



Inter-Agency Task Force on
Social and Solidarity Economy

More than monitoring: developing impact measures for transformative social enterprise

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Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for Social and Solidarity Economy?

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Abstract

Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 involves transformational change in the business of business, and social enterprises can lead the way in such change. We studied *Cultivate*, one such social enterprise in Christchurch, New Zealand, a city still recovering from the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes. Cultivate works with vulnerable youth to transform donated compost into garden vegetables for local restaurants and businesses. Cultivate's objectives align with SDG concerns with poverty and hunger (1 & 2), social protection (3 & 4), and sustainable human settlements (6 & 11). Like many grant-supported organisations, Cultivate is required to track and measure its progress. Given the organisation's holistic objectives, however, adequately accounting for its impact reporting is not straightforward. Our action research project engaged Cultivate staff and youth-workers to generate meaningful ways of measuring impact. Elaborating the Community Economy Return on Investment tool (CEROI), we explore how participatory audit processes can capture impacts on individuals, organisations, and the wider community in ways that extend capacities to act collectively. We conclude that Cultivate and social enterprises like it offer insights regarding how to align values and practices, commercial activity and wellbeing in ways that accrue to individuals, organisations and the broader civic-community.

Keywords

Urban agriculture, disaster recovery, youth, metrics, social transformation

Bio

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attempt to harness the truism that organisations often change their behaviour to match the metrics by which they are judged. If, as they say in the work-a-day world of business, “what gets measured is what gets managed”, then what follows is that changing what gets measured, and ultimately valued, can be a potent intervention in the behaviour of individuals, public and private organisations, and even entire societies. However, as many scholars have pointed out, because metrics are developed in a cultural context, reflecting and reproducing shared values, they seldom provide an impetus for truly transformative change that shifts the paradigm beyond the “norm and order” of dominant values (Merry and Conley 2011, Bauman 1997).

And yet transformation is precisely what the seventeen SDGs describe: a profound paradigm-shift in the dominant cultural values and in economic, ecological, and political processes that shape and reproduce our shared world. Two questions arise for us: How do we measure progress when the goal is transformation of the very society that is being measured? Given the power of metrics, how might a different measure of progress help us find our way towards what late eco-philosopher Val Plumwood termed a new “mode of humanity” (Plumwood 2007)?

If the aim of the SDGs can be understood as enacting a new mode of humanity, then what holds the old mode in place becomes a crucial enquiry. A widely held view is that it is the values and practices of private sector enterprise that play a large role in reproducing business as usual—a world where economic growth, in particular the growth of private sector for-profit enterprise, is held to be the fount of wellbeing. Belief in economic growth as the only measure that matters perpetuates the powerful rationale for business as usual (BaU): from national scale decisions about corporate tax rates, to the moral defence of globalization, free-trade, and competitive markets. The past half century of deepening economic inequality and ecological degradation make it clear that “growth” is in fact a threat not just to our general wellbeing, but also to our shared survival (Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003, Raworth 2017, Banerjee 2008). Thus, we are left with a dilemma: given the ambitious goals of the SDGs and the short-time frame of 2030 for their realization, it is impossible to exclude enterprise from the task. And yet implementing the SDGs requires a thorough rethink of the role and purpose of all business—from private for-profit organisations to various other forms of enterprise (not-for profits, for purpose, social and solidarity enterprise etc.). The sheer proliferation of terms that describe alternative enterprise forms and economies, deployed in the social and solidarity economy movements and elsewhere, is evidence that we are not alone in coming to this conclusion. But the question for us becomes how do new forms of business enable new modes of humanity? The answer, in our view, is central to reaching SDG targets.

A New Mode of Humanity requires a New Mode of Business: Social and Solidarity Economy and Transformation

The task before us is not an easy one. The principal challenge for realising the SDGs will be one of committing to the progressive elaboration of this “new mode of humanity,” while not slipping unaware back into the reproduction of the old BaU mode. We need look only at the past half century of efforts at the local, global and national scale to see how transformational agendas can easily be enrolled into re-inscribing norm and order. For example, the term “sustainability” was originally intended to underscore the limits to growth, or even capitalism itself. Its present meaning is now far removed from this, and for many it is understood as describing a set of efficient practices and reporting requirements presumed to be in-line with commercial viability (Valenzuela and Böhm 2017). Sustainability is now joined by other ideas such as the closed-loop or circular economy—the former tends to focus attention on purely technological fixes that promise ecological efficiency, while the latter is tied to an imaginary where economic growth is “de-coupled” from negative environmental externalities (Fletcher and Rammelt 2017, Valenzuela and Böhm 2017). Our concern is that the SDGs could readily furnish us with yet another vocabulary of half-measures that do not foster transformation-work, but only reproduce business as usual.

A transformative agenda is hard to hold on to. The title of a recently commissioned benchmark report from PWC serves to illustrate this point — “From promise to reality: Does business really care

about the SDGs? And what needs to happen to turn words into action” (Scott 2018). In this report, PWC surveyed 792 corporations around the world, with a combined annual turnover of more than \$12 trillion USD. On the one hand they found that 72% of the businesses they surveyed mentioned the SDGs in their annual reporting. On the other hand, it seems like the engagement is highly selective: Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8), Climate Action (SDG13) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG12) are frequently mentioned while “Life Below Water (SDG14) ranks last in corporate priorities” and “Zero Hunger (SDG2) and No Poverty (SDG1) also barely register with companies as SDG priorities.” (Scott 2018, 12) This unevenness is disturbing given, as the report author notes, all 17 SDG goals are integrally connected: for example, there is no effective response to climate change without care and attention to life below water. The authors offer a few possible explanations: further education might be needed in relation to some goals (SDG14), while other goals such as (SDG1 and 2) are perceived to be the responsibility of the state. Finally, the report notes that a key challenge involves developing robust measurement and tracking against the SDGs, which does not appear to be happening effectively at present.

Thus it is not surprising that the question, “does business really care?” hangs in the air. What the PWC report underscores is the need for a more compelling shared imagination about how social and ecological concerns might be integrated, on an equal footing with economic viability, into enterprise activities. As Kate Raworth (2017) points out, new ways of measuring and representing economies—both visual and descriptive—can play a powerful role in strengthening a new economic imaginary. To that we would add that the enterprise-context in which these new measures emerge can also play an important role. Social and solidarity economy based enterprises are described as value-oriented-businesses: enterprises where values are put to work (Bruni and Smerilli 2014). What we will refer to here as social enterprise (for the sake of simplicity) is but one enterprise type among a diverse area of economic forms (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013b) The proposition we explore in this short paper is that social and solidarity economy enterprises provide an alternative context for rethinking the role of business, and how to measure success in ways that has implications for *all types of enterprise, capitalist and non-capitalist alike*. Reaching SDG goals cannot be left to states. But nor should their realisation be seen as solely the responsibility of change oriented social and solidarity economy enterprises. Rather, the idea here is that the measure of success (or impact) developed, could in turn play a role in re-writing the social licence for the business of business. In our view, this move to reposition the role of enterprise in meeting the SDGs is essential for their realisation.

In this paper we recount our ongoing engagement with a social enterprise, Cultivate, located in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. Christchurch is a community still recovering from a series of devastating earthquakes that occurred in 2010 and 2011. Cultivate was one among a number of organisations that emerged in the aftermath of these earthquakes, taking up the opportunity to use vacated central city land for particular purposes. Cultivate’s aims are multiple—food production, youth employment, the creation of civic space, and to act as a model for a different city future. In the course of our engagement we have met with Cultivate staff, youth and volunteers in order to generate a better understanding of how the organization attempts to align investments of time, money, and collective practice with what the organisation values. Our ongoing conversations with those involved at Cultivate have informed our efforts to develop a new kind of impact measurement that, we hope, communicates more clearly the impact of this particular social enterprises’ efforts. In so doing, we also hope to trace the broad outlines of a new relationship between private sector efforts and the individuals and institutions that comprise the broader civic community. Our contention here is essentially to reverse engineer the logic that informs the SDGs: to align a new measure of impact and a new mode of business in service of a new mode of humanity. In our view, this change will only be effective if we see in social enterprise a template for rewriting the social-licence for all enterprise types, moving away from a simple focus on economic viability and towards a meaningful contribution to social and ecological vitality.

In the sections that follow we recount the history of Cultivate and then explain a collaborative project where we worked with them to generate new approaches to thinking about how we measure success and impact. In this project we elaborated on an impact tool, the Community Economy Return on Investment (CEROI), that had been developed previously (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013b). (See (Dombroski 2018, 2019) for a full report on how this process unfolded.) Our co-productive approach involved thinking with Cultivate in the broadest possible terms about how individuals, other organisations and the broader community invest in organisations like Cultivate. Using

tools from contemporary pedagogy we worked with the organisation to describe its understanding of success, specifically in terms of what returns accrue to individual's working at Cultivate ('Cultivators'), Cultivate the organisation, and the broader civic community. In doing this we reposition Cultivate, the enterprise, as part of what Gibson-Graham (Gibson-Graham 2006) describe as a 'community economy', that is an economy that foregrounds and affirms our shared interdependence. Generalising from this, we begin to re-imagine the role that the social enterprises might play in helping to realise the SDGs and how we might measure progress along the way.

Cultivate, Christchurch in the Aftermath of the Quake

Social enterprises have proliferated in post-earthquake Christchurch and other parts of New Zealand in recent years, seeking to create ethical social and environmental returns on investment, rather than just profit for shareholders. Cultivate is one such social enterprise and uses available post-earthquake resources, such as lots left vacant when damaged buildings were torn down, to produce vegetables and promote social wellbeing in Christchurch. Cultivate was started by an ecologist and a social worker who wanted to create an environment where youth could learn new skills through meaningful work.

Cultivate currently operates two urban farms at different sites in Christchurch (a city centre location in Peterborough Street and a suburban location in Halswell Road) and employs administrative, farm, and social work staff. The city centre farm is situated on privately owned earthquake-cleared 'waste' land which is leased on a 30-day rolling cycle to the organisation. Cultivate collects green waste in Christchurch's inner-city, using an electric bicycle and trailer to pick up green bins in a part of the city where the council green waste collection is not available. This green waste is used as a resource to literally create the ground on which the enterprise is built, through composting, worm farming, and soil build up. Vegetables grown on the farms are then sold to local businesses. Much of the equipment and infrastructure on the farms is made from recycled materials, including composting toilets, recycled sheds from earthquake-demolished homes, and repurposed containers, kitchen sinks, barbecues, pallets and more. The youth interns who work on the farms come from a variety of backgrounds and participate for different reasons; some have connections to social welfare and the justice system, while others are looking for a supportive environment to prepare themselves for life beyond school. Volunteers from the wider Christchurch community and beyond also regularly work on the farms.

Cultivate offers a form of collective non-stigmatising mental health care which is significant given traditional mental health services in Canterbury and elsewhere in New Zealand are struggling to meet demand. While the post-quake rebuild has kept employment in Christchurch at high levels and provided employment opportunities for many young people (Johnson 2016, Ministry of Business 2017), the rebuild process is beginning to wind down and youth unemployment rates are starting to rise (Ministry of Business 2017). Increased incidence of serious mental illness is also evident across a variety of groups, alongside a general increase in levels of mental distress ('subclinical' symptoms) and is significantly worse in Canterbury than elsewhere in the country (Fergusson et al. 2014, Spittlehouse et al. 2014). By collectivising some of the care for the young people of Canterbury through participation in innovative social enterprise, Cultivate works to expand and amplify the capacity of the somewhat stretched Christchurch community. Cultivate draws on mixed resources to gather what is needed to provide this care, including the time and energy of its staff, funding from various agencies and supporters, and the donated land and other material resources.

For each of these supporters and funders, Cultivate appears to be worth investing in because it is producing some form of value beyond what would normally be considered in a strictly financial return on investment calculation. How do we make sense of these returns? How do organisations like Cultivate communicate the value of what they do, not just to funders, but to a broader community? And in making this visible to a broader community how might we re-imagine the role and purpose of enterprise in ways that will allow communities around the world to realise the SDGs?

Measuring Progress as a Means for Transformation

Cultivate, like many enterprises operating in the context of the social and solidarity economy, receives support from philanthropic organisations as well as the state (in this case, through the New Zealand Ministry for Social Development). Indeed, just as social enterprises have come to occupy an important place in the development of social and solidarity economies over the past three decades, there has been a growing emphasis on developing appropriate metrics for measuring their performance. Funding organisations and social impact investors frequently require impact reporting to assure that the funds invested generate the desired outcomes. All too frequently these reporting requirements become an unwitting way in which the BaU-mode of humanity creeps back into organisations like Cultivate that have transformative motivations. One simple way in which this happens is that the reporting requirements fall entirely upon the organisations, taking up limited time and resources in order to legitimate efforts or secure funding. Loh & Shear (2015) argue that these onerous reporting requirements have become a particularly damaging part of the non-profit industrial complex. Another way is when impact-investors bring the same mentality to social enterprise that predominates in the for-profit corporate sector (Anderson and Dees 2006). The danger here is that private sector imperatives like cost-containment, staff-rationalisation or even impact-reporting requirements may serve to interrupt or even undermine the caring relationships or convivial practices crucial to success.

In the course of an action research project funded by New Zealand's National Science Challenge 11 (see <http://www.buildingbetter.nz/>), our work with Cultivate offered us an opportunity to elaborate upon an impact assessment tool: the Community Economy Return on Investment (CEROI) tool, initially described in *Take Back the Economy* (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013b). In the course of developing the CEROI tool, we sought to combine the best elements from three approaches to impact measurement: Social Return on Investment (SROI), Social Audit Accounting (SAA), and Development Impact Indicators (DII). Each of these can be summarised:

- SROI is an adaptation of the cost-benefit-analysis methods commonly used in the for-profit and public sectors. Its purpose is to measure the value of the benefits generated relative to the costs of achieving those benefits; and to do this consideration of social and ecological value is 'translated' into monetised terms by assigning 'proxy' values to inputs and outputs that may otherwise be invisible, using a process of market price substitution (Arvidson et al. 2013).
- SAA was developed with and for the not-for-profit sector (social enterprises, community organisations and the like) and takes as its starting point that 'proving and improving' organisational performance and effectiveness is the way to grow mission impact. As a result, the focus is on the enterprise itself – from a holistic perspective that encompasses financial, environmental and social dimensions (McNeill 2011).
- DIIs have emerged out of monitoring and evaluation practices (M&E) that tend to involve describing project objectives then coming up with measurable indicators. The SDGs themselves are an example of this approach. Recent research into M&E has argued that the process of developing monitoring frameworks and indicators should be undertaken with the affected community (Van Ongevalle, Huyse, and Van Petegem 2014).

The CEROI developed out of diverse economies scholarship to capture and represent how organisations like Cultivate could be evaluated. Our aspiration in developing this metric is to try and take the best from each of these impact accounting frameworks. Like SROI, CEROI intends to capture the flows of matter, energy, labour, monetary and non-monetary investment in a place or process, and the benefits that come from this investment. However, unlike SROI, CEROI seeks to represent this value in a more holistic way than just market price substitution. Like SAA, CEROI attempts to generate shared values as a way of clarifying what is being invested in, and to frame the hoped-for returns. However, unlike SAA, CEROI emphasises how investments made in one context or organisation might generate benefits that accrue to a broader community, rather than just improve the performance of the organisation in focus. Like DIIs, CEROI attempts to develop meaningful context specific indicators. What we would like to ensure with CEROI is that the findings in one context can be shared with others elsewhere in a spirit of co-learning.

In this way CEROI attempts to consider the interdependent relationships that allow individuals to survive well; and how, in turn, this capacity is connected to relationships with other people and organisations, and their relationship with places and ecological processes upon which shared-life

depends, as part of what Gibson-Graham (2006) call the community economy. CEROI builds on six shared ethical-concerns that provide the contours of the theory of community economy. In Table 1 we have grouped these concerns together to reflect processes and investments at the individual human scale (individual Cultivators), at the collective organisational scale (Cultivate), and at the wider community scale (Christchurch and beyond).

Table 1: Six Shared Concerns for Taking Back the Economy for People and Planet

Summary of shared concern	Application to Cultivate
<p>1. <i>Surviving together well and equitably</i></p> <p>What do we really need to live healthy lives both material and psychically? How do we take other people and the planet into account when determining what is necessary for a healthy life? How do we survive well?</p>	<p>Individual scale:</p> <p>What attributes does a successful graduate from the Cultivate 'program' have?</p> <p>What would be the attributes of a care-full Cultivator (both staff and interns)?</p>
<p>2. <i>Consuming sustainably</i></p> <p>What materials and energy do we use in the process of surviving well? What do we consume?</p>	
<p>3. <i>Encountering others in ways that support their well-being as well as ours</i></p> <p>What types of relationship do we have with the people and environments that enable us to survive well? How do we encounter others as we seek to survive well?</p>	<p>Organisational scale:</p> <p>What would a thriving Cultivate look like organisationally, relationally, financially, environmentally?</p>
<p>4. <i>Distributing surplus to enrich social and environmental health</i></p> <p>What do we do with what is left over after we've met our survival needs? How do we make decisions about this excess? How do we distribute surplus?</p>	
<p>5. <i>Caring for common-wealth</i></p> <p>How do we maintain, restore and replenish the gifts of nature and intellect that all humans rely on? How do we care (maintain, replenish, grow) for our (natural and cultural) commons?</p>	<p>Wider community scale:</p> <p>What would the broader Christchurch community look like if Cultivate and all the Cultivators were at their best?</p>
<p>6. <i>Investing our wealth in future generations</i></p> <p>How do we store and use our surplus and savings so that people and planet are supported and sustained? How do we invest in the future?</p>	<p>How do Cultivators and supporters measure and evaluate what is working well and what to invest in to secure a different more equitable, sustainable future?</p>

Source: Authors, based on key concerns identified in (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013a)

In the context of elaborating the CEROI we worked with Cultivate staff, youth-workers, and community members across a number of steps. These steps were intended to clarify what values motivate cultivators (individuals), Cultivate (organisational), and the Christchurch community, as well as how these values translate into practices. The net effect was to **expand** what was visible as an investment into Cultivate's success. The next step involved **including** Cultivators and other stakeholders in thinking carefully about what counts as success (specifically what the return is to

individuals, the organisation and the broader community when organisations like Cultivate thrive). The last step involved visually **communicating** how Cultivate, and enterprises like it, contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, organizations, and broader civic communities. This approach is fairly simple and is not resource intensive, and could therefore be applied relatively easily to other organisations and contexts in the pursuit of realising the SDGs. Below, we review this approach to rethinking impact.

CEROI Expanding What Counts as Investment, Aligning Value and Practice

The first step was a series of in-depth interviews with people involved with the organisation. We then analysed their narratives to identify the values people shared, *and* the practices they engaged in that helped them achieve these values. We organised a workshop with Cultivate’s staff members where we presented back to them common *values* that were expressed through their interviews. Our shared understanding was that organisational values were distinct from more nebulous ideals. An organisation might aspire to an ideal like ‘organisational diversity’, or ‘inclusion’ but, as we are treating it here, these things only become values when they are connected to practices aimed at actualization. Value-practices, a term we borrow from Daskalaki *et al* (2018), describes how individuals, the broader community and the organisation itself invest in Cultivate as a shared enterprise.



Figure 1: Collectively identifying value-practices

What was crucially important to the development of CEROI as a tool for both measuring and enacting a different approach to enterprise was that the identified value-practices came from participants themselves. What this co-production approach afforded was a more comprehensive understanding of what investments contributed to Cultivate’s success, as well as potentially innovative approaches that could be adopted by other organisations. These ranged from nuanced discussion of how Cultivate staff and youth engaged in self-care or dealt with inter-personal conflict, to how volunteer energies were accommodated. Likewise others recounted Cultivate’s innovative approach to finance and connecting to broader community. Cultivate issued “broccoli bonds,” a fundraiser where community investors helped to capitalise the organisation in exchange for a return (e.g. a share of the harvest or help from Cultivate youth interns in their own gardens).

CEROI, Including Others in Determining What Success Looks Like

Step two involved working with Cultivate to determine what a success might look like: specifically, how to measure and demonstrate a holistic ‘return on investment’ which includes a non-numerical way of assessing and representing each of the identified values. In developing our co-productive approach, we leveraged our familiarity with a profound shift in assessment that has taken place in education. In recent years, education has moved from test scores based on performance in comparison to others, to describing standards and assessing to what degree people meet those standards (see for instance (Rust, Price, and O’DONOVAN 2003). This involves educators being clear about what the ‘learning outcomes’ of any exercise are, and being clear about what it looks like when these outcomes have been achieved. Some educators co-construct the assessment criteria with their students,

asking them what they think it might look like to achieve the learning outcomes. We conducted a similar exercise with Cultivate Staff, youth participants and with members of the broader community focused around three questions:

- What attributes does a good worker from Cultivate have? What would be the behaviours of a care-full Cultivator (both staff and youth interns)?
- What would a thriving Cultivate look like organisationally, relationally, financially, environmentally?
- What would the broader Christchurch community look like if Cultivate and all the Cultivators were at their best?

In relation to each of these questions, we asked interviewees to elaborate their criteria for success, failure as well as gradations between the two extremes, all as a basis for assessing whether or not Cultivate was putting into practice what it valued as well as whether or not these values produced results worthy of these investments. In education, assessment matrixes are used to justify the assignment of a grade-ranking. In relation to Cultivate we were inspired by the plants themselves to produce a different set of criteria: Mature, Thriving, Growing, and Wilting. In the course of conversation with interviewees, we explored what it looks like when a goal is reached (mature), what it looks like when things are nearing fruition (thriving), areas where progress is made but where there is a need for further nourishing (growing), and finally what it looks like when an organisation is failing altogether (wilting). Below in Table 2 is a partial description of the matrix criteria we arrived at together.

Table 2 Co-produced Assessment Table

Criteria	Cultivators (individuals)	Cultivate (organisation)	Christchurch (community)
Mature	Self-aware, able to effectively care for and manage self and others; able to articulate emotional and physical needs and move to have them met in a healthy way; can focus on and complete tasks unsupervised	Able to listen deeply; effectively models what it means to be in a healthy community through attunement to the needs of youth workers, volunteers, cultivators, customers, investors and other stakeholders	Has the resources and community endorsement to lead the way environmentally; is an integral part of the connected local and organic food community puzzle; increasing carbon sequestration; authentic and reciprocal relationship with community and funders
Thriving	Self-aware, able to care for and manage self and others; able to articulate emotional and physical needs; can focus on an complete tasks; empowered to act in the world	Able to listen, often modelling what it means to be in a healthy community through attunement to the needs of youth workers, volunteers, cultivators, customers, investors and other stakeholders; maintains clear behavioural expectations and processes	Developing the resources and community endorsement to lead the way environmentally; building the capacity to be a part of the connected local and organic food community puzzle
Growing	Developing Self-awareness and can sometimes articulate emotional and physical needs; completes some tasks; has a developing sense of personal agency; developing an appreciation for social and environmental issues	Some capacity to listen and model what it means to be in a healthy community; developing a clear behavioural expectations and processes to ensure everyone stays physically and emotionally safe; developing the capacity to care for and respond to some concerns	Identifying some resources and building community endorsement; developing connections with the local organic food community; developing carbon sequestration practices
Wilting	Not yet listening or reflecting on behaviour, not yet articulating emotional and physical needs; not yet able to care for or respond to others; not yet completing tasks.	Limited or no capacity to listen; not yet able to model what it means to be in a healthy community; no clear behavioural expectations and processes to ensure everyone stays physically and emotionally safe; not yet able to care for and balance multiple concerns	Limited resourcing and little community support; undeveloped connections with local and organic food community; reducing carbon sequestration; tick-box bureaucratic relationships

The development of the indicators allows us to articulate what a mature (or thriving, growing or wilting) Cultivator, Cultivate, and Cultivate land and community might look like. If the initial phase of identifying value-practices invested in Cultivate, the co-development of the matrix allows us to assess what “returns” have accrued to Cultivators, Cultivate and the community of Christchurch. Our efforts to use the tool to assess Cultivate was hampered by the fact that most of the young people involved in

developing it had moved on and the next generation of youth had only just begun working with Cultivate. This suggests to us that the timing of the assessment exercise is crucial. Nevertheless, we gained valuable insights about how this assessment exercise could be further developed and applied elsewhere. In our view, this exercise in co-generating assessment criteria may be applied to other organisations, though the criteria we have come up with are uniquely suited to Cultivate. While the Matrix is helpful for gaining clarity on the relationship between investment and returns, it does not communicate quickly and clearly to potential or current stakeholders what benefits may be realised as a result of their investment. In our ongoing work with Cultivate and designers we have been experimenting with ways of visually communicating the CEROI evaluation tool.

CEROI, Communicating with Others: New Enterprises and New Modes of Humanity

In step one we identified how values are invested into practices that allow Cultivate to reach goals for youth-participants, the organisation and the Christchurch community. In step two, we co-produced assessment criteria working with others to specify what success, failure and progress look like. Our goal here is not simply the measurement of impact but, in the spirit of the community economy, to use the measure to reshape the conditions of our shared interdependence. In this context, impact metrics are recast as something that, in the first instance, facilitates communication between Cultivate staff, participating youth, and the broader community. This re-purposing of an impact measure is not unprecedented. McNeill (2011) recounts how simple graphics have been used in the UK’s NHS to facilitate a conversation between health care patients and providers.

Cultivate’s situation is more complicated in that the goals for youth-cultivators, Cultivate the organisation and goals for the broader community are often aligned but are also distinct. At the moment we are in the process of developing graphics that will be useful in representing the inter-related, yet distinct goals of the organisation. A graphic artist working with us developed the following visual as a depiction that attempted to capture these singular-yet-interconnected outcomes (see figure 2).



Figure 2 CEROI Communicative Info-graphic

The point here, beyond a demonstration of impact, is to use the process of measurement and representation itself as part of an ongoing co-adaptive social-learning process: explore the stocks and flows of investment, checking in on results, reforming organisational process, resolving difficulties, exploring new opportunities and connections. It also means that potentially the lessons learned in Cultivate could be communicated with like-minded organisations and the broader community. However, what is required for this opportunity to be realised are the development of visual infographics that, like figure 2, describe distinct yet interconnected returns that come from efforts like Cultivate. We should note in passing we have also developed a community resource kit that will outline the steps of how to identify a commons and their community, determine the operative values that structure the use and care of commonwealth, as a basis for understand what returns, outputs or fruits accrue to the individuals, organisations and whole of community.

Conclusion

Reaching the SDG goals is a transformational project that will involve every segment of society in countries, rich and poor, around the world. This transformational agenda extends to how we track progress and measure impact, in ways that are particularly important for remaking BaU. In our view if there is to be a different mode of humanity, one capable of responding to 21st century wicked social and ecological challenges, this new mode is predicated upon a different way of doing business. In this context social enterprises like Cultivate can point to a way forward. However, such enterprises need to be able to easily identify, measure and communicate their success to their wider community.

We see in Cultivate an exemplar social enterprise pursuing what Gibson-Graham (2006) refer to as an ethic of community economy—an economy which affirmatively acknowledges our shared inter-dependence. In our view, this inter-dependence implies an integral relationship between distinct investments and “returns” for Cultivators, Cultivate and the broader community. For young people a space where they can feel supported to become more fully who they are. For Cultivate the organisation, success means continuity through time, maintaining urban farms as a space for fulfilling its mission—directed at both young people and the broader community. In turn, the key to this stability through time is the development and maintenance of supportive relations with the broader community. CEROI helps us to clarify how social enterprises like Cultivate can play a key role in meeting SDGs, both through their efforts but also by providing a template for how we might reimagine the values, practices, and measure-of-success for enterprises of all types.

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