is an inherent part of challenging, altering and/or replacing dominant institutions.

The analysis brought forth the following evidence and insights from the TRANSIT cases. The Transition Towns movement has clearly emerged from a ‘community logic’: the network has arisen in a civil society context and the main logic that it proposes is one of informality and community-based and community-led solutions that are aimed at primarily benefiting communities and reducing ecological footprints. The argument proposed here is that in order to realise its transformative ambitions in system-wide changes, the initiative would need to step out of its informal community logic and radically increase its transformative potential by engaging with other actors to merge different ILs and (re)-negotiate new/adapted ones, even in the face of resistance from actors supporting dominant institutions. Recent developments have emphasized the need to support sustainable livelihoods and engage with local job creation and therefore ‘economic logics’. Tentatively, these developments could be interpreted as a possible development of the initiative towards a recognition of the need to bridge different ILs.

Credit Unions appear to show that it is possible act within one dominant logic (in this case the dominant market logic) but to fundamentally question it at the same time, while also demonstrating/pioneering an alternative. Credit Unions could be interpreted as an example of an initiative that is both working productively within a dominant IL, while at the same time building the case for the creation of a wholly new logic, and for system-wide changes. They do so while also paying attention to the status of the opportunity context (see proposition 7) which has been changing in association with developments such as the global financial crisis of 2008.

Ashoka provides an example of an initiative that very intentionally and strategically put themselves *in* the market. It can be argued that they are trying to achieve transformative goals

while operating within the boundaries and constraints of one particular dominant IL, which according to the theoretical idea developed in this proposition is problematic. And indeed we find that there is quite some critique of the Ashoka model of social entrepreneurship from several of the other initiatives studied, and specifically in terms of the idea that issues can be solved from 'within' the existing market logic. For example, a representative of the European Credit Unions whom we interviewed criticized the conceptualization of "entrepreneur" as a lone "hero" who can change the world by himself/herself. In contrast, the European Credit Union members espoused a logic of collective action. They understand collective entrepreneurship as a community economic development solution for societal challenges and, in consequence, their members prefer to fund collective projects (cooperatives, social and solidarity economy projects, social entities) rather than projects led by just one person (at least, this is what they claim to do).

RIPESS, as a network-of-networks, arguably provides an example where the tensions between whether transformative change is possible from within a currently dominant IL or whether it requires an overthrowing of the dominant IL has been played out over time and within the broad diversity of the membership of the organisation. Indeed, the TRANSIT case research exposed how the social solidarity economy concept espoused by the network is itself born out of tensions around this exact issue and unification considerations (see Pel and Dumitru 2015). The solidarity economy is a radicalization, a particularly transformation-minded translation, of the notion of social economy. From the perspective of the former, the latter is too much a matter of solidarity with the own group (as in the large banking or agricultural cooperatives), forgetting about solidarity with marginalized groups, future generations and nature, i.e. wider society. Also social entrepreneurship and micro-credit strategies tend to be mistrusted (reinforcing individualist entrepreneurship ideology), whilst 'social innovation' and 'social business' are often seen as shallow, instrumentalizing appropriations of alternative economies by the EU. The *social solidarity economy* concept provides an agenda for the remaking of a dominant IL, based in part on an assessment that the *social economy* concept was still too much anchored in the existing logic.

The case analysis suggests, not surprisingly then, that a lot depends on how analytically one defines the concept of ILs. In conclusion though we can certainly say that some of the networks studied are working more obviously within a single (currently dominant) IL and working within that logic to pioneer and develop new practices, while other cases are more explicitly trying to forge new connections across different ILs.

Proposition 9. *SI initiatives may originate in the context of any one particular institutional logic (e.g. state-, market-, community-, non-profit- or science-logic). However, SI initiatives only start to significantly challenge, alter and replace dominant institutions when they are first able to merge different institutional logics and (re-)negotiate new/adapted ones: challenging, altering, or replacing dominant institutions cannot occur within the boundaries of existing dominant institutional logics.*

Challenges for further research: A next theoretical step will be to further explain the ways in which SI initiatives are able to create a necessary basis for institutional change by merging and (re-)negotiating different institutional logics. The concept of opportunity context (see proposition 7) could be combined with this idea of remaking institutional logics to better explain the ways in which the merging or remaking of institutional logics, requires on the one-hand TSI-agency on the part of TSI but on the other hand requires the right *opportunity context*, i.e. that the conditions are also ripe for such change in the wider institutional context in which the TSI exists.

Cluster D: Relations to a broader social-material context

Proposition 10. On the social-material evolution out of which TSI emerges

This proposition reflects the insight that our theoretical explanations of TSI should account also for how contemporary TSIs are influenced by historical social-material developments in the context. A starting point for exploring this in TRANSIT has been the concept of social-economic development waves as articulated by Polanyi. It has been further developed by Kemp et al. (2016) in this project with the idea of a third movement of the ‘re-embedding of the economy’ which posits that TSI can be understood as part of a ‘third wave’ (a response to earlier waves of marketization and bureaucratization) that involves ‘re-embedding’ or ‘humanisation’ of social-economic development. TSI journeys emerge and develop in a wider historical context. Those embarking on them may be immersed in the action of today, but this does not contradict that the seeds for their initiative have often been planted decades ago, and that the institutional contexts in which they operate are typically historically formed structures. The notion of the ‘re-embedding of the economy’ is adapted here in order to accommodate further theoretical insights from critical theory and Science and Technology Studies (that challenge the Marxist focus on marketization and bureaucratization) and the empirical evidence from the TRANSIT cases. There are key empirical insights from the case studies that should inform the theoretical scheme for explaining the historical shaping of SI. Thus, the proposition is brought more in line with the overall co-productive perspective on TSI, which conceives of a social-material social order. The proposition was constructed in three distinct steps.

A first important theoretical move was the reflection that the data from the case studies bear a degree of agentic bias and particularism. Focusing on SI transnational networks, local manifestations and the members of those, broader societal developments are relatively under-exposed. Similarly, the focus on contemporary initiatives tends to underplay the historical context. The proposition thus started from theoretical reasoning aimed to grasp the broader historical trends underlying the otherwise so diverse SI initiatives. In line with SI scholars like Moulaert, Defourny and Laville, and more generally in accordance with critical theorists like Marx, Polanyi and Habermas, the scheme of marketization-bureaucratization and ‘re-embedding of the economy’ asserted itself as a critical and pertinent reading of contemporary history. This scheme articulates a great deal of the historical roots of current TSI phenomena. TRANSIT empirics do exhibit strong examples of SI initiatives that reach for practices and social relations that are better serving desires for self-determination, relatedness and competency than is possible in bureaucratized and marketized society. This was confirmed by the observation that Credit Unions, Time Banks, Via Campesina, Ashoka, Impact Hubs, RIPESS, and Basic Income are forms of ‘new economies’ that explicitly address various needs for a ‘re-embedding of the economy’ in their narratives of change. Co-housing, Shareable and Ecovillages do seem to aim for mutualist ways of living that are better serving basic needs than modes of coordination brought forward through bureaucratization and marketization. Furthermore, a loss of trust and belief in the existing formal institutions seems to pervade many SI initiatives, notably even Basic Income with its traditional bet on state-implemented TSI. Finally, the various struggles identified in the cases towards ‘finding an institutional home’, of searching for new balances of efficiency, inclusion, accountability, and trust, are indications of moves away from bureaucratization and marketization.

A second step was to recognise the assessments of many of the empirical researchers that the notions of 'marketization' and 'bureaucratization', and the 're-embedding of the economy', do not adequately capture the observed historical shaping of the initiatives studied. For a start the empirics suggests that many initiatives are not so much 'responding to' or 'fighting against' the two movements, nor are they, in some cases, even motivated that much by institutional failures. Furthermore, it seems that the 'third wave' idea is insufficiently sensitive to the different European and Latin American SI contexts – especially as far as it suggests a sequence of movements. Finally, there are other and more specific historical shifts than the two movements that are of equal or even greater relevance in the emergence of certain initiatives. For example: Living Knowledge has been shaped by the role of science that became problematic; many of the Ecovillages have been shaped by quests for spirituality and/or respond to trends in the human/societal relations to nature; DESIS and the maker movement have been shaped by concerns over commoditization; Living Labs has been shaped by the rise of internet society; INFORSE and Transition Towns have been shaped by the problems of an Anthropocene world order; Slow Food and the Seed movement have been shaped by a quest for food sovereignty; and, Credit Unions and Slow Food have been shaped by notions of regionalism. Also, the ICT revolution was a key factor in the formation of transnational TSI networks (Jørgensen et al. 2016). The availability of software/ICT seems an essential backbone for the way of doing and organizing of several initiatives. These include Time Banks, Shareable, Credit Unions, Living Labs. Seed Movement, Transition Towns, Slow Food, and Ecovillages. These historical trends are related to—but cannot be reduced to—marketization and bureaucratization.

The third step then had a theoretical focus. It builds on the above-stated consideration that the 're-embedding of the economy' reading of the historical shaping of SI goes for various 'new economies', but cannot capture the broader diversity of SI initiatives studied. As argued by Jasanoff, Latour and Foucault amongst others, the (neo-) Marxist view of the two movements is attributing too much power to market and state institutions. Rather they bring forward accounts (of co-production, and of governmentalities) that situate power and dominance in current societies in social-material webs of procedures, technologies, monitoring tools, accounting systems, infrastructures, communication channels, spatial structures, etc. This networked, 'capillary' and social-material view on the historical shaping of SI raises attention to some crucial social-material developments for the SI initiatives studied – also highlighting how the social-material context is constraining and productive.

Proposition 10. *The rise of SI initiatives and discourses and the particular transformative ambitions conveyed by them are strongly shaped by the historical paths that their social-material contexts have taken. Even if SI agency tends to be focused on social relations and motivated by basic human needs for self-determination, the historical shaping of TSI is a social-material process. It involves social-economic development waves like the marketization and bureaucratization movements described by Polanyi, but also social-material long-term developments like shifting governmentalities, the rise of the high-technological society, globalization, and the changing social-ecological relations of the 'anthropocene' as well as long-term trends in cultures, values and worldviews. The social-material historical shaping of SI initiatives and discourses can take negating forms of resistance (towards ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing that have become dominant in particular social-material contexts) but can also take the affirmative forms of transformative social innovation that is in tune with the Zeitgeist, strongly embedded in cultures and regions, or following the affordances and scripts introduced by new technologies. As SI initiatives and discourses with transformative ambitions involve mixtures of negation and affirmation, their social-material shaping is an ongoing dialectical process.*

Challenges for further research: this proposition reflects the insight that our theoretical explanations of the historical backgrounds of TSI should account for the social-material developments in society. It brings the account of the historical shaping of SI initiatives and discourse in line with the empirical evidence from the TRANSIT cases and the overall relational view on TSI processes adopted in the TSI framework. Further elaboration of the stated *social-material* historical shaping can be done by closer analysis of the ‘broader societal developments’ implicated in the empirics, and by further theoretical reflection on the (neo-)Marxist and social-material accounts of contemporary historical trends and developments.

Proposition 11. On the ebb and flow of socially innovative practices

This proposition takes to heart the empirical evidence that contradicted the understanding of TSI as a *response* to problematic historical trends, failing institutions and dominating ideologies – as articulated in the earlier proposition on the ‘re-embedding of the economy’. More generally, the idea of SI initiatives *responding* to institutional failures or institutional voids seems to have been assumed too easily – which simplifies the relations between SI initiatives and the broader social-material context and seems to misrepresent the historical development of SI initiatives and discourses. This proposition then represents a first attempt to make a synthesizing statement on the empirical evidence of SI activities that are not so much responses to historical trends deemed problematic – such as the social pathologies associated with bureaucratization and marketization, or the environmental challenges of ‘unsustainable development’ – but rather are historically quite continuous activities.

The paradigmatic example of this continuous existence are the Ecovillages. These forms of conviviality, the values that they are based on and the spirituality that characterizes them date back much further than many of the historical developments to which they appear to respond. They have not emerged as TSI-oriented activities, i.e. as attempts to challenge, alter, or replace dominant institutions, but rather out of a set of values and preferences quite independent from institutional constellations and transformative ambitions. They rather have *become* pertinent cases of TSI, as these continuous activities have been perceived, presented, mobilized, asserted as bundles of doing, organizing, framing and knowing (DOFK) that are socially innovative, and that are potentially transformative with regard to current dominant institutions and the social-material context. Their existence as *TSI activity* becomes more obvious for example against the background of the growing concerns over sustainable development (especially strong from the 1970s onwards), or against the background of individualization and ‘colonization of the lifeworld by instrumental rationality’ as similarly contemporary developments. It is against the background of such contemporary developments in the context that both insiders and outsiders start to seek to assess, communicate and develop the socially innovative and transformative potentials of this continuous activity.

The implication is that certain bundles of DOFK only become socially innovative in certain historical contexts, that they may therefore also cease to have an existence as such, and that they may *re-emerge* again as such. A further implication is that various ‘bundles of DOFK’ that are not currently recognized as socially innovative may have existed as SIs, and may again become SIs.

Theoretically, this proposition is in accordance with several innovation-theoretical accounts. Authors like Defourny, Moulaert and Laville have outlined earlier how also the Social Economy has had such continuous existence, and especially displayed re-emergences in various historical

contexts in different shapes. More generally, there is the received innovation-theoretical wisdom that much apparent innovation is on a closer look rather a case of re-invention. This re-inventing and re-emerging might be stronger for the social innovations than for the population of (socio-technical) innovations as a whole. Furthermore, our overall relational outlook highlights how entities and qualities are always in a state of becoming – and how entities like SI concepts, discourses, initiatives, networks have intermittent existences even if we study them as discrete units of analysis.

As indicated however, this historicizing proposition is (at this point) based heavily on the paradigmatic example of Ecovillages. Systematic empirical elaboration has yet to be done. Still, there are several pertinent examples within the set of cases: RIPESS is an example of several re-emergences, of which the solidarity economy is a radicalized re-emergence responding to the watered down Social Economy initiatives that to a certain extent lost their TSI potentials over time; the maker movement, Slow Food, Seed Movement, Transition Towns seem upon closer examination to be contemporary re-emergences of quite historically continuous activities. The emergence of Transition Towns in Totnes for example is demonstrably linked to a long history of ‘alternatives’ to have come out that one small market town; Co-housing, Shareable, Via Campesina, Time Banks, Credit Unions seem to re-invent schemes of mutuality in the current historical context. By contrast, there are also initiatives that display less or no historical continuity, no re-emergences, and have existed as transformation-oriented SI initiatives from their very inception. Ashoka, DESIS, Participatory Budgeting, Living Labs, Living Knowledge, Hackerspaces, INFORSE seem to be counter-examples to the continuity and re-emergence of the Ecovillage case.

This tentative historicizing proposition articulates how TSI processes rest on and are co-produced by SI initiatives and discourses that often have a historically continuous existence. As socially innovative and potentially transformative bundles of DOFK they have an intermittent existence of emergence, recession, and re-emergence: resulting in an ebb and flow in their relations to the wider context.

Proposition 11. *Bundles of doings, organisings, framings and knowings (DOFK) as practised by collectives of people are not intrinsically socially innovative or transformative. They can become SI initiatives with certain transformative potentials once it gets articulated how they might challenge, alter and possibly replace dominant institutions in a particular historical context. Accordingly, their existence as SI can recede again as the difference from and friction with dominant institutions recedes, and they can re-emerge again as SI – with different socially innovative and transformative potentials, depending on the elements of the new historical context they are impinging on.*

Challenges for further research: One important implication of this proposition is that TSI is not necessarily carried by collectives currently identified and existing as SI initiatives. This proposition emphasises the importance of avoiding falling into a substantivist (Emirbayer, 2007) notion of the SI initiative when developing accounts and explanations of the historical development of relations with the social-material context: the ‘shapes’ of the collectives studied change over time and this has very practical implications for e.g. how other societal actors might best support TSI processes. As a tentative proposition, further analysis is still needed to clarify to what extent the continuity and re-emergence holds across the broader set of cases, and it still needs to be theorized further what the implications are.

Proposition 12. On the construction of crises and problematic trends

This proposition addresses the importance of crises in the social-material context for TSI processes. It attempts to refine the earlier proposition on crises (on 'Responding to external crisis'), building on empirical feedback and on theoretical reflection on the somewhat vague 'crisis' term. The general relevance of crises is that SI initiatives and SI discourses need to seize certain 'windows of opportunity' as conditions for having a transformative impact. Without seizing those, they tend to stay as marginal as when they first emerged. TSI journeys need certain favourable background conditions, the 'stars need to be in position', to accelerate, or make breakthroughs in particular ambitions of challenging, altering and replacing of dominant institutions.

From the practical viewpoint of empowerment, SI initiatives need the capacities of appropriate timing and a good sense of where the 'system' or 'Strategic Action Field' in which they operate is heading towards (Moore et al. 2012). The general significance of crises seems to be the temporary scope they offer for discursive destabilization and challenging of dominant institutions, as preconditions for altering and replacing. Crises can open up the discursive space for alternatives, even if they also tend to invite control-responses and crisis *management* that favour system stabilization rather than transformation.

The adapted proposition reflects various empirical researchers' doubts about whether SI initiatives and discourses are actually trying to 'respond to' crises, construct them, or play into them as the theorized 'windows of opportunity' towards increasing transformative impact. Questions were raised about the relevance of crisis as sudden, highly temporary events versus the relevance of more enduring developments and problematic trends in the social-material context (like bureaucratization and marketization, see proposition 10).

Particularly important empirical evidence in this regard was the example of the Spanish Credit Unions. The initiative has not so much seized or played into the 2008 economic crisis, as accounts of 'responding to crisis' would expect. They did play into the crisis as a sudden event that confirmed their critical analysis and narrative, and that legitimized their alternative practice of Credit Unions. Still, the Credit Unions underlined how they have been criticizing the flaws of the banking system for a long time, and how they are challenging a broader, more enduring development that cannot be sustained. The initiative is even reluctant to go along with the framing of the banking problems as a crisis, as this framing has become instrumental to system-confirming austerity measures, rather than in favour of transformative alternatives presenting themselves. As the framing of a Spanish banking 'crisis' invited a control-response that distracted from the problematic trends in the social-material context, it exemplifies how the discursive construction of the latter may be more important to SI initiatives than the former. In any case, the lesson seems to be that it is important to analytically distinguish between the sudden and temporary crisis on the one hand, and the problematic trends on the other hand.

The proposition with its temporal distinction between sudden crises and ongoing trends has the Spanish Credit Unions as paradigmatic example, yet there are also several other examples that support it: Basic Income (BI) repeatedly appears on the political agenda in times of high structural unemployment, yet this political support tends to fade away again once the unemployment – and the urgency of reforms – diminishes. BI advocates to break through the cycle of hype and disillusion by emphasizing the problematic trends and structural problems over the temporary windows of political opportunity. Time Banks have proven to be very flexible and polyvalent in

addressing very different kinds of locally occurring social-economic crises. They have proven effective in seizing crisis situations, and currently they do seem to be gaining ground as the broader trend towards a problematic social security is becoming part of the prevalent framings on the economic crisis. Transition Towns and Slow Food are very actively intervening in prevailing framings of crises – they seem to articulate problematic trends more than temporary crises. Transition Towns notably discarded the crisis-oriented narrative on Peak Oil (as it faded from mainstream discourse).

Other networks studied however are not very polyvalent or politically opportunistic – as if they are immunizing, retreating from the changing social-material context. Maybe this is a theme to develop more: some are just not interested in windows of opportunity, just as they're somewhat disengaging from politics. The Ecovillages, for example, tend to be not at all engaged in the construction of 'crises'. They are quite detached from such political challenging, focusing instead on their own practices and what they bring for those involved.

TSI initiatives may be affected by social constructions of crisis by incumbents. In particular, the narrative of the non-sustainability of the welfare system by government may affect TSI journeys. Basic income may be accepted as part of a strategy to reduce the costs of welfare system and to reduce government's involvement in the economy. TSI initiatives are already instrumentalised by local governments in requesting social welfare claimants to do volunteering work in SI projects. The articulations of system failure by TSI initiatives will come into play with system-changing agendas of incumbents.

Proposition 12. *TSI initiatives need to play into sudden and temporary crisis events as moments at which institutional flaws and problematic trends in the social-material context become more clearly visible to the public. The sudden and temporary crisis events can be framed such that the desirability and viability of socially innovations can be brought out with greater persuasiveness and visibility. The occurrence of crisis alone is insufficient however, and may even backfire as far as the prevailing framing of these sudden events distracts from the more enduring problematic trends in the social-material context that SI initiatives and discourses articulate. Crises are easily seized by dominant institutions and actors to argue for greater control of the dominant institutional constellation to ensure sustained operation of key societal functions. Through such typically short-term responses, emergent SI initiatives and discourses are vulnerable to becoming marginalized as 'risky bets'. Sudden, temporary crises events need therefore to be discursively constructed as events through which broader problematic trends in the context manifest.*

Challenges for further research: It seems that the example of the Credit Unions is not at all an outlier case. Very few SI initiatives are actively constructing crisis events as windows of opportunity, and quite some of them seem more focused on bringing forward their accounts of problematic trends in the social-material context. This temporal differentiation in the proposition seems to be a valuable refinement. Still, further refinement is desirable to articulate more sharply how SI initiatives and discourses are (dis)empowered by changes in their social-material context. *Which kinds of changes in the social-material context – whether sudden and temporary crises or rather enduring trends – matter? Which are the kinds of windows of opportunity towards greater transformative impact that these changes open? And considering that we have a symmetrical interest in both empowerment and disempowerment – which changes in the context have been closing windows of opportunity and undermining SI activities?*

Conclusion

The set of twelve propositions on the agency and dynamics of TSI presented here, together with a theoretical and conceptual framework for TSI (Haxeltine et al 2016) constitute the foundational framing and tentative 'proto-explanations' of an emerging middle-range theory of TSI, that is being developed over a four year period in the TRANSIT research project. The *TSI framework* brings together different theoretical resources and building blocks in ways that are not yet fully integrated but that are consistently grounded in a relational perspective, and that frame and inform further theory development. Similarly, the TSI propositions presented are not yet fully validated statements about TSI but rather represent a preliminary and tentative structuring of our insights about TSI so far, and that imply the questions that need to be asked in further developing a theory of TSI. As a work-in-progress, the propositions presented in this working paper will be subject to further iteration in the final year of the research project. This will include the further development of the TSI propositions through a final theoretical integration step that will be based on a meta-analysis of the 'Critical Turning Points' (CTPs) encountered by initiatives on their TSI journeys. The meta-analysis will make use of a large data set of in-depth interviews of TSI cases from which a novel 'CTP data-base' has been developed.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on research carried out as part of the Transformative Social Innovation Theory ("TRANSIT") project, which is funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) under grant agreement 613169. The views expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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