ECOPRISE

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

D2.1 SWOT Analysis - Social Enterprises vs. Ecovillage Experiences

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SWOT Analysis - Social Enterprises vs. Ecovillage Experiences

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Introduction

About the project

Project “ECOPRISE – Future-oriented social entrepreneurship through Ecovillage Design” main objective is the creation of a new sustainable social entrepreneurial model and skillset for an Ecoprise Designer. The Ecoprise Designer is a professional figure contributing to local regenerative development and a harmonious coexistence between human life and nature.

This project aims to gather and identify the best practices and successful examples of social enterprises and ecovillages and analyse the skill gaps in the two fields. The creation of the interdisciplinary model of these two aspects is done as eco-villages are seen as experts on sustainable development and regeneration and social enterprises as the place for social innovation.

The devised model will be piloted and implemented in the local context of the partnering countries. For a more detailed description of the Ecoprise project and main target groups, activities and impact can be found in the project website here: https://ecoprise.eu/.

Partnering organisations of the project:

- CESIE ETS (coordinator, Italy)
- LAND Impresa sociale (Italy)
- Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal)
- Global Ecovillage Network of Europe EV (Germany)
- Univerzitet u Novom Sadu (Serbia)
- UAB THEORIA (The Critical) (Lithuania)
- EUROTraining Educational Organisation (Greece)
- ReadLab Brussels (Belgium)
- CSI Center for Social Innovation LTD (Cyprus)
- GrantXpert (Cyprus)
- Mazoji Bendrija Zaliasis judejimas (Lithuania)
- ECQA GMBH (Austria)

The task at hand

The main aim of this SWOT analysis is to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the organisations researched across all partnering countries, diving deeper into the knowledge gathered throughout the project research phase. This analysis will incorporate insights from ecovillages, social enterprises, and sustainability educators, providing a deeper understanding of their practices and challenges.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT analysis) aims to identify valuable and transferable sustainability practices that the Ecoprise Designer can adopt, highlighting potential opportunities and risks associated with them. This research is a baseline for the development of the Ecoprise Designer model and skillset.

Key research questions focus on uncovering the unique practices of ecovillages and social enterprises, the accelerators and challenges they encounter in implementing sustainability practices, and the impact of these practices on the environment and local communities. Additionally, the analysis seeks to identify missing skills and competencies that could help social enterprises to move towards a more sustainable business practices.

ECOPRISE

Methodology

Concepts and definitions

Before the start of the study, main concepts for formulation of the Ecoprise designer model and skillset - an ecovillage, a social enterprise, as well as four pillars of regeneration - were defined. These concepts were instrumental later in creating the research strategy and tools.

Firstly, the project defines an **ecovillage** as a cohabitating community united by a mutual commitment to regeneration of their social and natural environment, which is collectively realised through a chosen lifestyle. Such lifestyles focus on acting in more than one of these regeneration domains - social, economic, ecological, and cultural.

Whilst it closely follows GEN Europe's[1] definition of an ecovillage, a couple of adaptations and changes were nevertheless introduced. First, it was aimed that the collectives participating in the project would not only be binded by the aim of regeneration, but also by collective action to realise this aim. This aspect was important as it was aimed to involve ecovillages who are communities binded by collective identities[2] - hence, the mission of regeneration, as well as being able to share good practices which could later be used in the formulation Ecoprise designer - hence, the collective realisation. On the other hand, ecovillages were defined as acting in more than one of four regeneration domains. Whilst GEN Europe views ecovillages as acting in all four, the decision was made to lower the number as contributions from ecovillages of varying levels of evolution were viewed as valuable to the research.

The definition of an ecovillage is closely related to the four pillars of regeneration conception. Borrowing from GEN Europe[3], four regeneration pillars - environmental, social, cultural and economic - and their interconnections are viewed as embodied (or sought to be embodied) by ecovillages:

- **Environmental regeneration** - bettering (e.g., restorating, preserving, enhancing) the occupied environment and biodiversity.
- **Social regeneration** - building a community and its institutions based on trust, equal opportunities and collaboration.
- **Economic regeneration** - holistically transforming economic systems and practices to prioritise sustainability, equity and community empowerment.
- **Cultural regeneration** - preserving and enriching the diverse traditions, practices and views systems, leading to harmony between wellbeing of individuals, community and nature.

As Ecoprise Designer model and skillset are to be formed by merging principles, practices and knowledge of ecovillages with social entrepreneurship, the four pillars of regeneration as

[1] GEN Europe (n.d.). *What is an ecovillage?* Accessible on: https://gen-europe.org/discover/about-ecovillages/ (last accessed on 5th September, 2024).

[2] Snow, D. and Corrigal-Brown, C. (2015). 'Collective identity' in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (2nd Edition)*. Edited by J. D. Wright. Elsevier.

[3] GEN Europe (n.d.). Accessible on: The Ecovillage Map of Regeneration. https://ecovillage.org/ecovillages/map-of-regeneration/ (last accessed on 5th September, 2024).

practised by ecovillages will be a cornerstone to the creation of this new professional figure. Importantly, the researchers are aware of strong Western European cultural influence on the concepts of ecovillage and regeneration used in this research.[4] Whilst the Ecoprise Designer model and skillset are not planned to be place-specific, the Western European influence should nevertheless be acknowledged when reading the collected data, as well as becoming familiar with the Ecoprise Designer formulations and looking for opportunities of implementation.

Furthermore, social enterprises in the project were defined as an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities.[5]

In the interviews, social entrepreneurs were asked questions about sustainability rather than regeneration (see Appendix 2A and 2B for definitions). Regarding that the utilised definition of regeneration is embodied by ecovillages, sustainability definition was used as more closely related to entrepreneurial context. Furthermore, theoretical notions of regeneration as a more advanced stage of sustainability were adopted, allowing the analysis of data from social enterprises and ecovillages together.[6] Therefore, challenges did not occur in comparing the activities of ecovillages and social enterprises.

Lastly, educational institutions which teach ecovillage design and permaculture were defined as Higher Education institutions, VET providers, and other types of institutions offering less structured courses on the topics. Ecovillage design education, following GEN Europe's past courses, was defined as teaching how to create a new way of living with low environmental impact and high quality of life, bringing together the four areas of regeneration: social, ecological, economic, and culture/worldview[7].

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with organisations were conducted between April and June 2024. The interviews took place via Zoom, Teams, in person, or by phone. A standardised questionnaire was developed in English and subsequently translated into the local languages (Italian, Greek, Serbian, Lithuanian, Portuguese) by all participating countries. For the complete questionnaires, please refer to Appendix 1A, 1B, and 1C.

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[4] Farkas, J. (2017). ''Very Little Heroes' History and Roots of the Eco-Village Movement', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 62(1), pp.69-87.

[5] European Commission (n.d.). Social Enterprises. Accessible on: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/social-enterprises_en (last accessed on 5th September, 2024).

[6] Hahn, T. and Tampe, M. (2021). 'Strategies for regenerative business', *Strategic Organization*, 19(3), pp.456-477.

[7] Global Ecovillage Network (n.d.). Ecovillage Design Education 2022. Accessible on: https://learn.ecovillage.org/course/ecovillage-design-education-2/ (last accessed on 5th September, 2024).

The semi-structured interview method was chosen for the flexibility that it allows for researchers to explore in-depth the diverse interpretations of key concepts like ecovillages, social enterprises, and the four pillars of regeneration - environmental, social, economic, and cultural. As the researched topic has a lot of local contexts that has to be taken into consideration when interviewing, the researchers were left with the ability to shape and turn the interviews to acquire deeper knowledge if needed. Nevertheless, the same topics were discussed in all of the interviews.

Table 1. Summary of conducted interviews number per country and in total.

Country	Interviews with ecovillages	Interviews with social enterprises	Interviews with educational institutions	Total
Cyprus	5	5	6	**16**
Greece	5	5	5	**15**
Italy	7	5	6	**18**
Lithuania	5	5	6	**16**
Portugal	6	8	6	**20**
Serbia	7	7	7	**21**
Total	**35**	**35**	**36**	**106**

Focus groups and workshops

Focus groups were conducted as a follow-up to the interviews to deepen the qualitative data and insights collected. These interactive sessions brought together participants from ecovillages, social enterprises, and educational institutions to explore key themes such as sustainability and regeneration practices. Participants who were initially interviewed were then invited to join the focus groups, creating a platform for sharing personal experiences and discussing needed interventions and the potential transferability of knowledge.

These focus groups allowed for a deeper exploration of the practices and skills valuable for the Ecoprise Designer, helping to identify key opportunities, risks, and essential competencies. Focus groups were held in each partnering country during June-July 2024. The focus groups have been facilitated in each partnering country online or in person, common worksheets were used in all countries using the Miro platform. Focus groups were focused on looking for common practices, useful insights of working in the interdisciplinary space of different organisations and initial ideation on what type of skills and knowledge would a persona of Ecoprise designer need to implement higher sustainability practices in the organisations. The focus group data was analysed by thematic note taking and analytical insight from the researchers. For focus group worksheets please look at Annex 4.

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, additional workshops were held during the ECOPRISE International Camp arranged in August 2024 at the ecovillage of Ängbacka, Sweden, on the occasion of 2024's European Ecovillage Gathering. Two workshops were conducted: one aimed at filling information gaps for this SWOT analysis and another focused on gathering insights from ecovillages with long-standing practices. The insights from these workshops were also integrated into the SWOT analysis, enhancing the overall understanding of best practices from experienced community members.

Table 2. Amount of conducted focus groups per country and in total.

Country	Number of conducted focus groups	Participants from ecovillages	Participants from social enterprises	Participants from educational institutions
Cyprus	4	3	7	**7**
Greece	2	5	5	**4**
Italy	3	4	6	**7**
Lithuania	2	5	4	**6**
Portugal	2	5	3	**5**
Serbia	3	5	5	**7**
Total	**16**	**27**	**28**	**36**

Sample of participants and recruitment process

Recruitment process

Each participating country was responsible for recruiting research participants according to specific requirements defined for each respondent type, as outlined below. The recruitment process faced several challenges, primarily due to the lack of a consistent definition of an ecovillage across the participating countries. This inconsistency meant that communities identifying as ecovillages differed in their levels of engagement with sustainability practices, making it difficult to target those most aligned with the study's objectives.

Establishing initial contact and maintaining effective communication with potential participants was also challenging. Social enterprises focused on social sustainability were generally more accessible compared to other types of organisations; however, the lack of formal regulation of social enterprises in many countries made it difficult to identify suitable participants who self-identified as such. To address these challenges, the deadline for data collection was extended to ensure the inclusion of appropriate participants and it also resulted in the need to take more interviews than previously planned to reach higher saturation of the data.

All research participants in interviews and focus groups took part voluntarily. They were fully informed about the nature, content, objectives, and potential outcomes of the project. Measures were taken to protect participants' identities, and data were analysed in an anonymized manner. No exact names of participants or their organisations will be disclosed in this SWOT analysis. A summary of the specific criteria established for any organisation to be considered a valid research participant is below followed by uniqueness of the research sample.

Criteria to participate in the research

For a participation in the research, the partnership identified main concepts and criteria, which are presented below.

Ecovillages - a cohabitating community united by a mutual commitment to regeneration of their social and natural environment, which is collectively realised through a chosen lifestyle. Such lifestyles focus on acting in more than one of these regeneration domains - social, economic, ecological, and cultural.

Eligibility criteria:

- be a cohabitating community of people,
- be united by a conscious, mutual commitment to regeneration of natural and social environments,
- offer value to internal/external stakeholders in one or more domains of regeneration.

Social enterprises - an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities (European Commission)[8].

Eligibility criteria:

- have a social / societal objective of the common good as the main reason for its commercial activity,
- mainly reinvest the profits to achieve the said social / societal objective,
- have the social / societal objective fall within one or more domains of sustainability,
- employ specific actions to realise the said social / societal objective.

If the social enterprise was being currently established, the information about their intentions for the future is considered sufficient if the intentions still meet the main eligibility criteria.

[8] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions "Social Business Initiative: creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation" COM (2011) 682/2.

Educational institutions providing ecovillage design education and permaculture learning paths, including Higher Education institutions, VET providers, and other types of institutions offering less structured courses on the topics.

Eligibility criteria:

- be a higher education institution / vocational education and traineeship provider / non-formal education provider,
- provide ecovillage design education and/or permaculture learning paths, or other closely related topics,
- if an institution is NOT publicly-owned, the teaching form, through which ecovillage design education and/or permaculture learning paths or other closely related topics are taught, should have been carried out more than a single time.

Sample variety and important features

As in any research the sample has unique characteristics that have to be taken into account when viewing the results of the research. As this qualitative research is focused around implementing best-practices from eco-villages it could be valuable to reflect on what type of eco-villages have been included in the sample and a general overview of who were the people participating in the research. In the list below you can see a general description of what respondents have participated in the research and the main characteristics of the participants. In the table below you will find a general overview of the organisations participating grouped by thematic approach in the research and number of interviews conducted in total. More detailed information is provided on a country level after that.

Table 3. Thematic overview of respondent sample. Organisations grouped according to main field of activity.

Ecovillages	Social Enterprises	Educational institutions
Sustainability and Environment Focus: 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	Sustainability Education and Environmental Conservation - 10 Agriculture and Permaculture - 12 Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Awareness - 7 Business and Entrepreneurship in Sustainability - 4 Holistic Living and Regenerative practices - 3

Interviewed eco-villages summary and overview of important features

Cyprus

1. Eco-village seeking to integrate refugees by teaching sustainable living practices. Faces challenges with government approvals and local community resistance.
2. Eco-village with an elderly population looking for new younger generation members.
3. Permaculture project in preparation to become an eco-village when land is ready.

4. Ex eco-village that used to be a part of an existing village in Cyprus. Used to sell village grown produce and educate children in one group, have not survived based on the lack of social skills.
5. Eco-village with a very strong emphasis on organic farming.

Greece

1. Sustainable construction and community empowerment focus.
2. Environmental and youth empowerment focus.
3. Holistic community living, with a focus in social and cultural regeneration.
4. Promoting sustainability through renewable energy, organic farming, and eco-friendly waste management.
5. Focuses on environmental sustainability through reforestation and community-supported agriculture (CSA).

Italy

1. Family run ecovillage, focused on sustainable construction and organic food.
2. Bio-farm that also protect forest land.
3. Renovation project that turned into sustainable education centre and small-scale sustainable farm.
4. Community of multiple villages, impacted by Rainbow movement, focused on sustainable living with limited technology.
5. Spiritual community living geographically separately, focused on group dynamics and community education.
6. Intentional community with a shared economy and parental education.
7. Eco-village based on a commune with a focus on shared economy and organic farming practices.

Lithuania

1. Cohabitating community with multiple buildings mostly find common identity through common cultural practices - folklore ensemble and singing.
2. Eco-village based in rural Lithuania with common ideologies. Has an alternative nature education-based kindergarten and school for pupils from the village and surrounding territories.
3. Cohabitating eco-village with ideological differences within the community.
4. Eco-community focused on friendly neighbourhood, healthy lifestyle and creating eco-villages association in Lithuania.
5. Eco-village practicing ecotourism and has an alternative education school.

Portugal

1. Eco-village and intentional commune.
2. Family based project working with many regional eco-friendly projects, open to visitors, works with local education of partners.
3. Eco-village with more than 100 residents, open to visits and events.
4. Intentional community existing for more than 30 years, focus on practical learning, social technologies, group dynamics.
5. Eco-village having a legal association status, receives volunteers, international students and interns.
6. Community that organises a festival, has permanent residents and hired workers all creating an eco-park.

Serbia

1. Natural materials build eco-village initially intended for tourism purposes, now doing organic farming practices.

2. A village with historic ethnographic buildings is an important part of municipality tourism.
3. Small eco-village setting with organic food-based restaurant also providing accommodation services.
4. Eco-village with accommodation services, local food producers consisting of young members and acting as a social hub in the area.
5. Urban eco-village in a rural setting with co-working space and focused not only on sustainability but also towards social entrepreneurship.
6. Community working towards cultural and natural regeneration with a focus on gender equality.
7. Eco-village consisting of national minorities.

Interviewed social enterprises summary and overview of important features

Cyprus

1. Local policy advisors on environmental sustainability.
2. Organisation based around research, education and dialogue focused on social sustainability.
3. Non-governmental organization (NGO) raising awareness on nature preservation and social activism.
4. NGO working with education, social innovation and entrepreneurship.
5. Foundation working with ecosystems.

Greece

1. Focuses on environmental education, sustainability practices, empowering students.
2. Active in social, environmental, and economic sustainability; focuses on renewable energy, eco-tourism, urban development.
3. Focuses on circular economy, sustainable packaging, community engagement.
4. Focuses on social sustainability through tech education for vulnerable groups.
5. Conducting research to identify support needs, forming a coordinating committee with experts, legal compliance for establishment.

Italy

1. Organisation working with social inclusion of various communities.
2. Organisation working with attained means from mafia, also have an organic farm.
3. Art festival that promotes renewable energy.
4. International restaurant working with social inclusion.
5. NGO of social promotion.

Lithuania

1. Big scale NGO working with social reintegration, elderly population, social inclusion and cultural revitalization in rural territories.
2. Village enterprise employing local people in their economic activity.
3. NGO structure-based day care centre for people with mental disabilities that used to have a commercial social enterprise with employment for their centre visitors.
4. Day care centre for people with mental and physical disabilities that has a successful social enterprise of making ceramics and employing their centre visitors.
5. Sustainability focused community centre that has sustainability education and practices focused around it and is running economically sustainable businesses - cafe.

Portugal

1. Focused on the production of organic agricultural products and training on organic/regenerative agricultural production.
2. Community for people with special needs that uses permaculture and holistic design
3. Multisectoral cooperative with various cooperatives and big structures, fostering gathering, etc.
4. Multisectoral cooperative in urban setting working on producer consumer links.
5. Multi-sectoral cooperative with decentralised organisation principles.
6. NGO focused on social, environmental and economic regeneration creating temporary learning communities.
7. NGO focused on education and community building seeking environmental regeneration.
8. NGO and local tourism enterprise focus on non-formal education.

Serbia

1. NGO of regional development agency focused on circular economy projects by networking with various stakeholders and implementing sustainability projects.
2. Environmental protection agency implementing state monitoring of air and water quality.
3. Agency of rural development working towards numerous sections of economic and cultural development.
4. Regional development agency focused on creating networks of public and private sectors.
5. Association nurturing cultural heritage.
6. Traditional agricultural farm with passing of family traditions.
7. Chamber of commerce.

Interviewed educators summary and overview of important features

Cyprus

1. University lecturer with an emphasis on business side of sustainability.
2. Agricultural management and development expert.
3. University lecturer teaching environmental education to educators with a focus on pre-school children.
4. University lecturer on agriculture sciences.
5. Expert working with inclusivity-based projects.
6. Entrepreneurship expert.

Greece

1. Focuses on environmental conservation, sustainability education, and biodiversity protection.
2. Focuses on sustainable tourism, cultural awareness, responsible travel.
3. Focuses on holistic living, sustainability, community resilience.
4. Focuses on digital transformation in agriculture, smart farming, sustainability.
5. Sustainable tourism, cultural awareness, responsible travel practices, digital literacy.

Italy

1. Permaculture educators giving short courses, focused on hands on focus.
2. University engineering department teaching about human and ecosystems relationship.
3. Permaculture collective giving training on the topic from adults and children.
4. Permaculture organisation giving trainings.

5. Experiential learning centre specialised in permaculture.
6. Organisation managed by a cooperative. They give training and are focused on experiential teaching and non-formal education.

Lithuania

1. A freelance educator working with sustainable education in food production, sustainable construction and similar topics.
2. University lecturer giving lectures on ecosystems and rural ecology.
3. Cultural educator working with creativity projects in urban areas and cultural regeneration.
4. Professor of agriculture teaching in agriculture faculty at a university.
5. Non-formal education folk high school mentor and initiator with the school focus being social innovation, sustainability and community development.
6. Freelance sustainability educator and journalist giving trainings to various levels to increase the knowledge about sustainability topic and raise awareness.

Portugal

1. Educator in natural building, permaculture and holistic design, eco-art student.
2. Permaculture school educator.
3. Permaculture educator and a lecturer of ecology in university.
4. Educator of regenerative practices, syntropic regeneration, syntropic agriculture, agroecology, food production with regeneration, seasonal products, how to regenerate a semi-arid & desertified uninhabited region with syntropic methods and collective action.
5. Educator of permaculture and syntropic and regenerative methods.
6. Holistic regeneration educator with abundant experience in alternative education.

Serbia

1. University lecturer teaching subjects related to sustainable tourism and regenerative practices.
2. Teaching assistant engaged in subjects related to tourism economics, enterprise economics and cost management.
3. High school teacher and educator teaching courses: Activities of the child in the natural and social environment and Holistic approach in the psycho-motor development of the child.
4. Ecological education centre working with children. They hold summer camps and other educational initiatives.
5. Assistant professor in agriculture university with a focus in agro-economy.
6. Professor and researcher of sustainable tourism and entrepreneurial sustainability
7. Professor with a focus on agro-economy and rural tourism.

As with any sample the specifics of the people whose interviews and focus groups are the main analysis points in the research, we have to recognize that the patterns of common experiences of these people will be evident in our research findings as well. From this sample we have a tendency to see higher importance based on permaculture, social inclusion and rural realities. This is not something that should be considered a ‘bad’ sample characteristic rather a point to keep in mind while reading research findings and in creation of the Ecoprise designer model.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in 3 main stages:

1. **Interview analysis via coding and analytical comments** - The interviews were analysed using a mixed methods approach, combining both inductive and deductive coding techniques. A coding framework was established to systematically categorise data from ecovillages, social enterprises, and sustainability educators, allowing for effective comparison across these organisational types. (For the full coding systems please see Appendix 3A, 3B, 3C) Analysts used a set of predefined thematic codes along with custom codes to capture specific details from the interviews, ensuring a consistent and deep analysis that is standardised in a way but has enough flexibility to adapt to local context. Each interview was reviewed, coded in segments, and relevant insights were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. This coded data was then used to support the creation of focus groups, contribute to SWOT analysis, and inform future course development for the Ecoprise project.

2. **Focus group construction and analysis -** The focus groups were guided by reviewed data, which was hierarchically organised during the sessions based on its importance for the development of "Ecoprise designers" and the functioning of eco-villages. The focus groups were conducted interactively, with participation from all attendees. They were analysed using analytical comments to capture key insights and patterns. The data collected through the interactive discussions were systematically reviewed to identify themes related to sustainability practices, skills, competencies, and challenges faced by ecovillages, social enterprises, and educational institutions. The focus group questions guided the exploration of unique capabilities, missing skills, and accelerators of sustainable practices, providing a context for understanding the opportunities and risks associated with the Ecoprise Designer model. Analytical comments from the focus groups were synthesised to highlight the most valuable practices and potential interventions, feeding directly into the SWOT analysis.

3. **SWOT analysis** - First country-specific SWOT analyses were done and afterwards consolidated into an international SWOT analysis. This combined analysis is looking into common trends, unique challenges, and overarching opportunities for the Ecoprise Designer and its application across different countries and various expert groups.

Limitations

While the SWOT analysis provides valuable insights into all the possibilities of the Ecoprise Designer model, **several limitations** must be acknowledged:

- Diverse definitions and interpretations. A lack of a consistent definition of key terms, such as "ecovillage" and "social enterprise", across the participating countries. This variation led to differences in the types of organisations included in the study, potentially affecting the comparability of findings.
- Sample bias and representation. The research relied on participants who were willing and available to engage, which may have introduced selection bias. Additionally, personal relationships with the research participants were also present through the researchers in the project which might lead to a higher researcher bias.

- Variability in participant engagement. Levels of engagement and knowledge varied significantly among participants, particularly in focus groups. Some participants were more familiar with the concepts of sustainability and regeneration than others, influencing the richness of the data.
- Complexity of data integration and secondary analysis. Combining insights from diverse sources, including interviews, focus groups, and workshops, presented challenges in ensuring a consistent and coherent analysis.
- Time limitations. Time limitations in data collection, particularly in the recruitment phase, led to extended deadlines and occasionally rushed analyses.
- Focus on specific regeneration pillars. The research primarily focused on environmental, social, cultural, and economic regeneration, with a noticeable emphasis on certain pillars depending on the country or organisation type. This may have impacted the result to be focused on these pillars more extensively too.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the SWOT analysis and in the creation stage of the Ecoprise Designer model.

Structure of SWOT analysis

Strengths and Weaknesses: The realities of ecovillages, social enterprises and Ecovillage Design Education providers

Strengths

The following sections will present and discuss the strengths of the interviewed ecovillages, social enterprises and educational institutions, grouping them thematically into the categories of environmental, social, cultural and economic regeneration. Strengths here are understood in two different ways. First, the report will present strengths as good practices, which at the time of the research were enacted or embodied by social enterprises and ecovillages:

- Environmental, social, cultural and economic regenerative practices, successfully creating value for entities' inner and/or outer audiences;
- Skills, knowledge and values, which drive the execution of the above-mentioned regenerative practices;
- Other accelerators, which support and enhance the entities themselves or their execution of the regenerative practices.

In the following subsections, the similarities and differences between the ecovillages and social enterprises will be presented. Secondly, strengths of the interviewed educational institutions will appear as:

- Teaching material which was positively evaluated in relation to teaching about the topics of regeneration;
- Skills from the EU competencies frameworks.

Regarding the different definitions of strengths, this section aims to outline the good practices that could become building blocks of the Ecoprise designer. In particular, the data from ecovillages and social enterprises will indicate what this professional figure could adopt from their practices and activities, as well as what supportive circumstances to seek. Further, the insights from the interviews of all three entities will inform about the skills, knowledge and values that the Ecoprise Designer could benefit from.

Additionally, analysing the differences and similarities between the social enterprises and ecovillages will provide knowledge on the possible conflicts and discrepancies could occur when adapting practices and principles of ecovillages in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Weaknesses

Similarly, to the strengths, the weaknesses were identified from interviews with ecovillages, social enterprises and educational institutions and grouped thematically into environmental, social, cultural and economic regeneration. Identification of weaknesses was approached in two different ways. First, weaknesses of ecovillages and social enterprises were defined as:

- Main barriers and challenges which negatively affected entities themselves or their activities;
- Gaps in skills and knowledge which minimised the potential of social enterprises and ecovillages successfully executing their internal and external offer.

Stemming from these identified weaknesses, the challenges faced by social enterprises and ecovillages were identified. Secondly, weaknesses of educational institutions were defined as:

- Less taught skills from the EU competencies frameworks;
- Possible improvements on the course material and methods offered by the interviewed educational institutions.

Regarding the different definitions of weaknesses, the following sections will aim to present not only what challenges and barriers should be overcome in order to strengthen the performance of social enterprises and ecovillages respectfully, but also what are the potential challenges of the Ecoprise designer. Further, the weaknesses of the educators will reveal which skills and knowledge are currently lacking in the teaching material, as well as what teaching methods should be improved.

Opportunities and Threats: The potential of the Ecoprise designer

Opportunities and Threats section is analysed through emerging topics in social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability regeneration pillars. This part draws on the research insights that shed light into the struggles faced by the research participants and potential opportunities existing for the Ecoprise designer in this field. The role requires a mix of skills, knowledge and expertise required in order to recognize and organise solutions for social enterprises seeking to move towards deeper sustainability regeneration.

This section of SWOT covers:

- Opportunities for Ecoprise designer within environmental regeneration;
- Opportunities for Ecoprise designer within social regeneration;
- Opportunities for Ecoprise designer within economic regeneration;
- Opportunities for Ecoprise designer within cultural regeneration;
- Opportunities for Ecoprise designer beyond regeneration;
- Overview of innovation through persona and needs visible in the data;
- Main skills and knowledge needed to respond to the outlined opportunities;
- Threat in all sustainability pillars and beyond;
- Questions to keep in mind while creating Ecoprise designer model.

Strengths and Weaknesses: The Realities of Ecovillages, Social Enterprises and Ecovillage Design Education providers

Environmental regeneration

Strengths in environmental regeneration: practices

Common environmental regeneration practices

Ecological waste management

Interviewees of both social enterprises and ecovillages reported using various ecological waste management practices, such as recycling, compost, water purification, etc. Whilst both entities were striving to reduce their ecological footprint, there were reports of different aims behind the responsible waste management practices. Whilst some ecovillages strived for energy independence (nevertheless, there were reports of the importance of partnerships with neighbours and local communities in executing this goal), a number of social enterprises were interested in raising awareness and promoting recycling and upcycling to the wider society.

Apart from the aims of ecological waste management, ecovillages also stand out in their reconceptualization of waste. The meaning behind it is transformed from an issue related to the environment to social and cultural domains. Ecovillages' creative waste management practices serve as an example - waste can be used as material for educational activities, crafts, jewellery, etc.

Application of renewable energy

Renewable energy was utilised by social enterprises and ecovillages - installing sun panels was a commonly reported practice.

Green product-making

Outlined by many enterprises and ecovillages, data suggests that green-product making is an important environmental regeneration practice. This includes recycled, sustainable materials and products being made in day-to-day life, following circular economy principles through reusing and recycling and ensuring a short pathway from production to buyer.

Teaching courses and organising trainings

Educating other societal groups on the topics related to environmental regeneration and ecology was a common practice. Indeed, representatives of both of the entities were reported

as aiming to give back to the local communities and/or wider societies - a method of doing so was reported to be sharing of their knowledge and raising awareness about the importance of sustainable topics. Furthermore, both ecovillages and social enterprises offered educational activities for different age groups - from adult education to alternative education of children (from primary school children to teenagers).

Despite these similarities, there are reports showing differences in taught topics. For ecovillages, teaching is mainly approached by sharing of the knowledge that these communities apply in their day-to-day lives. Here, notable examples are teaching courses about permaculture, which is almost unanimously used by the representatives of the interviewed ecovillages, or hosting educational events on possible transitions to ecological lifestyles. Therefore, the knowledge shared is practical and specific. On the other hand, there are reports showing that the knowledge on environmental sustainability and regeneration among the social enterprises can be primarily theoretical, vague and too general, and used "performatively" rather than meaningfully applied.

Thus, whilst the aim and form of educational activities are similar between the two entities, the quality and substance of teaching materials appear to differ.

Advocacy work and activism

It is reported that both social enterprises and ecovillages advocate for environmental sustainability and regeneration causes. There are reports that representatives of both entities are active in local organisations, such as land shareholders associations acting for protection of the local resources, or partake in acting for reforestation, promotion of organic cultivation of land, protection of biodiversity, etc.

Environmental regeneration practices of ecovillages

Responsible agriculture practices

Ecovillages are reported to undertake different 'responsible' agricultural practices, such as biofarming, organic farming, agroforestry, etc. These differences can be explained by ecovillages operating in different regions with different climate conditions and agricultural traditions. However, practices and principles of permaculture appear as overarching guidelines for ecovillages' agricultural practices.

Protection and restoration of the local biodiversity

Ecovillages are also active in protection, restoration and regeneration of the local biodiversity. Whilst some of such efforts overlap with agricultural practices, ecovillages apply additional efforts, such as regenerating endemic species of herbs, trees and fruit, creating ecosystems and/or ecological niches for endangered species, etc. Whilst there are social enterprises who also focus on protection and restoration of the biodiversity, these instances are very rare and thus appear as more ecovillages-specific.

Ecological self-building

Ecovillages practise ecological self-building - the members of ecovillages build their infrastructure themselves. Whilst application of renewable energy is a part of ecological building practices used by both social enterprises and ecovillages, ecovillages differ by applying methods, such as traditional/archaic building practices, and executing these procedures by themselves. Therefore, self-building can be identified as a more ecovillages-specific endeavour.

Adaptive and contextualised implementation

Ecovillages are reported to adaptate their used regenerative and ecological practices and tools to their local context.

Environmental regeneration practices of social enterprises

Policy work

Whilst both ecovillages and social enterprises participate in advocacy work (see the subsection above), social enterprises do not only advocate for or educate upon the environmental protection and restoration. Indeed, it is reported that social enterprises' work extends to analyses of various parameters, monitoring of implementation of national strategies and influencing the decision-making process. Therefore, they are more active players in the policy and legislation fields.

Strengths in environmental regeneration: skills and knowledge

Common skills and knowledge

Activism / change-making mindset

The leaders of both ecovillages and social enterprises and their environment protection aims are powered by their sense of being activists and fighters. There are reports that some of social enterprises were started out from fragmented activist efforts, which over time grew into (or institutionalised into) stable social enterprises. Nonetheless, both entities reported believing in their ability to make a positive change to the society and environment.

Skills in advocacy and lobbying

Representatives of both entities have skills in advocacy and lobbying aiming for environmental protection and restoration. Nevertheless, the more active participation in the field of policy- and legislation-making, raises a supposition that skills of social enterprises are more advanced and varied.

Knowledge and ability to practically implement energy efficiency and waste management practices

Whilst both social enterprises and ecovillages implement energy efficiency and waste management practices, the skills and knowledge will differ. Indeed, social enterprises highly depend on the existing infrastructure and services to realise energy efficiency and ecological waste management. Ecovillages, on the other hand, are more likely to build the needed infrastructure themselves.

Pedagogy skills

Skills in organising educational activities, covering topics of environmental regeneration, culture, spirituality, etc. Nevertheless, there might be a disbalance in skills between social enterprises and ecovillages, which will be further addressed in the Weaknesses section.

Unique knowledge and skills of ecovillages

Learning through experience and observation

There are reports that living in an ecovillage requires adopting an “off-the grid” lifestyle. Therefore, the needed knowledge is usually acquired through years of living in, observing and mimicking the natural environment. Furthermore, the knowledge is acquired through hands-on, trial- and error-based learning, when theoretical knowledge is applied in practice - the mistakes are then analysed and used to improve and adapt the theoretical concepts to their specific situation.

Creativity and ‘engineering mindset’

The “off-grid” lifestyle dictates the need for problem-solving skills. Therefore, residents of ecovillages benefit from creativity and being versatile (“engineering mindset”) - finding creative solutions for everyday problems, which take the least resources and leave the smallest imprint on the environment (e.g., upcycling materials, creative waste management, etc.).

Manual labour skills

Ecovillages demonstrate strong manual labour skills, which are necessary to carry out regenerative agriculture (the specific agricultural branch depends on the ecovillage’s region), self-building, waste management and installation of renewable energy apparatuses. In relation, representatives of ecovillages also have skills of using various manual labour tools - from archaic/traditional to highly technical and advanced.

Unique knowledge and skills of social enterprises

Regeneration-forward thinking and risk management

Entrepreneurs are mindful of the negative impact that their enterprises’ activities could generate, even if they are believed to be inherently sustainable or regenerative (e.g., urban

gardening). They are attentive of what practices they are promoting - in this way the possibility of greenwashing is minimised.

High standard for sustainable activities

Enterprises lean towards regenerative activities and strategies that are most impactful and refuse to execute green practices out of necessity (e.g., refusing to hold sustainability and recycling as equivalents).

Importantly, the regeneration-forward thinking and high standards for sustainable activities are reported in parallel to the limited knowledge of environmental regeneration practices. This conflict will be discussed further in the “Weaknesses” section.

Good practices of the educational institutions

Positively evaluated teaching material

Sustainability and innovations in agriculture

The majority of educators positively evaluated the course materials on sustainable agriculture in educating upon regenerative practices. Importantly, the connection of sustainable agriculture and advanced technologies was stark, meaning that the educators view utilising technological innovations in agriculture as a way to ensure sustainable practice.

In relation, some educators were shown to hold sustainable innovations as another important topic and skillset in regeneration education. Whilst a lesser number of educators were of this opinion, it nonetheless extends the idea of innovations and technological advancements as beneficial knowledge in the environmental regeneration field.

Permaculture and systems knowledge

Relatedly, courses on permaculture and ecosystems were positively evaluated, too. However, educators appeared to have two different views to permacultural education. The first and the largest group declares that programmes, such as the Permaculture Design Certificate (further on - PDC), “Mollison Curriculum and 12 principles of Holmgreen” and similar, should be understood as a foundation for any environmental sustainability project. They declare permaculture design to be beneficial (or even the best) because of its holistic approach to the systems design, as well as including social systems (the connecting points between the human and non-human systems was indeed evaluated as very important knowledge by many of the educators). These educators placed great importance on natural patterns, observation techniques and zones.

On the other hand, other educators were of the opinion that knowledge of permaculture is not enough and that it needs to be supplemented with the knowledge of other philosophical domains. Syntropic method was presented as a potential solution, with understanding complexity, entropy and regenerative succession of systems, as well as having grounded knowledge about energy flows in ecosystems, which also relate to social and economic issues.

Regeneration as a practice of questioning

Regeneration is invited to be understood as a practice rooted in the continuous process of questioning. It is not merely a set of predefined actions or methodologies but a reflective journey that encourages individuals and communities to explore, adapt, and co-create solutions that resonate with their unique contexts. As observed in the experiences of various youth movements and associations, the essence of regeneration is the active pursuit of understanding what regeneration means for each community, acknowledging that there is no definitive answer. This process emphasises the importance of questioning as a fundamental practice, particularly for younger generations, fostering an environment where curiosity and exploration are valued over the fear of making mistakes.

Nature and protected areas conservation

Another positively evaluated topic of knowledge - nature and protected areas conservation.

Practical, hands on learning

Diverging from the important topics of knowledge, educators also highlighted the importance of learning practically - either by individually experienced experiences or by hands-on learning practices.

Teaching of the European sustainability competence framework

The competencies from the European sustainability competence framework (further on - the GreenComp) were taught by the most interviewed educators, showing the dominance of green skills in the permaculture and ecovillage design education. From the competencies, Valuing sustainability and Systems thinking were taught almost ubiquitously. Indeed, Valuing sustainability was reported as the core in teaching, permeating all practices. Further, more than half of the reports identified that critical thinking and exploratory thinking were nurtured by educators.

Here, critical thinking was mostly understood by the definition provided in the GreenComp framework, yet it was also reinterpreted in the light of the literacy of the future. Some educators proposed to use critical thinking as a way to break reductive mental patterns and create a new mental space and vision of nature and ecosystems and how people can interact with them to accelerate the transition.

Strengths in environmental regeneration: other accelerators

Common accelerators

Responsibility for bettering social and natural environment

Both entities are reported to feel a sense of duty to create positive value/change for locals (both human and non-human). Strong emotional relationship with the local population and environment ignites this responsibility.

Partnerships with external entities

In execution of the environmental regeneration practices, both social enterprises and ecovillages are reported to rely on partnerships with external entities. However, data shows ecovillages prioritising partnerships with their community members, as well as other local communities and bodies (e.g., local authorities, local farmers), whilst social enterprises were reported to work together with state bodies and less localised communities and organisations.

Accelerators of ecovillages

Living in direct contact with nature and principles of self-sufficiency

The manual labour and learning through observation of nature are driven by the communities of ecovillages living in rural areas. Further, the direct contact with nature coupled with adherence to principles of self-sufficiency lead to seeking hands-on, practical skills which could be applied in day-to-day management of various household domains.

Attendance of courses and trainings

Not only are ecovillages learning from observing and mimicking the natural environment, they are also seeking knowledge on permaculture and sustainable agriculture in attending courses and training. This is a unique quality in comparison to social enterprises who were not reported to attend any educational activities.

Strengths in environmental regeneration: conclusions

Similarities between social enterprises and ecovillages

Both social enterprises and ecovillages demonstrate responsibility to better their local natural environment and give back to the community or the broader society. This outlook is reflected in the shared ‘change-making’ mindset and belief in bringing a positive change, as well as in regeneration-forward thinking and risk of greenwashing management and high standards for impactfulness of sustainability interventions held by social enterprises.

The felt responsibility to protect and nurture environmental wellbeing is realised through practices of energy efficiency, renewable energy and waste management, sustainable product design and nature and protected areas conservation. In parallel, both entities are active in knowledge sharing and heightening of awareness over ecological issues - this is done through organising educational activities and advocacy work.

Differences and conflictive aspects between social enterprises and ecovillages

Whilst the outlook onto the environmental and societal wellbeing is similar, as well as some of the regenerative practices, the entities differ in the circumstances from which environmental bettering is approached. The majority of interviewed ecovillages are located in rural territories, where communities are co-living and working. In relation, residents of ecovillages are propagating self-sufficiency, meaning that the infrastructure, the products, and the services are developed and executed by the residents themselves. Rather differently, the majority of interviewed social enterprises are committed to bettering the natural environment through policy work, advocacy, and education. Whilst ecovillages are committed to some of these practices as well, social enterprises nevertheless lack the 'hands-on', practical approaches.

This divergence of hands-on vs monitoring, in close vs from the distance is reflected in the different knowledge and skills that the representatives of the entities hold. As ecovillages' lifestyle can be defined as "off-grid" and manifold of their practices are rather niche, they learn through observation and mimicking the natural cycles, as well as experimenting with more theoretical concepts and finding ways of their adoption to the land. Residents of ecovillages are also skilled in manual labour and tend to be creative and versatile in their solutions. Rather differently, social enterprises do not hold these skills as it is rare for them to approach environmental regeneration "hands-on".

Relatedly, the knowledge in permaculture and environmental regenerative practices differ, too. Here, some of social enterprises' knowledge is described as too vague and generalised, whilst ecovillages hold deep understanding of place-specific regenerative practices. The lack of depth in knowledge may be the reason why more social enterprises focus on sustainability rather than regeneration.

Good practices of educational institutions

The good practices of educators can be read as crystalizing the relevance of ecovillages' practices, knowledge and skills. However, it also highlights a couple of areas for improvement. Firstly, educators denounce the blind following of permaculture and suggest that for well-rounded environmental regenerative practices one might need to venture out and learn about additional schools of thought (e.g., syntropic view onto systems was mentioned as an example).

Another takeaway is the view that environmental sustainability can be realised with help of technological advancement and innovative approaches. Whilst some residents of ecovillages do utilise technological tools in their agricultural activities, such practices should be further nurtured and supplemented by innovative thinking. This is also stark in suggesting that critical thinking could be reinterpreted as an ability to imagine a future of environmental paradigm shift (future literacy).

Weaknesses in environmental regeneration: main barriers and challenges

Common barriers and challenges

Worsening climate situation

Whilst interviewees from both ecovillages and social enterprises demonstrated the mindset of activists, their belief of doing a positive change to their societies and the natural environment is constantly impeded by the worsening climate change and anti-environmental policy implementations. The worsening climate situation is especially influential to residents of ecovillages who are living and working in direct contact with nature and commonly experiencing strain of the “off-grid” lifestyle. Indeed, the life and work in an ecovillage requires resilience and stamina as it is - adding the doom of the climate situation worsening beyond repair is reported to make life as an ecovillage even more difficult.

Limiting infrastructure

Both entities also face the barriers of physical infrastructure. Social enterprises are highly dependent on the available infrastructure to execute environmental sustainability practices, such as waste management and renewable energy. It was reported that the existent infrastructure is not always up to the needed standard. Whilst ecovillages are known to be more independent - the installation of infrastructure for waste management, renewable energy, energy efficiency and other similar practices are done by the members themselves - they nevertheless may face opposition from local authorities which restricts the possibilities of infrastructure development. In relation, ecovillages were also reported to face difficulties in buying and accessing land and real estate, which in some interviewed countries may be easier to do for expats.

Profitability versus environmental regeneration

The interviewed social enterprises and ecovillages reported difficulties in ensuring sufficient fund attraction whilst remaining environmentally sustainable (and regenerative). Although ecovillages are choosing to prioritise environmental regeneration over profitability - this is evident from their reliance on simple economic principles and localised market networks - the interviewed social enterprises face a bigger struggle. The reported constant market pressure to prioritise profitability is usually met with ‘financial adaptability’ and monetization practices, which are reported as potentially limiting the choice and event quality of the executed environmental regeneration practices (e.g., the material of the education programme).

On the other hand, it is important to note that some of the interviewed ecovillages were reported as striving for strengthening skills in funding diversification, as well as operating more in broader networks of exchange. As such, finding the right balance between profit-making aspirations and environmental regeneration practices is relevant for both entities.

Barriers and challenges of ecovillages

Lack of tools for teaching applied permaculture

Ecovillages face difficulties in executing regenerative agricultural practices as it requires large teams of people working together. Ecovillages are reported to face large rotation of residents which results in big intakes of new residents or volunteers. However, the newcomers usually

arrive without the needed manual labour skills or applied permaculture knowledge. Since these 'know-hows' are usually nurtured throughout time spent in living in, observing and mimicking the natural environment, it is particularly difficult to efficiently train the new members. This difficulty appears even larger considering the fact that there is a lack of tools which would support the practical application of permaculture, such as tools of observation and design.

Weaknesses in environmental regeneration: skills and knowledge gaps

Skills and knowledge gaps of ecovillages

Problematic measurement of impact

Ecovillages are reported to lack knowledge of the right use of sustainability and regeneration (as result/impact) measurement tools.

Technological skill gaps in executing agricultural practices

It was reported that residents of ecovillages would benefit from higher skills in operating advanced technical tools. These skills are particularly important as ecovillages seek higher efficiency in executing agricultural practices. Nevertheless, there are ecovillages that choose to steer away from technologies altogether - filling in the technological skill gaps need to be approached in remembrance of the variety of ecovillages and their differences in approaches to regenerative activities.

Knowledge and skill gaps in legislation and bureaucratic processes

Ecovillages are currently in need of deepening their knowledge on legislation and bureaucratic processes (e.g., infrastructure construction), as well as learning to deal with unexpected changes in legislative and economic situations (e.g., increased inflation, higher rates and taxes, etc.). This knowledge seems to be particularly relevant regarding the possibility of local authorities' rejection of ecovillages' infrastructure and activities development.

Skills and knowledge gaps of social enterprises

Lack of expertise in environmental regeneration practices

Social enterprises do not hold sufficient knowledge of environmental regeneration and permaculture. It is reported that the knowledge is vague and generalised, and used performatively (e.g., as an asset in networking) rather than meaningfully applied. Compared to the knowledge of ecovillages, more local environment- and situation-centred, expertise-like knowledge is needed. In relation, whilst some interviewed entrepreneurs are open to learning and collaborating with educational institutions that could help them acquire these skills and knowledge, others are suggested to be ill-reacting to the potential of new knowledge acquisition.

Skills in networking and joint action

Social enterprises report the need of strengthening their joint action organisation and networking skills. Whilst entrepreneurs are skilled in advocacy and policy work, joint activism organisation seems as an underdeveloped ability.

Weaknesses in environmental regeneration: possible improvements in education

Teaching of GreenComp framework

Whilst skills of “Valuing sustainability”, “Systems thinking”, “Critical thinking” and “Exploratory thinking” are taught almost ubiquitously, the programmes of ecovillage design and permaculture rarely nurture abilities of “Individual initiative”, “Supporting fairness” and “Adaptability.” This is particularly problematic considering that a) critical and inquisitive thinking practices might not lead into actions if skills of “individual initiative” are not nurtured, whilst b) undertaking ecovillages’ practices might become unbearing in the era of climate crisis without proper adaptability skills.

Weaknesses in environmental regeneration: main take-aways

Similarities between ecovillages and social enterprises

Both ecovillages and social enterprises are experiencing worsening climate situation, limiting infrastructure and profitability versus environmental regeneration dilemma as main barriers and challenges.

Regarding the worsening climate and the anti-environmental policy, both entities reported feelings of helplessness and loss of motivation to continue with their environmental sustainability/regeneration practices. In this light, the lower rate of teaching Adaptability (as compared to other GreenComp framework skills) is particularly worrying, as entities are in need of strong stamina and resilience skills to continue their practices in the current era.

Moreover, limiting infrastructure is another common barrier for environmental regeneration. Here, entities were reported to experience this challenge from two different standpoints. Ecovillages, who have limited knowledge and skills in dealing with legislation and bureaucracy, are limited by the opposition that the local authorities and other influential bodies are showing. On the other hand, social enterprises, who are dependent on the existing infrastructure and services more than self-sufficient ecovillages, inform of the sustainability infrastructure as being not up to standard to execute all the wanted sustainability practices.

Lastly, profitability versus environmental regeneration dilemma is relevant for both entities, too. Here, market pressures of profitability are identified as conflictive with the aspirations of

environmental sustainability. Therefore, finding balance between profit-making and environmental regeneration practices is indeed relevant.

Differences and conflict points between ecovillages and social enterprises

Differences between ecovillages and social enterprises again highlight the divergence between the practicality of skills upheld by the interviewed ecovillages and monitoring and administration-focused skills of social enterprises. In relation, ecovillages were reported to struggle with the lack of tools for teaching applied practices of permaculture and regenerative agriculture, as well as were in need of more advanced skills in usage of technological tools in agricultural practice.

On the other hand, social enterprises were reported to lack in-depth knowledge of environmental regeneration and permaculture, which tends to be more generalised and performative compared to the more specialised, context-driven expertise found in ecovillages. Further, social enterprises identified skills in networking and joint action as underdeveloped, again stressing their trajectory of advocacy and policy work.

Possible improvements in education

Regarding the GreenComp framework, skills of “Individual initiative”, “Supporting fairness” and “Adaptability” were identified as taught less in comparison to the other skills in the framework. Underdevelopment of “Adaptability” and “Individual initiative” skills appear as particularly problematic in the light of the gathered data, as popularly nurtured critical and inquisitive thinking practices might not lead into actions if skills of “individual initiative” are not nurtured, whilst, as was mentioned above, undertaking ecovillages’ practices might become unbearing in the era of climate crisis without proper adaptability skills.

ECOPRISE

Social regeneration

Strengths in social regeneration: practices

Common social regeneration practices

Ethics of care

Both ecovillages and social enterprises are reported to have established values and ethics of care, which are targeted toward the internal members of the organisation. However, social enterprises and ecovillages approach it differently. Reports on the practices of social enterprises show ethics of care to be highly fragmented and event based - farewell parties or team building/bonding activities are some of the activities done within such organisations. Rather conversely, residents of ecovillages engage in more horizontal, long-term practices, such as promoting inner and relational work among the residents or providing mutual psychological and spiritual aid.

Varied decision-making models: horizontal, hybrid and hierarchical

In relation to the commitment of ethics of care, both entities also implement horizontal decision-making structures, which vary from consensus decision-making and participatory democracy to hybrid models, where hierarchical apparatus is balanced with semi-autonomy in teams. On the other hand, there are also reports of entities led by strong visionary leaders, who set a clear direction for their teams to follow. The hierarchical model appears as the least common practice among the entities.

Whilst social enterprises are reported to implement a fragmented, event-based ethics of care, there are enterprises that connect their care provision with their approach to employee integration. In this case, employees are selected not by their previously acquired knowledge or skills but by their aspirations - the skills are nurtured during the employment and later integrated into their role. Furthermore, the employees are encouraged to experiment on their individual projects, which later are tested and incorporated into the commercial activity of the enterprise. Lastly, employees have access to all the organisational information (e.g., bank statements, access to bank accounts, etc.). As such, the enterprise nurtures a sense of ownership and agency, which are understood as the highest care.

Supporting the disadvantaged groups of the local communities

Both social enterprises and ecovillages are reported to work with disadvantaged groups of their local communities. Here, disadvantaged groups were elderly people, people from migrant backgrounds and people of low socio-economic status. Regardless of the difference in group, the activities usually aim for filling the gaps in their cultural capital (e.g., provide necessary skills to boost their social mobility) or provide financial support (e.g., promote scholarships). The tools to realise these aims are manifold, but the most popular are community projects/education related to art and culture.

Strengths in social regeneration: skills and education

Common skills and knowledge

Skills of implementation of horizontal decision-making mechanisms

Both entities have skills and knowledge of implementation and practical use of horizontal decision-making structures.

Facilitation skills

Social enterprises and ecovillages are reported to have knowledge of how to lead a productive discussion, solution-seeking, ideation, as well as how to unite people around ideas. Yet, there are cases where facilitation skills are not sufficient, especially in implementing horizontal decision-making across different domains of organisations.

Visionary leadership

Both entities are reported to have skills in setting visionary goals for their team and ensuring that they are realised.

Emotional intelligence

Representatives of both entities are reported to have nurtured skills of emotional intelligence, such as empathy, patience and tolerance to others. In relation, active listening and emotionally involved, non-violent communication are stressed.

Work with disadvantaged groups

Both entities are reported to hold knowledge and abilities to execute methods of social inclusion targeted to migrants, people with disabilities, marginalised communities, etc.

Unique skills and knowledge of ecovillages

Self-betterment individually and being a part of the group

Whilst emotional intelligence appears to be a skillset of both entities, ecovillages are more prone to encourage having a responsibility of one's growth as an individual and a team member. Therefore, skills of introspection and reflection, as well as learning as a part of the group (co-living is a common practice of group-level growth) appear as more pronounced in the ecovillages.

Unique skills and knowledge of social enterprises

Abilities to experiment and innovate

Social enterprises were reported as nurturing their employees' abilities to experiment and individually come up with new solutions or activities. This creativity and innovative approach was highlighted in organisations with bottom-up decision making structures, leading to assume that such skills could be also apparent in ecovillages.

Good practices of the educational institutions

Positively evaluated teaching material

Ethics

As regeneration is understood as a sum of four interlinked pillars - social regeneration being one of them - ethical approaches are important to be taught in courses on regeneration. Here, ethics should be exercised towards both human and non-human agents.

Holistic approach to personal development
Sustainability related educators outline the need for holistic education towards personal development with deepening hard knowledge in relation to soft skills and personal development. This includes a wide array of skills that should be raised in relation to one another and a reminder that all skills should be raised in cohesion with one another.

Community building knowledge

Educators positively evaluated provided knowledge and abilities to build a community - some viewed it as a foundation for any sustainability practice. Community building here implies becoming familiarised with the community, community activation, conflict resolution, community decision-making (here, theory of sociocracy is particularly important) and positive communication practices, which are defined as communication loops with space for feedback, are taught.

Teaching of the Life skills

Empathy
Empathy is outlined as an important skill to be able to identify and recognize the struggles and feelings of others. This skill is outlined as important to build communities, engage with others and be able to understand various perspectives.

Empathy is also perceived as a skill necessary to understand climate change affected nature subjects and people.

Adaptability
This involves exposing individuals to diverse roles and challenges that require them to continuously adjust to new information, environments, and responsibilities. It is a crucial skill for fostering innovative solutions that drive sustainability and regeneration, especially given the complexity and dynamic nature of these processes.

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Strengths in social regeneration: other accelerators

Common accelerators

Strong relationship with the community

Having a personal relationship (e.g., feelings of admiration and awe) with the natural and social aspects of the local environment provides motivation/sense of duty to create value for locals (human and non-human), as well as supports the employment process and employee integration efforts.

Accelerators of ecovillages

Co-living and day-to-day project management

Residents of ecovillages propagate co-living. These communities are living and working together - both in the same territory, so there is physical proximity, as well as in the same communities, which ensure mutually followed and thus binding values, ideologies and agreements. In parallel to the collective lifestyle, living in an ecovillage means that the line between work and life is rather blurred - residents of ecovillages can find themselves continuously working on the community projects.

This living situation becomes a driving force for the horizontally carried out ethics of care and individual and group-level self-betterment. On one hand, continuously participating in community projects and managing them via the collective decision-making mechanisms can be intense social interactions. Maintaining these arrangements requires constant effort in the form of individual growth and community building. On the other hand, self-betterment and group enhancement practices are easier whilst co-living - collective work and sharing of living spaces work as “methods” in building these social skills.

Accelerators of social enterprises

Self-realisation as motivation

Entrepreneurs profit from making their teammates experience the circumstances which realise their individual goals or interests. This is done when the teammates are involved in the decision-making process of the trajectory of the enterprise (e.g., enterprise's strategy, deciding on offered products and services), as well when they are allowed to lead/organise the activities that fulfil their interests. Self-realisation is especially motivating at the start of the enterprise when it is based on volunteering.

Empowerment and sense of ownership

Empowerment and involvement of employees in decision-making leads to formation of a sense of ownership over the enterprise and its trajectory, which results in innovations and feeling more comfortable in implementing new activities or solutions.

Positive impact on the local community increases likelihood of employment

In smaller towns or villages, the labour market is limited - entrepreneurs face difficulties with finding employees. Positive impact on the community - social sustainability practices targeted to the improvement of the local community - strengthens employer's brand and heightens the possibility of finding employees.

Strengths in social regeneration: conclusions

Similarities between ecovillages and social enterprises

Ecovillages and social enterprises share a commitment to social regeneration, which is demonstrated through their ethics of care, varied decision-making models and efforts to help the local disadvantaged groups.

First, both entities prioritise the well-being of their members, which are crystallised in their ethics of care. Moreover, both entities are reported to connect their ethics of care with their decision-making processes. The data presents that indeed both social enterprises and ecovillages choose varying decision-making structures - from horizontal decision-making (either consensus or hybrid approaches that balance autonomy and leadership) to visionary leadership. However, in each case the decision-making models are chosen aiming to ensure positive outcomes for the organisation members, such as empowerment, feelings of ownership in the former case or clear direction to positive changes in the latter.

Furthermore, both ecovillages and social enterprises are dedicated to supporting disadvantaged groups, which is driven by their close relationship with the community. In the external groups-targeted social regeneration practices, entities are aiming to fill cultural capital gaps, improve well-being, and enhance social mobility.

Differences between ecovillages and social enterprises

Nevertheless, the entities differ significantly in their approaches to ethics of care and individual empowerment. Ecovillages tend to embrace a more holistic and continuous ethics of care, fostering long-term relational work and mutual support among residents, whereas social enterprises often focus on event-based care practices that can be more fragmented. Moreover, social enterprises place a strong emphasis on self-realisation and empowering employees by involving them in decision-making processes and fostering a sense of ownership over the enterprise. In contrast, ecovillages emphasise co-living and collective responsibility, where empowerment and ownership are more about contributing to the community as a whole rather than individual achievements. These differences highlight the distinct ways each entity contributes to social regeneration, with social enterprises leaning toward individual empowerment and innovation, and ecovillages focusing more on communal care and collective growth.

Weaknesses in social regeneration: main barriers and challenges

Common barriers

Inefficient horizontal decision-making systems

It is reported that radical - “unrealistic” all inclusive - horizontal decision-making structures can be inefficient - they can be time consuming and exhaustive. This is particularly relevant to ecovillages, whose decision-making spans domains of life and work, making organisational experiences rather intense.

Barriers of ecovillages

Blurred line between life and work

Being a part of an ecovillage can mean that the division of life and work is practically non-existent. In this context, the horizontal decision-making culture means that group discussions and problem-solving is an ongoing process. Together with challenges of living off-grid, it makes social interactions within the ecovillage a very intense experience, potentially leading ecovillage residents to experience psychological burnout. Therefore, it is necessary to implement tools and strategies for a balance between work and rest; between having a project that is ongoing (or always open) and the need for private life and rest.

Reliance on personal charisma

There were reports of ecovillages overlying on personal charisma versus professional and role-based competences. In ecovillages where more hierarchical decision-making is practised (i.e., leadership of a single person), over-reliance on personal charisma and personality can lead to authoritarian or even cult-like deviations.

Lack of intergenerational plan

Living in ecovillages’ communities was reported to be challenging in relation to the generational transition. It was reported that some ecovillages are not aware of the needs of different generations, as well as face difficulties in managing the generational transmission of power, which can become a reason for inner conflicts.

Weaknesses in social regeneration: gaps in skills and knowledge

Common gaps in skills and knowledge

Skills in employment and employee retention

Skills in employment practices should be strengthened. Problems in attracting and retention of employees (specifically acute in the field of agriculture) - both entities struggle with big turnover of workers in other sectors as well. However, lack of skills is not the only reason for the problem - problems in attracting the needed financial resources to be able to continuously pay salaries is another factor driving the big turnover of employees.

Problem-solving and conflict de-escalation knowledge

Both entities report lacking skills of problem solving and conflict de-escalation on the community and individual level.

Lack of facilitation skills

Whilst it is reported that facilitation skills are common in residents of ecovillages, there are cases where facilitation skills are not sufficient to lead horizontal decision-making practices across different domains of organisations. In other words, horizontal decision-making is applied fragmentally due to the lack of skilled facilitators.

Skills and knowledge gaps of ecovillages

Organisational skills in workload management

In day-to-day life where the division of work and life is blurred (or non-existent), ecovillages are reported to be struggling with setting professional roles and delegating tasks, as well as setting shifts (i.e. defining the periods of time for work and rest). These struggles appear to be born out of the choice to limit ‘top-bottom’ decision-making and prioritise people’s needs and aspirations related to the work practices.

Human resource management skills

Ecovillages are reported to face difficulties in managing small teams with a big and diverse workload.

Skills and knowledge gaps of social enterprises

Collective decision-making skills

In contrast to ecovillages, social enterprises face problems of arriving at decisions and solutions through group discussions.

Self-reflection

Social enterprises are unique in their employees’ struggle to reach self-reflection and resultant self-betterment within the team.

Weaknesses in social regeneration: possible improvements in education

Potential improvements in course material

Handling emotional difficulties throughout the course

To improve the effectiveness of non-formal education courses, it is crucial to anticipate and develop strategies for managing students who attend with high idealism or those facing psychological or emotional challenges. These individuals may seek comfort in the course environment due to its community dynamics or natural setting. However, educators often lack the qualifications or resources to address these complex situations, which can negatively impact the course quality. Without proper management, such courses can devolve into "holiday camps" for adults, creating a challenging emotional environment for educators.

Weaknesses in social regeneration: main takeaways

Similarities and differences between ecovillages and social enterprises

Whilst both entities were reported to face difficulties with navigating potentially exhaustive horizontal decision-making systems with limited problem-solving and conflict de-escalation skills, there nevertheless were differences between the two.

It appears that ecovillages tend to face problems related to co-living and culture where hierarchical decision making is commonly minimised or rejected. Living and working in circumstances where the line between work and life is blurred, residents of ecovillages are likely to experience psychological burn-out due to intense social interactions, which are likely to be impeded even further by potentially exhaustive horizontal-decision making structures. The emotional strain is coupled by the underdeveloped skills of workload and time management, as ecovillages are reported struggling to define professional roles, delegate tasks and set shifts.

On the other hand, social enterprises are reported to struggle with skills of community building and collective work. Collective decision-making and self-reflection skills were identified as underdeveloped. The difference also often lies within collective vs individual leadership, as eco villages are more prone to having less centralised leadership whereas social enterprises often rely on a more hierarchical management structure with decision power being more clearly divided by the responsibility in the team.

Possible improvements in education

To enhance the effectiveness of non-formal education courses, it is essential to plan ahead and develop strategies for managing students who either enter with high idealism or are dealing with psychological or emotional difficulties. Educators often lack the necessary skills or resources to handle such complex situations, which can diminish the overall quality of the

course. If not properly managed, these courses risk turning into "holiday camps" for adults, presenting a challenging emotional landscape for educators to navigate.

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Cultural regeneration

Strengths in cultural regeneration: practices

Common practices

Collective identity

Both entities are reported to have mutually followed values, ideologies and a set mission/aims of the organisation - together these aspects make up a collective identity of the entity (e.g., spiritual community, anti-fundamentalism community, vegetarian community, etc.). The difference between social enterprises and ecovillages is the question of breath and rigidity of the notions of collective identity. As reported, ecovillages tend to either have strict rules which dictate how to live and work as a collective - the individual freedoms are thus limited. Resultantly, communities protect themselves from misdeeds of the members and ensure a strong sense of belonging. On the other hand, other ecovillages limit such agreements in favour of individual decision making - such approach minimises the possibility of fundamentalism and ensures open and inclusive community.

The question of collective identity rigidity appears as less important for social enterprises - their strong relationships with the public bodies usually ensures sufficient flexibility and a balance between the collective and individual.

Advocacy for heritage protection

The other angle to cultural regeneration - heritage protection. Both organisations approach it through advocacy work and education. For example, it is reported that both social enterprises and ecovillages promote cultural awareness - understanding and respect for local cultures and traditions. Further, being part of heritage protection associations is an additional approach.

Product design

The knowledge of cultural legacy is also utilised in designing products, such as handicrafts or services.

Practices of ecovillages

Implementing traditional practices in the everyday activities

Ecovillages have knowledge on traditional/ancient agricultural, building and cultural practices that are applied in their everyday activities. For example, some ecovillages report using ancient seeds in their agricultural efforts, whilst others report singing ethnic songs in community choirs.

Protection and restoration of material heritage sites and objects

Whilst both social enterprises and ecovillages are active in advocacy for heritage protection, ecovillages are reported to also restore and help maintain heritage sites and objects by themselves (e.g., rehabilitation of historical stone houses). Whilst hands-on restoration was reported in few social enterprises, it is nonetheless more popular within ecovillages.

Promotion of holistic wellbeing and lifestyle

Another approach to cultural regeneration - promotion of lifestyle that is rooted in holistic wellbeing. Ecovillages are reported to propagate and educate upon the practices of holistic healing, where physical, psychological and spiritual needs of a person are collectively met.

Practices of social enterprises

Exploration of the local context before staging interventions

Whilst above sections propose cultural regeneration to be tightly connected to the protection and implementation of traditional/ethnic practices, social enterprises are unique in approaching cultural regeneration in an anthropological manner. This means that social enterprises also consider the cultural discourses and codes of the local population before staging a sustainability intervention. It is reported that some social enterprises indeed hold sustainability practices as culturally-specific, meaning that an activity needs to be properly "acculturated" for it to work out in a specific local context. Therefore, experimenting (e.g., conducting place-making experiments) allows to test a foreign/theoretical idea and better understand how it has to be adapted (and in relation improved) to the local context, so that it is eventually "taken-up" by the local community and natural environments.

Strengths in cultural regeneration: skills and knowledge

Common skills and knowledge

Skills in advocacy

Skills in advocacy, lobbying and policy work aiming for heritage protection.

Skills in adopting the traditional/heritage practices in product design

Ecovillages have knowledge and wish to adopt and incorporate traditional knowledge and practices into their daily life. This includes traditional crafts, agriculture, green product making and similar practices. This quality of ecovillages varies from country to country but a general tendency to implement local heritage into daily life exists.

Skills and knowledge of ecovillages

Implementation of traditional practices

Ecovillages have knowledge on traditional/ancient agricultural and building practices that are applied in their everyday activities.

Practical skills in heritage protection and restoration

These knowledge and strengths mostly come from ecovillages that are more closely related to building restoration and heritage protection. This includes hands-on work knowledge of how to fix, maintain and restore buildings.

Skills and knowledge of social enterprises

Local context analysis and cultural adaptation of concepts

Social enterprises have skills of observation and analysis of the local social field, which are applied to experimentation with sustainability interventions. Observation and analysis of the local context and how it responds to a specific intervention is later translated to improving the original intervention idea so that it is culturally adapted[9].

Good practices of educational institutions

Positively evaluated teaching material

Traditional ecology

Educators identify knowledge of "traditional" ecology and classical knowledge of sustainability as important to regeneration education. Returning to traditions and preservation of heritage are presented as a part of it.

Responsible tourism

Responsible tourism is evaluated as a good practice in regeneration education. Here, responsibility entails aspects of adaptability and respect for local cultures.

Strengths in cultural regeneration: other accelerators

Accelerators of ecovillages

Community events and festivities

[9] Cultural adaptation involves "reviewing and changing the structure of a program or practice to more appropriately fit the needs and preferences of a particular cultural group or community." In Samuels, J., Schudrich, W. and Altschul, D. (2009). Toolkit for modifying evidence-based practice to increase cultural competence. *Orangeburg, NY: Research Foundation for Mental Health*, p. 7.

Collective identity of ecovillages is not only strengthened by the community work or co-living, but also by community events and festivities.

Self-sufficiency

Similarly to accelerators of environmental sustainability, the practical implementation of traditional/archaic practices is partly powered by ecovillages' aim for self-sufficiency. Therefore, the self-building and gardening, which are a part of ecovillages' residents' everyday lives, are organically supplemented with traditional principles and practices.

Seeking knowledge from professionals

Residents of ecovillages were reported to seek knowledge on traditional/archaic practices from professional lecturers, which powers their ability to "keep traditions alive."

Accelerators of social enterprises

Outward-looking organisations: communication and collaboration with external organisations

The flexible approach to collective identity, which is commonly embraced by social enterprises, is reported as related to the organisations' strong relationships with the external organisations, such as societal groups, state bodies, associations, etc. This outer-focus - communication and collaborations - creates a necessity to be open to differences, which in turn minimises the possibility of fundamentalism.

Collaboration and work with existing communities

The strong relationships with the outer world are related to the fact that social enterprises, differently to ecovillages, work with existent communities with set cultural discourses. Conversely to the ecovillages which can ensure that their values and ideology align perfectly, social enterprises have to adapt their interventions so that they are understandable and valued by the local communities.

Strengths in cultural regeneration: conclusions

Similarities between ecovillages and social enterprises

Both ecovillages and social enterprises are similar in their dual approach to cultural regeneration. They both organise their activities following the set values, ideologies and mission of the organisations - in other words, they adhere to their collective identity. On the other hand, ecovillages and social enterprises work towards material and non-material heritage protection - this is done through education and advocacy works and traditions-inspired product and service design.

Differences and conflict points between ecovillages and enterprises

Whilst both types of entities have and adhere to their collective identities, social enterprises and ecovillages differ in how the breath and rigidity of the notions of collective identity are approached. Ecovillages are reported to manage the notions of collective identity on a spectrum - there are ones that instil and follow strict rules of community life, whilst others keep the community agreements to a minimum in favour of individual choices. On the other hand, social enterprises are reported to fall into the latter category of collective identity management.

Some partners report that such distinction can be explained by the fact that social enterprises are more in contact with the external institutions, which creates the openness and flexibility translated to collective identity management. Whilst this might not be the only explanation - ecovillages are reported to be open to partnerships related to environmental regeneration and their advocacy work - the openness to the public is nonetheless an important factor influencing their approach to external cultural regeneration practices.

Social enterprises not only work towards traditions and heritage protection, as do ecovillages in their advocacy work and keeping traditions “alive”, they also regard the current cultural discourses and codes of the outer communities in their work. Social enterprises were reported to consider the sustainability interventions as culturally-specific: in order for the external communities to find them valuable, they view them as needing to be properly “acculturated”. As such, social enterprises experiment first and later adopt the practices to the cultural realities of the place accordingly. This shows that social enterprises have skills of experimentation, observation and adaptation of concepts, all powered by their openness to the public and other external bodies.

Lastly, ecovillages differ from social enterprises in their propagation and education of holistic wellbeing, uniting physical, psychological and spiritual health. Social enterprises were not reported as to follow or teach such philosophy or related practices.

Good practices of the educational programmes

The positively evaluated educational material demonstrates educators’ positive evaluation and support for the application of traditional/archaic practices as valuable methods for sustainability and regeneration realisation. Nevertheless, as the ecovillages were reported to seek efficiency through adaptation of technology, the traditional/archaic practices should not become a dominant strategy or teaching trajectory.

On the other hand, the respect for local cultures and adaptability, which are encoded in the courses of responsible tourism, strengthen the argument for the importance of cultural adaptation of regenerative/sustainable interventions, which is already practised by social enterprises and unreported as done by ecovillages.

Weaknesses in cultural regeneration: main challenges and barriers

Common barriers and challenges

Lack of human resources for teaching new members of collective identity

The maintenance of collective identities of ecovillages and social enterprises, both in the form of teaching new members and maintaining the agreements binding throughout time, require time, human resources and tools, which are currently reported as lacking. This problem is particularly acute for ecovillages, where new residents are reported to come with unrealistic expectations and little or no experience and skills of collective life and work.

Barriers and challenges of ecovillages

Potential of conflicts with local cultures

As ecovillages are “self-made” communities, formed by the residents rather than formed “organically” throughout time, there is a likelihood that their collective identities - values, ideologies, missions - will be conflictive with the existent cultures. Whilst this could mean positive changes (e.g., raising awareness and knowledge of the sustainability/regeneration topics), it could also lead to conflicts with the native culture and unacceptance of the local authorities and public. This possibility is particularly acute considering that ecovillages are not reported to adopt their practices to the local cultural discourses.

Barriers and challenges of social enterprises

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within the team

Social enterprises often face challenges in fostering cultural sensitivity and inclusivity among team members. Differences in cultural backgrounds, personal values, and work styles can lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and reduced team cohesion. This can hinder the effectiveness of collective decision-making and disrupt the organisation’s overall mission, particularly when trying to balance social and economic goals.

Weaknesses in cultural regeneration: conclusions

Both ecovillages and social enterprises face challenges in maintaining their collective identities, particularly in teaching collective identity to new members. This process requires considerable time, human resources, and tools, all of which are currently reported as lacking. This issue is especially pronounced in ecovillages, where new residents often arrive with unrealistic expectations and limited experience in collective living and work. Additionally, ecovillages face the potential challenge of overshadowing local cultures, as their self-formed collective identities may conflict with existing local cultures. This can lead to resistance or conflicts with local authorities and the broader community, particularly since ecovillages are not typically reported to adapt their practices to align with local cultural norms.

Economic regeneration

Strengths in economic regeneration: practices

Common practices

Income reinvestment

Both entities were reported to implement income reinvestment. The earned income is commonly invested into social and environmental initiatives of the organisations, such as social regeneration of their local neighbourhoods or social inclusion of people from migrant backgrounds.

Importantly, income reinvestment in ecovillages is commonly motivated by permacultural notions, where accumulation and prioritisation of a singular value, such as income, is viewed negatively.

Operation in and support for the local economy

Both entities were reported to operate in the local economy - products and services are commonly sold and supplied, as well as acquired through, the local market networks. Both entities were also intentionally choosing to work with locally-based businesses and/or organisations (e.g., local craftsmen) to help create and strengthen the local economy.

Use of diverse fund acquisition practices

There were reports that both entities use diverse fund allocation practices, such as grants, sales, state support, etc. However, as will be further discussed in the 'Skills and Knowledge' section below, social enterprises are likely to be more advanced in fund attraction and management than ecovillages, which commonly utilise basic economic principles and are more confined to the local economy.

Practices of ecovillages

Community-level paid and unpaid labour practices

Residents of ecovillages are reported to depend on community help in paid and unpaid labour practices. Here, neighbours or other community members cooperate in agricultural activities (e.g., harvesting food from shared land, collectively managing organic materials), as well as work together on cooking, cleaning, childcare and other similar unpaid labour practices.

Importantly, there are reports that some labour practices are done collaborating with external communities - for example, exchange of food produce or sharing of land for gardening.

Community-level fund management

Ecovillages are reported to have collectively-owned financial resources, which can be managed as a community fund or a community bank.

Efforts in financial equity

Some ecovillages were reported to strive for financial equity, keeping services accessible for local income levels.

Practices of social enterprises

Operation in the national and international markets

Whilst social enterprises are active in local markets, their commercial activity nonetheless can extend to national and international economies. Therefore, the networks of exchange are of greater distances.

Strengths in economic regeneration: skills and knowledge

Skills and knowledge of ecovillages

Basic economy principles

Knowledge and application of basic economy principles, such as reuse of resources, saving to invest, etc.

Collaboration with local economy

Skills and knowledge required for organising and carrying out collaborative paid and unpaid labour practices with other community members.

Skills and knowledge of social enterprises

Step-by-step mindset

Entrepreneurs profit from a step-by-step mindset when dealing with challenging, first-time activities. To not overwhelm themselves and their teams, as well as to guarantee a long-lasting entrepreneurship, they start slowly and by little - this experimenting allows them to test whether the commercial activity will be viable in terms of human resources, market demand, finances and other important factors.

Abilities of monetization

Social enterprises differ in their abilities of spotting and realising a potential for profit-making. Creativity and adaptability of practices is key - social enterprises usually balance the value

creation with methods for value attraction (e.g., a part of social-educational-awareness projects is showcasing the enterprise's experience or promoting different programmes).

However, it is important to stress that aims of monetization can evolve to be highly limiting and make enterprises compromise the quality and substance of their activities for profit-making possibilities. This will be discussed in depth in the Weaknesses section.

Financial adaptability

Related to skills of monetization, social entrepreneurs demonstrate financial adaptability in spotting opportunities and realising ideas related to attracting funds. For example, social enterprises start propagating reinvestment of income or additional commercial activities to finance their endeavours.

Communication, brand creation and storytelling skills

Social enterprises outline the ability to do brand communication and creation with keeping in mind the social aspect of their enterprises into their messaging strategies. They are more experienced storytellers that resonate with the audience that is sharing common goals. Use of digital platforms is more prominent in these organisations as well.

Good practices of educational institutions

Positively evaluated teaching material

Sustainable entrepreneurship

Similarly to sustainable agriculture practices, which were discussed in the environmental regeneration section, educators value sustainable entrepreneurship which is environmentally and socially innovative and leads towards creation of new products.

Teaching of the Entrepreneurship competence framework

Regarding the teaching of the Entrepreneurship competence framework (further on - EntreComp, for full description see Annex 2B), it was the second most broadly taught skill set of competencies. Out of these, the majority of reports showed “Vision” and “Learning through experience” being taught at ecovillage design and permaculture education courses. Further, half of the reports showed “Spotting opportunities” and “Ethical and sustainable thinking” being part of the taught material.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that ethical and sustainable thinking is rather similar in definition to a GreenComp “Valuing sustainability” skill, which was taught in all of the partner countries. Therefore, “Ethical and sustainable thinking” might have not been chosen because of the possible repetition.

Strengths in economic regeneration: other accelerators

Accelerators of ecovillages

Collective identity defines appropriate economic activity

The collective identity dictates the economic practices that ecovillages choose to do. Commercial activities that are understood as non-meaningful or conflictive with the organisational values and ideologies are not undertaken, even if they would be financially valuable. Such agreements also extend to the partnerships that ecovillage can form regarding their economic activities, as well as potential employers of community members.

Accelerators of social enterprises

High demand for sustainable services

Social enterprises use the currently high demand for environmentally and socially sustainable services by adapting their commercial activity or introducing new products and services to meet their clientele's needs. This drives innovation and evolvement of the enterprises, as well as encourages to start more sustainable activities.

Strengths in economic regeneration: conclusions

Similarities between ecovillages and social enterprises

Both ecovillages and social enterprises share several strengths in economic regeneration, despite their differing structures and scopes. Both entities are deeply embedded in their local economies, actively supporting and operating within them by engaging with local markets and businesses. Additionally, both ecovillages and social enterprises utilise diverse funding acquisition strategies, drawing from grants, sales, and state support, although social enterprises tend to be more advanced in fund management and attraction.

Differences and conflictive points between ecovillages and social enterprises

Ecovillages and social enterprises, while both contributing to economic regeneration, differ significantly in their approaches and operational scales. Ecovillages focus primarily on community-level economic practices, where financial resources are often collectively owned and managed, and both paid and unpaid labour is shared among community members. Their economic activities are deeply rooted in basic economic practices, with limited engagement beyond their immediate local markets.

In contrast, social enterprises operate on a broader scale, often extending their commercial activities to national and international markets. They demonstrate advanced financial strategies, including monetization and financial adaptability, and are skilled in communication,

brand creation, and storytelling. Social enterprises also reinvest their income into social and environmental initiatives.

Importantly, while ecovillages prioritise maintaining alignment with their collective identity and values, even at the expense of financial gain, social enterprises are more commercially oriented, adapting to high demand for sustainable services and leveraging market opportunities.

Good practices of educational institutions

The positively evaluated teaching materials highlight the importance of sustainable entrepreneurship education, which should include a component of social and environmental innovations used in product and service development. Considering this together with the positively evaluated innovative and technological advancements-focused sustainable agriculture courses, creation and usage of technologies and innovative thinking appear as red threats in positively evaluated regeneration teaching.

Furthermore, teaching of EntreComp framework competencies show that both ecovillages' and social enterprises' held skills are important in ecovillage design and permaculture education. Whilst "spotting opportunities" appears as consistent with social entrepreneurs' abilities in monetization and financial adaptability, "vision" is rather similar to ecovillages adhering to their values and mission in their commercial activity, which are usually connected to their visions of future. Therefore, this could be read as recommendations for searching for possibilities of hybridization between economic regeneration practices of social enterprises and ecovillages.

Weaknesses in economic regeneration: main barriers

Common barriers and challenges

Lack of inclusivity in management of finances

Both entities were reported to face problems with employee/member involvement in overseeing organisations' finances. Commonly, there was a lack of transparency on senior members'/owners' finances, as well as lack of transparent and collective fund management and allocation. Furthermore, social enterprises reported problems in ensuring equality in payment for their employees.

Barriers and challenges of ecovillages

Collective identity as a barrier to external communication

Whilst ecovillages present a need to strengthen their communication with external bodies, strict adherence to collective identity can be a barrier for successful outer communication and collaboration practices. Indeed, one might refuse or not be able to navigate the differences in values and ideologies between themselves and potential economic partners.

Over-dependence on public funds

Both entities were reported to face risks of overdependence on public funds. This tendency makes social enterprises and eco villages particularly vulnerable to macroeconomic crises, such as Covid lockdowns, or international political changes. Additionally, it can also impede the partnerships that are important accelerators of environmental regeneration activities, as ecovillages were reported to compete for public funds and/or philanthropic supporters with other ecovillages or similar organisations.

Barriers and challenges of social enterprises

The pressures of profitability

Social enterprises face considerable pressure of profit-making, which, as aforementioned, influence their choices of and ways of execution of commercial activities. Whilst it does translate to advanced abilities of monetization and financial adaptability, which can be positive attributes, striving for profitability can also mean choosing less sustainable practices or compromising on quality of the products and services. Here again, the profitability vs sustainability dilemma appears as particularly accurate for the social enterprises. Yet again, understanding the wishes of ecovillages to nurture their entrepreneurship skills and practices, the same problem should be anticipated as becoming accurate for these entities as well.

Weaknesses in economic regeneration: skill and knowledge gaps

Skills and knowledge gaps of ecovillages

Limited skills in diverse funding acquisition

Ecovillages strive for nurturing their skills in funding diversification, improving their participation in the regional and local networks, as well as strengthening relations with the state institutions, with aims of financial resources acquisition.

Limited communication skills

Furthermore, marketing, brand creation and maintenance and communication is another underdeveloped skillset of ecovillages.

Weaknesses in economic regeneration: improvements of educational programmes

Possible improvements in the teaching material

Whilst there was not much data on possible improvements on the teaching material regarding economic regeneration, educators highlighted the difficulties of teaching sustainable entrepreneurship because of its contradictions between the aims for environmental sustainability and practical application oftentimes leading to “greenwashing”.

Possible improvements in EntreComp framework teaching

Out of EntreComp framework skills, least educators of ecovillage design and permaculture were teaching the “Uncertainty, ambiguity and risk” skill.

Weaknesses in economic regeneration: conclusions

Similarities between ecovillages and social enterprises

Both social enterprises and ecovillages encounter challenges related to their collective identities and communication practices, which can hinder their external collaboration efforts. For ecovillages, a strong adherence to their collective identity can be a barrier to effective communication with external partners, as differences in values and ideologies may create conflicts or misunderstandings. Similarly, social enterprises face pressures to maintain profitability, which can lead to compromises in sustainability and quality, posing a challenge in balancing economic goals with their broader mission.

Differences and conflict points between ecovillages and social enterprises

Ecovillages differ from the social enterprises in their less advanced skills in funding diversification and outward communication which could strengthen their ties with broader networks of exchange and state institutions.

Potential improvements of educational programmes

Out of EntreComp framework skills, least educators of ecovillage design and permaculture were teaching the “Uncertainty, ambiguity and risk” skill. Considering that “Adaptability” skill from the GreenComp framework was reported as taught by less educators in comparison to other skills, there appears to be a red string of underdevelopment of skills of navigating the current era of uncertainty.

Miscellaneous insights

Teaching of Digital Competence Framework for Citizens

In comparison to covering GreenComp and EntreComp frameworks' skills in ecovillage design and permaculture educational programmes, the skills of Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (further on - DigComp) were taught by the least of the interviewed educators. "Development of digital content" was the skill taught by half of the partners' interviewed educators. On the other hand, "Interaction through digital technologies", "Engaging citizenship" and "Creatively using digital technology" were identified as taught in one of the partners' countries respectively.

Diverging from the framework, other educators reported teaching of data analysis and use of AI.

Considering the strengths and needs of ecovillages and social enterprises, skills of "Development of digital content", "interaction through digital technologies" and "creatively using digital technology" appear as particularly relevant for ecovillages, who were reported as lacking communication, marketing and brand creation abilities, as well as struggling with knowledge sharing and trainings on applied permaculture practices.

Potential improvements in ecovillage design and permaculture education

Practical learning

Educators stressed that the ecovillage design and permaculture programmes should be based on practical learning practices. The examples of these practices were hands-on learning by doing or learning through experience, study visits, analysing real world cases and implementing interactive learning (e.g., mentorship programmes). Courses without the practical knowledge and skills were in turn criticised.

Sensorial learning

Additionally, educators were suggesting including sensorial learning methods in the applied regeneration programmes. Educators specified that it is particularly beneficial as information acquisition practice.

Assessment improving

Difficulties in assessment were also notified. Educators were invited to rethink the traditionally used assessment systems, stressing that they might not work in showing whether students of ecovillage design, permaculture or regeneration adopted any of the taught knowledge or skills. As a potential alternative, educators identified reflections as an assessment method.

Delivering complex topics in understandable language

Educators of environmental sustainability/regeneration topics reported the importance of learning on how to teach about the complex topics in a simple and understandable language. The loss of complexity was described as particularly problematic in teaching topics, such as permaculture and syntropy, which are closely related yet are not interchangeable - the differences appear when analysing the level of fine details and complexity.

Contextualised course creation

Ecovillage design, permaculture and related courses should be designed to be place- and population specific. Currently, there are courses which appear to be de-contextualized, creating problems of inapplicability of knowledge and skills.

Opportunities and Threats: The potential of the Ecoprise designer

Opportunities for Ecoprise designers are analysed having in mind country differences, practices, motivations and values. The findings of our research are mostly focused as a thematic guide of diverse opportunities that exist. The findings are organised into environmental, social, cultural, and economic categories trying to understand how and what this new persona could be doing and should know to drive sustainability and regeneration in social enterprises.

Most of the findings in the opportunities section come from focus groups held in all of the countries. If the need for a reminder of who participated in these focus groups exists, please go back to the sample description.

The opportunities section of the SWOT analysis is focused around main opportunities arising in sustainability regeneration pillars, going to opportunities beyond that and thematic analysis of skills, competencies and potential opportunities for a ‘persona’ skill sets found in the data. The potential innovation area is big and with multiple opportunities.

Opportunities

Opportunities for Ecoprise designer in sustainability regeneration pillars

Opportunities for Ecoprise designer in environmental regeneration

Enhancing biodiversity and creating local food networks

Practices such as permaculture, organic farming, and agroforestry were consistently highlighted across multiple countries' data as essential methods for restoring soil health and enhancing biodiversity. The role of the Ecoprise Designer in this context extends beyond implementing these practices - they are seen as people who could help deepen agricultural knowledge, facilitate plant-sharing initiatives, and promote the widespread adoption of organic farming techniques.

Another opportunity lies in the creation of community-supported agriculture (CSA) networks, where producers are directly connected with consumers. This model would see Ecoprise Designer as a central figure helping to build and support sustainable food networks.

The skills essential for seizing these opportunities include systems thinking, understanding natural patterns, and the ability to foster reconnection with nature. This includes activities such as seed propagation, biodiversity enhancement, permaculture and organic farming.

Adoption of renewable energy solutions

The Ecoprise Designer could also be seen as a person promoting the use of locally available renewable resources and designing energy-efficient systems. As communities often struggle with understanding the most suitable energy sources, such as solar, wind, or biomass, that can be effectively harnessed in their specific geographical and climatic conditions. This opportunity lies within lack of knowledge on how to innovate energy solutions, what is the legal aspect of implementing renewable energy solutions. This includes knowledge of incentives, subsidies, and the legal procedures necessary for installing and operating renewable energy systems. The need to be able to conduct current state analysis is mentioned as important here as well the ability to help in identifying gaps, inefficiencies, and opportunities for integrating sustainable energy solutions.

Environmental education and advocacy

Environmental education and advocacy emerged as important elements across various countries, reflecting a need for raising awareness and building environmental literacy within communities. The Ecoprise Designer could help communities to develop a deeper understanding of ecological principles and the value of living with nature. The opportunity in environmental education is from promoting systems thinking and climate change awareness to offering practical knowledge on topics like waste reduction, sustainable farming, and nature-based solutions. Advocacy is seen as guiding communities in understanding environmental policies, navigating green certifications, and being resilient to greenwashing practices.

Skills such as effective communication, systems thinking, and knowledge of local ecosystems are essential for fulfilling this role. The Ecoprise Designer is not just an instructor but a facilitator of environmental stewardship, cultivating a culture of responsibility and resilience that is passed from one generation to the next. By blending education with advocacy, the Ecoprise Designer can drive lasting change, ensuring that sustainability becomes an intrinsic part of both individual behaviours and collective community actions.

Sustainable waste management

Sustainable waste management and circular economy practices were frequently mentioned in the research as participants highlighted waste reduction, recycling, and composting as central practices for reducing environmental strain and promoting sustainable resource use. Opportunity here lies in designing systems that minimise waste generation while transforming waste into valuable resources through composting, upcycling, and creating local circular economies. Lack of infrastructure and awareness regarding waste management strategies exists in many communities. Skills such as community facilitation, knowledge of waste treatment technologies, and the ability to design waste management plans tailored to local needs are essential for these opportunities.

Opportunities for the Ecoprise designer in social regeneration

Facilitating community building and networking

The importance of building relational dynamics is seen as the foundation of long-term project success, particularly in intentional communities and social enterprises. The opportunity lies in developing common practices, defining shared values, and communication tools that strengthen groups that are working towards higher goals. This presents the opportunity to create frameworks for collective culture, consensus-based decision-making, and conflict resolution. The importance of non-hierarchical, consensus-based governance structures is highlighted to design and facilitate participatory decision-making processes that promote transparency, equity, and inclusion. Skills of working with group dynamics are presented as a strong need in the research data.

Another community empowering opportunity lies in a persona focused on creating more networking and micro-networking opportunities for people living in the community. Micro-networks as small, localised groups focused on specific goals or issues, can enhance collaboration and support among members with shared objectives. Creation and the need for them is visible in multiple sources.

Empowering marginalised groups and promoting social inclusion

Multiple sources identified that social enterprises and ecovillages prioritise human relationships over economic profit, often aligning with values that challenge traditional capitalistic systems. Ecoprise Designers can promote social inclusion by integrating diverse community members, ensuring equal participation, and providing opportunities for underrepresented voices. Data reflects that many regions, especially those with high unemployment or rural depopulation, benefit from ecovillages and social enterprises that integrate economic activities aligned with social and environmental values. Opportunity lies in helping to structure and launch these models, ensuring communities and their members are empowered to act in the chosen field of social enterprises.

Innovation of social impact measurement tools

Social enterprises and ecovillages increasingly recognize the need to track their social impact and demonstrate value beyond economic profit. Opportunities lie in developing and applying tools for measuring social impact and resilience in community-led initiatives.

Opportunities for Ecoprise designer in economic regeneration

Consulting on access to funds and investments

Identifying and securing funding opportunities, including ethical investment, grants, European funding knowledge and community-supported financing is an important knowledge need, mentioned by different communities. Access to capital is a recurring topic within the research frame. Opportunities lie in knowledge of what funding mechanisms exist and how they can be sourced. This suggests a need for economical support via a consultant or funding expert of sorts.

Economic resilience through diversification of income means

Economic fragility, especially in rural areas, was noted as a significant issue. Encouraging economic diversification to reduce reliance on single industries and enhance community resilience against economic shocks is mentioned as well. This raises the opportunity for developing a figure that helps to diversify income streams by integrating various regenerative practices, such as eco-tourism, local crafts, and sustainable agriculture, into the economic practice. The need for the promotion and design of circular economy models where waste is minimised, resources are reused, and by-products are used too is visible.

Advisory on entrepreneurship

Need for social entrepreneurship as a means of combining economic activity with social and environmental goals is evident. There is a need for advising on business planning, governance structures, and legal frameworks that support cooperative ownership and equitable profit-sharing. There is also a need for training focused on budgeting, financial planning, business management, and ethical entrepreneurship. By integrating economic regeneration with social inclusion, enterprises can become sustainable engines for both economic growth and social cohesion in their communities and a need for a persona doing this exists.

Opportunities for the Ecoprise designer in cultural regeneration

Local culture. Knowledge and enhancement of it

There is a visible note on the importance of cultural heritage and traditional practices in researched countries. This includes promoting local arts, crafts, and storytelling as a part of cultural heritage in a local context. Creating shared cultural practices and events that strengthen community bonds and provide a sense of belonging is another opportunity arising from the data as many research participants frame collective experiences as the one building the community the strongest.

The data also suggests that communities face cultural shifts due to environmental, economic, and social changes. The opportunity to guide communities in adapting their cultural practices while maintaining their core values exists too. Supporting the adaptive reuse of cultural practices ensures that communities or enterprises remain resilient and culturally coherent even as they transition to more sustainable life.

Bridging the gap between archaic and modern regeneration practices

Local knowledge of older generations and practices by them can be underappreciated by modern day solutions. Research participants highlight that older generations possess valuable insights into sustainable living, community governance, and local craftsmanship. Development of programs that blend environmental education with cultural teachings, transferring older generations' knowledge or integrating it into modern regenerative practices and making sure that young people and newcomers to the community understand and appreciate the cultural context in which they live.

The opportunity lies within working with communities to craft narratives that highlight local history, shared struggles, and collective aspirations in this way reinforcing cultural identity

while promoting regenerative ideals. Tourism practices that are respectful, educational, and aligned with the community's cultural values, ensuring that cultural heritage remains authentic and beneficial to the local population were mentioned as an opportunity field as well.

Creation of spaces for cultural connection and innovation

Place-based practices, which are closely tied to the land and its history, were highlighted as a means to deepen the connection between people and their environment. Promoting place-based practices that are rooted in the specific environmental, historical, and cultural context of a region serves as an opportunity to create community connection and innovation. The data hints at the potential for cultural entrepreneurship, where local cultural practices can be turned into sustainable economic activities.

Opportunities beyond sustainability regeneration pillars

Data suggests that there are opportunities for Ecoprise designers that are hard to group into sustainability pillars. These mostly cover the cross section of sustainability and the holistic approach to it.

Building lifelong learning opportunities

Education from early childhood to adulthood is mentioned by research participants. Democratisation of knowledge is important through creation of widely available resources and knowledge sharing platforms. Space for mentorship on important topics is also discussed here.

Involvement into local governance

The Ecoprise designer is seen as a person who could also fill the need to change local government policies as a supplementing force to create needed regulatory change in the system. Opportunity to build alliance networks between different NGOs and social enterprises is also visible.

Integration of art and creativity into daily practices

There is the potential of integrating art practices into regenerative sustainability mindsets. This includes creation of artistic spaces and practices facilitation of art initiatives and projects also is here.

Opportunities as types of a "persona"

All these opportunities, coming from different pillars of sustainability, directly address the needs and insights highlighted by various research participants. When considering the Ecoprise designer persona, three primary areas of opportunity emerge as central themes. These are not presented here in order to provide solutions and answers but more as thematic approach to the persons needed by our researched stakeholders and that could give us a research-based development for Ecoprise designer persona.

Need for economic viability advisor

There is a need for a person that is able to provide expert guidance to social enterprises, ecovillages, and other regenerative initiatives, helping them secure funding, access investment opportunities, and design economically viable models that align with their values. This individual should well know funding mechanisms, ethical investment options, grant opportunities, and circular economy models. They also could work as a player providing strategic advice on income diversification, ensuring long-term resilience and economic stability for both newly emerging and established projects and or social entrepreneurs.

- Expertise in funding sources (e.g., European grants, community-supported finance, ethical investments).
- Economic planning and financial management for regenerative enterprises.
- Circular economy design, emphasising resource reuse, waste minimization, and local production.
- Business development for social enterprises, including marketing, project management, and scaling strategies.
- Strategic networking and stakeholder management, helping connect projects with potential partners, investors, and like-minded organisations.

Need for sustainability “enhancer”

Sustainability and especially organic farming, permaculture and agriculture questions are often the questions on which an ability to discuss and integrate sustainability into daily practices is important. Ability to integrate knowledge about sustainability and its application in practice is an opportunity mentioned by research participants.

- Ability to understand current state of the field and nature that they work in.
- Knowledge about permaculture, agroforestry, and organic farming.
- Sustainable construction methods.
- Renewable energy integration.
- Soil regeneration techniques and biodiversity enhancement strategies.
- Waste reduction and resource management, including circular economy principles.
- Environmental education and advocacy, promoting systems thinking and ecological literacy.

Need for community empowerment and group dynamics support

Opportunities for strengthening community living and group dynamics are commonly acknowledged in the researched participants. As social enterprises in their essence are more connected to the people and groups many projects face problems when trying to sustain long-term projects.

- Knowledge of group dynamics, conflict resolution, and non-hierarchical governance structures.
- Facilitation of consensus-based decision-making and participatory processes.

- Knowledge of community empowerment strategies, focusing on marginalised groups and underrepresented voices.
- Skills in designing and implementing community-building events, shared cultural practices.

Skills and knowledge valued for Ecoprise designer

- Systems thinking
    - Holistic approach to nature and natural systems.
    - Ability to observe patterns of natural and human action.
    - Critical thinking.
- Communication skills
    - Facilitation of discussion.
    - Conflict resolution.
    - Group dynamics
    - Collaborative leadership.
    - Community building.
    - Social inclusion.
    - Empowerment of marginalised groups.
    - Networking.
    - Work ethics and social structures.
- Sustainability related knowledge and skills
    - Practical knowledge of agriculture and organic farming practices.
    - Knowledge of sustainable construction practices.
    - Renewable energy knowledge.
    - Climate change education.
    - Recycling and upcycling.
- Enterprise and innovation related skills and knowledge.
    - Creativity.
    - Marketing.
    - Business development.
    - Financial knowledge.
    - Innovation and social impact measurement tools.
    - Digital skills and management.
    - Efficiency and transparency.

Summary of opportunities

The opportunities for the Ecoprise Designer are diverse and reside across environmental, social, cultural, and economic pillars of sustainability. These opportunities highlight the potential for this role to act as a catalyst for regeneration and resilience within communities and social enterprises. Within the environmental domain, key opportunities include enhancing biodiversity through sustainable agriculture, promoting renewable energy solutions, advancing environmental education, and designing effective waste management systems. Social opportunities centre around community building, empowering marginalised groups, and facilitating inclusive governance structures. In the economic sphere, the focus lies on consulting for ethical funding, promoting income diversification, and supporting social

entrepreneurship. Culturally, opportunities exist in preserving local traditions, fostering cultural connection, and bridging the gap between traditional and modern practices. The big amount of available opportunities shows us the potential to have the Ecoprise designer as a persona that is able to support and help with these various challenges.

Threats

Threats for Ecoprise designer in social enterprises innovation

Threats section of this SWOT analysis is focused on the sustainability pillars as all of the previous analysis as well. Most of the threats analysis arises from focus group discussions held in consortium countries. The role of the Ecoprise designer was considered and discussed from various perspectives and when looking into threats it's important to recognize that not all threats are universally applicable. Their relevance may vary depending on the specific context in which the Ecoprise designer operates. Personal, organisational and structural barriers play in here too while looking into the differences within different sustainability pillars.

Threats around environmental regeneration

Differences in regulation and legal obstacles

Environmental practices, especially those involving innovative solutions like renewable energy, waste management, or organic farming, often face strict legal and regulatory challenges. Different regions have varying levels of legal support or hostility toward sustainable practices. Knowledge of these differences is very important in order to navigate the change and being able to discuss the regulatory differences with stakeholders.

Greenwashing

The pressure to maintain an eco-friendly image without substantive environmental impact could result in superficial practices (greenwashing). The Ecoprise designer might face the challenge of distinguishing genuinely regenerative practices from those that are merely performative, potentially harming their credibility and trustworthiness.

Climate change tempo and eco-anxiety

With the climate change effects rapidly strengthening it is hard to estimate how the Ecoprise designer knowledge and intervention can be fast and innovative enough to reach desired sustainability goals. Worsening climate conditions could undermine regenerative efforts and require constant adaptation to an increasingly unstable environment.

Eco-anxiety is another problem Ecoprise designers might face when working with sustainable regeneration questions in communities. Rising anxiety about changes happening to the environment and heightened sense about the climate change impact raises scepticism and potential stagnation to community innovation.

Threats around social regeneration

Local community resistance to new practices

The Ecoprise designer may face resistance from local communities that view regenerative practices or social enterprise activities as culturally or socially intrusive. Without proper engagement and alignment with local cultural norms, these practices could be rejected, creating tension between the project and the community.

Conflict and non-hierarchical management structure adaptability in profit seeking organisations

As eco-villages are perceived as more implementing horizontal or consensus-based governance models they share the experience that these models often lead to inefficiency and conflict. In some cases, these models can enforce power dynamics, be a process of timely decision-making, and create environments where internal conflicts go unresolved, leading to burnout or project stagnation.

Attraction and retention of stable workers or volunteers

Social enterprises and ecovillages often rely heavily on volunteers and short-term workers, leading to high turnover and instability. The constant need to retrain and integrate new members could strain resources and disrupt long-term planning.

Threats around cultural regeneration

Disconnected and culturally isolated practices

Some eco-village experience driving threat is the possibility of creating a living community that is separated from its local context. This derives from the seeking of isolating oneselves from the broader societal pressures and as an obstacle to create and integrate surrounding culture and traditions into their practices. This raises the threat of losing cultural diversity and ability to implement older generations' knowledge.

Urban vs. rural activities

The data suggests that there could be a difference between the good practices applied in rural eco-village settings and their transferability to social enterprises working in urban cities. Most of the threats are perceived with implementation of non-hierarchical management structures in places of peoples working in social enterprises settings.

Fundamentalism and strong ideology and perception tendencies

Strong collective identity in ecovillages sometimes arise from a stronger set of values that resist different narratives and can be a brewing point for conflict, limiting the ability to enhance the community or innovate. This threat is mostly arising from the need to have a strong ideological alliance when creating long-term cohabitation communities and its level of impact can vary in social enterprises setting.

Threats around economic regeneration

Profitability vs. sustainability goals

As profitability is perceived to be at the core of any enterprise the threat of it gaining higher priority than sustainability goals. The need to generate income might lead to compromises that prioritise profit over sustainability, undermining the core mission and leading to potential greenwashing.

Depending on the external funding sources

Ecovillages and social enterprises often face financial instability due to their dependence on grants, donations, or external funding. A sudden loss of these funding sources could jeopardise ongoing projects and threaten the long-term viability of the Ecoprise designer model.

Lack of knowledge about economics management

One of the threats outlined by research participants is the lack of knowledge on how to manage funds for longevity of the project. Eco-villages and social enterprises often face challenges in financial planning, diversifying funds and investing strategically, threatening their financial stability. This lack of economic literacy, including budget management, income diversification, and financial forecasting, hinders the ability to maintain operational longevity.

Threats beyond sustainability regeneration pillars

Psychological and emotional resilience

Threats such as eco-anxiety, burnout, and emotional strain, especially within non-hierarchical structures where responsibilities can be overwhelming. These threats are important when it comes to sustaining regenerative practices and managing community dynamics.

Overly broad skill set of the Ecoprise designer

A possibility of overloading a person with a very broad knowledge base is evident here when thinking about all the information that might be useful for the Ecoprise designer. This threat involves the designer being pulled in multiple directions, leading to inefficacy in delivering results.

Social enterprises legal and regulatory definition

A significant portion of the threats identified in our analysis show a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes a social enterprise. The data reveals that in several consortium countries, there is a blurred line between social enterprises, NGOs, and traditional businesses with a social mission. This confusion can lead to structural and operational challenges, such as mismatches in legal recognition, funding eligibility, and organisational governance. The

ambiguity surrounding the definition of a social enterprise can result in varying expectations from stakeholders, leading to conflicts in decision-making processes, difficulties in securing investments, and even tension within local communities. Addressing this lack of clarity and standardising the understanding of social enterprises across different countries gives one of the opportunities for Ecoprise designers as well.

Summary of Ecoprise designer threats

In conclusion, the threats faced by the Ecoprise designer are diverse and span across environmental, social, cultural, and economic pillars of sustainability. These threats highlight the complexity and context-specific challenges that could impede the effectiveness of this role. Most of the threats around Ecoprise designer are broad and could be applicable in some scenarios but not necessarily all. This leaves us with a question to further the SWOT analysis and move into our ideation of solutions on the skillset and model of this persona. Below you can see a list of research finding based questions that should be kept in mind while designing the model.

- How can the Ecoprise designer help social enterprise effectively balance the diverse sustainability goals across environmental, social, cultural, and economic pillars?
- Which social enterprises are their focus field and how the model reflects existing variety in the social entrepreneurship field?
- What skills are necessary for the Ecoprise designer to manage the tension between profitability and sustainability in social enterprises?
- On what type of knowledge and skills this persona should act and be thought about?
- How should the Ecoprise designer model be adapted to different socio-political contexts where the definition and acceptance of social enterprises vary?

ECOPRISE

Discussion of data and experts' inputs

During the Ecovillages Gathering, we preselected and invited experts as well as elders of ecovillages to attend a focus group. This group of people has practical and theoretical knowledge about ecovillages and their intricacies.
Participants ranged from developers of Gaia Education, financial consultants of ecovillages, researchers on ecovillages and entrepreneurship as well as ecovillages themselves that are also involved not only in their local ecovillages but participate in networks outside their ecovillages as well.

Participants discussed regenerative activities conducted by ecovillages. Ecovillages differ by their focus and capacities in different regenerative fields. Some ecovillages are very strong in environmental aspects while some are stronger in social aspects. However, some participants mentioned that cultural regeneration is a challenge in most ecovillages. Participants were able to share effective examples from:

- Economic regeneration: production of their own energy with capacity to sell to the grid outside an ecovillage; production of their food; establishment of an institute for forest research; running a supermarket with their produce;
- Environmental regeneration: agriculture on permaculture principles; dry toilets in all apartments; waste management (reuse); influenced the local waste management at the municipal level;
- Social regeneration: establishment of an internal pension fund; shared economy; share of wealth, cooperative financial management, commune sharing 100% shares;

It was acknowledged that:

- Cultural regeneration is a bit of a missing part or less developed. Some examples are their acknowledgement of needed conflict resolution and some of ecovillages being able to accommodate this need. As one additional example of culture spillover would be that children that attend schools outside ecovillages tend to be very active and participate in school management.

Thus, some new unmentioned aspects could be added to the SWOT from this focus group:

Strengths:
Environmental

- Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle aspect of both business models.
- Energy in ecosystems (syntropic perspective) dynamics.

Social

- Container for affect and meaning-relationships beyond instrumental purposes. Social regeneration.

Cultural

- Looking into non-western land-based cultures for inspiration of values and attitudes that would support shift to regeneration.
- Cultural container for innovation that might be regarded as countercultural by mainstream.

Economic

- Vision of values beyond revenue - social/environmental/cultural value.

Weaknesses:

Environmental

- Amateur approach, lack of expertise.
- Work with local networks for protection and regeneration in a bioregion setting.

Social

- Lack of project resources or skills to deal with "difficult" personal background issues (psychological, emotional).
- Lack of worst-case scenarios/planning and unintended consequences (team building).

Cultural

- Cultural imprint effect in collective dynamics (all phases of the project).

Economic

- Difficulty in creating endogenous capital.

Opportunities:

Environmental

- Localization means less mobility.
- Regeneration leads to better evaluation of quality of life.
- Deep adaptation to climate change.

Social

- Joint efforts in influencing policies - joint advocacy for appropriate regulations.
- Doing wider community impact requires local community involvement.

Cultural

- Inclusion of marginalised groups.
- “Crisis of meaning” and “Quiet quitting” by professionals in highly skilled professions.
- End of grand narratives, crisis of legitimacy of capitalism, representative democracy and the nuclear family.

Economic

- Opportunities to learn a new economic system or and create a new one.
- Financial schemes that use existing laws and are applied in order to create a sustainable financial model for ecovillages.

Threats

Environmental

- Environment friendly practices are often too expensive to implement.

Social

- Generational gap

Cultural

- Infiltration of conspiracy thinkers/populists in alternative circles.
- “Holistic thinking” is partial to people anti-science and anti-bureaucratic.
- Sometimes ecovillages adopt their practices from all over the world that might not work in the local context.

Economic

- Political change in the EU. through public funding.
- Macroeconomics crises decrease grants and philanthropic funding.

Concluding remarks and SWOT summary tables

This SWOT analysis serves as a systematic analysis of extensive knowledge gathered in the research stage and as a platform of common insights gathered from all partnering countries, providing an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with ecovillages and social enterprises. It should be considered as a stepping stone in the development of the Ecoprise model and skillset, offering knowledge that should guide the creation of an innovative, sustainable social entrepreneurial framework. The findings within this analysis aim to inform and inspire the creation of the Ecoprise Designer. Below is a short summary overview of the SWOT insights in the spheres of each sustainable regeneration pillar.

Table X. SWOT insight summary for environmental regeneration.

Category	Aspect	Details
Strengths	Practices	Common Practices: Ecological waste management, Application of renewable energy, Green product-making, Teaching courses and organising trainings, Advocacy work and activism; Practices of Ecovillages: Responsible agriculture practices, Protection and restoration of local biodiversity, Ecological self-building, Adaptive and contextualised implementation; Practices of Social Enterprises: Policy work.
	Skills and Knowledge	Common: Activism / change-making mindset, Skills in advocacy and lobbying, Knowledge and ability to practically implement energy efficiency and waste management practices, Pedagogy skills; Unique of Ecovillages: Learning through experience and observation, Creativity and 'engineering mindset', Manual labour skills; Unique of Social Enterprises: Regeneration-forward thinking and risk management, High standard for sustainable activities.
	Other Accelerators	Common Accelerators: Responsibility for bettering social and natural environment;
Weaknesses	Main Barriers and Challenges	Common: Worsening climate situation, Limiting infrastructure, Profitability versus environmental regeneration; Unique of Ecovillages: Lack of tools for teaching applied permaculture.

	Skills and Knowledge Gaps	Of Ecovillages: Problematic measurement of impact, Technological skill gaps in executing agricultural practices, Knowledge and skill gaps in legislation and bureaucratic processes; Of Social Enterprises: Lack of expertise in environmental regeneration practices, Skills in networking and joint action.
	Possible Improvements in Education	Teaching of GreenComp framework.
Opportunities		Enhancing biodiversity and creating local food networks.
		Adoption of renewable energy solutions.
		Environmental education and advocacy.
		Sustainable waste management.
Threats		Differences in regulation and legal obstacles.
		Greenwashing.
		Climate change tempo and eco-anxiety.

Table Y. SWOT insight summary for social regeneration.

Category	**Aspect**	**Details**
Strengths	Practices	Common Social Regeneration Practices: Ethics of care, varied decision-making models, Supporting the disadvantaged groups of the local communities.
	Skills and Education	Common Skills and Knowledge: Skills of implementation of horizontal decision-making mechanisms, Facilitation skills, Visionary leadership, Emotional intelligence, Work with disadvantaged groups; Unique Skills and Knowledge of Ecovillages: Self-betterment individually and being a part of the group; Unique Skills and Knowledge of Social Enterprises: Abilities to experiment and innovate.
	Other Accelerators	Common Accelerators: Strong relationship with the community; Accelerators of Ecovillages: Co-living and day-to-day project management; Accelerators of Social Enterprises: Self-realisation as motivation, Empowerment and sense of ownership, Positive impact on the local community increases likelihood of employment.

Weaknesses	Main Barriers and Challenges	Common Barriers: Inefficient horizontal decision-making systems; Barriers of Ecovillages: Blurred line between life and work, Reliance on personal charisma, Lack of intergenerational plan.
	Gaps in Skills and Knowledge	Common Gaps in Skills and Knowledge: Skills in employment and employee retention, Problem-solving and conflict de-escalation knowledge, Lack of facilitation skills; Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Ecovillages: Organisational skills in workload management, Human resource management skills; Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Social Enterprises: Collective decision-making skills, Self-reflection.
	Possible Improvements in Education	Potential Improvements in Course Material: Handling emotional difficulties throughout the course.
Opportunities		Facilitating community building and networking.
		Empowering marginalised groups and promoting social inclusion.
		Innovation of social impact measurement tools.
Threats		Local community resistance to new practices.
		Conflict and non-hierarchical management structure adaptability in profit-seeking organisations.
		Attraction and retention of stable workers or volunteers.

Table U. SWOT insight summary for economic regeneration.

Category	**Aspect**	**Details**
Strengths	Practices	Common Economic Regeneration Practices: Income reinvestment, Operation in and support for the local economy, use of diverse fund acquisition practices; Practices of Ecovillages: Community-level paid and unpaid labour practices, Community-level fund management, Efforts in financial equity; Practices of Social Enterprises: Operation in the national and international markets.
	Skills and Knowledge	Skills and Knowledge of Ecovillages: Basic economy principles, Collaboration with local economy; Skills and Knowledge of Social Enterprises: Step-by-step mindset, Abilities of monetization, Financial adaptability.

	Other Accelerators	Accelerators of Ecovillages: Collective identity defines appropriate economic activity; Accelerators of Social Enterprises: Outward-looking orientation, partnerships with external entities.
Weaknesses	Main Barriers	Common Barriers: Profitability vs. sustainability goals, Depending on external funding sources.
	Skill and Knowledge Gaps	Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Ecovillages: Limited formal financial management skills; Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Social Enterprises: Insufficient skills in sustainable financial planning.
	Improvements of Educational Programmes	Possible improvements in educational programmes focused on integrating practical financial skills into the curriculum.
Opportunities		Consulting on access to funds and investments.
		Economic resilience through diversification of income means.
Threats		Profitability vs. sustainability goals.
		Depending on external funding sources.
		Lack of knowledge about economics management.

Table P. SWOT insight summary for cultural regeneration.

Category	**Aspect**	**Details**
Strengths	Practices	Common Practices: Preservation of cultural heritage, Community events and festivities, Collaboration with local artists and cultural practitioners; Practices of Ecovillages: Integration of traditional knowledge in daily practices, Preservation of local languages and customs; Practices of Social Enterprises: Cultural awareness programs, Advocacy for heritage protection.
	Skills and Knowledge	Common Skills and Knowledge: Cultural awareness, Community engagement skills, Knowledge of traditional practices; Skills and Knowledge of Ecovillages: Hands-on experience with traditional crafts and sustainable living; Skills and Knowledge of Social Enterprises: Anthropological approach to understanding local contexts.

	Other Accelerators	Accelerators of Ecovillages: Community events and festivities, Self-sufficiency, Seeking knowledge from professionals; Accelerators of Social Enterprises: Communication and collaboration with external organisations, Work with existing communities.
Weaknesses	Main Challenges and Barriers	Common Barriers and Challenges: Disconnected and culturally isolated practices, Urban vs. rural activities; Barriers and Challenges of Ecovillages: Fundamentalism and strong ideological tendencies.
	Skill and Knowledge Gaps	Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Ecovillages: Limited engagement with modern cultural movements; Skills and Knowledge Gaps of Social Enterprises: Lack of integration of traditional cultural practices.
Opportunities		Local culture knowledge and enhancement.
		Bridging the gap between archaic and modern regeneration practices.
Threats		Disconnected and culturally isolated practices.
		Urban vs. rural activities.
		Fundamentalism and strong ideology tendencies.

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Annexes. Interview questions, term definitions, other relevant processes and documents

Annex 1A. Interview questions for ecovillages

1. In which of these fields of regeneration is your ecovillage the most active? Could you provide me with examples of regenerative practices that your ecovillages enact?
2. Keeping this in mind, which of the regenerative practices that are related to others do you participate in? What exactly do you do whilst participating in these activities?
3. Could you explain to me in what way your identified practice contributes to regeneration?
4. Could you please tell me, how did you get involved in participating in this exact regenerative practice?
5. Imagine that another resident of your ecovillage wants to start participating in this regenerative practice the way you do.
   a) What knowledge would be necessary for them to have?
   b) What experience would be necessary for them to have to do this practise well? What training could be helpful?
   c) What skills and competencies are necessary for that person to have to do this practise well?
   d) What material resources (i.e. digital devices, specific tools, programmes, etc.) are necessary to have to execute this practice well? What about digital devices and programmes?
   e) What personal qualities, such as values and attitudes, would that person need to have?
6. Could you tell me what are the main issues that you face in participating in this practice?
7. What are the main agreements (or rules) among your community that regulate how the members of your community live and make a living?
8. How do these aspects regulate and/or influence the regenerative practice in which you participate (what was spoken about before)?
   a. How about the other common traits - e.g., values, habits, lifestyles - that are shared by the community members. What are they?
9. Is there any influence of these traits on your practice? If yes, could you explain what influence these common traits have on your practice?
10. This is the final question of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending this interview?

Annex 1B. Interview questions for educators

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and the institution in which you are a member of the teaching staff?
2. Please tell me about your taught course – I am interested in your taught topics, and how ecovillage design and permaculture education or other closely related topics are incorporated.

3. What are your main aims that you wish to realise by teaching this course/module?
4. Here is a list of the EU-devised competencies. Please familiarise yourself with only those categories of competencies - sustainability, entrepreneurship and/or digital - that you teach in your course.
    a. Which of these competencies do you enhance during your course?
5. Are there any competencies that you teach that are not a part of this list? What are they?
6. Why exactly do you teach these competencies?
7. Which of these competencies are the most difficult for students to nurture? What would have to change to make these competencies easier to acquire?
8. How would you evaluate your course's capacity in teaching students about these four pillars of regeneration? Please consider them all - social, environmental, economic and cultural regeneration.
9. Why do you think so?
10. What do you think would have to be changed in your course, so it is more tailored to provide knowledge on these topics?
11. Tell me a little bit about your thought process – why would you like to implement these changes?
12. This is the final question of the interview. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we finish the interview?

Annex 1C. Interview questions for social enterprises

1. In which of these domains of sustainability is your organisation most active in? Could you explain what your organisation does to contribute to social/environmental/economic sustainability?
2. Could you tell me about the period before you established your organisation? Please focus on the most significant steps of your journey. (Only for co-founders, if you are interviewing a HR specialist or a manager, skip to section 3)
    a. In this interview, I am equally interested in both your organisation's offer to external stakeholders – customers, partners, etc., as well as to inner stakeholders – mainly, your colleagues.
    b. Let's begin with the internal stakeholders.
3. Does your organisation do any actions aiming for social/environmental/economic sustainability that are related to your fellow colleagues? What are they?
4. The following questions will be related to better understanding these activities - could you please choose one of the sustainability-driven activities that you are the most familiar with?
5. Keeping in mind this specific activity, what do you hope to achieve with it?
6. How would you evaluate this activity in reaching these goals? Could you please explain your answer - why do you think so?
7. Are there any other activities related to your fellow colleagues that your organisation should take up? Is it possible that this will be done? Why/why not?
8. Moving on to the offer to external stakeholders – customers, partners, society and nature at large, etc.

   a. Does your organisation do any actions aiming for social/environmental/economic sustainability that is related to the external groups? What are they?
9. The following questions will be related to better understanding these activities - could you please choose one of the sustainability-driven activities that you are the most familiar with?
   a. What do you hope to achieve with this activity?
   b. How would you evaluate this activity in terms of reaching these goals? Could you please explain your answer - why do you think so?
10. Are there any other activities related to external groups that your organisation should take up? Is it possible that this will be done? Why/why not?
11. Thinking about sustainability-driven activities of your enterprise - both related to internal and external groups - are there any shared traits - values, knowledge, skills - that motivate the members of your organisation to execute these activities? What are they?
12. Are there any advantages in executing your sustainability-driven activities as a social enterprise, which might not be present in a different business model? Could you please provide me with examples so that I understand it better?
   a. Are there any disadvantages in executing your sustainability-driven activities as a social enterprise? Could you please explain by using examples from your experiences?
13. This is the last question of this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending this interview?

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Annex 2A. Regeneration term definitions used in interviews

Definitions of regeneration	Possible regenerative practices
Economic regeneration - holistically transforming economic systems and practices to prioritise sustainability, equity and community empowerment.	• Reconstruct the concepts of wealth, work and progress • Commit to responsible production, consumption and trade • Cultivate social entrepreneurship for local regeneration • Increase economic justice through sharing and collaboration • Ensure equitable access to land and resources • Use banks and currencies that strengthen communities
Environmental regeneration - bettering (e.g., restorating, preserving, enhancing) the occupied environment and biodiversity.	• Grow seeds, food and soil through regenerative agriculture • Clean and replenish sources and cycles of water • Move towards 100% renewable energy and transport • Innovate and spread green building technologies • Work with waste as a valuable resource • Increase biodiversity and restore ecosystems
Social regeneration - building a community and its institutions based on trust, equal opportunities and collaboration.	• Nurture diversity and cohesion for thriving communities • Develop fair, effective and accountable institutions • Practice conflict facilitation, communication and peacebuilding skills • Empower collaborative leadership and participatory decision making • Ensure equal and lifelong access to education for sustainability • Promote health, healing and wellbeing for all
Cultural regeneration - preserving and enriching the diverse traditions, practices and views systems, leading to harmony between wellbeing of individuals, community and nature.	• Clarify vision and higher purpose • Nurture mindfulness and self-reflection • Enrich life with art and celebration • Honour indigenous wisdom and welcome positive innovation • Engage actively to protect communities and nature • Reconnect to nature and embrace low-impact lifestyles

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Annex 2B. EU-devised competencies definitions used in interviews

GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework	**Valuing sustainability**	Knows the main views of sustainability, can articulate sustainability's values, principles and objectives, is prone to acting in line with values and principles for sustainability.
	Systems thinking	Knows that every human action has environmental, cultural and economic impact and is concerned about the short- and long-term impacts of personal actions on others and the planet.
	Critical thinking	Can analyse and assess arguments, ideas, actions and scenarios to determine whether they are in line with evidence and values in terms of sustainability.
	Adaptability	Can cope with trade-offs in sustainability, e.g. environmental impacts and social outcomes as well as economic aspects. Feels empowered to consider options and make decisions even when facing contradictions and risks in terms of the future.
	Exploratory thinking	Knows that sustainability problems must be tackled by combining different disciplines, knowledge cultures and divergent views to initiate systemic change. Can synthesise sustainability-related information and data from different disciplines.
	Individual initiative	Identifies its own potential for sustainability and to actively contribute to improving prospects for the community and the planet.
	Supporting Fairness	Knows that ethical concepts and justice for current and future generations are related to protecting nature. Can apply equity and justice for current and future generations as criteria for environmental preservation and the use of natural resources.

	Collective Action	Knows how to work with diverse participants to create inclusive visions for a more sustainable future. Can create transparent, inclusive and community-driven processes.
EntreComp: the entrepreneurship competence framework	**Spotting opportunities**	Uses their imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating value. ● Identifies and seizes opportunities to create value by exploring the social, cultural and economic landscape ● Identifies needs and challenges that need to be met ● Establishes new connections and bring together scattered elements of the landscape to create opportunities to create value
	Vision	Works towards their vision of the future: ● Imagines the future ● Develops a vision to turn ideas into action ● Visualizes future scenarios to help guide effort and action
	Ethical and sustainable thinking	Assesses the consequences and impact of ideas, opportunities and actions: ● Assesses the consequences of ideas that bring value and the effect of entrepreneurial action on the target community, the market, society and the environment ● Reflect son how sustainable long-term social, cultural and economic goals are, and the course of action chosen ● Acts responsibly
	Uncertainty, ambiguity, risk	Makes decisions dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk: ● Makes decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes ● Within the value-creating process, includes structured ways of testing ideas and prototypes from the early stages, to reduce risks of failing ● Handles fast-moving situations promptly and flexibly

	Learning through experience	Learns by doing: ● Uses any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity ● Learns with others, including peers and mentors ● Reflects and learns from both success and failure (their own and other people's)
DigComp: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens	**Managing data, information and digital content**	Organises, stores and retrieves data, information and content in digital environments. Organises and processes them in a structured environment.
	Interaction through digital technologies	Interacts through a variety of digital technologies and understands appropriate digital communication means for a given context.
	Engaging citizenship	Participates in society through the use of public and private digital services. Seeks opportunities for self-empowerment and for participatory citizenship through appropriate digital technologies.
	Developing digital content	Creates and edits digital content in different formats, expresses oneself through digital means.
	Creatively using digital technology	Uses digital tools and technologies to create knowledge and to innovate processes and products. Engages individually and collectively in cognitive processing to understand and resolve conceptual problems and problem situations in digital environments.

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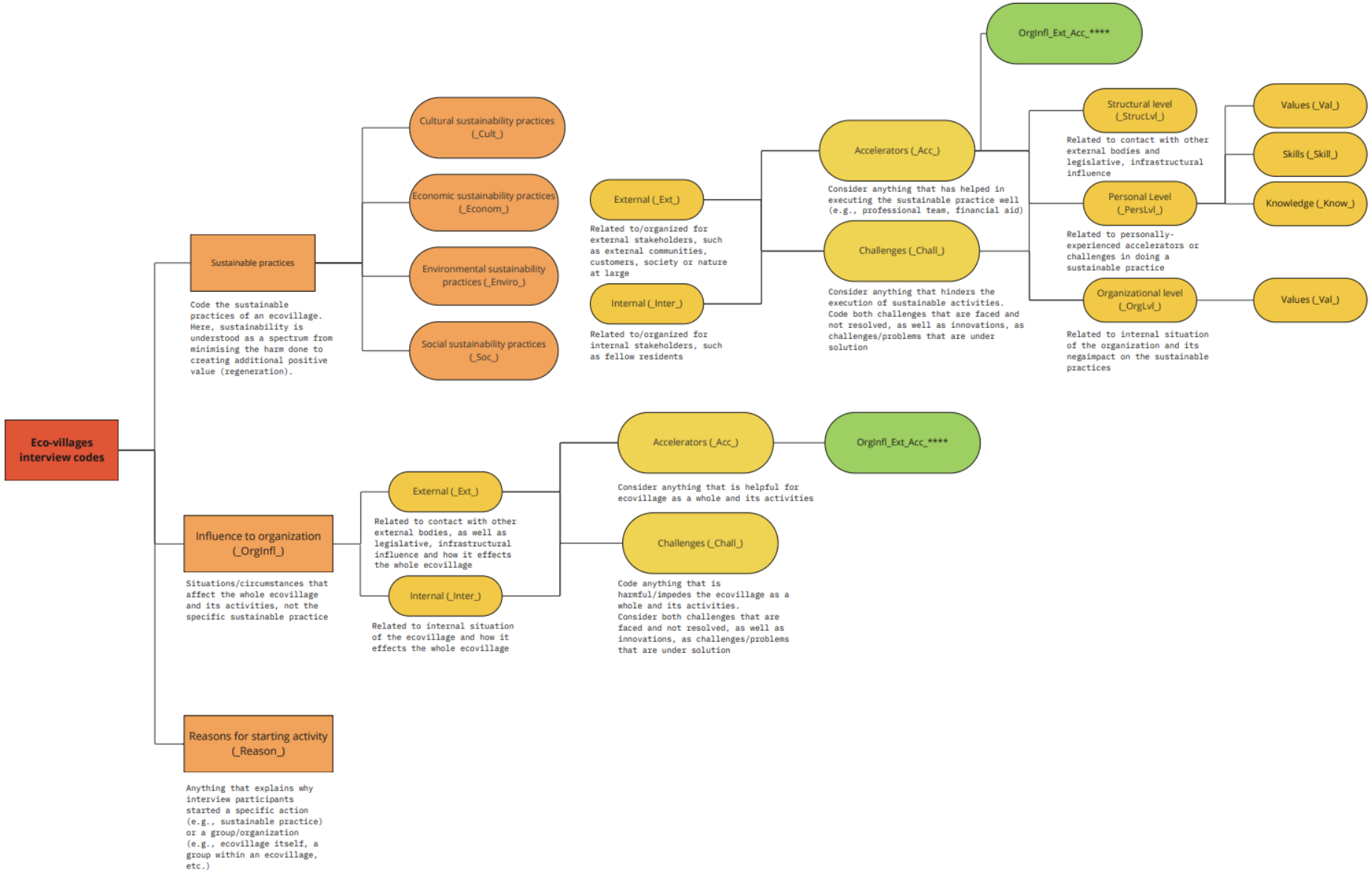
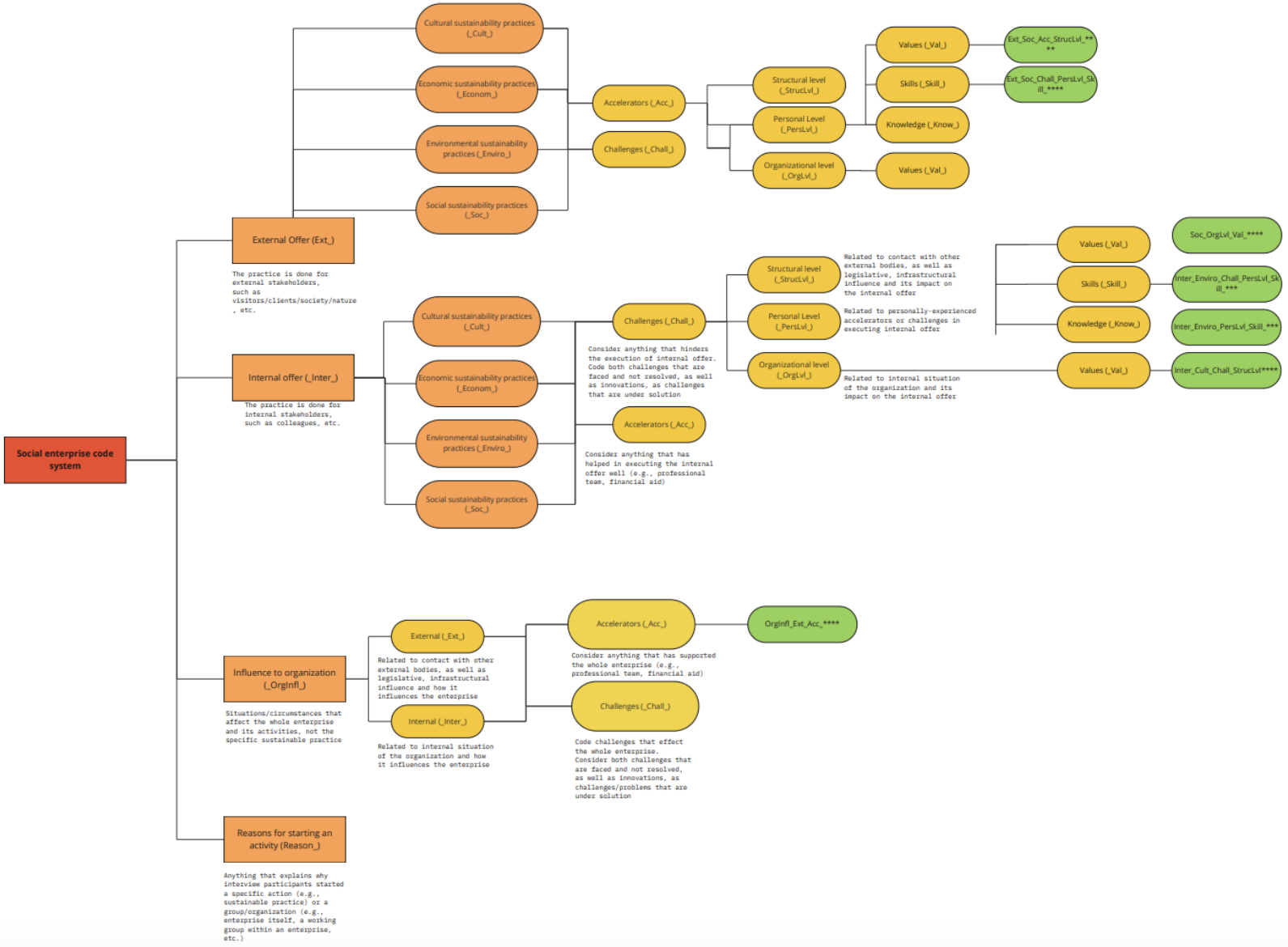
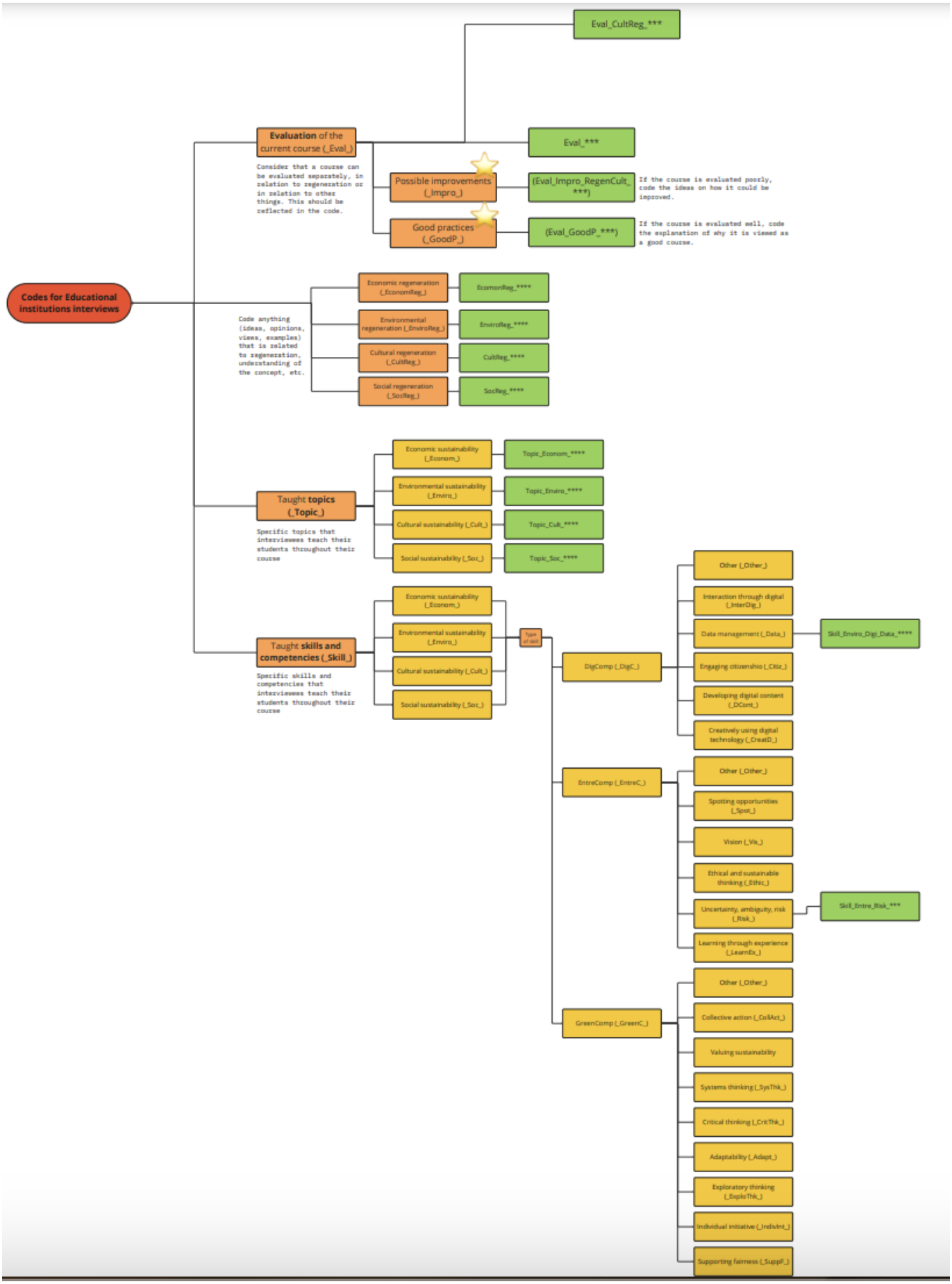
Annex 3A. Ecovillage coding system



Annex 3B. Social enterprises coding system



Annex 3C. Educational institutions coding system



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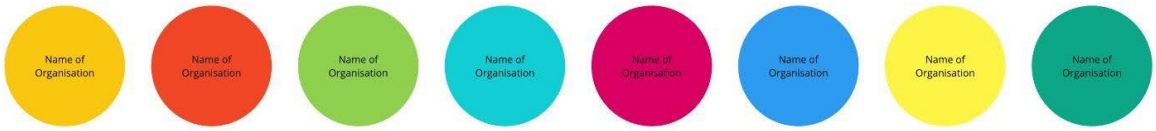
Annex 4. Focus group worksheets

Step 1

Introductions

Where is your organisation located across the sustainability/regeneration domains?



Cultural	Environmental	Social	Economic
Cultural regeneration - preserving and enriching the diverse traditions, practices and views systems, leading to harmony between wellbeing of individuals, community and nature.	Environmental regeneration - bettering (e.g., restorating, preserving, enhancing) the occupied environment and biodiversity.	Social regeneration - building a community and its institutions based on trust, equal opportunities and collaboration.	Economic regeneration - holistically transforming economic systems and practices to prioritize sustainability, equity and community empowerment.
Positive value is created (restoration and/or regeneration)			
No harm is done (sustainability)			
No attention or effort			

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Step 2
Presentation of the Ecoprise project and today's activity

Future-oriented social entrepreneurship through Ecovillage Design

Project timeline 2024.02 - 2026.12

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What is the Ecoprise designer?

Ecoprise intends to promote a new entrepreneurial model and skillset for a new professional figure, the Ecoprise Designer, **able to contribute to local regenerative development, promoting a harmonious coexistence between human life and nature within enterprises.**

How it will be created?

Bringing together Higher Education Institutions, VET providers, enterprises and non-profit associations to develop a multi-disciplinary course on Ecopreneurship, i.e. future-oriented social entrepreneurship through ecovillage design, inspired by the 4 imensions of sustainability, and recognised through micro-credentials and through a European certification.

Goals of the current phase of the project

1. Identification of successful examples of social enterprises and ecovillages and analysis of existing skills gaps in the two fields
2. Development of the Ecoprise Model, reference point for the following actions, and the Skillset for Ecoprise designers

The development of the current phase

Desk research and **research concept** design → **Interviews** with ecovillages, social enterprises and sustainability educators → Interview **analysis** → **Focus group** to discuss synergies and differences between sustainability / regeneration practices and possible adaptation for Ecoprise designer → Interview and focus group analysis to make a **national SWOT** analysis → **International** comparison and international SWOT → Ecoprise designer model **prototype** creation (skillset and training plan) → Prototype **improvement** with expert board

Co-funded by the European Union

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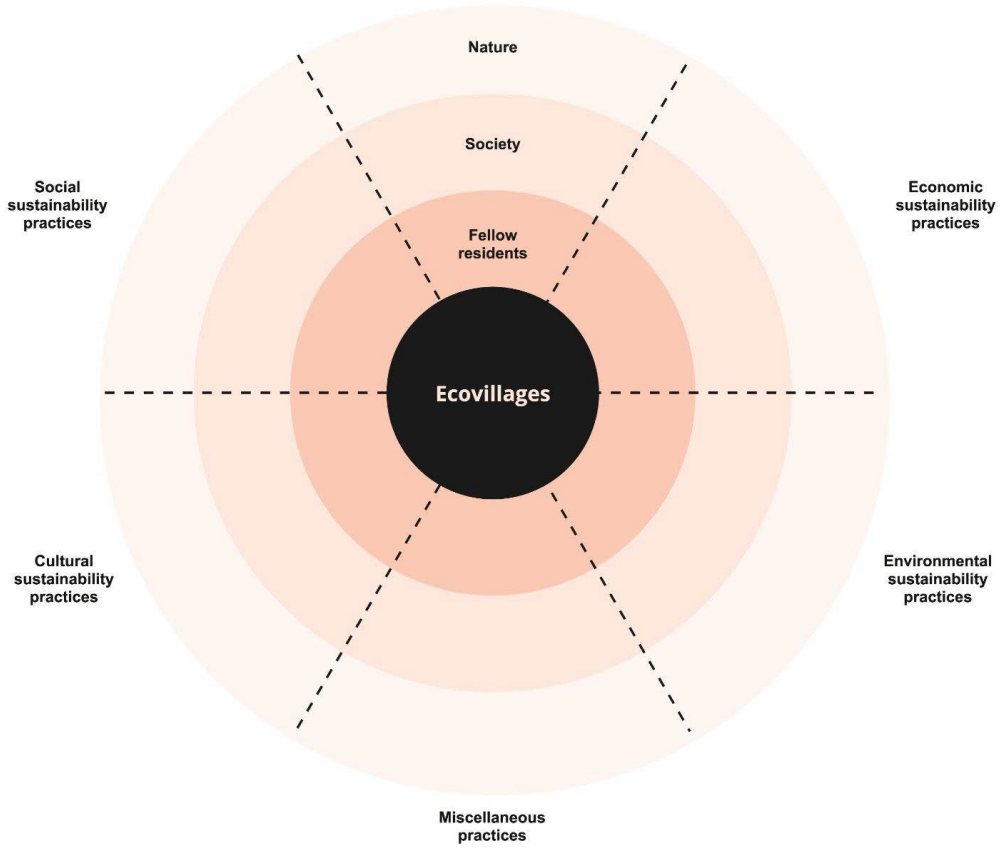
Step 3.1

Sustainability practices of ecovillages

Do the outlined practices present your eco-village's activities accurately? Are there any gaps or misinterpretations that should be corrected?



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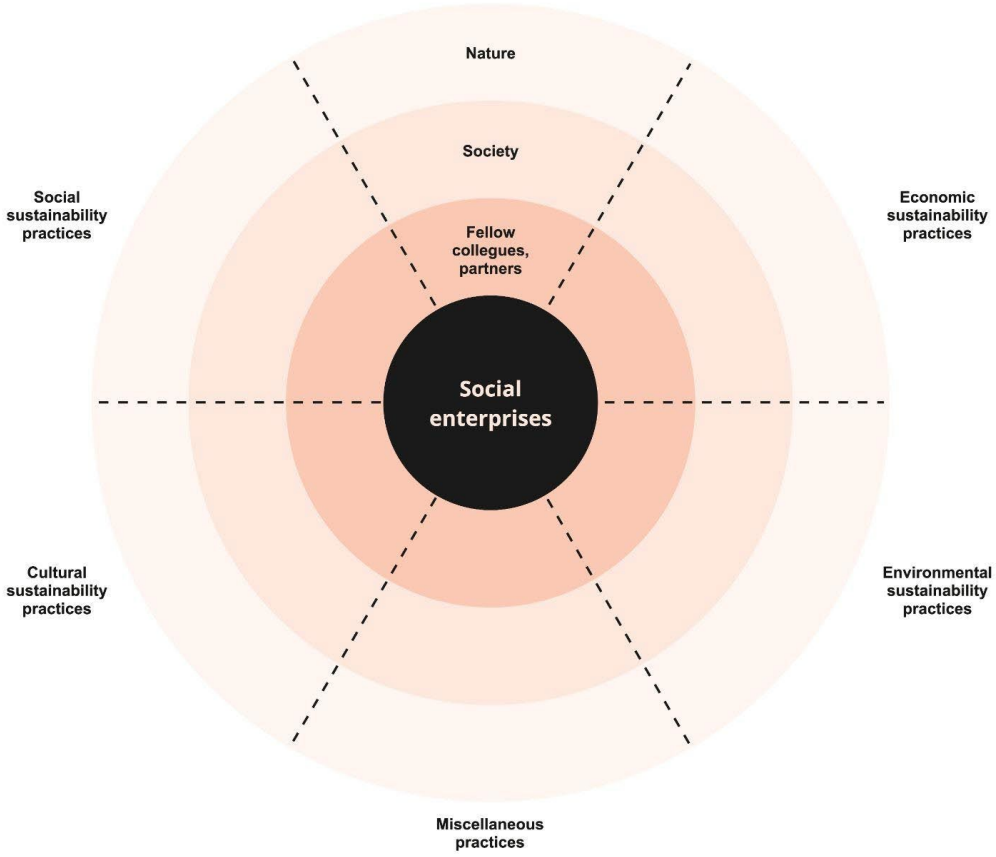
Step 3.2

Sustainability practices of social enterprises

Do the outlined practices present your social enterprise's practices accurately? Are there any gaps or misinterpretations that should be corrected?



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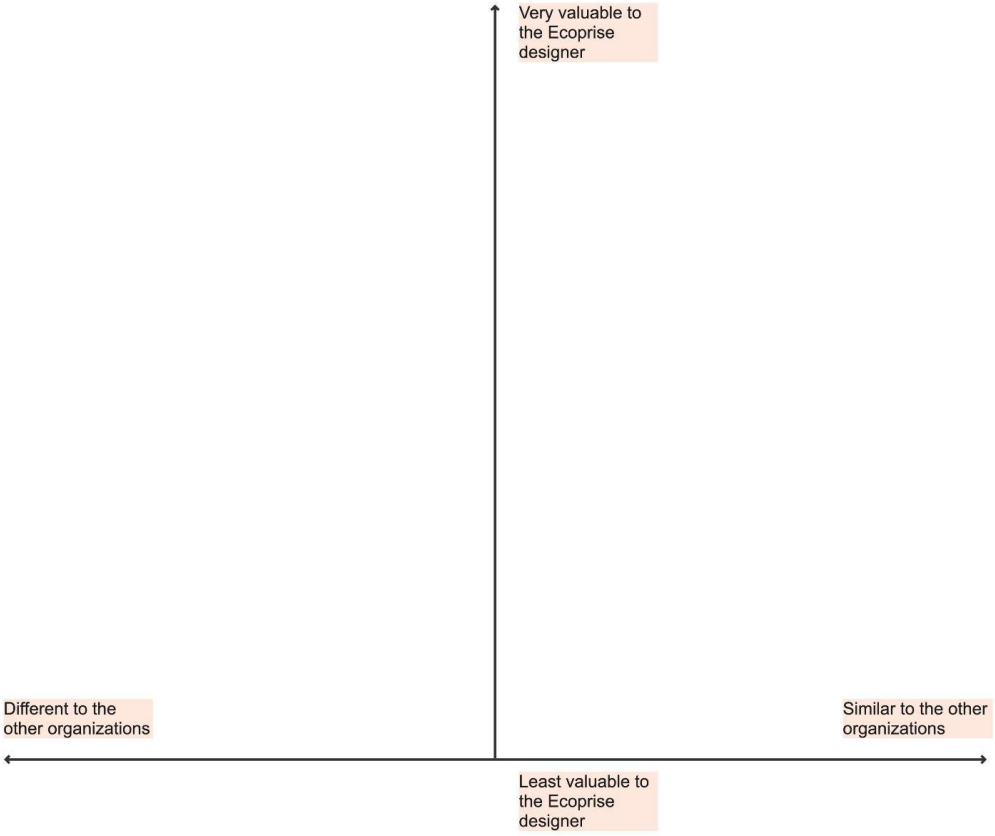
Step 4

Sustainability practices valuable for Ecoprise designer

1. Out of all sustainability practices, which would be valuable for an ecoprise designer to implement? Why?
2. Are your chosen sustainability practices similar or different to the practices of other organisations? What opportunities or risks does that imply?



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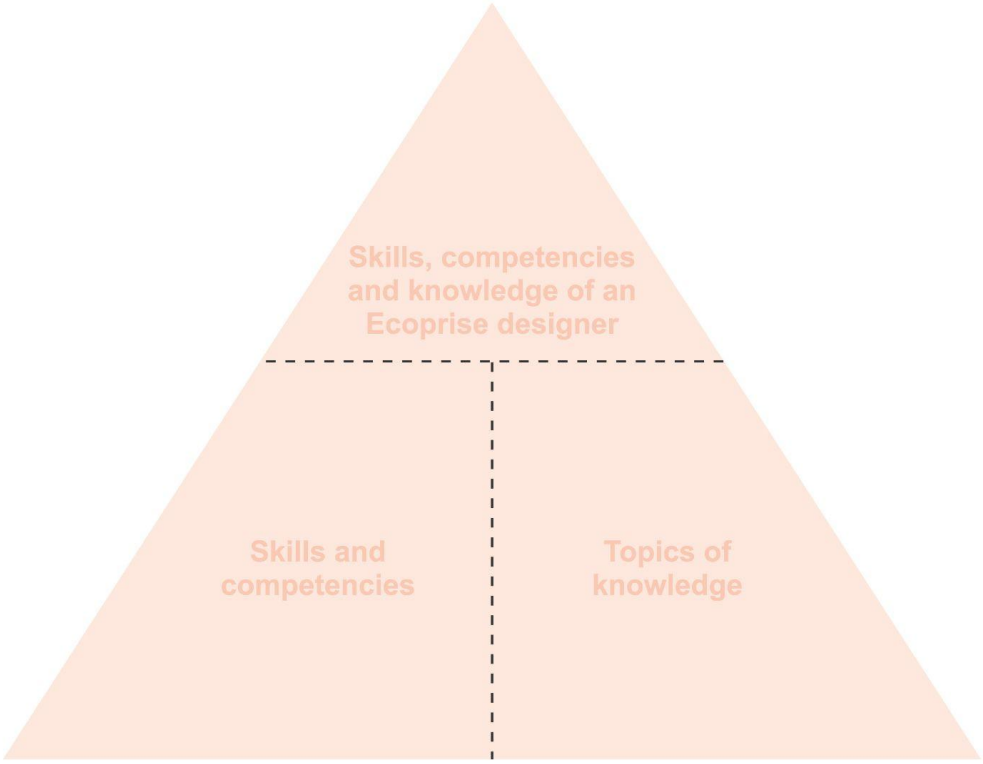
Step 5

Skills and knowledge of the Ecoprise designer

1. Do the outlined skills, competencies and topics of knowledge present your teaching accurately? Are there any gaps or misinterpretations that should be corrected?
2. What are most important skills, competencies and/or topics of knowledge that an Ecoprise designer should know? Consider what an Ecoprise designer should know in general and to implement the above-listed practices.



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