



**Montréal 2016**

Global Social  
Economy Forum

## **THEMES AND SUB-THEMES**

SEPTEMBER, 7-9, 2016  
MONTREAL, CANADA



## CENTRAL THEME

The central theme of the GSEF2016 is **the collaboration between local governments and organizations of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) for the development of cities.**

Around the world, SSE initiatives contribute to addressing major challenges faced by the public administrations of cities and of the communities living there: how to promote inclusive and sustainable development; ensure social cohesion; improve the quality of life of residents; and enable a wide variety of stakeholders to address these challenges.

Valuable lessons can be learned from the collaborations taking place between local governments and SSE actors on every continent. Starting from the principle that city governments are responsible for meeting their communities' basic needs with regards to infrastructure and security and fostering residents' wellbeing, the GSEF2016 will present best practices in these areas. These include processes, tools, and other innovative results of co-constructed public policies designed to create decent jobs, ensure local services, and other initiatives that support the development of smarter cities, i.e. ones that are more equitable and sustainable. The Forum will also be a space to consider questions such as prior conditions, challenges, and procedures for local governments and SSE organizations to co-construct public policy on local development.

## THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

### A) Enterprise and Job Creation

The creation of social and solidarity enterprises has a major impact on the economic development of their territories. By creating non-relocatable jobs and responding to the needs of local communities, they make residents more resilient. To enable the creation and development of these enterprises and reinforce their economic impact, local governments must ensure their access to adequate support, financing and markets, starting with local public procurement. Governments are also called upon to recognize and support different and innovative forms of SSE entrepreneurship, sometimes in partnership with the informal sector or the private sectors, to facilitate plural economic development to which all local stakeholders can contribute.



## 1- Technical Support for Entrepreneurship

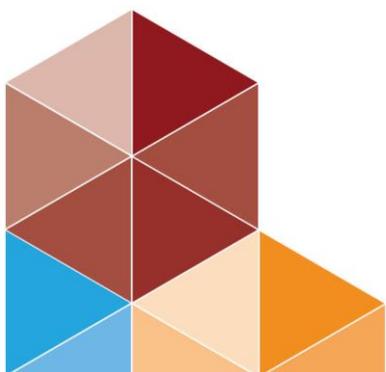
To carry out their projects, SSE entrepreneurs must possess know-how, including human resource and financial management, the commercialisation of their products and services, democratic governance, etc. Support structures with services tailored to the needs of SSE enterprises can reinforce the capacities of entrepreneurs. Many local governments provide support to these kinds of structures because they enable the realization of innovative projects and their growth in scale.

## 2- Access to Financing

Access to financing continues to be crucial to the creation and growth of new SSE initiatives. As a result, many local governments have implemented measures to increase access to grants and loans and facilitate their use. Moreover, many local governments directly or indirectly support structures that provide services, including business loans and capitalization, and training to ensure that enterprises take proper advantage of the funds available them. In recent years, we have also seen the emergence of new forms of financing such as micro-financing and crowdfunding that seem well suited to SSE enterprises, given their economic and social impact, and the community engagement they entail.

## 3- Access to Markets

The purchase of SSE products and services, by the public and private sectors, and by individuals, supports the viability of these enterprises. Different types of initiatives exist to promote the access of the SSE's local products and services to these markets, including the creation of commercial spaces reserved for SSE products, social clauses adopted by governments in their public procurement, allotment practices, awareness campaigns aimed at institutional purchasers, government or civil society certification processes, the creation of consortia, and so on.



#### 4- Short Supply Chains

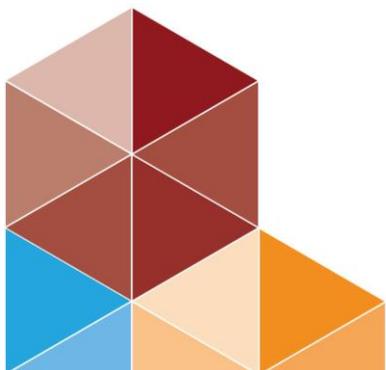
The implementation of local purchasing systems ensures, among other things, food security and food sovereignty in metropolitan areas, and supports their sustainable development by anchoring economic activities in the territory, highlighting local products and resources, reducing transportation costs and environmental impact, and strengthening ties between producers and consumers. In this respect, local governments and the SSE can collaborate in various ways to develop practices that facilitate these short supply chains, ranging from measures that generate new products and services, for instance, through urban agriculture, to initiatives that raise public awareness about the impact of their consumption habits.

#### 5- Innovative Partnerships with the Private Sector

Economic development in a given area is the fruit of the activities of all local stakeholders, providing many opportunities for the SSE to collaborate with the private sector. Examples of this are mixed ownership schemes, the transfer of best practices, joint promotional activities, and joint knowledge- or resource-sharing initiatives. Such partnerships can be facilitated by local governments to ensure an inclusive development of the city that optimizes the resources and efforts of all those involved.

### B) Quality of Life and Living Environment

Quality of life and the living environment have an impact, not only on individual and collective well-being, but also on a territory's long-term economic and social development. People's feelings of belonging to a city, and their desire to live there, do creative work, and be active participants are all factors that propel the development of dynamic communities and increase their attractiveness to new residents, tourists and entrepreneurs. The SSE operates in fields that are essential when it comes to a decent living environment: it facilitates access to housing and provides local services that answer the needs and aspirations of communities; it generates solutions to make local resources accessible (physically, geographically, financially, etc.); and it creates opportunities for residents to become involved in the planning and management of the "Commons" in its broadest sense, not just known and recognized public spaces. By joining their efforts with local governments, the SSE's capacity to improve residents' well-being is enhanced, which in turn has a direct impact on the economic and social development of the city.





## 1-Housing

Housing refers to much more than a building: the quality and accessibility of housing have social, economic and cultural repercussions for cities. Housing policies influence social diversity, participation in civic life, and residents' access to public and local services, and have a major impact on quality of life in the city. Propriety forms and their monetary value are also determining factors. Whether it be through land trusts, housing cooperatives or housing for target populations in need, the SSE has shown itself to be a key partner of local governments that are seeking to design and implement projects to facilitate access to housing in the short and long term.

## 2- Local Services

Availability and diversity of local goods and services are essential to attracting and maintaining residents in a neighbourhood. Local meeting places for residents, businesses rooted in their communities, and local activities and services can reinforce the sense of belonging to a community. Though local public bodies are often the first point of contact between residents and the city administration, many times the SSE is solicited to develop and manage the services they provide, especially in the areas of recreation and culture. Other initiatives created in response to public need, including food cooperatives, daycares, and local financial services, have broader impact on the community, and as a result, in some instances, have been recognized and supported by their local governments.

## 3- "The Commons":

We are seeing more and more discussions about the efficiency and effectiveness of collectively managing "the commons" —natural resources, underused public spaces, open data and software, etc. Certain local governments, academics, and actors of the SSE have identified contexts where the SSE could be a solution to this end. This sub-theme will highlight projects already underway and under consideration to this effect.



#### **4- Active and Collective Transportation**

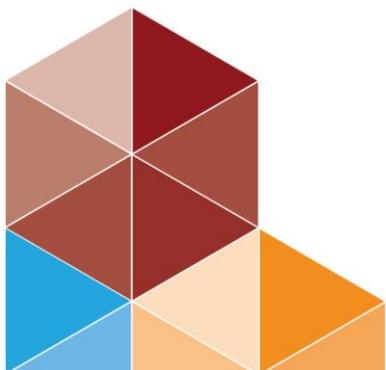
Cities that invest in the development of active and collective transportation services ensure more than their inhabitants' mobility: they reinforce local economic and social activities by promoting local travel, improving accessibility to and networking among local resources, helping to reduce pollution of public space, and fostering the development of pedestrian neighbourhoods. In most cases, the new services are being developed by community members who join forces to create innovative responses to needs that are not being met by existing services. Partnering with local governments ensures the realisation and improves the organisation of many of these initiatives and helps to ensure their sustainability.

#### **5-Natural Resources**

The efficient and transparent management of local natural resources, including the use of clean energy, waste management, and initiatives to improve energy efficiency, is essential to cities' sustainable development and quality of life. Everywhere, SSE organizations are working to ensure equitable access to natural resources and their democratic management. For local governments, supporting these initiatives means ensuring a better management of local resources with all of the social impact and the growth in resiliency that this implies.

### **C) Social Cohesion**

The myriad forms of community involvement positively influence cities' economic and social sustainable development, and social cohesion facilitates the participation of all actors in this development. The SSE, due to its roots in the community, promotes civic engagement and identifies and works on issues related to social cohesion that are specific to each city, helping to make them more inclusive economically, socially, culturally, technologically, etc. In this respect, partnerships with city governments can take different forms to foster the integration of all residents and communities, thereby reinforcing and enriching the social fabric.



## 1- Social Inclusion and Accessibility

When it comes to the inclusion of marginalized groups, integration of newcomers, service accessibility, and inclusion of people with disabilities or diminishing autonomy, the SSE is a key partner of local governments to ensure service delivery to the entire population. By virtue of practices that enable communities to meet their own needs, innovative and sustainable solutions to complex social issues, and the diversity of groups it serves and sectors in which it operates, the SSE fosters inclusion and stronger social cohesion in cities, and, in so doing, makes neighbourhoods safer.

## 2- Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Cultural and recreational initiatives reflect the ideas, identity and interests of a community's inhabitants. Among other things, SSE tourism enterprises showcase these initiatives, which can be particularly attractive to visitors because of their specifically local character. By supporting the SSE in the areas of culture, recreation, and tourism, local governments are not only ensuring services that are essential to their residents' quality of life and promoting local culture, they are also helping to consolidate a tool that fosters integration, and social and cultural cohesion, and that is rooted in its territory.

## 3- Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is both a big challenge and an invaluable resource for any city. When it is recognized and adequately taken into account, cultural diversity becomes a driving force of economic, social and cultural development because it generates multiple forms of civic engagement and synergy among the different approaches. By strengthening communities' capacities to meet their needs and supporting local civic engagement, the SSE plays a key role in promoting social cohesion in a context of cultural diversity, while highlighting the benefits of this diversity. In this sense, it is a natural ally of local governments that are also seeking to promote the use of all the cultural resources of their territories.

## 4- SSE and Social Services

Several countries and cities have explicitly recognized the role of SSE enterprises in providing certain social services, often complementing public or private services, including socio-professional integration of individuals excluded from the labour market, and integration of people with disabilities. These services are all the more



important in the context of a demographic transition that is dramatically affecting public needs, not all of which can be met by government. The objectives and specific characteristics of different government measures, including at the local level, have a huge influence on the creation of SSE enterprises and their local impact.

## **5- Recognizing the Informal Economy**

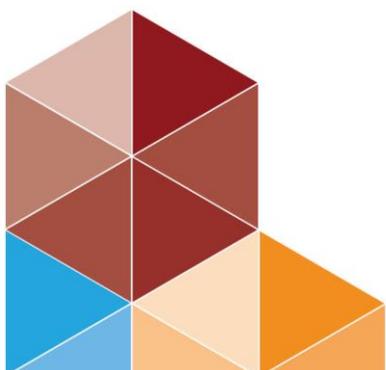
The informal or popular economy comprises economic activities that may involve most of the inhabitants of a given territory and that provide essential public services such as the reuse or sharing of goods, home care, and waste management. While taking into account the diversity and the complexity of the informal economy, the SSE often plays a key role in formalizing these activities, generating positive spinoffs on different levels: municipalities are better able to serve their target groups; public revenues are increased; and the economic stability of those who work in these enterprises is ensured. In some contexts, exiting the informal economy also translates into decent employment for the communities concerned, including immigrants, thereby promoting their social integration.

## **D) Governance**

Smart forms of governance gather communities' ideas, efforts, data, and resources in an optimal and equitable way to meet community needs. To this end, the SSE is often a source of major social innovations that local governments would be wise to recognize and develop. Moreover, collective management, a hallmark of the SSE, is the best guarantee of these initiatives' sustainability and appropriateness to local needs, whether economic, social, environmental or cultural.

### **1- Sharing Information**

Access to information, through open data, free software, exchange platforms, and ICT, enables the development of social and economic innovations and, in so doing, generates smart cities, on the condition that residents can reap their benefits and participate in the decision-making process. It is in the interests of local governments to support the institution of technologies and practices that facilitate community access, use, and information development, as well as technologies that help to democratize city operations for all residents.



## 2- Citizen Initiatives

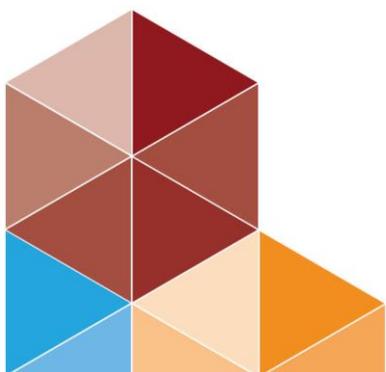
Every day, community members develop projects in response to many different needs, and emerging or unmet aspirations: housing, design and creation of green spaces, resource sharing, knowledge transfer, etc. These actions position community members at the centre of social transformations. The recognition and support of local governments for these social innovations enhances their sustainability and their impact. Through its work to foster community mobilization and its collective management tools, the SSE movement also has a role to play in ensuring the sustainability and the impact of these initiatives.

## 3- Migrations and Urban Transformation

While some cities and neighbourhoods are facing decline or depopulation, others face the challenges of a significant increase in new inhabitants, due to neighbourhood gentrification, or high levels of migration from rural areas or other countries. Adjusting public services in response to these changes, and meeting the emerging needs necessarily requires collaboration between residents and local authorities. When it works, the resulting initiatives can become important drivers of urban renewal and social innovation.

## 4- Participatory Governance

Participatory forms of governance provides spaces for residents to express their opinions on the processes, outputs and benefits of public measures. When these spaces for dialogue are designed in an integrated and proactive manner, new innovations are more likely to be developed, recognized, and, when necessary, supported. These spaces are particularly important for the development of the SSE, which often extends beyond the limits of planned governmental frameworks. From participatory budgets and other forms of ad-hoc consultations to permanent consultation structures, these initiatives take on different forms depending on the territories and the issues at hand. All face the challenges of ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders, preventing special interests from co-opting the processes, and ensuring that the recommendations they generate have an impact on the measures that are put in place.



## Cross-cutting Themes

*Particular attention will be given to initiatives addressing these issues.*

### Youth

In many cities of the world, integrating a growing population of young people, some of whom have left the countryside or another country in search of a better future, is a serious challenge. In other cities and neighbourhoods, the challenge is rather to retain youth by offering them jobs, housing and attractive and affordable services. In all cases, cities that have involved young people in governance and development structures will benefit from their energy and ideas to move the city toward economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress.

### Women

While women represent a little more than half of the world's population, they definitely constitute the majority of SSE stakeholders, partly because with these initiatives they wield more direct influence on decision-making and are compensated more equitably. Women are most often responsible for the care of vulnerable family and community members; they therefore have specific needs and expertise and, accordingly, frequently develop new initiatives to benefit their families, communities, and cities.

### Relationships Between Urban and Rural Areas

Of necessity, cities maintain multiple ties with the wider territory in which they are located. On the one hand, rural stakeholders may depend in part on urban stakeholders, for instance, for the processing or marketing of their products. On the other hand, cities depend on rural areas for basic goods and services, starting with food. Further, the accelerated rural exodus in many regions reflects a dangerous imbalance for both cities and urban areas. In this context, the development of cities depends on the adequate development of rural areas. SSE enterprises that foster local development and economic relationships validated by the community help to ensure that the links between cities and rural areas are conducive to the social and economic development of these territories and those who live and work there.



## Technology

The new technologies developing in every industry are useful to the extent that they improve the quality of life of their users, either directly or through their general impact, and to the extent that their use or impact benefits as many people as possible. Because it favours idea and skill sharing, and is collectively run, the SSE can be a breeding ground for the development and dissemination of these innovations.

## Indicators and Measures of Impact

Well designed indicators and measures of impact testify to the changes brought about by specific SSE initiatives, whether economic, social, environmental or cultural, and are a tool for persuading public bodies to support their work. They can also be used to clarify the objectives and evaluate the results of public policies, and as a result can highlight the comparative benefits of SSE initiatives. It is therefore strategically useful to develop measures of impact, both for local governments and for SSE organizations engaged in projects related to city development.

