

Transformative Social Innovation and New Economies

Flor Avelino

DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Worldwide we see critiques of current economic and institutional arrangements emerging. These critiques are translated into action by initiatives promoting new ways of doing, thinking and organizing. In TRANSIT, an ongoing research project on transformative social innovation, we study 20 translocal social innovation networks in both Europe and Latin America. We conceptualise social innovation as changes in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organizing, knowing and framing. This also involves new approaches to the economy. All sorts of new economy concepts arise; green, communal, collaborative, sharing, inclusive, solidarity, social, circular and several others. Based on a comparison of social innovation networks and initiatives – such as ecovillages, Transition Towns, Impact Hub, Ashoka, RIPESS and several others – we identified four strands of alternative economy narratives: 1) degrowth and localization, 2) collaborative economy, 3) solidarity economy and 4) social entrepreneurship. In this lecture, dr. Flor Avelino shares insights on how different translocal initiatives across Europe question mainstream economy, and existing institutional constellations by creating narratives of change and shaping new social relations. We discuss the transformative ambitions and potential of these initiatives and explore their role in enabling transformative change towards a sustainable future.