

Workshop: Coastal communities, business models in a changing blue economy
How can the transition contribute to local jobs & business?

Date: Tuesday, November 14th, 2023

Theme: Business

Moderated by: Lena Holmberg, Viable Cities.

Short description:

The transition to a blue economy offers significant potential for generating local jobs and growing businesses within coastal communities in the blue economy sector. Perspectives from businesses, communities, education, and governance were presented to showcase best practices and provide participants with a holistic approach to key strategies harnessing the potential of the blue economy.

More innovative business models, such as integrating ecosystem services, but also citizen engagement and guerrilla tactics accompanied by adequate regulatory frameworks, investment attractiveness and financial support are key. From the business perspective, particularly small-scale farmers in coastal regions require easy access and lower costs for infrastructure, implying innovative funding or subsidy approaches. The blue market demand is relatively low or does not even exist in many regions because of economic and regulatory obstacles and the lack of skilled labour. It is also based on a lack of knowledge and scepticism about blue products. The emphasis on a clear value proposition stimulates market interest, fostering growth in local businesses involved in seaweed-related activities. As the market expands, new business opportunities emerge, creating jobs in seaweed cultivation, harvesting, processing, and distribution.

With its inclusive approach of life-long learning for all ages at the regional level, the blue community gardens concept provides the region with environmental benefits. It increases awareness and interest in commercialised blue products. Public acceptance and knowledge about blue innovations such as food, feed or cosmetics will increase with citizen engagement and education. It is, therefore, essential to increase knowledge and awareness early with innovative education programs or even with a change of education system at all levels. Coupling education with business collaboration is key for vocational education to shape the workforce of tomorrow. But it is also the responsibility of the blue industry sector to reach out to skilled labour before traditional industry headhunts them.

Highlighting innovative practices, initiative, and guerrilla tactics, like the small-scale private mussel farm toolkit, underscores the potential of the blue economy. These practices not only create jobs within specific innovative projects but also inspire a culture of innovation that can lead to the establishment of new businesses, thereby contributing to local economic growth and sustainable use of marine resources.

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