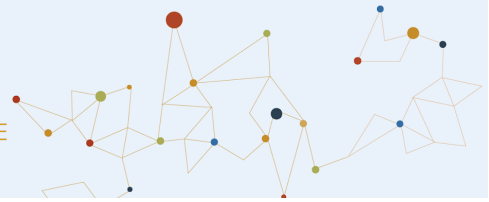


# ECOLISE

EUROPEAN NETWORK  
FOR COMMUNITY-LED  
INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND SUSTAINABILITY



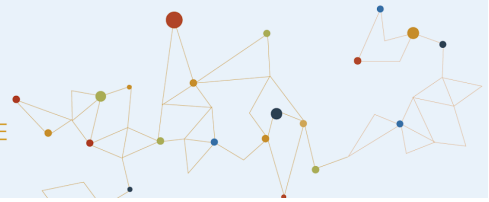
## Who are we

ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability, is a coalition of 43 member organisations engaged in promoting and supporting local communities across Europe in their efforts to build pathways to a sustainable future.

Members of ECOLISE include international networks of community-led initiatives such as the Transition Network (representing over 1200 Transition initiatives), the Global Ecovillage Network (15,000 ecovillages) and the Permaculture movement (3 million practitioners globally); ICLEI, the association of local governments for sustainability; national and regional networks; and other specialist bodies engaged in European-level research, training and communications.

By bringing these organisations together, ECOLISE seeks to establish a common, Europe-wide agenda and a platform for collective action.

ECOLISE and its members would like to thank the presidencies of COP23 and COP24 for their joint efforts in setting up the Talanoa Dialogue and including non-party stakeholders. The dialogues showcased a model that could be followed by different societal groups and communities in all countries, regions and at local level. They created a space for a much needed and honest dialogue about existing paradigm and current practices, and how to challenge them and **develop a shared vision for our future**. Many ECOLISE members hosted their own Talanoa Dialogues at community level. This submission is based on those dialogues, as well as knowledge gathered and practices learnt and shared among participating communities and member networks.



## Summary

ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability, believes responding to the climate crisis requires a complete transformation of our socio-economic systems and engagement in unprecedented levels of cooperation and solidarity, in order to create a regenerative culture and collaborate on care.

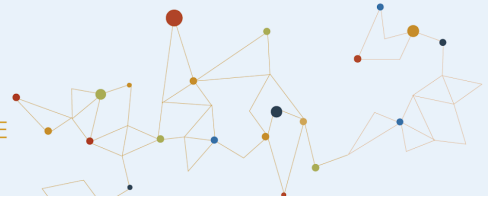
ECOLISE's vision of thriving and resilient communities supporting planetary health and regeneration is based on the already widespread and diverse work of people and communities across Europe and the globe who are taking creative action in response to the great challenges of our time, including climate breakdown.

Research shows that community-led initiatives such as ecovillages, Transition towns and permaculture initiatives are creating low carbon alternatives to existing lifestyles, local economies and other societal structures, directly reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses, enhancing biodiversity and fostering independence from the fossil fuel economy.

Where governments, especially at municipal level, embrace and work with these initiatives, something powerful and transformative is unfolding, and is being recognised. In February 2018, the Council of the EU for the first time acknowledged the critical role of local communities in addressing climate challenge.

Appropriate legislation, enabling frameworks and funding instruments are needed in order to foster the right conditions for transitioning to regenerative cultures which can make significant contributions to effective, inclusive and pluralistic implementation of the Paris Agreement.

**Key words:** community-led, cooperation, solidarity, regenerative culture of care, research, recognition, effective



## I. Where are we?

Global problems such as climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, ecological degradation, economic inequality, social inequity and natural resource depletion urgently require just, innovative and systemic responses across multiple levels.

The Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set the frameworks for action at national and international levels to tackle these issues. However, implementation is difficult at these scales, and hindered by lock-in to inherently unsustainable and inequitable macro-economic models.

According to the latest IPCC Special Report<sup>1</sup> the earth is warming faster than previously predicted; for this reason, the goal agreed by governments of keeping the temperature increase to less than 2°C is no longer considered safe and could lead to devastating impacts. Scientists now emphatically warn that the temperature increase must be kept below 1.5°C to avoid climate chaos.

The window for achieving this is closing rapidly. Global carbon emissions need to stabilise by 2020 and then fall dramatically, to net zero emissions by 2050.

In the current climate, populism, austerity, inequality, and social exclusion continue to harm and divide our communities, our movements and our nations. These are all symptoms of interconnected systems of oppression<sup>2</sup> that are extractive to people, destroying the planet, and weighing on the social fabric of communities.

**The climate crisis offers us an opportunity to fundamentally reassess our vision of change.** It requires complete transformation of our socio-economic systems, and engagement in unprecedented levels of cooperation and solidarity within and among countries. At the heart of this is also a need for a cultural and personal transformation.

Our actions and more so inactions will affect not only present generations but all future generations. In order to avoid climate chaos, every country, every region, every community and every citizen must play their part, in accordance to their respective historical responsibility and capability.

At the local level, where processes of transformation are more manageable, many communities are already taking the initiative themselves, showing that they play an effective part in the solutions needed, and **demonstrating that a better future is possible.**

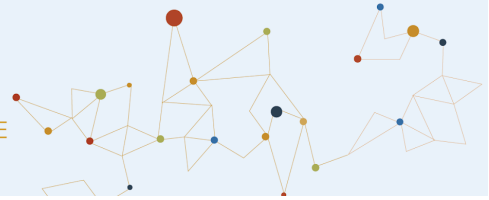
“Another world is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing.”

—Arundhati Roy

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2018. Global Warming of 1.5 °C

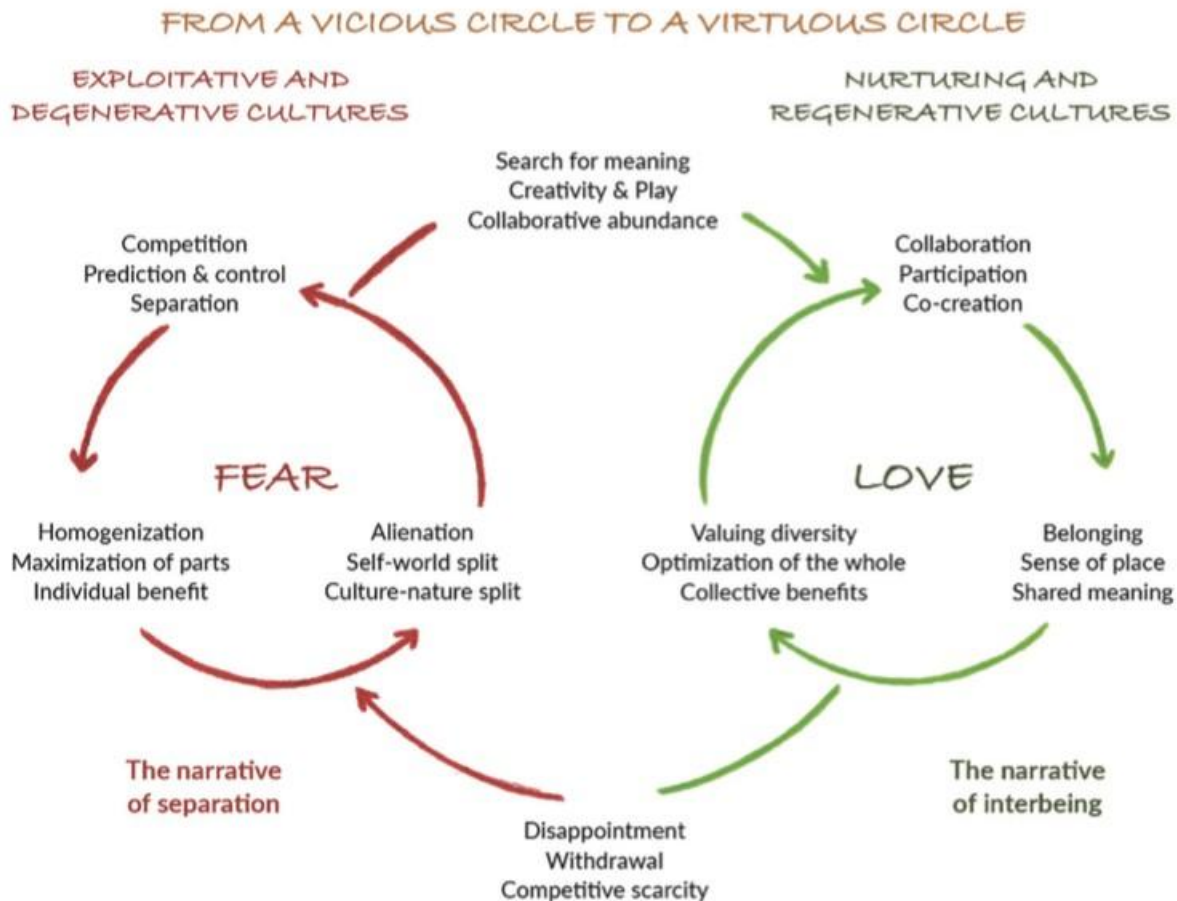
<sup>2</sup> Interconnect systemic oppressions such as supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism; Carastathis, Anna. 2016. *Interlocking Systems of Oppression*. 161-171. 10.1057/978-1-137-55425-3\_17.



## II. Where do we want to go?

*“ In order to change/transform the world, [we] must change/transform [our]selves.”*

—Grace Lee Boggs



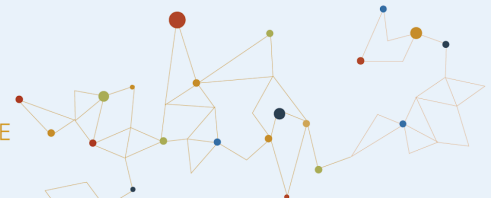
See Medium article “Towards a Regenerative Economy” by Daniel Christian Wahl

If we are to truly transform and bring forth the world we deserve, it’s going to take all of us. We are in a historical moment that requires us to connect with each other, expand our capacity to love and find the leverage points<sup>3</sup> within the system – points where people power<sup>4</sup> can disrupt the status quo and push for change.

As people who care about change, we have a responsibility to find these leverage points in our everyday lives. How does one confront systemic oppression at home, in an organization, in one’s community? What small, mighty actions can one take daily to move us closer to each other and the new world? Every small interaction holds the possibility of transformation.

<sup>3</sup> Donella Meadows, 1997. *Places to Intervene in a System*. Whole Earth Catalogue.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://mobilisationlab.org/resources/10-ways-people-power-can-change-the-world/>



ECOLISE's vision is for **"thriving and resilient communities supporting planetary health and regeneration."** Regeneration, in our view and in the work of our members, refers to the replacement of extractive and destructive forms of social and ecological relationship with systems that are nurturing to all forms of life and enable individual and collective flourishing. In practical terms, this consists of initiatives that seek to bring about ownership, custody and management of natural resources and productive assets by their communities of co-users, and to bring provision of basic needs and economic governance into community control. They value difference, diversity and integrity. These we consider to be the optimum conditions for nurturing and stimulating the inherent creative and collaborative potential of people, communities, and living systems.

ECOLISE believes that a **culture of care**, cooperation, sharing and solidarity is essential to restoring personal, societal and planetary **wellbeing**, and for transitioning to **regenerative cultures**<sup>5</sup>.

Regenerative cultures require holistic frameworks, policies and actions that are implemented to ensure that they are for the **good of the planet and for all people**. They operate from a place of collaborative abundance rather than competitive scarcity.

**The potential of bottom-up action is being rediscovered across the globe as people and communities take ownership of both local and global challenges.** Where governments embrace and work with this, something very powerful and transformative is unfolding.

Community-led initiatives (CLIs) are transformative social innovations that involve new ways of being, understanding, organising, negotiating and acting. There are thousands of such initiatives across Europe from community farms and gardens to community energy cooperatives, social enterprises to zero-waste initiatives.

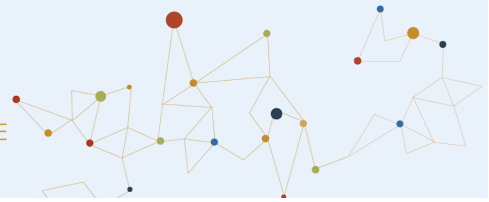
Increasing numbers of scholars now recognise the present time as a distinct geological epoch, the Anthropocene, in which human impacts significantly and unavoidably affect ecological conditions all over the world<sup>6</sup>. The Anthropocene raises new, complex and often unprecedented challenges, of many kinds: ecological, cultural, socio-political, socio-technological and economic. In light of this, scientists from many different disciplines are now calling for a shift in the premise of global governance to one of **planetary stewardship**<sup>7</sup>.

CLIs represent a pre-emptive response, at local levels, to this call for planetary stewardship. Arising and existing across Europe, and beyond, and focusing on a huge range of local and global issues, they take many different forms. Building and mobilising community through diverse partnerships and innovative initiatives, their work is a vital complement to high-level political action on climate change and sustainability. Through their work towards **creating low carbon alternatives to existing lifestyles, local economies and other societal structures, directly reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses and fostering independence from the fossil fuel economy, they can make significant contributions to effective, inclusive and pluralistic**

<sup>5</sup> Wahl, D.C., 2016. *Designing Regenerative Cultures*. Axminster: Triarchy Press

<sup>6</sup> Steffen, W., Crutzen, P.J. and McNeill, J.R., 2007. *The Anthropocene: are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature* *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 36(8): 614-621.

<sup>7</sup> Steffen, W., Persson, Å., Deutsch, L., Zalasiewicz, J., Williams, M., Richardson, K., Crumley, C., Crutzen, P., Folke, C., Gordon, L. and Molina, M., 2011. *The Anthropocene: From global change to planetary stewardship*. *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 40(7), pp.739-761.



**implementation of the Paris Agreement.** Their work often addresses themes relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals, and can provide innovative ways to implement these goals at local levels. It also challenges, in important ways, some of the assumptions behind both the Paris Agreement and SDGs: particularly in highlighting the benefits of alternative transition trajectories involving fundamental changes in political and economic structures in favour of more inclusive, equitable and democratic alternatives.

The European Day of Sustainable Communities showcases and celebrates such initiatives from across Europe, with the aim of inspiring similar such action elsewhere. It was celebrated in 24 countries this year and 15 in 2017.

We are calling on the Parties and the COP to take note of the momentum created by the Talanoa Dialogues and the Global Climate Action Summit in California and initiate a “World Communities Climate Action Day/World Day of Sustainable Communities”. It will be to recognize, celebrate and showcase Non State Actors contributions to climate action.

### III. How do we get there?

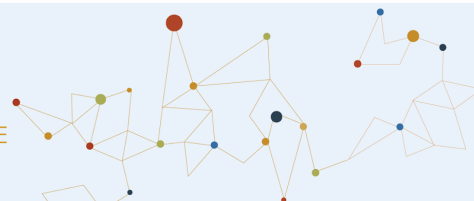
"Do we build sustainability or do we focus on profits?"

– Margaret Gordon

ECOLISE believes that our current, growth-centered economic system is unjust and unsustainable and that a system change is needed in order to transition to a regenerative model that promotes social justice and respect for planetary boundaries. This transition is already underway, evidenced by the many thousands of communities across Europe and beyond that are rebuilding their local economies by **putting people and planet before profit**<sup>8</sup>. A priority for ECOLISE is to help amplify this response; supporting these communities and also helping to create the right conditions for many more communities to become engaged and to help the process of redesigning the system from the bottom up. To further advance this process, ECOLISE is also reaching out to sister movements, in areas such as food (community supported agriculture), community energy, the solidarity economy, post-growth/degrowth and more in order to align strategies and build critical mass.

Creating the right conditions for transitioning to regenerative cultures means putting in place appropriate legislation and **enabling frameworks**. As an essential first step, it requires removing legislative barriers and, where appropriate, introducing laws and regulations that recognise and address emerging needs. However, legislation alone will not achieve the desired goals if communities do not get the information and support needed to benefit from such opportunities. Awareness raising, technical assistance, **accessible funding**, and support for networking and exchange are also key elements of an enabling framework. To create appropriate enabling legislation and support provision, **the roles of citizens and of community initiatives must be properly recognised and enabled**. In turn, participation in policy development processes must be facilitated and, crucially, actively supported.

<sup>8</sup> See: [http://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ECOLISE\\_BOOKLET\\_2018\\_LR.pdf](http://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ECOLISE_BOOKLET_2018_LR.pdf)



For ECOLISE, climate action must center the needs of the poorest and most marginalised, and prioritise and address the vast inequalities in consumption, wealth, and power.

While communities play their part, governments must act with urgency to implement the Paris Agreement and deliver on the SDGs with pathways that are compatible with equity, wellbeing, and societal and ecological regeneration.

We call on the Parties and the COP to establish a list of new enabling actions and additional financial resources, as well as new means of participatory programme implementation and a coordinated effort to support countries in multiplying community-led efforts to implement the Paris Agreement and SDGs.

The following set of questions<sup>9</sup> reflect ECOLISE’s approach to responding to climate breakdown and how we and our members are realising our vision.

## 1. Are our actions addressing poverty and strengthening human rights?

*“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”*

–Audre Lorde

The concept of climate justice takes into account the social injustices that a warming climate creates, and the historical and social responsibility of corporations and countries who benefited and still are from polluting and exploiting ecosystems. Climate breakdown has a compounding effect on the enjoyment of human rights for individuals and communities across the planet and exacerbates the impact of socio-economic inequalities and imbalanced power dynamics. Taking an **intersectional approach**<sup>10</sup> helps us understand and provide more integrated solutions to these compounding impacts. According to the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report<sup>11</sup> the climate crisis is already affecting temperatures, hydrologic conditions, ecosystem functioning, and agricultural productivity in many regions. Displacement is also an imminent prospect for some communities, such as those situated in the rapidly melting Arctic and low-lying coastal areas.

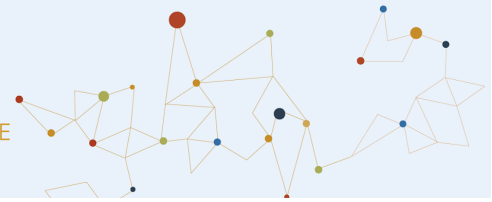
An intersectional approach brings together all that humanity has learned about how human rights and the environment interact. It looks at collective versus individual rights, minority versus majority, ethnicity, race, class, regional location, rural versus urban. It encompasses the

<sup>9</sup> CIDSE report, November 2017. *Climate Action for Common Good: Reflecting the principles of Laudato Si’ in our transformative response to the climate crisis*

<sup>10</sup> Intersectionality is a concept from feminist theory that “treats social positions as relational, and it makes visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it.” It is about “the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experimental – intersect in historically specific contexts”; Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989.

[Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#), University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.

<sup>11</sup> See IPCC AR5: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>



dimensions of the rights to life, health, food, water, sanitation, decent jobs and wages, property, private life, culture, and non-discrimination, among others. It gives citizens and indigenous and other communities defending their environment and lands the tools they need to defend their rights and build partnerships and alliances.

Communities are at the heart of the process of transformation, where direct partnerships between institutions and communities on the ground enable a relationship of respect and listening between institutions and communities. **CLIs focus on building a resilient, bio-diverse and sustainable environment with related socio-economic sustainable and equitable systems that also take into consideration cultural and traditional values.**

## 2. Does our ambition match the scale of the climate challenge?

“False solutions are politically possible because they are compromises that benefit no one, so how do we make the things we long for politically possible?”

– Adrienne Maree Brown

As the Paris Agreement moves into the implementation phase, amid growing acceptance of the need to raise levels of ambition, the potential role of communities is attracting increasing attention. A recent policy paper from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on Boosting climate actions by non-State actors<sup>12</sup> reflects this growing recognition at EU and global level. In February 2018, in a policy statement on climate diplomacy, the **Council of the EU for the first time acknowledged the critical role of local communities in addressing climate challenge.**

Understanding community-led action on climate change and sustainability is also important from a scientific perspective. CLIs are important agents in processes of sustainability transitions<sup>13</sup> - the shifts in interlinked social and technical configurations in key societal domains such as energy, water and transport. Improved understanding of CLIs - what they do, the effects and the factors that enable and assist these - can help inform wider questions of appropriate technological choices and governance methods for society-wide transitions to sustainability. CLIs are also important to the science and practice of social-ecological resilience<sup>14</sup>. Community-level innovations can increase adaptability and resilience<sup>15</sup>, in ways that both directly affect local-level prospects for navigating social, environmental and economic changes and affecting the prospects for wider transformation.

Numerous studies of ecovillages and other intentional communities based on shared ethics of sustainability show them to have per capita carbon and ecological footprints significantly lower than the corresponding national averages. In Danish ecovillages find they are 60 percent lower than the national average. Those of German ecovillages are 35 percent lower than the

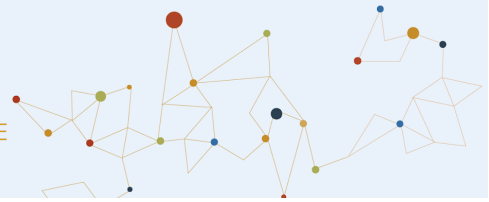
<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/boosting-climate-actions-non-state-actors>

<sup>13</sup> See [http://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php/Sustainability\\_transitions](http://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php/Sustainability_transitions)

<sup>14</sup> Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig. 2004. *Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social-ecological systems*. Ecology and Society 9(2): 5.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, K., & Westaway, E. (2011). *Agency, capacity, and resilience to environmental change: lessons from human development, well-being, and disasters*. Annual Review of Environment and Resources 36: 321-342





national average and Findhorn Ecovillage in Scotland has the lowest documented ecological footprint of any settlement in the industrial world<sup>16</sup>.

Transition groups are also achieving amazing results. The Transition Streets project in Totnes, England, involves 468 households, each saving at least 1.3 tons of carbon annually<sup>17</sup>.

From a national and international perspective in order to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C a rapid transition towards decarbonisation must start immediately. This transition will differ between countries given the context for the countries' economies, societies and national priorities. The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and Long-term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) of Parties must be based on scientific, historical and fair share<sup>18</sup> analysis for their contributions to be considered equitable and ambitious.

National and regional climate policies must go beyond mitigation efforts and their costs and aggregate economic benefits to address the impacts on different socio-economic groups and communities - the impact on basic needs, on the fundamental elements of wellbeing, and on rights to access services and opportunities. They should focus on existing solutions being modeled by local and indigenous communities and not fall into the trap of false solutions such as Bioenergy Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and geoengineering that are often presented as good political compromises to keep the status quo.

There is an urgent need for a new political narrative which reframes discussion of emission reductions, away from the current narrative of loss (a focus on what we will need to give up), to one focused on the exciting (albeit brief window of) opportunity that we have at this moment in human history **to rethink the purpose of our economy and to empower people to fulfil their natural desire to build the thriving, caring, resilient communities that are central to our individual and collective wellbeing.**

### 3. Does our response to climate breakdown consider the environment as a whole?

**“All of the circumstances relating to the ecological crisis—waste and toxins, food and agriculture, water—are changing the quality of life for communities today.”**

**— Adrienne Maree Brown**

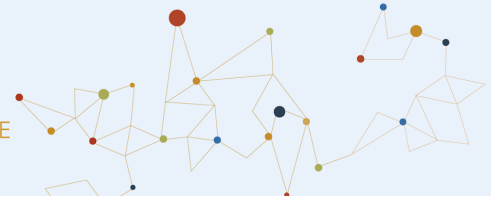
The climate crisis is inextricably linked to social and other environmental crises. In our efforts to limit climate breakdown we must avoid climate-myopic and carbon-centric environmental policies which will exacerbate the pressures on other planetary boundaries<sup>19</sup>. Instead **climate action must include investing in protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil, water, air and other natural systems.**

<sup>16</sup> Daly, M., 2017. *Quantifying the environmental impact of ecovillages and co-housing communities: a systematic literature review*. Local Environment 22, 1358–1377.

<sup>17</sup> Ward, F., A. Porter & M. Popham, 2011. *Transition Streets Final Report*. Totnes: Transition Town Totnes.

<sup>18</sup> <https://climateequityreference.org>

<sup>19</sup> CIDSE report, November 2017. *Climate Action for Common Good: Reflecting the principles of Laudato Si' in our transformative response to the climate crisis*



An example of community-led initiatives taking an integrated ecological approach is the **Living in Sustainable Villages** project run by the Global Ecovillage Network's (GEN) Germany branch, in cooperation with local authorities in Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Baden-Württemberg. Five established ecovillages (Sieben Linden, Lebensgarten Steyerberg, Gastwerke Escherode, Schloss Tonndorf and Schloss Tempelhof) work in partnership with conventional communities negatively impacted by factors such as falling soil fertility, drinking water quality, biodiversity and aesthetic qualities of the landscape due to agricultural intensification, disappearance of traditional forms of employment forcing people to commute long distances or migrate to urban areas in search of work, pressures on general services, increasing numbers of vacant houses and overall aging of the population. All of these are leading to declines in the social, cultural and economic quality of village life.

These ecovillages work with their partner villages to develop a **positive vision** of their community's future, including factors such as revitalisation of village social life, retention and/or immigration of young people, strengthening local and regional economies and increasing employment, sustainable agriculture (including smallholder production and local marketing, increasing local and regional self-reliance in key areas such as energy production, and the revival of cultural traditions. They will then collaborate on making these visions a reality, creating a village sustainability plan and fostering the linkages, learning and mutual support among people, places and organisations necessary to implement the plan. It is hoped that this will lead to development of a transferable methodology and build capacity to support other villages inspired by the project to do similar work<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4. Have our climate plans embedded dialogue, inclusive and democratic participation at all levels?

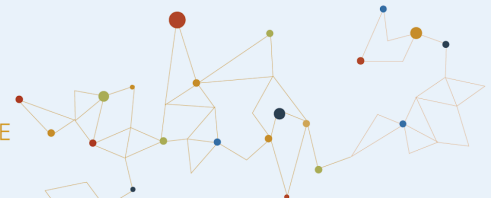
*“We live in a super interconnected world. This means that anything we do that improves how we are being with each other is of benefit to the entire planet.”*

– Adrienne Maree Brown

Climate breakdown impacts marginalised people and communities more significantly than others, on an international and local level. Globally, the countries least responsible for emissions and most impacted by systematic oppression, such as colonialism, are those now at the frontlines of climatic impacts. **Solutions developed without including the voices of those most impacted are unlikely to be fair or sustainable solutions.**

Locally, climatic changes and an extreme weather often impact people and communities who are marginalised in society more severely and for a longer period of time. This could be small scale farmers who are already being pushed out by industrial agriculture and are then hit by flooding or unpredictable weather. An intersectional approach showcases how people and communities

<sup>20</sup> [http://gen-deutschland.de/wp\\_gen/projekte/uba-projekt/](http://gen-deutschland.de/wp_gen/projekte/uba-projekt/)



with less access to support and resources - such as communities of colour<sup>21</sup>, working class<sup>22</sup>, children<sup>23</sup>, disabled<sup>24</sup>, senior citizens<sup>25</sup> and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) communities<sup>26</sup> - are most impacted by extreme weather events not only in the global south but also in richer nations. Groups at the margins such as indigenous communities that are often prevented from finding resources to build resilience and efficient solutions need to be included in decision-making processes. Beyond a show of solidarity, this requires challenging the power relationship and working together without a group dominating another based on class, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, cultural background or age.

The international community needs to deliver on its **climate finance and sustainable finance commitments** and replenish global instruments and funds created for the disbursement of these financial flows such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF).

**Climate action must be defined, designed, and undertaken in an inclusive, participatory, democratic way, with the active and empowered involvement of all stakeholders.** The process for developing national plans (i.e. NDCs and LT-LEDS') should engage the most affected communities and diverse constituencies, especially reverence for local and indigenous communities, their knowledge and their cultural traditions is crucial. Non State Actors including CLIs that are often at the forefront of developing and delivering solutions need to be included in the process of generating strategies that could form the basis of a society-wide dialogue on equitable and regenerative pathways.

<sup>21</sup> Clean Air Task Force for Clear the Air, 2002. *Air of Injustice: African Americans and Power Plant Pollution*; J. Andrew Hoerner and Nia Robinson, 2008. *A Climate of Change: African Americans, Global Warming, and a Just Climate Policy for the U.S.*, Environmental Justice & Climate Change Initiative; Environmental Justice and Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform, 2014. *Who's in Danger? Race, Poverty, and Chemical Disasters: A Democratic Analysis of Chemical Disaster Vulnerability Zones*; Liam Downey and Brian Hawkins, December 1, 2008. *Race, Income and Environmental Inequality in the United States*, SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, 51 (4): 759-781; Gregory A. Margida, 2017. *Race and Climate Change*. Climate Change Literacy and Education Social Justice, Energy, Economics; and the Paris Agreement Volume 2 Chapter 4, pp 41-47

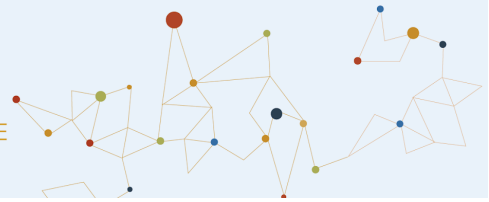
<sup>22</sup> S. Nazrul Islam and John Winkel, 2017. [Climate Change and Social Inequality](#). UNDESA

<sup>23</sup> Perry E. Sheffield and Philip J. Landrigan, 2011. *Global Climate Change and Children's Health: Threats and Strategies for Prevention*. *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

<sup>24</sup> Wolbring, G 2009. *A Culture of Neglect: Climate Discourse and Disabled People*. *M/C Journal*, 12(4)

<sup>25</sup> By David Filiberto, Elaine Wethington, Karl Pillemer, Nancy M. Wells, Mark Wysocki, and Jennifer True Parise, 2011. *Older people and Climate Change: Vulnerability and Health Effects*. *Generations, Journal for the American Society on Aging*.

<sup>26</sup> See [Left out and Behind: Fully incorporating gender into the climate discourse](#), August 2016



The stories we hear from communities experiencing systemic failures<sup>27</sup>, of which the climate crisis is just one symptom, are not just stories of struggle, but also inspiring stories of change. They provide the seeds of a new narrative which shows that creative options to the crisis exist, and must be shared.

## 5. Are we delivering an equitable and just transition?

“We need to build relationships in solidarity...we need to be protective of each other, each others wellbeing, each others healing processes and each others rest.”

— Adrienne Maree Brown

We need a just transition to a zero-carbon, climate resilient and regenerative economy and society. A just transition would mean the poor, the marginalised and those communities which are currently dependent on the fossil economy - such as coal workers - are not negatively impacted.

Permaculture is a vital tool in strategies for progressive reduction of the energy inputs necessary for economic activity while simultaneously increasing prosperity<sup>28</sup>. It challenges established macroeconomic theory and associated policy measures that assume provision of wealth and wellbeing to rely on continued economic growth, which has never genuinely been decoupled from increases in carbon emissions and other forms of environmental damage<sup>29</sup>. **By finding solutions based on the convergence of needs, ethics and available resources permaculture can support diverse, intersecting forms of low-carbon, zero-carbon and carbon-negative economic activity<sup>30</sup>.**

When self-organised community action is the main strategy for energy descent it increases social capital, providing a powerful basis for long-term adaptation to climate change. The **Transition Streets project** in Totnes, South West England, encouraged small groups of immediate neighbours to meet and share ideas and concerns about climate change. This achieved highly cost-effective reductions in household carbon emissions through behaviour change, energy efficiency measures, and renewable energy installation<sup>31</sup>. Independent evaluation by the UK Government suggested that intangible social benefits were equally important: by coming together in this way, neighbours got to know each other far better than they had done before<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Interconnect systemic oppressions such as supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism; Carastathis, Anna. 2016. *Interlocking Systems of Oppression*. 161-171. 10.1057/978-1-137-55425-3\_17

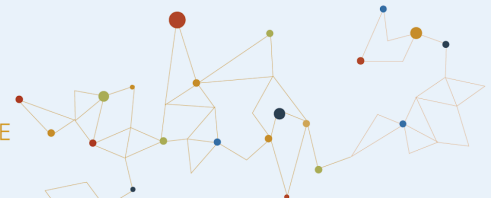
<sup>28</sup> Odum, H.T. & E.C. Odum, 2001. *A Prosperous Way Down*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

<sup>29</sup> Jackson, T., 2009. *Prosperity without Growth*. London: Earthscan.

<sup>30</sup> Roland, E. & G. Landau, 2013. *Regenerative Enterprise: Optimizing for Multi-Capital Abundance*. E-book v1.0.

<sup>31</sup> Ward, F., A. Porter & M. Popham, 2011. *Transition Streets Final Report*. Totnes: Transition Town Totnes.

<sup>32</sup> Beetham, H., 2011. *Social Impacts of Transition Together*. Report prepared on behalf of Transition Town Totnes



Social capital of this type is an important resource for climate change adaptation, supporting people's ability to cooperate in the face of any crisis.

Transition<sup>33</sup> has been successful in improving conditions in very poor areas, where it provides a model for responses to economic hardship that may arise from climate change. **Brasilândia**, a very low income suburb in São Paulo, Brazil, has hosted a Transition Initiative since 2010<sup>34</sup>. In BEM São Paulo, a city-wide survey of neighbourhoods conducted since 2009, shows steady improvements in all areas of Transición Brasilândia's work, including frequency of cultural events, standards of healthcare, and quality of community relations and civic responsibility. Indices of participation in voluntary activity, awareness of environmental impacts of consumer goods, level of community ownership, and peaceful co-existence of different religious groups, have all risen to the highest in the city<sup>35</sup>.

6. Do our plans and solutions acknowledge and support the personal and inner dimensions of addressing the climate crisis?

*“We are all in the most intimate direct relationships with the source of all knowledge through our living loving breath, bodies and spirit.”*

– Hadar Cohen

Extraordinary transformation is needed for effective climate action. It is needed at social, economic, technological and cultural level, but also at the personal and inner level. Responding to climate breakdown will require a global mobilisation, demanding our political attention, material resources, personal diligence, spiritual commitment and global solidarity<sup>36</sup>.

Personal betterment will lead to building social capital and trust, lead to mutual concern and solidarity, and will benefit humanity as a whole<sup>37</sup>. Impacts of climate breakdown are more than physical. They can be psychological<sup>38</sup> and deeply emotional as well, which can lead to inwardly focused responses that contribute to the isolating of individuals and fracturing of communities. Building mutually respectful and lasting relationships is key for cultivating a **culture of care**<sup>39</sup>.

Cultivating this culture of care will require us and others to acknowledge and address our own power and privilege and actively find ways to welcome, listen and respond to marginalised voices; exploring how to work creatively and effectively with emergence and complexity; bring in new and unexpected collaborators, giving us access to new audiences and new perspectives;

<sup>33</sup> See [wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php/Transition](http://wiki.ecolise.eu/index.php/Transition)

<sup>34</sup> Hopkins, R., 2013. *The Power of Just Doing Stuff*. Cambridge: UIT/Green Books. Pp. 113-4.

<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br/portal/irbem>

<sup>36</sup> Catholic Church, and Sean McDonagh. 2016. *On care for our common home: the encyclical of Pope Francis on the environment, Laudato Si'*.

<sup>37</sup> Bridger, J. C. and Luloff, A. E. (2001). *Building the Sustainable Community: Is Social Capital the Answer?* Sociological Inquiry, 71(4). 458–472. DOI:10.1111/j.1475-682X.2001.tb01127.

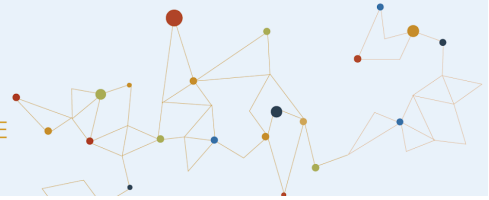
<sup>38</sup> See <https://grist.org/article/climate-grief-un-ipcc-report/>

<sup>39</sup> See <https://medium.com/@meelaya/we-need-a-culture-of-care-to-stop-climate-breakdown-91f739afbd39>

# ECOLISE



EUROPEAN NETWORK  
FOR COMMUNITY-LED  
INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND SUSTAINABILITY



support our ongoing inquiry around how to get better at collaborating across difference; and place value on, and help us and others to develop, the inner resilience so needed in these times.

*“Sometimes [we] feel immense belonging, an interconnectedness so profound that [we] know everything, [we] just know.*

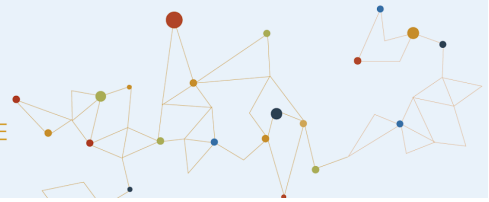
*Other times [we] feel overwhelmingly alone - lonely, or, more and more often, at peace in the solitude and mystery; a star that cannot feel the constellation [we’ve] been clustered into, just the darkness.*

*Joy is possible in each place, and in the transitions.”*

— Adrienne Maree Brown<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Author of [Emergent strategy : shaping change, changing worlds](#), 2017. AK Press



## Examples of Stories from across the EU

### Food Communities

Todmorden, UK: The Incredible Edible community food growing project, which began in 2007, increased community cohesion and connectivity, created spin-off businesses and heightened understanding of sustainability. An independent 'social return on investment' evaluation conservatively estimated that the project realised direct and indirect benefits to the community of a total value equivalent to over five times that invested in the project.

Madrid, Spain: Red de Huertos Urbanos Comunitarios de Madrid (RED), the city's community gardens network, shows how food production can be the basis of transformative community initiatives. In 2018 it included 60 neighbourhood projects. The network has been collaborating with local municipalities since 2014 and its members have become an important driving force for new initiatives on citizen participation, food production, agroecology, reimagining the city and reinvigoration of urban social relationships through shared learning and collective action.

### Energy Communities

Enercoop is France's only cooperative supplier of 100% renewable electricity. Founded in 2005, it now has ten regional cooperatives and 171 producers with a total capacity of 129 MW, who are producing 245 GWh annually for 58 000 consumers. The cooperatives allow members to engage in energy solutions specific to their region. They support their local renewable energy producers, encourage local energy efficiency measures and engage in public environmental debate.

Coopérnico is a renewable energy co-operative (RESCoop) in Portugal, founded in 2013, that harnesses solar power for the benefit of the local community. It now has 1038 members, investments of over €800,000 and 561 contracts. The cooperative rents roof-space for its PV panels from socially-minded institutions, providing them with extra income.

### Sustainable mobility

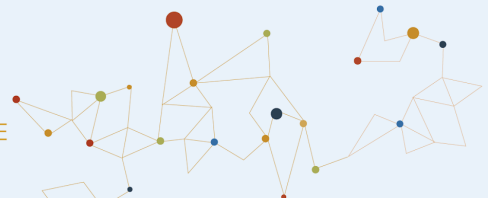
Rezo Pouce is an example of a solidarity enterprise in the field of transportation. It's a hitchhiking service, first developed in the Tarn et Garonne and Haute Garonne regions of France in 2010. It is similar to car-sharing, but focuses mainly on short journeys, organised at short notice. The service is a social enterprise cooperative, which brings together different groups with an interest in mobility: local authorities, transport operators, associations, foundations, users and employees. Based on the success of the scheme, the concept is now being replicated in many other parts of France. [rezopouce.fr](http://rezopouce.fr)

### Regenerative Communities

#### Sicilia Integra, Italy

Sicilia Integra is an educational and social initiative developed by Gaia Education and the University of Catania in partnership with various local migrant welcome centres, organic farmers' cooperatives and European ethical organic food companies. An academic evaluation of the project identified it as an example of best practice in strengthening sustainable agriculture and improving migrant integration in Sicily, with potential for adoption in countries experiencing high levels of labour immigration and/or dependent on migrant labour for agricultural production.

#### AndelsTanken Langelan, Denmark



This sister project to Sicilia Integra aims to promote sustainable regional development on the island of Langeland via reinvigoration of the Danish tradition of cooperative enterprise in areas such as agroforestry, sustainable agriculture and education. An educational programme initiated in 2016 targeted local unemployed people, including a number of Eritrean refugees, who have since found employment in a local agroforestry business. Research on AndelsTanken Langelan and Sicilia Integra identified them as key examples of initiatives that can help support inclusive transitions to sustainability.

### **Collaboration between communities and local authorities**

Vauban, Germany: A unique top-down and bottom-up planning process took place in this new city district, involving the city council, the city administration and representatives of the 6000 residents, including a cluster of co-housing initiatives. Achieving the goal of building a participatory, ecological neighbourhood was made easier by the city council's recognition of the 'Forum Vauban' citizen initiative.

Frome, UK: Since 2015, the local town council has been under the control of Independents for Frome, a group that emerged from the local Transition initiative and rejects party politics in favour of an inclusive form of local democracy based on values of participation and sustainability. Their experience forms the basis of the 'Flatpack Democracy' model, which has been adopted in a number of towns elsewhere in the UK and several other countries.

Brussels, Belgium: Vilco is an action-research project exploring how community-led initiatives and municipalities can better cooperate in order to strengthen ecologically sustainable, local resilience.

For more information please consult the [ECOLISE website](http://www.ecolise.eu)<sup>41</sup> and [2018 Booklet](#)<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> See [www.ecolise.eu](http://www.ecolise.eu)

<sup>42</sup> See [https://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ECOLISE\\_BOOKLET\\_2018\\_LR.pdf](https://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ECOLISE_BOOKLET_2018_LR.pdf)