

# WP 1.1 - Survey Paper

## Labour Market, Employment Strategies and Social Economy

Coordinators:

Isabel André and Alexandre Abreu

With contributions from:

Abdelillah Hamdouch, Bernhard Leubolt, Dina Vaiou,  
Felicitas Hillman, Jorge Malheiros, Juan-Luis Klein,  
Laurent Fraise, Marthe Nyssens,  
Patrícia Rego, Tomáš Sirovátka

And comments and other inputs from:

Denis Harrison, Dimitra Siatitsa, Enzo Mingione,  
Frank Moulaert, Haris Konstantatos, Isabel Vidal,  
Jean Hillier, John Andersen, Len Arthur,  
Serena Vicari, Tommaso Vitale

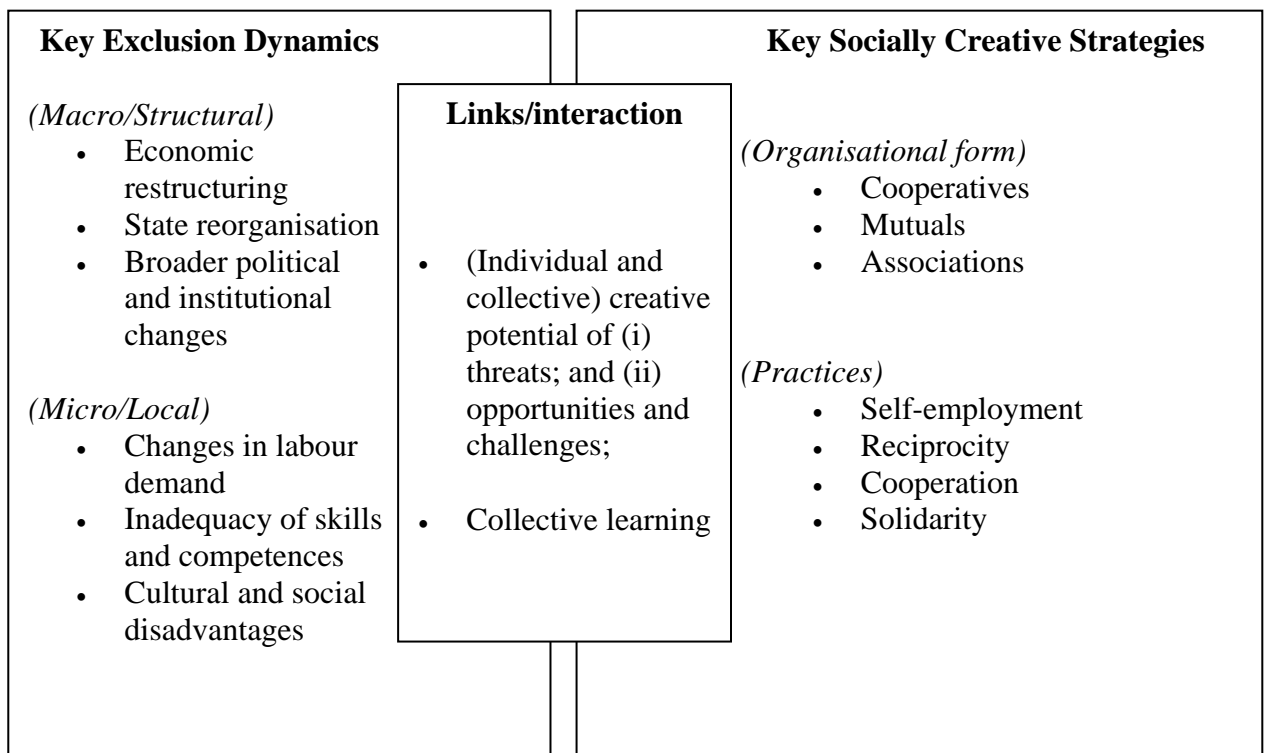
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on socially creative strategies (SCS), mainly in reaction to exclusion dynamics (ED) in the “labour market, employment strategies and social economy” existential field. This existential field is essentially regarded as comprising all exclusionary and inclusionary aspects having to do with labour (whether paid, voluntary or corresponding to self-employment), work more generally (i.e. including “commodified” labour and “non-commodified” work in a variety of social spheres) and the social economy (regarded as that subset of the third sector that is governed by the principle of reciprocity).

Special emphasis is given to the linkages between SCS and ED, namely the conditions under which the latter give rise to the former, the way in which the former can and should be regarded as representing the contextually-bound outcome of an interplay between practice-oriented goals (seeking to overcome concrete problems and threats) and ideology-oriented aims (seeking to enact alternative societal projects) and the ways in which SCS come to be appropriated, and possibly “neutralised”, by agents and in ways that are largely alien and contradictory to their original purpose and content.

### Labour Market, Employment Strategies and Social Economy – Key ED and SCS



The “good and best practice” exemplars presented in this survey paper come from a variety of European geographical contexts and cover SCS that assume both an *organisational* form, a *project* form and a *practice* form – in this, they contribute to illustrating both the variety of such strategies in this existential field and our conceptual understanding of them. The way in which they are presented is meant to highlight four key aspects: (i) their socially innovative and socially creative content; (ii) their specific governance characteristics, deemed an essential feature of SCS, particularly in the social economy sphere; (iii) the challenges and opportunities which enable(d) their emergence and/or sustainability; and (iv) the threats with which they have been faced along their trajectory and/or continue to be faced. As it turns out, most of the key aspects significantly present in the case-studies are in one way or another “representative” of a much broader set of socially creative initiatives.

### SCS Case Studies

- **Mondragón (Euskadi, Spain)**
  - A “cooperative conglomerate” with a history of over 50 years that illustrates the feasibility of long-term, supra-local forms of economic organisation based on cooperation and reciprocity. Key to its success are the emphasis on institutionalised collective learning and a favourable preexisting “breeding ground” in terms of cultural and political identity.
- **Job Rotation (Czech Republic)**
  - A EU-funded job activation scheme that has been met with considerable success. Network forms of governance, decentralised management and an individualised approach to users provide what might otherwise be a fairly bureaucratic and ineffective initiative with a significant socially creative content.
- **Cova da Moura (Portugal)**
  - An integrated area development project designed as a pilot scheme for country-wide urban policy in Portugal. Though the sustainability of the project is also due to abundant government funding, it is the fact that it is based on extensive participative planning and built on the knowledge base of the preexisting associative fabric, alongside its emphasis on providing innovative employment- and income-generating solutions to the residents, that has made it possible for its success to occur *because*, rather than *despite*, those residents.
- **Ethnic entrepreneurship (Germany)**
  - The analysis of the prevalence, strengths and weaknesses of the entrepreneurial (largely self-employed) sector among immigrant communities in Germany provides an example of a typical socially creative *practice* – adopted as a survival strategy – and of the ways in which such practices can be appropriated to serve the aims of third parties.
- **Crédal (Belgium)**
  - A credit cooperative that has recently moved into microfinance. This case-study highlights some of the key virtuous features of the socially creative social economy: cooperative governance based on equality and transparency, collective self-help, solidarity, emphasis on collective learning and a facilitating stance towards other social economy organisations.

This existential field has an obviously “transversal” character. Work/labour is the input *par excellence* in all creation of value. Whenever the value thus created is distributed in accordance with the principle of reciprocity and the values of cooperation, self-help and/or solidarity, it adopts a socially creative, emancipatory character that it is also inclusionary whenever its beneficiaries are originally in a situation of actual or potential social exclusion. To this *product or result-oriented* dimension of the socially creative potential of labour adds its *process* dimension: how forms of organisation of work based on participation, equality and creativity can unleash the potential of individuals and communities and serve to countervail the predominantly alienating effects of labour markets and workplaces and create alternative social and economic spaces.

In accordance with the typology presented in this survey paper, socially creative strategies assume the form of either *practices* or *organisations*. Whereas the former can be found anywhere in the economy and society, though most typically in the social economy and in the non-commodified household and community realms, the latter can be argued to correspond to a specific subset of the social economy – that which combines socially creative processes and products and which is *the* main locus of social innovation.