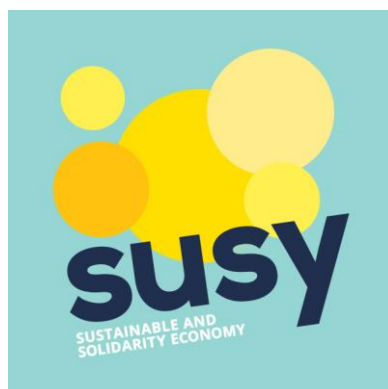


Solidarity Economy in Austria

Views, Experiences and Perspectives – Short Report

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15.10.2015



2015
Europäisches Jahr
für Entwicklung



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I. Aim of this study

Solidarity Economy is not a definitively defined object, but part of a discourse linking different practices of everyday life, work, housing and of how people relate to each other, thereby guiding these practices, interpreting and inspiring them. This report is part of this discourse as well. Above all, it represents views on Solidarity Economy in Austria. The long version of the report (in German) explains methods, results and conclusions in more detail¹.

¹ This report was written for Südwind as part of the EU project SUSY „Sustainability and SolidaritY in Economy“, (at.solidarityeconomy.eu).

II. Methods

To reach this aim, semi-structured interviews with two groups of actors were conducted. Firstly, with those who identify themselves with the term Solidarity Economy publicly. Secondly with those who were seen as relevant by actors of the first group, or as being thematically close. Furthermore, with actors that I assumed to be relevant for a delimitation of Solidarity Economy. The second group does not identify its views necessarily with Solidarity Economy or they more strongly relate to other, similar terms. 27 persons were interviewed and listed in the long version of the report (in German). All interviews were transcribed and paraphrased. Sampling was done according to principles of Grounded Theory.

To objectively describe Solidarity Economy is not possible for epistemological reasons. Also, I am strongly involved in the topic of Solidarity Economy myself. This report, however, is scientific, i.e. its methods are documented, it is systematic and self-reflexive. I attempted to balance views and to include a variety of perspectives. I furthermore laid an emphasis on interviewing persons with opinions different to my own. In this report, those parts, which are based on the analysis of the interviews and those, which are shaped by my own evaluations are clearly demarcated.

For analysis, I applied two methods: Firstly I describe the discourse, which frames the topic Solidarity Economy. A discourse is a deep cognitive structure defining what can be said and thought, and thus also what appears to be feasible. A discourse is not speaking about something, but the medium for the constitution of social reality. I applied an abbreviated form of a narrative discourse analysis to investigate into a *transformation* discourse, which is relevant for Solidarity Economy, and into another discourse, centered around *community*, that can be distinguished from the first.

Secondly, I developed a Grounded Theory of Solidarity Economy based on the analysis of the interviews. In doing so, I followed the approach of Thematically Oriented Coding. Such a theory systematizes what has been said in interviews, creates categories on that basis and relates them to a common key category, which describes the primary action problem. Thus, a Grounded Theory results in a dense and integrated description of patterns of thinking and conceptions that were expressed in the interviews on Solidarity Economy. Such a theory is not the theory of any single person in the debate on Solidarity Economy. Within its frame, oppositional political viewpoints are possible.

The conclusions are shaped by personal evaluations. My focus there are deficits and blind spots, which I identify in relation to the Grounded Theory of Solidarity Economy. In this section, my background knowledge and literature on Solidarity Economy play a more important role.

III. Results based on 27 interviews

NOTE: This section does not contain personal evaluations. It does not represent my opinions and expressions, but those of the interviewees.

a. Discourses on transformation and community

Two main discourses can be distinguished from within the interviews (in addition to two more, which cannot be analyzed in depth due to the limited amount of interviews): a discourse on societal transformation and a discourse on community. In the following, the central structures in the sense of an abbreviated narrative discourse analysis will be presented. The core element of this structure is a value opposition between good and bad, which defines the problem, which the discourse reacts upon and which suggests a specific action-problem. To resolve this problem, certain strategies can be identified, which are related to the value opposition. For both discourses, specific spatial and time structures are characteristic, too (see box 1).

The issue of Solidarity Economy is located within the frame of a discourse on transformation, which is characterized by the central value opposition between niche and system. In relation to it, a discourse on community can be identified in the interviews, at its core placing community and anti-social attitudes in opposition to each other.

Box 1: Features of discourses on transformation and community.

	Discourse on transformation	Discourse on community
Value opposition positive/negative	Niche/System	Community/Anti Social Attitude
Structure of the positive pole	contradictory, because penetrated and influenced by negative pole	Unambiguously positive, since only affected externally by negative pole
Problem definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - niche is in strong opposition to system - niche is precarious, unstable, threatened, marginal 	- Persons of good intent pay too less attention to community
Action-problem	Stabilization, broadening and diffusion of niche	Release, uncovering and strengthening of features that point towards the future, embody a norm, are a regular case or are part of a basis
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Politicization as constant reflection - Alliances with a friendly environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coming-together of all persons of good intent - Separation from or removal of the negative pole
Space-time-structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - historical depth - broad horizon of the future - movement from the depth into the breadth as transformation - global context of the local - complex structure of transformation as time arrow (differentiation into episodes) - partly complex spatial structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - historical depth - limited horizon of the future - no transformation - simple time-space-structur focusing on the present and the local

b. Notion of Solidarity Economy and criteria

Defining criteria of Solidarity Economy is seen ambivalent in the interviews. A rather broad and vague notion is considered to be important in order to be able to capture the diversity of initiatives, approaches and topics, which were, e. g., part of the two Solidarity Economy conferences in Vienna 2009/2013.

In addition, a strategy of alliance building and of public relations requires a broad understanding of the term, including gradations, as interviewees often pointed out. A certain vagueness, they argued, shall help to make Solidarity Economy more attractive. Criteria are by interviewees usually not (strictly) tied to enterprises.

Generally, and with regard to these reservations, which are often mentioned in interviews, Solidarity Economy, as an overview of the interviews shows, is defined as an ideal or core type on the following three levels: (1) democratic internal organization of a realm of life or work, (2) a relation between individual Solidarity Economy enterprises, initiatives or living arrangements and the region or the society, which is based on solidarity and institutionalized democratic procedures, (3) located within the frame of democratic macroeconomic planning. Internal democracy of workers is understood as the equal participation of each member in decisions on strategic issues of management and production. Profit maximization as well as social domination, violence and exclusion are seen as incompatible with Solidarity Economy.

Some of the interviews indicate that the Solidarity Economy debate transcends the clear distinction between politics and economy, which characterizes neoliberal thinking. This transgression is sometimes radicalized towards questioning the notion of economy in general. Summarizing the interviews, Solidarity Economy does not only denote the sphere of production, but also reproduction (household and care for children, housing, consumption, natural resources). Finally, Solidarity Economy – as it is communicated in interviews – is defined in relation to the perspective of a general societal transformation, not with a static view on organizations and institutions which are understood as isolated.

c. Grounded Theory of Solidarity Economy

Transformation is the key category of the Theory of Solidarity Economy as it results from the interviews. It includes the conception of a timely trajectory with different phases. These cannot be delimited exactly and they overlap. However, they structure the transformation and constitute a narrative. Graphic 1 illustrates this timely

trajectory, along which categories and meta-categories are arranged. In the following text, not all of them are mentioned. They are described in detail in the long version of this report.

The aim of Solidarity Economy is a general transformation of all societal relations towards a solidary and democratic society. These relations encompass the economy, politics, the relation to nature, future generations and other regions of the world. This transformation starts in niches with practices that are organized in ways that are more solidary and democratic than is commonly the case today. These niches are one topic of the debate on Solidarity Economy, its relation to the perspective of transformation is the second. The reference to this perspective constitutes the significance of niche practices. Solidarity Economy is not a static term to distinguish good from bad practices by means of fixed criteria, but a dynamic, political and future-oriented term.

The niches are internally contradictory, since these are part of a system of social domination, which cannot be delimited as “the capitalist economy“, but which rather influences all realms of life and is formed by different dimensions, that are interlinked: capitalism, gender relations, racism etc. Transformation thus is a movement of change that starts with these contradictions and further develops them towards a transcendence of the system of domination. This implies a process of competition especially with the capitalist economy, which is stable not only due to coercion, but also because it appears to be more attractive to the masses as an alternative. In this relation, contemporary flaws of alternatives play a role, too.

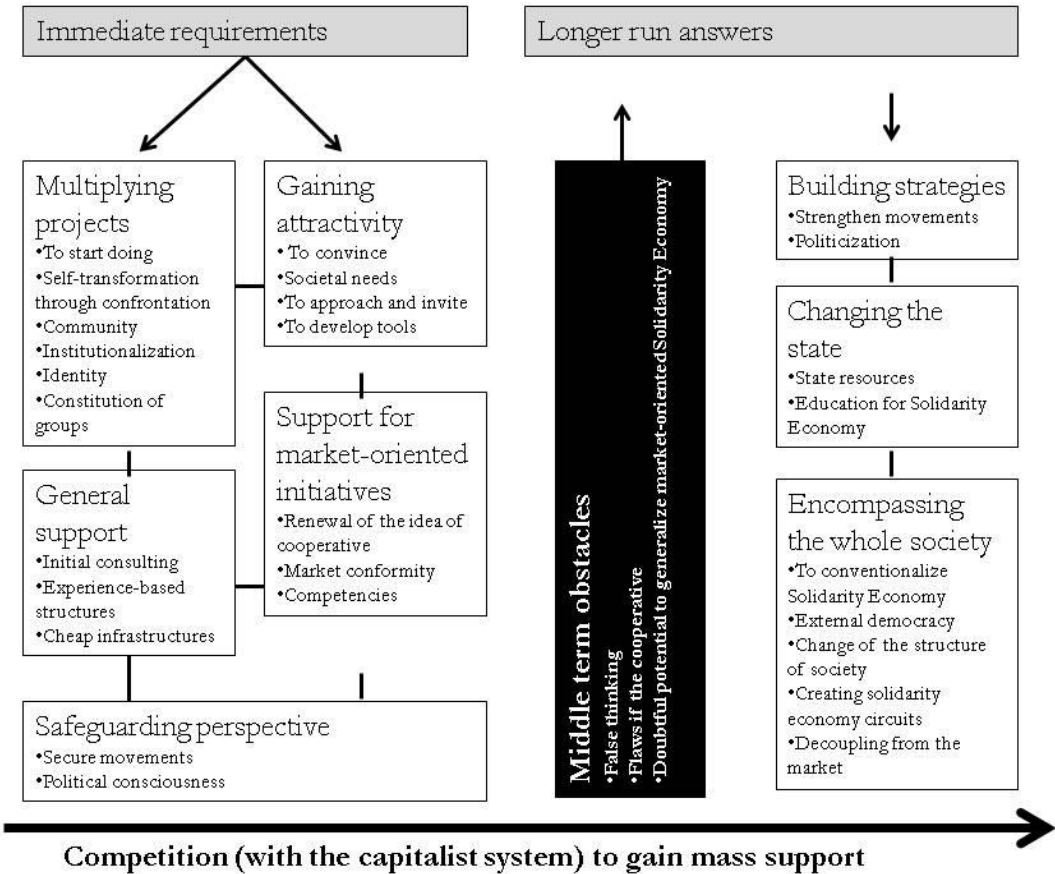
Initially, it is thus highly important for Solidarity Economy to become more attractive and to multiply projects of Solidarity Economy. By doing this, the perspective of transformation has to be safeguarded, which requires to secure the movement context of Solidarity Economy and to develop political consciousness. This movement and the consciousness are the basis for the potential of Solidarity Economy, which constitutes its significance and allows to reproduce its capacity for further development.

To support the multiplication of projects, firstly, knowledge in different forms is necessary. In this relation, the task primarily is to acquire knowledge, to transfer and implement it. Equally important is the willingness for self-transformation. On the other hand, institutional changes, which can be realized rather quickly, are important, e. g., regarding a new auditing federation (Revisionsverband)², which may

² In Austria, a cooperative has to be member of one of currently four auditing federations, which are not conducive for the foundation of new and democratically organized cooperatives.

facilitate new cooperative start-ups or cheap infrastructures, which would have to be wrenched from the state.

Attractiveness is gained through convincing further realms of society, which requires, inter alia, good practice examples of small alternatives, i.e., the multiplication and improvement of niche projects. It further takes first attempts towards a strategy of Solidarity Economy, which has to be created in the context of a social movement and is supported by financial means, which allows professional public relations. To be attractive, Solidarity Economy also has to create a welcoming climate, which, inter alia, reacts upon social emergencies and structural problems. Simple to use tools for Solidarity Economy facilitate the inclusion of wider reaches of society.



Graphics 1: Categories and meta-categories of a Grounded Theory of Solidarity Economy as a result of those interviews, which are attributed to the discourse of transformation (see Box 1). Along the timely trajectory of transformation, immediate requirements, middle-term obstacles and long-term answers can be discerned. These episodes are structured into blocks including a series of categories each. All categories and meta-categories refer to the key category transformation. They are only partly explained in this short-version of the report.

The niches are only able to improve limited parts of social relations. Moreover, success often remains contradictory. Any limited improvement is valuable, but has

to be continuously reflected upon. This (self)critical reflection is the precondition of a social movement, which is indispensable for a transformation. Furthermore, the niches themselves do not change their social context, which is becoming increasingly brutalized. It thus is paramount to change the context and to appropriate context-bound resources in order to expand, interlink and further develop the niches.

IV. Examples of actors of Solidarity Economy in Austria

In the following section, a series of important actors will be described briefly. This description does not aim at comprehensiveness. I included initiatives and organizations which were either identified unambiguously as good practices in interviews, or could very likely be regarded as good practices due to my own assessment.

a. Multi-focus groups, research and educational institutions

- **Solidarity Economy congresses in Vienna 2009 and 2013:** Both congresses were decisively important for the topic of Solidarity Economy in Austria. The responsible groups worked in a directly democratic mode and were critical of political representation. The congresses corresponded to this approach. → <http://solidarische-oekonomie.at>
- **Congress Good Life in Vienna 2015:** This congress linked several issues, among them Solidarity Economy, with ecological questions. The congress was organized in a conventional way and brought together practical initiatives with institutional actors. Working groups further develop issues that were identified and shall contribute to a civil society strategy. → <http://www.guteslebenfueralle.org/>
- **Catholic Social Academy Austria (KSÖ):** The KSÖ is a central actor of Solidarity Economy in Austria and has been organizing courses for solidary ways of doing economy for several decades (e.g., with regard to cooperatives). → <http://www.ksoe.at>
- **Grüne Bildungswerkstatt (GBW):** Members of the GBW were repeatedly active to promote Solidarity Economy and have initiated contacts between trade unions and AK³. → <https://wien.gbw.at/>
- **Mattersburger Kreis:** A scientific association working on Solidarity Economy in the Global South. It publishes the „Journal for Developmental Policy“. → <http://www.mattersburgerkreis.at/>
- **Paulo Freire Zentrum:** The center is active in education and regularly sets initiatives to support the debate on Solidarity Economy. → <http://www.pfz.at/>
- **Bündnis für Eine Welt (ÖIE):** ÖIE is an actor pro Solidarity Economy in the Austrian province of Carinthia and beyond. It engages in education

³ Legal representation of employees interests in Austria (Arbeiterkammer, AK; workers chamber).

concerning developmental policy with a focus on critically reflecting societal relations in the Global North. → <http://kaernoel.at/oeie/>

- **Impulszentrum für zukunftsfähiges Wirtschaften (ImZuWi):** ImZuWi is doing research on forms of sustainable economy in the sense of Solidarity Economy, documenting and promoting good practices. Its focus is the Austrian province of Styria. → <http://imzuwi.org/>
- **Department of Psychology, Univ. Innsbruck:** Research of the department concentrates on labor and organizational psychology in democratic enterprises. → <http://www.uibk.ac.at/psychologie/>

b. Food

- **Nyeleni Austria Forum:** The Forum is an important networking platform for initiatives for food sovereignty in Austria and beyond. It is centered around the issue of the right of all people to decide on their nutrition themselves. The Forum has organized two conferences 2011 and 2014, and supports the movement context of food coops, CSAs and other initiatives of Solidarity Economy. → <http://www.ernaehrungssouveraenitaet.at/nyeleni/>
- **Food Coops:** A food coop is an association of persons and households, which directly purchase ecological produce in self-organized manners from local farmsteads, market gardens, beekeepers etc. The Austrian platform of food coops currently lists 36 initiatives in Austria on its website. → <http://foodcoops.at/>
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):** CSAs are direct partnerships between consumers and producers for one season, sharing risks and benefits with producers. They aim at a secure income for producers and a secure provision of food for consumers. 29 initiatives are listed currently on the website → <http://www.ernaehrungssouveraenitaet.at/>
- **Collective agriculture:** A few initiatives in Austria use agricultural land collectively. An example, which is remarkable due to its political engagement and the directly democratic structure is the group Solidarity Agriculture (SoliLa) in Vienna. → <http://solila.blogspot.eu/>

c. Housing and collective living

- **Farm collectives:** In recent times, a certain trend towards the start of collective living and work communities in agriculture can be identified. A

prominent example, which exists since several years is the Wieserhoisl near Deutschlandsberg (Styria). → <http://www.wieserhoisl.at/>. The Long Mai collective Hof Stopar in Carinthia exists since 1977. → <http://www.prolongomai.ch/>

- **Co-Housing:** A remarkable number of projects that have established communal forms of living can be counted in Austria, some of them have been existing for many years. A prominent recent example is the Wohnprojekt Wien. → <http://www.wohnprojekt-wien.at/>. The also prominent Sargfabrik exists since 1996 (Vienna). → <http://www.sargfabrik.at/>. The Ernst Kirchweger-Haus (EKH) was occupied in 1990 and has been legalized in the meantime, its inhabitants are engaging in political work, and the EKH is part of the autonomous scene. → <https://med-user.net/~ekh/>. Franziskusgemeinschaft: This living and work community was founded in 1981 and is influenced by Christian Franciscan spirituality. It practices subsistence economy and is engaged in solidarity work. → <http://www.pinkafeld-online.at/?mmid=5&smid=92>

d. Regional economy and multi-focus initiatives

- **Open technology and workshop laboratories:** There are especially two initiatives in Austria, which provide free infrastructure for creative projects: Otelo (Austria), Metalab (Vienna). Otelo: → <http://www.otelo.or.at/>. Metalab: This is an independent and collectively managed space for technological and creative projects. → <https://metalab.at/>
- **Free-the-land initiatives:** In recent years, several initiatives have been developed to collectivize land in Austria, pursuing the aim to provide land for Solidarity Economy or collective good projects, to protect it from sealing and to use it as a commons. Collective Syndicate (Cosy): an association for non-commercial provision of resources for collective and emancipatory uses. → <http://zugangzuland.noblogs.org/> Bodenfreikauf Vorarlberg: an association for the purchase of land for the sake of protecting it as free space. → <http://www.bodenfreiheit.at/> Flächenfreikauf Steiermark: an association, which bought an arable field for collective agriculture and use, with the aim to decouple land from the market in the long-term. → <https://bodenfreikauf.wordpress.com>
- **Regional currencies and local exchange trade networks:** In Austria there are several local exchange trade networks and initiatives, which attempt to build circular regional economies. A remarkable example is Sonnenzeit/Spiel

des Lebens. → <http://www.sonnenzeit.jetzt>. The first regional money initiative in Austria following a Solidarity Economy perspective is the Waldviertler: → <http://www.waldviertler-regional.at>. Several local exchange trade networks pursue more limited aims, e. g., the Talentnetz in the Austrian province of Tyrol. → <http://www.talentnetztirol.net>

- **Transition Austria:** Originally started in England, transition groups have formed in several countries, among them in Austria. They attempt to develop a mode of living and producing without fossil resources on the communal level. Transition groups often integrate different approaches to Solidarity Economy. → <http://transitionaustria.ning.com/>

e. Distribution

- **Free shops:** In Austria, a couple of free shops exist, where clothes, household appliances and other things are available for free. Free shops attempt to support free giving and taking instead of the logic of exchange. One example is the free shop at Zentagasse, Vienna, which exists since 2005. → <http://www.kostnixladen.at/>
- **Food sharing initiatives:** In recent times, several initiatives have been created that distribute food freely, often in public space, which would otherwise be dumped, e. g., in Vienna. → <https://www.facebook.com/wienfoodsharing>
- **All sharing shops und repair cafés:** These initiatives try to reduce resource consumption by sharing and repairing goods. One example for an all sharing shop is → <http://www.leihladen.at/wp/>. An example for a repair café is → <https://www.facebook.com/repaircafesalzburg>
- **Popular kitchens** are organized depending on the occasion by diverse groups. Consumers help in the kitchen and with washing up. Kitchen teams are often organized around an experienced core team. Food is often donated and is provided frequently for free.

f. Mobility

- Several self-organized and collective **bicycle repair shops** exist in Austria. One example from Vienna also provides open spaces for political work and focuses explicitly on Solidarity Economy. → <http://www.bikekitchen.net>

g. Manufacturing and commercial services

Examples of Solidarity Economy in manufacturing and commercial services are very rare in Austria. Three examples are

- **Otelo Cooperative** → <http://www.oteloegen.at/>
- and the self-managed restaurants **Gagarin** → <http://cafegagarin.at/>
- and **Türkenwirt (TÜWI)** → <http://tuewi.action.at/> in Wien. The TÜWI is also engaged in political work.

h. Developmental cooperation (DC)

- **InterSol** → <http://www.intersol.at/> is a remarkable example of DC in Austria, since the association shapes its development projects, e.g., in Latin America, according to Solidarity Economy principles, and also plays an important role in Austria for the promotion of the concept of Solidarity Economy.
- **Info shops** are part of autonomous movements. They partly integrate political support for the Zapatistas in Mexico with material solidarity in terms of sale of coffee that is produced by Zapatist groups, e.g. in Linz. → <http://www.treibsand.servus.at/wo>. The Zapatistas are decisively important for the anti-globalization movement and for Solidarity Economy and are located in the South of Mexico.

i. Finance

- An **asset pool** is a tool for Solidarity Economy. In such a pool, contributions by people, groups and organizations or enterprises flow together to support a collective economic endeavor for human basic services (agriculture, housing, social services, energy, mobility, infrastructure etc.) and who/which also take part in it by living, working or otherwise. Money, assets and labor contributions are shared without interest to purchase land and houses, to build or renovate houses and to enable the development of energy and other infrastructures for basic human needs. The concept was developed by Markus

Distelberger and was implemented in projects by the 7-generation-network.
→ <http://www.vermoegenspool.at/>

- **Democratic bank:** Currently, a cooperative bank organized according to Solidarity Economy principles is in the process of foundation. → <https://www.mitgruenden.at/>

j. General infrastructures, networks and practices

- Over the course of the last years, several **mapping initiatives**, focusing on Solidarity Economy or on specific types of projects, have been created. The first initiative in Austria was vivirbien. → <http://vibirbien.mediavirus.org/> A more recent initiative with support from Austria is → <http://transformap.co>
- In several Austrian towns and cities, **self-managed network spaces** exist, which are active in political work and sometimes also manage restaurants (see TÜWI) and support initiatives of Solidarity Economy. Some of them (Amerlinghaus, RosaLilaVilla Wien) originated from occupations. Examples include the Gmota → <http://gmota.at/> and the Spektral in Graz → <http://spektral.at/> as well as initiatives in Vienna such as the RosaLilaVilla → <http://dievilla.at/>, the Amerlinghaus → <http://www.amerlinghaus.at/> and the Schenke → <https://dieschenke.wordpress.com/>

V. Conclusions with personal remarks

a. Developing contradictions

Solidarity Economy is shaped by contradictions. These cannot be resolved in isolation. They result from the niche position of Solidarity Economy in a system of social domination. Transformation means to further develop these and other contradictions within the frame of a social movement. Such a movement provides space for continuous reflection. Its function mainly is to integrate complementary ways of dealing with contradictions and to allow for an exchange between different strategies of doing so. Furthermore, reflection should generate new attempts to resolve contradictions for specific issues. The food coop approach could thus be further developed into democratic supermarkets, which demand less time and thus could be more attractive to broader reaches of society. Solidarity networks between Solidarity Economy enterprises, which suspend the market in part or on the whole, could reduce the inner contradictions of such enterprises.

b. Reflection of the enterprising self⁴

Nowadays, many people experience themselves as enterprises, that invest in themselves, i.e., as human capital. Life often is perceived as a series of projects. Social recognition depends on what is valued on social markets: in subcultures or milieus and often with regard to norms that are deemed attractive. This includes originality, creativity, enthusiasm, flexibility, productivity and capacity for teamwork – core values and notions of neoliberalism and conventional enterprises.

In practice, a critical attitude towards the enterprising self means to mistrust the jargon of management and of consulting literature, the terms linked to the enterprise, the idea of individual initiative, the enthusiasm generated by enthusiasm, the images of marketing, the fascination of power and speed, and the charismatic figures of the leader, the pioneer and the manager.

New ways to organize social recognition and to allow for different experiences of sensuality, emotion and satisfaction should be developed. A culture of repetition, of the care for others, and to cultivate everyday life are examples.

⁴ A term coined by Ulrich Bröckling.

c. Awareness of cooptations

The alternative economy of the 1970s and 1980s has prefigured today's management methods to a large part. The danger of cooptation should thus always be kept in mind. What distinguishes the participation of members of a cooperative bank or of a consumer cooperative from forms of creating consumer loyalty, as practiced by many conventional enterprises? How is a Community Supported Agriculture different from an alternative marketing approach? What distinguishes the membership of employees in a cooperative from forms of identification with a company's management? Such questions should be discussed more in depth. In doing so, a more realistic view on the de facto relations of domination and power within an enterprise is necessary, too, whether such an enterprise is conventionally organized or self-managed. The transition of a conventional enterprise towards a cooperative through the good will of the owner does not amount to a real change in this regard. Power relations based on unequal knowledge and due to charismatic authority will continue to exist. Such power relations cannot be diminished by merely explaining the rights of members in a general assembly. It is rather the context of a social movement, which decides whether cooperatives are yet another modernization of neoliberal ideology or an approach to exit it.

d. The conventionalization of Solidarity Economy

In the perspective of transformation, two issues are decisive: How can the industrial sector and large conventional enterprises be reorganized in the way of Solidarity Economy? How can Solidarity Economy secure the livelihoods of people? In the first step, a discussion of these questions in view of initiating practical implementations seems to be indispensable. Only through discussions a *Zeitgeist* can be created, which makes certain approaches reasonable and plausible. A conventionalization of Solidarity Economy also has to link with the debate on degrowth and should not assume that industry as a whole or in large parts must only be organized differently. In the course of such a discussion, it becomes necessary to recognize other aspects of a societal transformation quite early on. To date, only relatively isolated debates, such as those on an unconditional basic income or – in another way – on commons and a demonetization of society, have provided guidance.

e. Discussion of concepts of societal planning

Like the conventionalization of Solidarity Economy, the issue of societal planning has to be the object of thorough and broad discussions in the first instance. It should become clear that a redefinition of regions in the sense of self-reliance requires a planned reorganization of the interrelation of Solidarity Economy enterprises. The expansion of intra-firm democracy towards other affected groups puts the question of how to plan production on the agenda. Single Solidarity Economy enterprises will always be contradictory and narrowly limited as long as the usual form of the market or – depending on the political viewpoint – the market as such will exist. Societal planning has to be thought differently today than it was done still in the 1970s. For several reasons, a centrally planned economy, even when based on representative democracy, should be approached skeptically. Rather, and especially in the perspective of Solidarity Economy, the challenge consists in combining intra-firm democratization and the inclusion of other affected groups by formal democratic means with a general societal planning.

VI. Tasks: What can be done easily

a. Create subjective preconditions

At first, some subjective preconditions shall be mentioned. In a social movement in general, and facing the contradictory nature of Solidarity Economy especially, it always is necessary to deal with frustrations. Self-critical reflection confronts with displeasing insights or observations, which can strongly disturb an attitude oriented towards enthusiasm and rapid success. Furthermore, it is necessary to draw attention to social processes and to Solidarity Economy as a social process. It is also highly important that more practically oriented actors and others, that are more theoretically inclined, value their contributions equally and develop an active interest for each others contributions within a social movement. For practices to make sense, reflection is required. And reflection does not only need practical input, but also historical and theoretical ones.

b. Spread knowledge

It is important to systematize processes of learning, to get knowledge from where it can be found and to distribute it widely. This, for instance, concerns knowledge on the legal entity of the cooperative. Basically, the following points need to be recognized: (1) Self-management of a market-oriented enterprise can use the legal form of the cooperative; but it can also employ a construction that combines a limited company with an association of the members and a workers council (with such a construction, experiences have been made in Austria during the 1980s). (2) Social security is in principle easy to organize within a cooperative, if members are also employed; in this regard, the organizational innovation of the Otelo cooperative is important. (3) Self-management should always include a workers council; this is feasible within a cooperative, if members are employed at the same time; a workers council can also be part of a sociocratic organizational model of a self-managed enterprise. The restriction of self-management to small enterprises does not appear to be necessary; sociocratic organizational models combine direct and indirect democracy and are also well-tried in large organizations.

c. Organize theoretical and conceptual discussions

More openness to engage in conceptual discussions on self-reliance, economic democracy and regarding the relation between Solidarity Economy and the capitalist mode of production is required. Further controversial topics of discussion should be, among others: (1) the basic contradiction of the cooperative and the self-managed enterprise, respectively: between intra-firm democracy and solidarity on the one hand, and the egoism of the market-oriented enterprise and its forced orientation towards the maximization of profit; (2) the distinction between solidarity and entrepreneurial paternalism: Solidarity Economy should not be confounded with gifts and benefits by the owner of an enterprise. This process is in line with the neoliberal destruction of the welfare state and with the guiding figure of the creatively destructive entrepreneur, who does not care for societal regulations and formally democratic modes of communication and decision-making. Conventional enterprises with alternative self-perception often (yet, not always) employ good intentions for the sake of their survival on the market and thus, for the production of profit; in doing so, they appeal to certain segments of the market and gain in reputation within the game for authenticity and piece of conscience; however, this leads to the transformation of good intentions to bad outcomes, since context and perspective are decisive for Solidarity Economy, not a single good deed. If and because good deeds and intentions are part of a marketing strategy of an enterprise, that mostly has to fend for itself in rigorous world market competition, there is hardly a critical debate on such issues possible; such a debate would endanger the marketing strategy and thus is limited for structural reasons; (3) the commercialization of public services: the organization of public services in the form of social entrepreneurship or of cooperatives has to be reflected critically. The aim of democratization does not necessarily require organizing social services beyond the state; this can, quite to the contrary, also foster the trend towards privatization and precarization; (4) the relation between the state and bottom up-movements: historical experiences point towards the necessity of an integrated change of both realms; at the same time, there is a considerable danger that movements are coopted through the partial cooperation with political parties or state agencies; cooptation reduces the potential for change by movements; (5) the relation between civil society and struggles for hegemony: social movements have to target a change of power relations within civil society, which also determine state politics to a considerable extent; a major part of this endeavor is a change in dominant conceptions of authority and to critically discuss the longing for authority in general; the trust in the figure of the entrepreneur is part of neoliberal hegemony and should thus not be

reproduced within Solidarity Economy; instead, the trust in power and intelligence of collective self-organization should be cultivated.

d. Combine politics of alliance and movements

For a transformation of state politics, it is necessary or helpful, under certain conditions, to develop strategies and to formulate concrete demands. In so far as semi-public organizations or NGOs (should) play a role in this regard, logics of representation are evident, which is to be seen under a critical perspective. In order to uphold social pressure to transform state politics, to evade cooptation and to create organizational innovations, informal movements are required. They form the undercurrent for the ability to think and act strategically with regard to a change in state politics after all. Informal movements reject the logic of political representation – partly spontaneously, partly based on sound theoretical reflection. This results in a contradiction to formal politics of alliance, which is firstly unavoidable, secondly potentially very productive. This contradiction can be developed when both approaches create an appreciative, reflected and strategic balance, and manage to understand militant subversion and legalistic approaches as complementary.

e. Create open terms

Terms are shifting discursive nodes, that can never be fixed totally. They attract different people and groups or issues and create bridges. The discourse of transformation, within which the topic of Solidarity Economy is located, is broad. It probably includes further topics and related terms such as commons, degrowth, care-economy, resource justice or basic income. Open terms are productive. However, it is important to continuously clarify the basis for collective action and shared initiatives and to cultivate exchange about core elements of the perspective of transformation, which should be as clear as possible.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Sabine Klapf und Martin Haselwanter of Südwind and to Stephan Hochleithner for the excellent collaboration. I thank with heartfelt gratitude the following interviewees, who gave me their time, let me share their engagement and communicated their knowledge, in the order of interviews: Brigitte Kratzwald, Philip Taucher, Bernhard Mark-Ungericht, Ferdinand Kaineder, Florentine Maier, Markus Blümel, Alexandra Strickner, Gudrun Glocker, Utta Isop, Christian Kozina, Hans Eder, Emma G., Markus Auinger-Hafner, Marianne Schallhas, Andreas Novy, Ravi, Wolfgang Weber, Margit Atzler, Markus Distelberger, Martin Mair, Peter Uli Lehner, Ronald Pelikan, Hans Steiner, Klaudia Paiha, Marianne Gugler, Karl Immervoll, Josef Stampfer.