

Zivkovic, S. (2021), 'Social enterprises addressing the SDGs by taking a missions or systems-led approach', paper to the 2nd National Conference on Environment & Sustainable Development, Society for Environment & Sustainable Development, New Delhi, 10-11 November.

Social enterprises addressing the SDGs by taking a missions or systems-led approach

In April 2020, a study was initiated in Australia to advance the development of a national social enterprise strategy (Hannant, et al., 2021a, p. 4). A key recommendation from this study was that the Australian social enterprise sector needed to take a 'missions or systems-led approach' (Hannant, et al., 2021a, p. 86).

The study acknowledged that the mission approach being proposed was promulgated by Mariana Mazzucato (Hannant, et al., 2021b, p. 12). Mazzucato considers wicked problems to be "grand challenges" (Mazzucato, 2018a) and highlights that many grand challenges are expressed as the United Nations Sustainable Goals (SDGs) (Mazzucato, 2018b).

By referring to systems social entrepreneurship approaches and case studies, this article outlines a potential missions or systems-led strategy framework to enable place-based social enterprise sectors to address the SDGs. The strategy consists of four elements that need to be implemented simultaneously: social enterprises creating systems aware initiatives, the weaving of thematic place-based social enterprise networks, stewarding the system transitions of thematic place-based social enterprise networks, and providing transformation capital to transitioning thematic place-based social enterprise networks. An illustration of the proposed strategy framework is shown in Figure 1.

Systems social entrepreneurship approaches are recommended for addressing wicked problems. Two such approaches are the social innovation school of thought and the complexity approach to social entrepreneurship. The social innovation school of thought supports the creation of systems aware initiatives, as the approach supports social entrepreneurs taking direct action through the development on initiatives to transform systems (Martin and Osberg, 2007, p. 38). Using systems thinking, these social entrepreneurs identify an opportunity in a non-optimum complex system where they can intervene in order to create a better future state (Martin and Osberg, 2007, p. 35). This opportunity involves selecting and addressing a few of the underpinning causal factors of a target complex wicked problem: those factors that they consider will produce the greatest impact (Martin & Osberg, 2015). Oxford University's Map the System Competition supports this approach (University of Oxford, n.d).

An Australian example of the social innovation school approach is White Box Enterprises. White Box Enterprises identified that the current Disability Employment Services (DES) system was nonoptimal: that 'out of the 700,000 Australians on DES only 3% will be successful in finding work this year and only 27% of that 3% will still have a job after 13 weeks' (Terry, 2019). It also recognised an opportunity where White Box Enterprises could intervene in this non-optimum system as 'Employment focused social enterprises have a routine success rate of 80%+ to 13 weeks and beyond' (Terry, 2019). White Box Enterprises successfully intervened by lobbying government for a payment by outcomes pilot for the social enterprise sector (Terry, 2019).

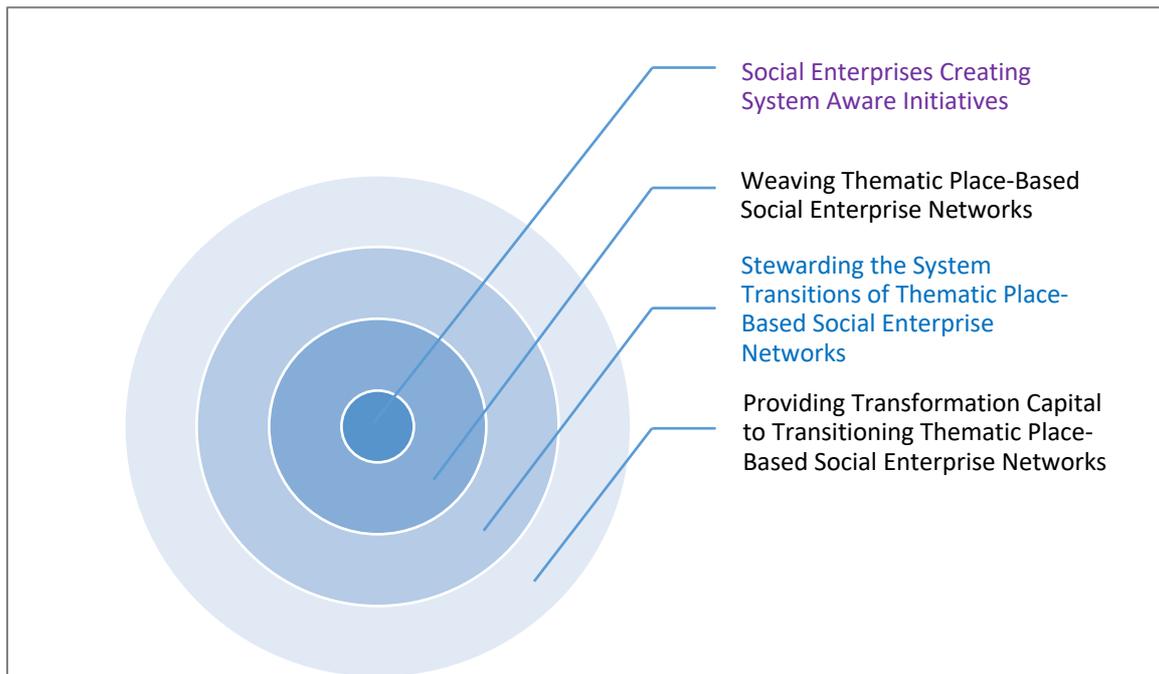


Figure 1: Proposed social enterprise missions or systems-led strategy framework

The development of thematic place-based social enterprise networks can be supported through network weaving. Network weaving is defined as “fostering new connections and deepening relationships. Weavers engage with participants to gather input, introduce participants to each other to inspire self-organization, and build bridges with new communities to help the network grow (Ehrlichman, 2021, p. 63).” A social enterprise example of network weaving is Social Enterprise Network Scotland’s (Senscot) efforts in weaving six thematic social enterprise networks (Social Value Lab, 2015). The themes for these networks are: Employability, Health, Community Food, Cultural & Creative, and Sport and Tourism (Senscot, n.d.). A survey of Senscot’s thematic networks in 2015 identified three main areas where the thematic networks are performing well: raising the profile of the sector, creating a collective voice for the sector, and encouraging joint working (Social Value Lab, 2015).

Stewarding system transitions is supported by the complexity approach to social entrepreneurship. This social entrepreneurship approach is underpinned by complexity science and focuses on addressing wicked problems (Castellani, 2021). Instead of creating interventions to solve problems using cause and effect logic, social entrepreneurship from a complexity perspective focuses on the creation of conditions for the components within a complex adaptive system, such as the initiatives and the organisations partnering on initiatives in a solution ecosystem, to transition coherently from their current state to a new and improved state.

Examples of initiatives that support and are stewarding system transitions of thematic place-based social enterprise networks are Wicked Lab and Moving Feast. Wicked Lab has

developed an online Tool for Systemic Change, training programs and a lab methodology that supports governments and communities to undertake system transitions (Zivkovic, 2018). In 2020, the social enterprise thematic network “Moving Feast” was established in Victoria, Australia ‘to build an immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic as well to collaborate to create a just, sustainable and resilient food system beyond the crisis’ (Moving Feast, 2020). Moving Feast was spearheaded by the social enterprise STREAT (Cody, 2020). Other member social enterprises of the network include CERES, Common Ground Project, Community Grocer, Cultivating Community, Fruit2Work, Melbourne Farmers Markets, Open Food Network, ACRE, Collingwood Children’s Farm, ASRC Catering, Kinfolk, 3000 Acres, Good Cycles, Whittlesea Food Collective, Laneway, Free to Feed and RMIT’s Bowen Street Press (Moving Feast, .n.d.). Moving Feast is using Wicked Lab’s Online Tool to support their transition to a just, sustainable and resilient food system in Victoria.

Transformation capital is a funding approach that considers how capital can be used to influence system dynamics (Hofstetter, 2020). This approach argues that investors should consider how their investments influence system transition dynamics, rather than individual project outcomes (Hofstetter, 2020). An example of a strategy that is taking a transformation capital approach is the South Australian Government’s Disaster Resilience Strategy. This Strategy is using Wicked Lab’s Online Tool to measure and monitor the portfolio of initiatives that are strategically aligned to the Disaster Resilience Strategy and are funded through South Australia's Disaster Resilience Grants (Wicked Lab, n.d.). The insights from using Wicked Lab’s Online Tool are being used to shape funding criteria for future rounds of grants funding (Wicked Lab, n.d.).

As highlighted in this article all four of the proposed missions or systems-led strategy framework elements are already occurring in practice. What is now required is to purposefully support the implementation of all four of these elements in the same place to address a specific wicked problem, grand challenge or SDG.

References

Castellani, B. (2021), *Map of the Complexity Sciences*, Art & Science Factory, viewed 23 October 2021, <<http://www.art-sciencefactory.com/complexity-map.html>>

Cody, G. (2020), Moving Feast will employ and feed Victoria's vulnerable, published 9 April 2020, accessed 17 April 2021, <<https://www.goodfood.com.au/eat-out/news/moving-feast-will-employ-and-feed-victorias-vulnerable-20200403-h1n4hl>>

Ehrlichman, D. (2021), *Impact Networks: Creating Connection, Sparking Collaboration, and Catalyzing Systemic Change*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Hannant, A., McNeill, J., Burkett, I., Price, A. (2021a), *Directions Part 1: Perspectives, provocations and sense-making for strategy. Social Enterprise National Strategy (SENS) Project*, The Yunus Centre Griffith University, Brisbane.

Hannant, A., McNeill, J., Burkett, I., Price, A. (2021b), *Social Enterprise National Strategy (SENS) Project - Directions Part 2: Towards a national strategy*, The Yunus Centre Griffith University, Brisbane.

Hofstetter, D. (2020), *Transformation Capital: Systemic Investing for Sustainability*, Climate-KIC, <https://www.climate-kic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Transformation-Capital-Systemic-Investing-for-Sustainability.pdf> (accessed 27 February 2021).

Martin, R.L. & Osberg, S. (2007), "Social entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2007, pp. 28-39.

Martin, R. L., & Osberg, S. (2015), *Getting beyond better: How social entrepreneurship works*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston.

Mazzucato, M. (2018a), "Mission-oriented innovation policies: challenges and opportunities", *Industrial and Corporate Change*, vol 27, no. 5, pp. 803-815.

Mazzucato, M. (2018b), *Mission-oriented research & innovation in the European Union*, European Commission.

Moving Feast (n.d.), Social enterprises helping vulnerable people during our current crisis while building a resilient and just food future, accessed 17 April 2021, <<https://movingfeast.net/>>

Moving Feast (2020), Our work has been gaining momentum, Moving Feast Newsletter Issue No. 2, published 20 April 2020, accessed 17 April 2020, <<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e796d8992b8f7283b2b039e/t/5ea7d983c7557d3463a3c7b5/1588059134618/Moving+Feast+week+2+update.pdf>>

Senscot (n.d.), Networks: Social Enterprise Networks in Scotland, accessed 17 April 2021, <<https://senscot.net/networks/>>

Social Value Lab (2015), Review of the Thematic Social Enterprise Networks: A Report for Senscot, published November 2015, accessed 17 April 2021, <<https://senscot.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Thematic-SEs-Review.pdf>>

Terry, L. (2019), Launching White Box Enterprises, published 27 August 2019, accessed 15 April 2021, <<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/launching-white-box-enterprises-luke-terry/>>

University of Oxford (n.d.), What is Map the System?, accessed 25 October 2021, <<https://mapthesystem.sbs.ox.ac.uk/overview>>

Wicked Lab (n.d.), Case Study: Disaster Resilience in South Australia, accessed 25 October 2021, <<https://www.wickedlab.co/disasterresilience.html>>

Zivkovic, S. (2018), 'Systemic Innovation Labs: A Lab for Wicked Problems', *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 348-366.