Sustainable business practices can build resilient local economies for a post-COVID-19 recovery

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TRANSFORM is a vibrant global network of researchers and practitioners who work with small and medium enterprises to design sustainability experiments, build capacity, and accelerate innovation leading to more resilient, inclusive, low-carbon communities.
• Small and medium-sized enterprises:

  • Employ up to 500 people
  • are directly responsible for around 200 million tonnes of greenhouse gases (Climate Smart, 2018)
  • make up 99 per cent of all businesses in Canada
  • employ 9 out of 10 private sector workers
  • create more than half of private sector GDP
  • represent an enormous potential force in advancing environmental health and social wellbeing in our communities.

But progress is slow, disjointed, and poorly understood
Our Hubs

- University of Waterloo
- Lund University, Sweden
- Leuphana University, Germany
- University of Graz, Austria
- Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
- Dutch Research Institute for Transitions, the Netherlands
- Swinburne University, Australia
- Monash University, Australia
- Arizona State University, USA
- ARISE Mexico*
- ARISE Colombia*

* Partnership Project 2021
How can sustainability-oriented practices of SMEs contribute to individual, organizational and community resilience?

- Collaboration and interpersonal relationships
- Strategic placemaking
- Building social connections through digital spaces
- Rapid business pivots
- Integrating unique skillsets
- Empowerment and ownership
Collaboration and interpersonal relationships

Strategic placemaking

Building social connections through digital spaces

Rapid business pivots

Integrating unique skillsets

Empowerment and ownership
In-depth look at SMEs

Sea to Sky
Vancouver, Canada
Researcher: Kyra Chisholm

Practices:
1. Construction waste diversion
2. Advocacy and education on Construction waste management
Policy Recommendations

• Support the formation and operation of employee-owned business types
• Support for capacity building in sustainability-oriented clusters of organizations
• Design policies that provide incentives and guidance for implementation
• Local government can repurpose public space to incentivize clusters of sustainable businesses or investors
• Raise the profile of success stories
• Upskill and retrain workers, owners, and managers
• Strongly articulate a positive vision of the “new normal”
Thank you!

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