ECOPRISE

WP2: Exploration of ecovillage design potential for a new entrepreneurial model

D2.2: Ecoprise prototype

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Ecoprise Model

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the project

According to the design of the project **Ecoprise: Future-oriented social entrepreneurship through Ecovillage design**, the intention is to create an innovative Ecoprise entrepreneurial model (EEM). The project will bring about a considerably innovative transformation, as it will develop a new entrepreneurial model inspired by the ecovillage design and by permaculture ethics, as well as create a new professional figure – the Ecoprise Designer, i.e., a professional able to support the setting-up of an Ecoprise. The Ecoprise model is a blueprint for future-oriented social entrepreneurship through ecovillage design that needs to be innovative and flexible enough to ensure its repeatability in several different contexts. The empirical findings of the SWOT Analysis conducted in the first months of the project, showed the advantages of adopting a place-based approach in the development of such a model due to the importance of taking into consideration each country's specific contexts, e.g. cultural and historical background, environmental, social, economic context, etc.

By integrating wisdom from both the ecovillage model as a well-functioning micro-society and learning centre, and the permaculture value system in order to promote a change in our worldview, the Ecoprise project will create a new business model for sustainable social entrepreneurship. Traditionally, social enterprises are community-rooted economic activities promoting local development in centralised systems - but not in all cases. This rationale also is a common feature of ecovillages. Thus, Ecovillage Design Education will be integrated in Ecoprise for its ability to foster new ways of living, enabling learners to become change agents in their local contexts, supporting sustainable and regenerative approaches to community building, towards healthier and more meaningful lives. The emergent concept of regeneration in the business context is based on regenerative strategies such as being adaptive and responsive, building capacity holistically, and creating multi-stakeholder value across nature-based socio-ecological systems (V. Yadav and N. Yadav, 2024).

The model incorporates ecovillage practices in the domains of environmental, social, economic and cultural regeneration - according to the Ecovillage Map of Regeneration - and it recognises the advantages of adopting an ecosystemic approach to the development of social entrepreneurship that fosters the creation of networks and alliances instead of focusing on a single entrepreneurship and/or entrepreneur.

1.2 Goal

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The model is rooted in an understanding of social entrepreneurship that - on a permanent basis - implements commercial activity where the goal is to create a social and environmental impact and the maintenance of that impact is done by reinvestment of the profit. The model understands innovation as: creation of value by better meeting customer needs and preferences in a changing world (A. Aagaard, 2024). The Ecoprise innovative model will merge different concepts in order to boost a radical change which is needed for green transition on both personal and organisational levels - not only on an enterprise level (processes) where most focus is generally placed on the mainstream conversations. The applied approach can be classified as holistic.

Objectives and priorities

Stimulating entrepreneurial attitudes, through the creation of a new entrepreneurial model and of the professional figure of Ecoprise Designer; Fostering corporate social responsibility, through an innovative model of social entrepreneurship supporting sustainable lifestyles, circular business approaches, and green skills.

2. Background

2.1 Concept of Ecovillage Design and Whole System Mandala

Ecovillage design and the Whole System Mandala are integral concepts in developing the Ecoprise Enterprise Model

Ecovillage design is a holistic approach to creating sustainable human settlements that balance ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. This concept aims to create self-reliant communities that use local resources, promote social cohesion, and minimise their environmental footprint. The holistic approach of ecovillage design is represented with a Whole System Mandala which identifies 4 dimensions of Sustainability: Ecology, Economy, Social, Culture, and additionally includes the Whole system dimension that permeates the other 4.

Fig. 1. Whole System Mandala

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As the Ecovillage Whole Systems Mandala is integrated into a business model, it acts as a guiding framework for designing operations that are not only economically viable but also socially equitable, culturally inclusive, ecologically regenerative, aligned with deeper values, and conscious of their impact on the complex systems that surround them.

1. **Economic**: The economic dimension addresses sustainable economics, financial independence, local economies, and ethical business practices.

Implementation in EEM

- Ethical Finance and Revenue Models: Develop revenue models that prioritise social and environmental impact alongside profit.
- Local Economies: Support local suppliers, collaborate with community enterprises, and reinvest in regional projects.
- Resilient Business Models: Build diversified income streams, reducing dependency on fragile global supply chains.

2. **Ecological/Environmental**: The ecological dimension is concerned with regenerative practices in land use, permaculture, water management, and biodiversity.

Implementation in EEM

- Sustainability: Integrate sustainable practices such as zero waste, circular economy principles, and carbon neutrality in business operations.
- Product Life Cycle: Design products using renewable resources, and ensuring recyclability or compostability.
- Environmental Stewardship: Invest in regenerative initiatives, such as reforestation, habitat restoration, and supporting biodiversity.

3. **Social**: The social dimension focuses on building strong, inclusive communities through shared values, communication, governance, and social structures.

Implementation in EEM

- Enterprise Culture and Governance: Implement participatory decision-making, horizontal, and inclusive governance structures that mirror ecovillage models.
- Community Engagement: Foster strong relationships with employees, customers, and the community, emphasising cooperation, transparency, and mutual support.
- Employees' Well-being: Caring for employees' well-being, considering their family situation, inclusive workplace culture, and community-building activities.

4. **Cultural**: The cultural dimension emphasises cultural heritage, education, art, rituals, and celebrations that foster a sense of identity and belonging.

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Implementation in EEM

- Brand Identity: Build a brand that reflects locality, cultural narratives, shared values, and ethical principles.
- Education and Learning: Implement continuous learning opportunities for employees, sustainability training, and cultural exchange within the business.
- Creativity and Innovation: Foster a work environment that encourages creative expression and innovative solutions to sustainability challenges.

5. The **Systemic** layer transverses all previously mentioned domains: it represents ethical and spiritual values, mindfulness, purpose, and personal development.

Implementation in EEM

- Purpose-Driven Mission: Focusing on creating a positive impact on the world.
- Mindful Leadership: Encourage mindful leadership practices that emphasise ethical decision-making, empathy, and reflective practices.

The Ecovillage Whole Systems Mandala is a foundation for the Ecovillage Map of Regeneration, a tool that helps assess and guide the progress of an ecopreneurial initiative toward regenerative practices. It extends beyond sustainability by focusing on ways to actively restore and enhance ecosystems, communities, and economies.

- Regenerative practices focus not just on minimising harm but on creating positive impacts, such as restoring soil health, enhancing biodiversity, and building stronger community connections.
- The Map of Regeneration can serve as a diagnostic and planning tool, allowing ecopreneurs to set clear goals for improving their impact in each area and to track progress over time.

Application in an Ecoprise Business Model

When applied to an Ecoprise, the concepts of ecovillage design and the Map of Regeneration help to build a business model that is deeply connected to place, community, and environmental stewardship:

- Ecovillage design principles guide the structure and operations of the ecoprise, ensuring that it remains aligned with sustainable values. This could include adopting regenerative agriculture practices, using renewable energy, or creating a supportive workplace culture.
- The Map of Regeneration acts as a tool to evaluate the ecoprise's impacts on its community and environment. It helps to identify areas for improvement and opportunities for creating greater positive impacts, whether through better resource management, community engagement, or creating more equitable economic structures.

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By integrating ecovillage design and the Map of Regeneration into an ecoprise business model, entrepreneurs can ensure that their ventures not only remain viable but also contribute positively to ecological restoration, community wellbeing, and cultural richness. This approach emphasises a balance between profitability and regenerative values, creating a path for sustainable growth.

2.2 Permaculture Ethics

1. Earth Care (Caring for the Planet)
The ethic of Earth Care focuses on protecting, regenerating, and preserving the natural environment. For an EEM, this means taking responsibility for the ecological impact of its operations and actively working to minimise harm while enhancing ecosystems.

2. People Care (Caring for People)
People Care emphasises the well-being, health, and empowerment of individuals and communities. In a EEM context, this ethic translates into prioritising employee welfare, community engagement, and creating value that improves people's lives.

3. Fair Share (Redistribute Surplus)
Fair Share involves redistributing resources, time, and wealth to create balance and equity. EEM can integrate this ethic by ensuring that profits are fairly distributed with employees and other stakeholders. Possibly part of the profit is directed to a local charity or environmental project.

2.3 Other relevant programs developed in Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)

The Global Ecovillage Network of Europe (GEN Europe) is a network of sustainable communities and ecovillages across Europe. It promotes ecological, social, economic and cultural sustainability by sharing knowledge, best practices, and resources among its members and individuals interested in alternative lifestyles. GEN Europe emphasises community-led solutions to address environmental challenges, fostering collaboration and resilience at a local level.
Sustainable practices developed in GEN are relevant for ecopreneurship because they provide models for sustainable living and business practices that balance environmental responsibility with social well-being. By creating frameworks for community resilience, cooperative governance, and low-impact living, GEN Europe offers inspiration and practical approaches for ecopreneurs looking to build businesses that are both profitable and sustainable. These

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innovations encourage new forms of enterprise that prioritise ecological and social values, making GEN Europe's initiatives a valuable reference point for sustainable entrepreneurship.

SIRCle

The Social Innovation for Resilient Communities (SIRCle) partnership developed Evoneers' Journey framework, inspired by Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. It includes permaculture and regenerative thinking as described above and elucidates the transformational path that individuals or groups (named "Evoneers") undertake to create sustainable and regenerative communities, businesses, or lifestyles. This journey is a roadmap for change-makers, entrepreneurs, and anyone passionate about ecological and social regeneration.

The Evoneer's Journey Stages

1. The Call to Adventure

The Evoneer feels a deep pull or calling to make a difference—whether it's addressing environmental degradation, social injustice, or the desire to live more harmoniously with nature. This could be triggered by a significant event, crisis, realisation, or exposure to new ideas that challenge the status quo. It's the moment when Evoneer decides to pursue a path of sustainability and regeneration, perhaps by starting a sustainable business.

2. Crossing the Threshold

The Evoneer leaves behind familiar, conventional ways of living or doing business, stepping into unknown, often challenging territory. This stage involves learning new skills, adopting permaculture principles, or shifting towards a circular economy model. It can involve personal sacrifices, such as leaving a secure job, investing in a new venture, or changing one's lifestyle.

3. The Challenges and Trials

As the Evoneer navigates their new path, they encounter obstacles, resistance, and the need for deep personal and systemic change. These obstacles may include overcoming financial hurdles, societal scepticism, internal fears, or the complexity of implementing sustainable practices. This stage is critical for developing resilience, creative problem-solving, and forging new alliances.

4. Meeting Allies and Mentors

Along the journey, the Evoneer meets like-minded individuals, mentors, and organisations that offer guidance, support, and collaboration opportunities. This may come in the form of networking with other regenerative entrepreneurs, participating in sustainability forums, or joining learning communities like permaculture courses and ecovillages. These connections provide the resources, knowledge, and emotional support needed to move forward.

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5. The Transformation

Through overcoming challenges and building supportive networks, the Evoneer undergoes a profound transformation, a shift in mindset, deeper ecological literacy, and the ability to implement systemic change. The Evoneer's business or community initiative begins to thrive in alignment with regenerative principles, demonstrating that a new way of operating is possible. It's about moving from theory to practice, with real-world impacts.

6. Sharing the Wisdom

Having gained experience and achieved some level of success, the Evoneer returns to share their learnings, inspire others, and help expand the movement. This can involve mentoring new Evoneers, teaching sustainable practices, publishing success stories, or advocating for policy changes. It's about spreading the regenerative mindset and empowering others to embark on their journeys.

7. Integration and Regeneration

The Evoneer's journey comes full circle as they integrate their experiences and continue to evolve, scaling their impact from personal and local to broader, systemic changes. The Evoneer starts influencing wider networks, inspiring industry-wide changes, or collaborating on global sustainability goals. This stage emphasises continuous learning, adaptability, and the ongoing nature of regeneration.

Community Learning Incubator Program for Sustainability (CLIPS)

The Community Incubator (CLIPS) was developed through a strategic partnership involving 10 European Ecovillage National Networks. This collaboration resulted in a framework that focuses on group dynamics within teams working toward a common goal. Statistics show that 8 out of 10 community-led initiatives don't last beyond 2 years. The Community Incubator aims to support newly established initiatives in overcoming initial obstacles and growing into thriving organisations.

The partnership included 5 well-established ecovillages with extensive experience in community-building dynamics and 5 newly established community-led initiatives. The newer initiatives helped identify common challenges faced in the early stages of development, while the experienced partners provided tools and guidance to overcome these obstacles.

The Community Incubator Framework offers valuable insights into group dynamics and can serve as a foundation for Ecoprise design.

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The framework consists of five interwoven layers:

1. Individual:

This layer focuses on the personal aspects of each individual involved in the group's efforts. Individual motivation to be part of a group can be observed through the lens of Ecovillage Whole System Mandala:

- Economic: need for regular income,
- Ecologic (environmental): for many individuals it is important and stimulating that they make their living in an environmentally conscious context.
- Social: a sense of belonging and shared values within the organisation contribute to the loyalty and feeling of ownership of the organisation's vision and mission.
- Cultural: Individuals feel accepted and valued within the group. The group considers the personal differences and individual circumstances of its members, such as parenthood, caregiving responsibilities, illness, or other vulnerable situations.
- Whole system: the feeling of purpose, continuous learning, and contribution to a higher good.

2. Community:

The community layer explores the relationship between individuals and the organisation. When individuals experience a sense of belonging and purpose within the organisation, the entire team becomes more cohesive, productive, and equipped to navigate complex challenges. A strong and resilient team is based on open communication, shared values, and a culture of trust. In such an environment, employees are more likely to share ideas, offer creative solutions, and support each other in achieving both individual and organisational objectives. This enables the organisation to handle conflicts or crises constructively, encouraging problem-solving and collective decision-making.

3. Intention/vision, mission:

In the CLIPS model, the term "intention" is used rather than "vision" or "mission" to emphasise purpose. Intention addresses the deeper "why" behind an organisation's existence. How do the organisation's actions impact the environment, and local community? When the organisation's intention is aligned with each individual's sense of purpose, it fosters a motivated and engaged team. In this context, reward goes beyond fair compensation—it's also the fulfilment that comes from contributing to a greater good, whether for the world, the environment, or society-at-large.

4. Structure:

Structure comprises the legal aspects of an organisation, which include: governance, decision-making, conflict resolution protocols, and internal policies. It is a frame within which the

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organisation and individuals operate on a daily basis. When viewed through the lens of the Ecovillage Whole System Mandala, an organisation typically adopts a horizontal governance model, emphasising shared responsibility and collective decision-making. This approach actively involves all stakeholders in key decisions and strategic planning processes. Additionally, when the organisation's actions are likely to have a significant impact on the surrounding community, it often invites local community representatives to participate, ensuring that their voices are heard and considered. This inclusive governance model fosters transparency, collaboration, and alignment with sustainability principles.

5. Practice:

The practice layer in the Community Incubator (CLIPS) serves as a reminder to align our actions with the theoretical foundations established in the previous four layers. It calls for consistency, self-reflection, and a commitment to continuously adapt our actions based on feedback from the environment. This layer emphasises a high level of accountability, urging us to "walk the talk" by ensuring that our actions reflect our stated values and intentions.

2.4 Research gap

Regeneration is not a mainstream direction for radical change in green transition yet, especially in business, because regenerative strategies still are more challenging than accessible. One of the main limitations for the creation and implementation of the regenerative strategies of businesses is a shortage of skills and knowledge which is far beyond the conventional business skills and mindset. The concept of regeneration embedded in design and purpose has been spreading in some parts of society such as in cohabitating communities or ecovillages which consciously choose a low impact lifestyle and social entrepreneurship. At the same time, social businesses are community-rooted economic activities promoting local development in centralised systems. In this sense, ecovillages as cohabitating communities have much in common with social businesses at least on a theoretical background. This assumption led to the assessment of real cases by doing research where ecovillages and social enterprises were compared by their performance in terms of regeneration. In the context of organisation and business, regeneration is envisioned to rebuild and strengthen ecosystems, making them more resilient to external forces (Das and Bocken, 2024). In ecovillage design methodology, regeneration is a goal in all 4 dimensions (environmental, social, cultural, economic) and their interconnections are viewed as embodied (or sought to be embodied) by ecovillages. The intention of the project's research is to identify the best practices and successful examples of social enterprises and ecovillages and analyse the skill gaps in the two fields in order to find and create synergies, allowing a new model to become a very valuable and powerful tool in tackling challenges, especially in our context of immediacy and uncertainty. Empirical findings of this research showed that the social enterprises which participated in the research are behind the ecovillages in terms of

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regeneration in the 4 focus areas. The main limitations for scaling social entrepreneurship are adequate skills and knowledge as well as balanced business models in terms of social and environmental impact-creation. Due to these limitations, social entrepreneurs were asked questions about sustainability rather than regeneration (see Appendix 2A and 2B for definitions in Ecoprise SWOT Analysis). As the term regeneration is used as a measuring stick in ecovillages, the concept of sustainability was used as a more closely related metric in the entrepreneurial context (Ecoprise SWOT Analysis). As *regenerative business* is in a very early stage of development, there is similarly not much available research. Not much is known about how regenerative business models are realised in practice, how they relate to their social and ecological environment, and how firms can approach embedding such strategies in their business models (Das and Bocken, 2024). A business model innovation is created on a sustainability framework where three aspects (economic, social and environmental) are integrated for value creation and value capture in a business model. This research seeks to fulfil the gap and enact social entrepreneurship that goes beyond sustainability by employing the regenerative practices by creating the Ecoprise Entrepreneurial Model.

3. Method

3.1 Data collection: ecovillages vs social enterprises

The research's main objective was to identify successful examples of social enterprises and ecovillages and analyse existing skill gaps in the two fields in order to design a tailored entrepreneurial model and a new professional profile able to support its deployment: the Ecoprise Designer. The research covered the main questions that were investigated by applying qualitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews with organisations were conducted in three months in six partner countries (more detailed explanation about research methodology is in Ecoprise SWOT analysis).

Table 1. Thematic overview of respondent sample. Organisations grouped according to main field of activity (Ecoprise SWOT analysis)

Ecovillages	Social Enterprises
Sustainability and Environment: 12 Community Living and Empowerment: 7 Education and Cultural regeneration: 7 Tourism and Hospitality: 5 Spirituality and Alternative Living: 4	Environmental Sustainability and Education: 9 Social Inclusion and Community Development: 9 Economic Development and Social Entrepreneurship: 9 Cultural Regeneration and Heritage Preservation: 5 Research and Policy Development: 3

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3.2 Data analysis: project partners' contribution

The Ecoprise project is a collaborative initiative involving a diverse consortium of partners with varied expertise. During the International camp held at Ängsbacka in Sweden in August 2024, a co-design session was organised in order to gather inputs from the project partners as valuable collective wisdom on creating the Ecoprise entrepreneurial model. The collective interactive session was held using the world cafe method where all participants were divided into 4 small groups (from 4 to 5 people) and then invited to answer 4 co-design questions by using 32 Whole System Mandala cards (Ecovillage regenerative model tool). These 4 co-design questions, centred around 4 key themes: PRACTICES, PROFIT, NETWORK, REPEATABILITY. These themes were chosen because they are directly related to the Ecoprise entrepreneurial model framework (presented in the beginning of the co-design session during the International camp in Sweden) on micro and macro level.

Ecovillage design cards - which are designed based on the Whole System Mandala described in Chapter 2.1 - have been used for inspiration.

The participants in the workshops were answering the following questions:

PRACTICES	**PROFIT**
Which Ecovillage practices should be integrated into an Ecoprise?	What should be the nature of an Ecoprise, and how would this combine with Ecovillage values?
NETWORK	**REPEATABILITY**
What structures can support ecopreneurs to thrive?	How can place-based solutions be integrated into the general Ecoprise model?

Summary of workshop findings:

1. Practices

Integrating Ecovillage Practices:

- Environmental: Adopt regenerative agricultural practices such as soil regeneration, seed preservation, and water management systems. Encourage local food production, emphasising short supply chains and community-based land management.
- Social: Focus on health and wellbeing through conflict resolution practices and fair, accountable institutions. Ensure that entrepreneurial models include spaces for social regeneration and avoid burnout among employees.
- Economic: Implement social entrepreneurship that promotes local regeneration, fosters economic justice, and is grounded in solidarity and sharing. This aligns with regenerative values of addressing broader community needs beyond profit.
- Cultural: Embrace whole systems thinking and engage in practices that protect and restore local communities, ensuring the regeneration extends beyond immediate business interests.

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Key Regenerative Principle: Focus on activities that restore ecosystems and enhance community wellbeing, creating value across multiple dimensions (environmental, social, cultural, economic). By embedding these practices into the Ecoprise model regenerates local ecosystems and communities, not just sustains them.

2. Profit

Nature of Ecoprise and Its Values:

- Responsible Production & Trade: Profit in the Ecoprise model must be aligned with ethical practices, including transparency, honesty, and regeneration. Wealth creation should not be solely monetary; it should focus on creating sufficient, value-based profits that improve local ecosystems and social cohesion.
- Sociocratic Decision-Making: Use inclusive decision-making models, where all members have a voice, thus fostering shared responsibility and success.
- Profit Redistribution: Any profits generated should be reinvested in ways that benefit local communities and ecosystems, such as regenerative agricultural projects or renewable energy initiatives.

Key Regenerative Principle: Redefine wealth as community wellbeing and ecosystem restoration. Align profit generation with ecological and social impact, ensuring that profit is distributed in ways that regenerate natural resources and positively impacts local communities.

3. Network

Supporting Ecoprises and Ecopreneurs

- Collaborative Governance: Implement collaborative decision-making that includes all stakeholders, encouraging participatory processes that take into account diverse viewpoints.
- Alternative Financial Systems: Explore non-extractive financial structures such as ethical banks, microfinancing, or community-led funding mechanisms that support regeneration-focused businesses.
- Indigenous Wisdom & Systemic Thinking: Integrate indigenous knowledge and system thinking to create support structures for ecopreneurs that value long-term environmental stewardship over short-term gain.

Key Regenerative Principle: Foster collaborative ecosystems that support ecopreneurs through collective governance, shared resources, and financial systems that prioritise sustainability and equity.

4. Repeatability

Scaling Place-Based Solutions:

- Local Adaptation: Ensure that the Ecoprise model is flexible and adaptable to local conditions, respecting cultural, environmental, and social specificities. This involves engaging local communities in the design process and tailoring solutions to their needs.

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- Systems Thinking & Nature-Based Models: Apply system thinking into the Ecoprise model, using natural cycles as blueprints for sustainable business practices.
- Education & Training: Invest in education and training for local communities to enhance their skills and involvement in regenerative practices.

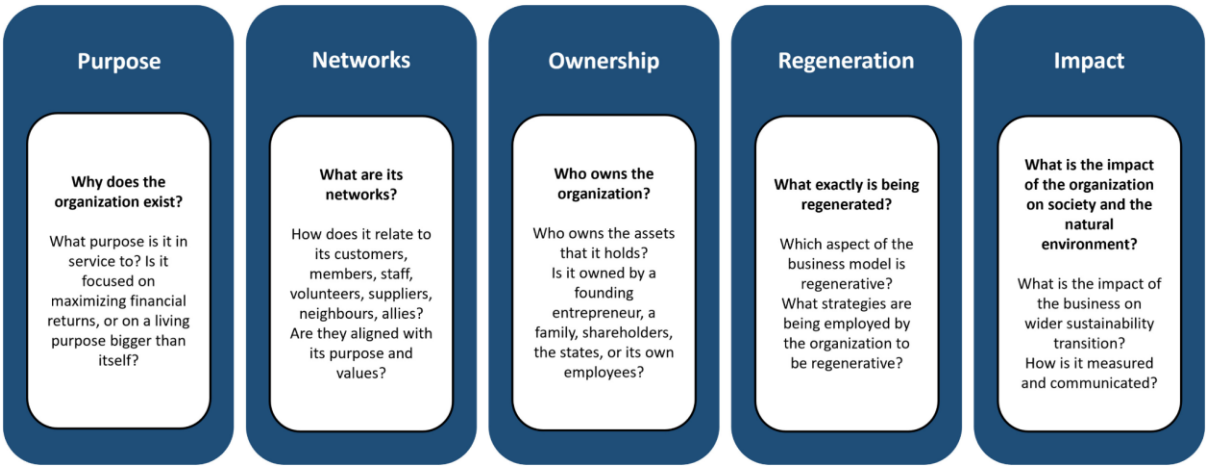
Key Regenerative Principle: Prioritise localization and scalability, ensuring the model can be adapted to different regions while maintaining core regenerative values of ecosystem restoration, social inclusion, and economic equity.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Framework of Ecoprise entrepreneurial model

The framework of the Ecoprise entrepreneurial model was created by merging theoretical and empirical data: a framework of core elements of regenerative business model presented by A. Das and N. Bocken in 2024 and empirical findings of the research (SWOT analysis).
A. Das and N. Bocken's provided framework describes five core elements of a regenerative business model: Purpose, Networks, Ownership, Regeneration and Impact.

Fig. 2. A. Das and N. Bocken's (2024) framework for identifying core characteristics of regenerative business model



The provided framework below is a redesigned framework according to the empirical findings of the research. The framework is for identifying the core characteristics of the Ecoprise entrepreneurial model which describes them. The core characteristics are: 1. Culture, 2. Purpose, 3. Regeneration, 4. Ownership and Governance, 5. Networks, 6. Impact and 7. Repeatability. The areas are interconnected and must be coherent.

Fig. 3. A Framework for identifying core characteristics of the Ecoprise entrepreneurial model

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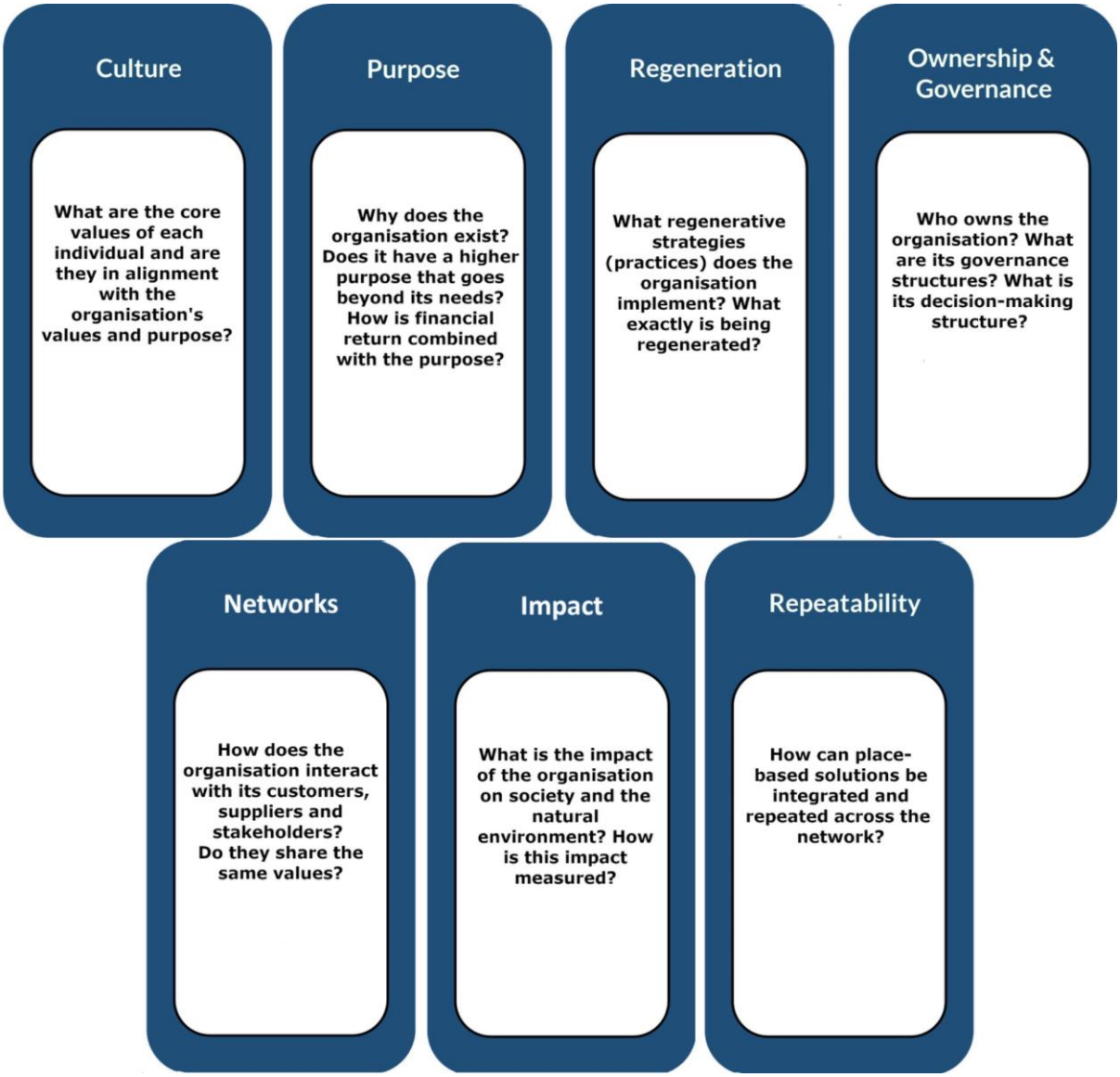

1. Culture

What are core values of each individual and are they in alignment with the organisation's values and purpose?

This layer focuses on the personal aspects of each individual involved in the group's efforts and the culture which will be created in the organisation.

2. Purpose

Why does an organisation exist? Does an organisation have a higher purpose which goes beyond an organisation's needs? How are the profit-as-financial-return and outcome of entrepreneurial activities combined with the purpose?

From the workshop findings, the purpose of an Ecoprise is focused on local regeneration and community well-being (creating environmental and social impact). The likely sectors of Ecoprises are in areas of regenerative agriculture, ethical production, and social justice. The

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broader purpose should be clearly defined, ensuring that values of community, environmental stewardship, and ethical production are central to the organisation's mission rather than the profit alone. This corresponds to three permaculture ethics described in chapter 2.2.

3. Regeneration

What regenerative strategies (practices) does the organisation implement? What exactly is being regenerated (what aspect of the business model)?

The regeneration can be reflected in the purpose of an Ecoprise or in the ownership and governance models as well as in people's care (relationship to employees and local community). Regenerative aspects of the social well-being of employees can be achieved by providing spaces for conflict resolution, collaborative leadership, preventing burn-out, and ensuring healthy working conditions.

4. Ownership and Governance

Who owns the organisation? What are its governance structures? What is its decision making model?

Organisation's ownership links to the type of social entrepreneurship (e.g. the community social entrepreneurship, the non-profit social entrepreneurship, transformational or global social entrepreneurship). Legal form of social business depends on the business strategies employed in a social business model (SME, NGO, association, etc.). According to workshop answers, an Ecoprise will adopt a collective ownership model, such as cooperative or community-owned assets. This will ensure that wealth and decision-making power are distributed instead of concentrated in a single entrepreneur or smaller group of people.

5. Networks

How does the business interact with its customers, suppliers, and stakeholders? Do they share the same values?

The workshop answers indicate potential synergies and support could come from collaborative governance, indigenous wisdom, place-based solutions, and supporting ecopreneurs through financial structures like cooperative banks. Ideally, an Ecoprise is part of the wider network that reflects inclusion and collective ownership. An Ecoprise can establish partnerships with local communities, investors, and customers, ensuring that all stakeholders contribute to, and benefit from, the regenerative practices. The collaborative environment where entrepreneurs interact within a supportive ecosystem in alignment of their values and purpose. The governance structures should encourage participation from all stakeholders involved.

6. Impact

What is the impact on society and the natural environment? How is this impact measured?

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The workshop emphasised responsible production, profit redistribution, and ensuring a positive footprint in every aspect of the business. An Ecoprise prioritises qualities such as ecosystem restoration, community well-being, and sustainable profit-sharing and fosters lifelong learning opportunities for its employees and local community. Ecological footprint assessments, employee satisfaction, social impact surveys, and listening to the feedback of the environment and local community can be applied as measuring tools.

7. Repeatability

How can place-based solutions be integrated and repeated across the network?

Ensure that the Ecoprise model is flexible and adaptable to local conditions, respecting cultural, environmental, and social specificities. This involves engaging local communities in the design process and tailoring solutions to their needs. The model aims to be replicable in different countries, considering cultural and environmental factors.

5. Discussion

In this chapter, we discuss the accelerators and challenges that arise when implementing regenerative strategies that have emerged from empirical data. Recognising these allows the research to identify the conditions needed to facilitate regenerative strategies in social entrepreneurship, contributions to practice and the limitations of the study.

5.1 Accelerators and challenges as conditions for regenerative strategies

In this section, we discuss the accelerators and challenges which serve as limitations or the drivers that arise when implementing regenerative strategies as they were uncovered by our research. The challenges are two types - as inner organisation's factors (weaknesses) and outer factors (threats). They are all important for taking into consideration, but their impact is not the same for organisations and their performance. Weaknesses can be overcome by the organisation through short or long- term strategy and development. On the contrary, dealing with the threats as external factors requires collective efforts needed on national, regional or global levels.

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Table 2. Identified accelerators and challenges from empirical data (Ecoprise SWOT analysis)

Accelerators	Challenges
Purpose - responsibility for bettering social and natural environment (Environmental regeneration). **Governance** - strong relationship with the community, empowerment and sense of ownership (Social regeneration). **Networking** - partnerships with external entities and outward-looking orientation (Economic regeneration). **Collaboration and networking** - exchanging knowledge, personal growth and development (Cultural regeneration).	**External conditions for activities** - worsening climate conditions, not supportive infrastructure, financial resources (Environmental regeneration). **Organisation management** - difficulties to attract qualified employees or volunteers, persistent resistance for a change and lack of specific skills and knowledge on governance of organisation (Social regeneration). **Management of finances** - dependency on external funding sources, lack of skills in financial management (Economic regeneration). **Mindset and values** - disconnected and culturally isolated approach to the organisational performance, fragmentation in different communities (Cultural regeneration).

Empirical findings of this research showed that certain conditions significantly affect social entrepreneurship scaling. The main conditions that pose threats to social entrepreneurship development are the political, economic and social environment. Political context differs in each country. It is stated that in Europe there is still not sufficient regulation in the social entrepreneurship sector in terms of definition and measurement of created social impact. In 2021, the European Commission introduced the Social Economy Action Plan which aimed to create an enabling environment for the social economy in order to release its full potential. The Social Economy Strategy on the national level should be in place by 2025 in all EU member states. At the moment, only 3 EU members - Ireland, Germany and Scotland - have the National Strategies for Social Business where appropriate regulation is set up for social entrepreneurship. Another challenge for social entrepreneurship is the legally defined measurement of social impact by social business. A measurement of a social impact is related to the values that should be followed by social enterprises. These values are transparency, accountability, honesty, etc. which are essential in implementing and boosting the social economy. Additional political and juridical efforts based on specific guidelines are also necessary to prevent greenwashing in the future (Griese et al., 2017). Greenwashing refers to deceptive or misleading marketing practices that exaggerate or misrepresent the sustainable goals and actions achieved by a company (Das and Bocken, 2024).

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Economic environment with its supportive infrastructure for social entrepreneurship is very important in enabling social business. The financing of social business and its influence on social business scaling won't be analysed in detail because this criterion wasn't assessed in the research. Although the empirical data showed that financing is a threat and huge challenge for social entrepreneurship development. At the moment financing for social business is fragmented and not sufficient which makes it difficult to balance between profitability and social and environmental impact creation and in some cases it requires the entire business model to change. Specialised financing focused on social entrepreneurship scaling could contribute to green transition significantly and create a more inclusive economy.

One more challenge identified by empirical data was mindset and values. This came up through disconnected and culturally isolated approaches to organisational performance and fragmentation in different communities. Transformative change requires efforts and actions on both levels - individual and collective - accompanied by systemic change with widespread societal engagement and action for a sustainable future. The pathway of resilience is a path of communities, social cohesion, people's relationship to place, people's relationship to each other and this might be a way of transforming how people interact to each other and relate to the system. Organisations today face complex and volatile business environments in the face of global risks that threaten the existence of businesses, society, and the planet (V. Yadav and N. Yadav, 2024). Research suggests that flexible, resilient, and innovative firms are more likely to survive and grow in turbulent environments (V. Yadav and N. Yadav, 2024).

5.2 Contributions to research and practice

Regeneration of nature and societies requires skills and knowledge that are typically beyond what is considered conventional business skills (Das and Bocken, 2024). It may entail collaboration and partnerships with NGOs, local communities and governments or nature conservation agencies (Das and Bocken, 2024). This project aimed to analyse the skills and competencies gaps in the two fields in order to promote social entrepreneurship and make regeneration in business more accessible. By addressing these issues the study contributes to previous research. Following the greater attention paid to a more inclusive social economy and its significant role to help meet the climate and digital objectives, offering innovative paths for life-long learning is a fundamental step to further stimulate the development of knowledge in social entrepreneurships. Ecovillage experiences, as well as innovative educational paths equipping future entrepreneurs with appropriate skills and competences to support the transition to more liveable societies are limited and unevenly distributed across European countries.

The Ecoprise entrepreneurial model applied the ecovillage design model to regeneration and social entrepreneurship, in order to spur an innovative "ecopreneurial" mindset, inspired by permaculture principles, able to balance social innovation and local economic growth, by

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integrating the four dimensions of regenerative development. The model framework presented here emphasises the importance of networking and experimentation due to regenerative business early stages of development and urgency of green transition in all areas of our life. It recognises the advantages of adopting an ecosystemic approach to the development of social entrepreneurship that fosters the creation of networks and alliances instead of focusing on a single entrepreneurship and/or entrepreneur. As the regenerative strategies are complex and very difficult to implement they require many different competences, therefore collaboration becomes vital between all stakeholders in a social business ecosystem. The networks and ecosystems which bring partners together by shared values and similar vision for innovation solutions as open innovation models become a foundation for regenerative strategies. This approach is based on the benefit of cross-sector collaboration while creating a social and environmental impact which could become a foundation for a system change. The Ecoprise entrepreneurial model's framework could serve as a guideline for social entrepreneurship in creating social and environmental impact by regenerative strategies.

5.3 Limitations

This research had a few limitations. First, the research task was to come up with a result - SWOT analysis, which "is a baseline for the development of the Ecoprise Designer model and skillset." The research was designed more for creation of a new professional figure (Ecoprise Designer) and a skill set for that role, but not enough focused on creation of a new social business model (Ecoprise Entrepreneurial Model). The research focus was on the identification of 4 pillar regenerative practices. Although the practices are the content of a business model they are only one dimension of such a model. In the research, data saturation is not sufficient in terms of a social business model and ecovillages as social enterprises assessment. Despite the fact that an inductive approach was used for designing the model - as research was done first - there is too great a gap in the gathered data and it is impossible to completely rely on the empirical insights while creating the Ecoprise Entrepreneurial Model Framework. Due to this fact empirical data and the theory were merged.

Second, there was not a unified approach in the use of the key terms - "ecovillage" and "social enterprise" - in the assessed participating countries and criteria for participants in the research from ecovillages and social enterprises. Ecovillages were seen as cohabitating communities which implement regeneration practices - not necessarily on a permanent basis as commercial activity. There is no provided data which would prove their working social business model. This variation led to differences in types of organisations included in the study, potentially affecting the comparability of findings (Ecoprise SWOT Analysis).

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The third limitation relates to sample bias and representation. The research relied on participants who were willing and available to engage, which may have introduced selection bias (Ecoprise SWOT Analysis). The cases were identified by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique and is susceptible to sampling bias which can skew results due to its reliance on existing networks (Das and Bocken, 2024).

Fourth, according to the project design, the intention of this research was to identify the best practices and successful examples of ecovillages and social enterprises but only in the project-participating countries. However, empirical data showed that some participants as ecovillages were not very mature as a cohabiting community with a proven social business model in comparison with the other ecovillages in different countries from the GEN Europe network.

Fifth, social entrepreneurs were asked questions about sustainability rather than regeneration and this circumstance makes it difficult to compare implemented practices by ecovillages and social enterprises. This is primarily because a sustainable business model focuses on harm reduction caused by its business model and regenerative business model goes far beyond just minimising harm to nature, but it aims to regenerate it. The lens of regeneration extends the notion of "conventional sustainability", which relies on resource efficiencies and technological solutions to reduce harm only to society and the environment (V. Yadav, N. Yadav, 2024). The intention to find social enterprises with regenerative practices in 6 participating European countries in this project research would be overestimated and not realistic because in 2024 presented by A. Das and N. Bocken the regenerative business cases database there are no regenerative businesses identified and verified in those 6 assessed countries out of 32 business cases in the whole Europe.

Sixth, in all cases of ecovillages and social enterprises, impact claims were not verified by providing the proof for measured social and environmental impact. This wasn't a mandatory criteria for selection of the participants in the research. Research relied on the words of the participants which might seriously affect the findings. This may also be a consequence of poor regulation in the social entrepreneurship sector in terms of definition and measurement of created social impact (there is a need for consistent definition of social entrepreneurship sector; only Ireland, Germany, Scotland have the National Strategies for Social Business and none of those countries were assessed by this research as participating countries).

Seventh, there were time limitations in the whole research phase and too little time allocated for such an important phase in the project implementation. The research should become a foundation for the main project outcomes to ensure the highest quality.

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6. Conclusions

The Ecoprise model is a blueprint for future-oriented social entrepreneurship through ecovillage design that needs to be innovative and flexible enough to ensure its repeatability in different contexts. The study based on empirical findings (SWOT Analysis) and theory created a new Ecoprise entrepreneurial model - the framework with 7 core characteristics of an innovative social business model: 1. Culture, 2. Purpose, 3. Regeneration, 4. Ownership and Governance, 5. Networks, 6. Impact and 7. Repeatability. These areas are interconnected and must be coherent. Inspired by ecovillage design and permaculture ethics, Ecoprise entrepreneurial model incorporates ecovillage practices in the domains of environmental, social, economical and cultural regeneration - according to the Ecovillage Map of Regeneration - and it recognises the advantages of adopting an ecosystemic approach to the development of social entrepreneurship that fosters the creation of networks and alliances instead of focusing on a single entrepreneurship and/or entrepreneur. The empirical findings uncovered from experience in ecovillages reveal that an implementation of regeneration is more effective through collaboration locally, especially while the regenerative strategies still are more challenging than accessible. At the same time, this study uncovered that certain conditions significantly affect social entrepreneurship scaling. The main conditions that pose threats to social entrepreneurship development are the political, economic and social environment. Political context depends on every country and it can vary, but in general, common direction has been set up on European level in 2021 when the European Commission introduced the Social Economy Action Plan which aimed to create an enabling environment for the social economy in order to release its full potential. The Social Economy Strategy on the national level should be in place by 2025 in all EU member states and each country can ensure its implementation through proactive advocacy work nationally.

This project aimed to analyse the skill and competency gaps in the two fields in order to promote social entrepreneurship and make regeneration in business more accessible. By addressing these issues, the study contributes to previous researchers and to practise. The Ecoprise entrepreneurial model's framework could serve as a guideline for social entrepreneurship in creating social and environmental impact by regenerative strategies and as a teaching tool in transition of business towards more sustainable business models.

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Annex 1. Partners' contribution - gathered data during the workshop

	PRACTICES	
Which Ecovillage practices should be integrated?		
Card group (Culture, Social, Environmental, Economic)	Mandala card selected	Insights
Environmental		
	Grow seeds	- Native seeds preservation and dissemination
	Soil regeneration	- Regenerative agriculture
	Local production	- Shorter food chain - Processes - localization of food production
	Water protection	- Water source protection and water management
	Land management	- Community land management and resources - Wider / Bioregion
Economy	Social entrepreneurship	- Cultivate social entrepreneurship for local regeneration (4 dimensions of regenerations are spread outside the community and do not remain within a "bubble". - Attractive / Magnet function - Everybody within the organisation has a voice - Collaborative leadership - Have a clear idea of an HIGHER PURPOSE (value based/spiritual)
	Economic justice	- Economic justice through SHARING and COLLABORATION - Focus on needs, solidarity, mutuality
Social	Health and wellbeing	- Avoid burn-outs - Need to have some "spaces" for conflicts discussion and resolution - Include additional tools to conflicts resolution beyond horizontal decision making processes (non-violence communication)
	A fair, effective and accountable institutions	- Develop fair, effective and accountable institutions (Model / Best practices - e.g. Les Pas - Sage)
Cultural	Engage to protect communities	- Integral design / whole system - A need of system thinking skills - A broad perspective approach

PROFIT

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What should be the nature of an Ecoprise (1), and how would this combine with ecovillage values (2)?		
Card group (Culture, Social, Environmental, Economic)	**Mandala card selected**	**Insights**
(1)	Commit to responsible production, consumption and trade	- Life cycle, resources - Value chain (trade: how is it sold?) - Profit in not dirty way (ethics: honesty, transparency, regeneration, bringing good) - Wealth is not understandable through consumption - Sufficiency should be a base for responsible consumption and production on personal and organisational levels - Specific mindset of the Ecopreneur - deeply rooted on personal level
	Reconstruct the concept of wealth, work and progress	- Not hierarchical and accessible working model - Concept of progress is happiness of producers, users and consumers - Looking for the common good - Wealth is not exclusively related to money - Safe environment - Redistribution of the profit
	Build alliances across all divides	- Not individual process - Sense of ownership for all the members - Co-deciding taken ecovillage decision-making model (e.g. sociocracy) - 7 main values of Sociocracy - Shared responsibility and success
		Why became an ecopreneur? Doing it to support their values and goals. Meaning and purpose aligned.
	Cultivate social entrepreneurship for local regeneration	- Core pillar - Provide value - Not just reduce harm - Measure not just footprint, but also handprint
(2)How can we combine it with ecovillage values?	Combine with ecovillage values	- Inquiry the vision of the enterprise - Collectively reflect and agree on the purpose
	Move towards 100% renewable energy and transport	- 100% coming from ecovillage values - Limitation of the area where they are operating: infrastructure and services - Legislative limitations and political situation / rejection of initiatives
	Be aware of privilege and use it for benefit of all	- Resistance for the model because of accumulation of wealth - Limitation of the dialogue from ecovillages - Capitalism / economic system - Ethics of permaculture integrated in the model - Profit without using privileges - Decolonization

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	NETWORK	
What structures can support ecopreneurs to thrive?		
Card group (Culture, Social, Environmental, Economic)	Mandala card selected	Insights
	Solidarity	Collective / Individual Be aware of privilege benefit for all Structures to be done and basic needs are met
	All stakeholder (all included)	- Explore existing structures - Collaborative governance (everyone already in design) - Participatory decision making (different standpoints) - Contributors vs developers (Les Pas-Sages) - Majority vs minority
	Context	- Indigenous wisdom (to avoid the loss of information) - Informal support (Environment activates social) - Nature - system thinking - Financial support/Economical/Legal
		Alternative banking system (loans and grants); observation (listen to the world); check and get feedback
	Difficulty not extract Degrowth	- Creating a product that changes system - Innovative - supports structure - Not a traditional way of doing - system change - Collaboration (working together originally)

	REPEATABILITY	
How can place-based solutions be integrated in the general Ecoprise model?		
Card group (Culture, Social, Environmental, Economic)	Mandala card selected	Insights
	Listen to the feedback of the world	Allow space for dialogue - what do the local population/teammates think about it? How can it be improved? Be aware where the practice comes from? What is it's history? What impact does it entail?
	Engage all stakeholders in designs for the future	Listen to all parties involved: - investors - workers - final users - local community (impact environmental, social..)

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		- nature
	Reconnect to nature and embrace low-impact lifestyles	- Environmental opportunities - What possibilities does nature/environment provide?
		Low impact in the environment and high positive on the employers, and local community
	Ensure equal and lifelong access to education for sustainability	Equality is one of the values to sustaining an ecovillage as well as education
	Learn from nature and practise whole systems thinking	Nature-based models/knowledge should be applied to general ecoprise model System thinking should be integrated to the ecoprise model Food chains, water, solar energy, building, heating - in cooperation with nature cycles
	Spread core patterns of regenerations	Switch from egocentric to community approach
	Grow seeds, food and soil through regenerative agriculture	Use collective toolbox (online) for collective resources
	Reconnect to nature	-
	Invest in Training/ education to enhance skills of locals	-
	Involve local communities in decision making	-

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