

Degrowth in Action, from Opposition to Alternatives Building

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**How the Cooperativa Integral Catalana enacts a
Degrowth vision**

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Abstract

Degrowth, beyond an ideology, is a comprehensive vision comprised of critical analysis, strategies, and actions denouncing the growth paradigm and presents alternatives calling for radical systemic change. I describe a degrowth vision to compare to my case study, the Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC), which is “a transition initiative” in Catalunya, Spain, for autonomous, democratic, and ecological living from the capitalist system. CIC, incepted in May 2010, has emerged as a response to the crisis in Spain, built upon and drawing from a regional legacy of activism and alternatives-building, including the anarchist, cooperative, and more recent, Indignados/15M movements. With focus on the local (and interregional) scale of the degrowth project, I present processes, models, and strategies used in CIC, relating to degrowth’s main objectives: the deepening of democracy and (re)politicizing of the economy, guided by concurrent values in degrowth proposals.

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Disclaimer

First, I use people's real names if by verbal or written form in an understanding, consent, and acceptance for me to do so. Second, some translations were made via google-translate of internal CIC documents, and others done by volunteer and paid translators. Notes from meetings I attended were also based on translations on-site, real-time, from which, at times, I was able to compare to published minutes (google-translated) or later to verbal communications, also on site. Given this, true meanings may have been lost or misinterpreted in the process. Further, opinions and reflections are my own (based on fieldnotes, interviews, and personal communications), unless referenced or noted otherwise.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements and Disclaimer.....	2
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Topic and Research Question.....	6
1.2 Background and Basis, Voices in the Wilderness.....	7
1.2.1 Financial Disobedience.....	7
1.2.2 The Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC).....	9
1.2.3 Degrowth – An Emerging Imaginary?.....	10
1.3 A Roadmap.....	12
1.4 Aim of Study.....	13
Chapter 2. Framework of Study.....	14
2.1 Degrowth as a Response to the Crises.....	14
2.2 Describing a Degrowth Vision.....	21
2.2.1 Strategies of Degrowth.....	22
2.2.2 Solidarity Economy.....	26
2.2.3 Social Enterprises and Cooperatives.....	28
2.2.4 (Re)localization.....	29
2.2.5 Autonomy and Democracy.....	31
2.2.6 Voluntary Simplicity.....	34
2.2.7 Alternative Currencies.....	37
2.3 Summary of a Degrowth Vision.....	44
2.4 Relation to Human Ecology.....	45
Chapter 3. Methodology.....	46
3.1 Theoretical Considerations.....	47
3.2 Method Instruments.....	48
Chapter 4. Findings and Discussion.....	51
4.1 Comparing Strategies in Action and Values.....	51
4.1.1 Opposition, Confronting the Hegemonic Imaginary.....	51
4.1.2 Reformism.....	55
4.1.3 Shifting of Values.....	56

4.1.4 Interpretations of Degrowth within CIC	63
4.1.5 Alternatives Building	65
4.2 CIC Political Economic Organization.....	66
4.2.1 Organizational Structure.....	66
4.2.2 Internal Organization	69
4.2.3 Decision-making Models.....	71
4.3 Economic Models & Mechanisms, Tools of Conviviality.....	73
4.4 Tensions and Challenges in the Search for Autonomy	77
Chapter 5. Conclusion	83
Appendices	84
Appendix 1: CIC General Principles and Aims.....	84
Appendix 2: CIC Membership Types	86
Appendix 3: Describing the term, Imaginary.....	87
Appendix 4: Sources of Degrowth	87
Appendix 5: Description and Impressions from Calafou.....	98
Appendix 6: Indignados/15M Statement.....	105
Appendix 7: CIC Conceptual Map Translation.....	105
Appendix 8: Decision Support System (DSS) from Field Notes.....	106
Appendix 9: Excerpts of Communications with Vado (CIC Currency Manager)	107
Appendix 10: Responses to Questionnaires.....	111
Appendix 11: Excerpt of Personal Reflections on my CIC Position.....	128
List of Figures	
Figure 1: CIC Conceptual Map (Translation: Appendix 7)	68
Figure 2: Map of Comprehensive Cooperatives and Ecoarxes	69
Bibliography.....	130

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the lament that we will not substantially change our collective behavior until crisis is upon us (Heinberg, 2007), or by “nothing short of a system breakdown” (Hornborg, 2011), the project of degrowth has arisen countering the multidimensional crisis as it is happening now (Bonaiuti, 2012) and reveals this change could already be underway.

Degrowth, beyond an ideology, is a comprehensive vision comprised of critical analysis, strategies, and actions denouncing the growth paradigm and presents alternatives (Demaria et al., forthcoming). It is a “radical political project”, a “rallying slogan”, “multi-faceted framework” (Kallis, 2011), and a social movement countering the “hegemonic ‘capitalocentric’” economic imaginary¹ to provide the basis for transitioning towards and building societies that live better with less (Latouche, 2009).

For ‘degrowthers’, the current crises (ecological, economic, social, political, and justice) signals an inevitable and necessary decline, reflected also by a recent studies which closely matches the 1972 *Limits to Growth* measured projections of mutually contingent and enforcing peaks and declines of remaining non-renewable energy resources, food, services, and industrial output per capita, global pollution, and population to current trends, forecasting global economic collapse by 2030². Rather than face economic recession or depression into ecological and social collapse (unsustainable degrowth), or an “unplanned degrowth within a growth regime”(Schneider et al. 2010, p.511), proponents advocate for a smooth transition and a “prosperous way down” (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010 referencing Odum and Odum, 2006).

¹ ‘Capitalocentric’ is used here from Bob Jessop, described: “hegemonic ‘capitalocentric’ concern with profit-oriented, market-mediated accumulation based on the commodification of social relations (including relations with nature)” and by: “capitalocentric imaginaries may focus on industrial districts, competitive clusters, the competitiveness of regional or national economies, imbalances at the level of the world market, and so on” (2012, p. 18).

² Turner, G. “A Comparison of the Limits to Growth with Thirty Years of Reality,” CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, June 2008. Updated again 2012 via interview with Smithsonian Magazine.

In its diagnosis against growth and growth fetishism, the project ‘tends’ to reject capitalism³ as inherently inhabiting growth-based market conditions (Kallis, 2011) and encapsulated sustainable development, ‘greening the economy’, technological efficiencies, and other mainstream remedial policies and ideologies (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010, Hornborg, 2009).

Its prognosis encompasses proposals for a multidimensional transition, not limited to focus on alternatives ‘outside’ the system, questioning whether degrowth can be achieved “without radical institutional changes” in promoting the prime objectives of “decentralizing and deepening democratic institutions and repoliticizing the economy” (Schneider et al, 2010).

As referenced throughout this paper, degrowth should be understood as *sustainable* degrowth, being: “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global scale, in the short and long term” (ibid)⁴.

1.1 Topic & Research Question

In this thesis I endeavor to describe a degrowth vision to compare to my case study, the Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC), which is “a transition initiative” in Catalunya, Spain, for autonomous, democratic, and ecological living, from the capitalist system. CIC, incepted in May 2010, has emerged as a response to the crisis in Spain, built upon and drawing from a

³ I describe ‘capitalism’ as the globally dominant political and economic system and ideology, characterized by accumulation, competition, and the profit motive, and as I speak to later in the paper, shouldn’t necessarily be equated with market economies, but more free-market economies. Further, modern capitalism can be further described, as per Graeber, as being “first and foremost the art of using money to get more money (M-C-M’)” (2011, p.260). This structure has further perpetuated a siphoning of power by those who first have money (and certain forms of capital it is to represent), given that the system is structured to reward those bestowed with having capital beforehand. I refer also to Jason Moore’s argument that capitalism, as an ecological regime, is not just appropriating nature, but has developed from nature–society relations, beyond metabolic rift theory, that capitalism “disrupts the exchange between social systems and natural systems” (2011, p.8).

⁴ At times throughout this paper I may also refer to degrowth, and by this definition, in the context of the project (framework, concept, imaginary, and movement) and *process* (Sekulova et al., 2012) as simply degrowth, but shall be qualified in the context I refer it to.

regional legacy of activism and alternatives-building, including the anarchist, cooperative, and more recent, Indignados/15M movements.

CIC utilizes various alternative political and economic models used also in the solidarity economy around the globe in its aims to build a solidarity network of cooperative economic relations. With focus on the local (and interregional) scale of the degrowth project, I present processes, models, and strategies used in CIC, relating to degrowth's main objectives: the deepening of democracy and (re)politicizing of the economy, guided by concurrent values in degrowth proposals.

Research question: Based on the multidimensional framework of the degrowth project, how does Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC) enact⁵ a degrowth vision?

1.2 Background and Basis, Voices in the Wilderness

1.2.1 Financial Disobedience

On September 17th, 2008, just as the US, media-dubbed, 'subprime mortgage' crisis culminated into the folding of investment banks on Wall Street, temporarily closing global credit markets, and spreading into a worldwide financial crisis, Enric Duran, an activist from Catalunya, Spain, announced his expropriation of almost 500,000 Euros from 39 banks. Duran released this information through the distributing of 200,000 copies of the publication, *Crisi* ('crisis' in English), with the subtitle, *Do you think the banks are robbing you?*, explaining his motivations: to denounce the banking system and use the money to support initiatives alerting people to a systemic crisis in building an alternative society (*Crisi* 17S, 2008). From a collection of authors, that later formed the group, 'Podem viure sense capitalisme' (We can live without capitalism), *Crisi* showcased articles on crises of our times: how financial speculation is causing a food crisis, how peak oil relates to a energy crisis, how corruption and the pursuit of power is causing environmental and social crises,

⁵ By 'enact' I mean, 'to put into practice'.

and ultimately, how the “financial system’s need for exponential growth is the underlying cause of the speculative bubble and hence of the very crisis itself, in addition to being directly linked to the energy and food crises.”

Duran had not apparently expected the convenient timing of his already planned announcement of his actions (Personal Communications, 2011). Becoming known as the ‘Robin Hood of the Banks’, whilst the crisis unfolded and governments in the US and Europe responded with broad scaled fiscal austerity measures and issuing unprecedented public bailout money to private banks, Duran left Spain and was arrested after his six month return. He spent two months in jail with time to write his book, *Insumisión a la banca* (Disobeying the Banks) (2009). After his release in March of 2009 on a 50,000 Euro bail (the financiers of the bail remaining anonymous⁶) Duran continued to work with the Podem group on further dissemination through publications and online debates for proposals to action, from financial disobedience to realizing alternatives, specifically how social movements can challenge the dominant system by building the alternative society through autonomous actions and multiple strategies⁷.

Meanwhile in Spain, unemployment rose more dramatically, joining the other PIG(S) (Portugal, Ireland, Greece, Spain), particularly for youth (aged 15-24) of whom 45 per cent were unemployed⁸. This situation prompted a mounting discontent in Spain (and across Europe) manifesting in the Indignados movement (movement of the indignant) coordinating, since May 15th, 2011, a series of protest marches and camp-outs in the squares of cities and towns across the country, demanding ‘a change in direction’⁹ (Charnock et al., 2011).

⁶ <http://www.defenestrator.org/enric-duran-released>

⁷ Refer to article by Bernabé Bravo and Blanca Brissac at the end of the September 2008 Crisi publication.

⁸ Statistics sourced in report, ‘Spain, Quality Jobs for a New Economy’ (2011), and confirmed in various news articles.

⁹ See statements from the organizing website, Democracia Real Ya!, and for background on the movement see Charnock et al. (2011). Throughout this paper, I will mainly refer to this movement as the Indignados, and 15M.

Before protests had begun, I had read an article on an online anarchist magazine¹⁰ about Duran's expropriation, his actions gaining some fame in Europe and the larger activist counterculture across the globe. A search on his name linked me to the Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC). Intrigued, I contacted and visited Duran, arranging an internship and fieldwork for a case study of this thesis.

1.2.2 The Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC)

CIC defines itself¹¹:

Cooperative, as a self-managed economic and political project with equal participation of its members.

Integral ('Comprehensive' in English), because it gathers all the basic elements of an economy such as production, consumption, finance and its own currency, and aims to integrate all sectors of activity required to live.

Catalana, because it is organized and operates in the territory of Catalunya.

Currently reporting 600 members¹² and approximately two thousand friends and social network participants who organize in CIC debates and projects¹³, CIC, as a legally registered comprehensive cooperative, provides an organizational and economic structure to host independent producers, consumers (and prosumers), social enterprises, and local/regional networks, called Ecoarxes (econetworks) for autonomous exchanges and living.

As an umbrella cooperative CIC includes the organized networks of Ecoarxes, which they began calling themselves as such in 2009 and self-define as a "new model of social and regional economy based on solidarity, cooperation and regional economic sovereignty, built by citizens who create and use an alternative local currency" (Didac-Costa, 2011). Further, CIC communicates via their brochures, they "come together to create alternative economic

¹⁰ 'Disobeying the Banks: An Interview with Enric Duran', by Scott Pierpont, Institute for Anarchist Studies, <http://www.anarchist-studies.org/node/429>

¹¹ CIC's website <https://cooperativa.ecoarxes.cat/>

¹² CIC's website <https://cooperativa.ecoarxes.cat/>

¹³ Relayed in an interview by a CIC spokesperson, October 30th, 2011 via article by Patricia Manrique <http://www.decrecimiento.info/2011/10/de-la-critica-la-construccion-la.html>

spaces to the official economy, and support mechanisms, mutual support and learning, based on ecological sustainability criteria, closeness and solidarity".¹⁴

CIC exists to create an economic network (inherently political also) that supports those that want to build a life outside of the 'official' system, including those the system rejects. Given the financial hardships Spain is facing, the demand or need for support other from what the deteriorating social system can offer has further impelled its ongoing transformation and progress.

1.2.3 Degrowth – An Emerging Imaginary?

Before the system collapses, taking us with it, we have discovered that the idea of degrowth is very useful for joining forces in a proposal which, more than an alternative, is a path. This path fuses the global demands we have been making for years with these concrete alternatives which we put into daily practice and pulls them together into a very broad and deeply significant political project. Degrowth is not recession. The proposal of degrowth has nothing to do with what might occur in the present economic crisis. As the saying goes, there is nothing worse than a growth-based society with no growth. So the degrowth movement doesn't propose a reduction in GDP, but rather a change of system. – Enric Duran, blog¹⁵

Arising as a social movement in Europe (from France to Italy and Spain) in the early 2000s, degrowth is quickly becoming a field and concept in academia, gaining traction as a strategic framework to "affirm an alternative representation of the world as well as affirming its dissidence with the current representations" - representations of and opponents whom degrowth actors have "clearly identified" (Demaria et al., forthcoming, p.2-3).

¹⁴ Guide to Host the CIC (2012)

¹⁵ May 10th, 2008, <http://www.enricduran.cat/forum/alternatives-economiques-i-de-vida-despres-de-la-vaga-de-bancs-que/decreixement-degrowth-cat-c>

From the 2008 First International Conference on Degrowth Proceedings in Paris¹⁶, degrowth was termed as being “understood as the search for a collective reduction of our capacities of appropriation and exploitation of natural resources (to exclude the possibility of the rebound effect)”. In the second 2010 Barcelona Degrowth Conference, the degrowth topic was further explored from a social movement perspective, in not only the movement to reject productivism, consumer society, development, and the fetish of economic growth but also, more broadly, as a “proposal of transformation with some epistemological novelties and an alternative economic philosophy¹⁷.”

Degrowth draws from and is preceded by multiple philosophic currents, including bioeconomics (within this field ‘degrowth’ was first coined), culturalist, democracy, “meaning of life”, ecology, and justice¹⁸. Degrowth, as an evolving discourse and a “democratic collective decision” (Schneider et al., 2010), confronts the power dimensions in the dominant growth-based capitalist system in recognition of the distributive imbalances of resources, goods, justice, and democratic rights at different scales.

In what is a diversified movement, degrowth is spreading, from Eastern Europe to the Americas¹⁹, where conferences have also been held in Canada and Mexico, the last being an conference of the Americas in May, 2012 in Montréal²⁰ and an international one in Venice, September, 2012. Degrowth authors also align and find inspiration in other grassroots movements²¹, as seen in the latest Indignados and Occupy movements, responding to the crisis, joining the search for “new constituent processes and to the invention of new deliberative arenas” (Deriu, 2012, p.1) to empower human (and ecological) rights and

¹⁶ Proceedings of the First International Conference on Economic De-Growth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity, Paris, 18-19 April 2008

¹⁷ Degrowth Conference Proceedings, Barcelona, 2010 - Second international Conference on Economic Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity, 26-29 March 2010, Barcelona www.degrowth.eu

¹⁸ See Appendix 4: Sources for history and elaboration of degrowth sources.

¹⁹ While the theoretical framework of degrowth from the European camp is accepted elsewhere, different interpretations and applications are being explored, particularly in the Americas context.

²⁰ Which I attended and presented my preliminary findings of this paper.

<http://montreal.degrowth.org/>

²¹ For example, see Deriu (2012) and Garcia (2012).

relations over those existing only in the market.

Reflecting also on the point that “various alternative movements are revealed to be structurally weak, fragmentary, and above all, lacking a shared imaginary” (Boaiuti, 2012, p.30), some degrowthers see the project, if perhaps not under its slogan, as means of uniting alternative movements in open and multifarious proposals according to scale, place, culture, economic and environmental conditions, and ‘voluntary’ will.

1.3 A Roadmap

At its core this thesis explores degrowth proposals in action for transitioning from the growth-based capitalist system comparing to the case study of CIC.

In the charge that the degrowth critique of the market economy and capitalism is too vague and radical to be relevant (to the mainstream) (see Kallis, 2011), I begin my theoretical framework with presenting positions on degrowth as a response to the growth-based multidimensional crisis, and an attempt to illustrate its diagnosis. I then touch on how degrowth may premise a shared counter-imaginary to the dominant ‘hegemonic’ imaginary. In the second part of the chapter (2.2), I describe a vision of degrowth based on values, strategies, and the related concepts: Solidarity Economy, Social Enterprise, (Re)localization, Autonomy and Democracy, Voluntary Simplicity, and Alternative Currencies. A summary of a degrowth vision follows, and my study’s relation to the field of Human Ecology.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, is my methodological section. Chapter 5, Findings and Discussion, is a presentation and analysis of how CIC enacts a degrowth vision, as a local project, comparing degrowth strategies of opposition, reformism, and alternatives building, as well as presenting members’ motivations to join CIC, based on circumstance and ideals. Next, as applications of degrowth’s objectives for a deepening of democracy and (re)politicizing of the economy, I explain the political economic models and decision-making methods of CIC.

Finally, I discuss some of the challenges and tensions in the search for autonomy and present my conclusion.

1.4 Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to contribute to the arguments and discussion against growth and ‘debt-based’ structures and imaginaries, and contextualizing some of alternative proposals for a transition towards a post-growth, post-capitalist reality. In view of an inevitable degrowth, this new reality which for those of us, particularly in the West/North, whom mostly enjoy high consumption and easy accessed, materially-rich lifestyles, will require serious adjustments in the way we work, eat, and play. I believe the degrowth framework, in its search, provides methods to apply to this transition, and examples to find inspiration from, in making it a smoother ‘ride’.

Can the example of CIC provide guidance and insight in what is seen as an inevitable transition? I did not seek to ask whether CIC presented a case where degrowth in the sense of actual material downscaling was occurring, due to limitations of information, and need for expanded analysis to inform this question²². My focus and area of study was concentrated on whether the proposals for decentralizing and deepening democratic institutions and repoliticizing the economy to achieve degrowth were being applied in certain forms by CIC. This case study is culturally, socially, historically and environmentally qualified by its region and unique development, however, as situated in the West/North’, follows also the western perspectives of degrowth; perspectives that call for immediate measures to descale, downshift, and degrow foremost by the “international elite and a ‘global middle class’”²³. By this, and in the ‘test’ of how a degrowth vision is enacted in the workings of CIC and by its members, I hope to shed light on answering this question by presenting some of the possibilities and challenges in the applications of convivial tools, that could be applied in other places and situations needing to ‘degrow’, specifically in

²² My focus is to provide a qualified interpretation within human ecology, which could supplement ongoing and future analysis using material flows and energy throughputs in assessing the implementations of a degrowth project, supporting the need as Cohen demonstrates, for “political and economic dynamics that animate throughput movements” (2010).

²³ Degrowth Declaration Barcelona, 2010

strategies of alternatives-building.

Additionally, I hope to contribute to the degrowth discourse by further ‘qualifying’ the degrowth vision I describe, which was according to what I believe are agreements within academic literature and degrowth movement, considering activist’s applications and actions, and by providing some insight through my case study.

Chapter 2. Framework of Study

2.1 Degrowth as a Response to the Crises

Degrowth authors see the ongoing multi-dimensional crisis as being a “reality check” (Kallis, 2011) and the “best, possibly last and only chance” for change (Schneider et al., 2010. p.511). Degrowth actors do contend that “the economic system based on debt-fuelled growth” is the main cause to the current crisis (Demaria et al., forthcoming) and remedial band-aid solutions (business as usual, including austerity and Keynesian measures²⁴) will not alleviate the causes to the ongoing crises, but instead perpetuate them. As per the Degrowth Declaration in Barcelona: “forcing the economy to grow in order to pay debt, will end in social disaster, passing on economic and ecological debts to future generations and the poor” (2010).

Arguably, this social disaster is already upon us, notably distributed unevenly across the globe.

Global disparities of wealth (between nation-states and within) by measures of economic and social unequal exchange, have increased, in a sharp contrast to the notion that a globalized free market economy lifts all boats²⁵. Examining economic wealth in a zero sum

²⁴ See Martinez-Alier, 2009; Bonaiuti, 2012.

²⁵ Growing disparities of income, can be shown by UNDP, Human Development Report 2002, referenced by Bonaiuti (2012) with “The difference in [global] incomes between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% increased from a ratio of 30:1 in 1960 to 74:1 in 1997”.

world as Alf Hornborg discusses, “economic growth will generally tend to occur *at the expense* of other social groups” (2009, p.239) and at the expense of the environment (p.246).

Degrowthers argue that the dominant capitalist system cannot maintain a regime of perpetual growth based on a finite planet²⁶. Standardized measurements of economic growth do not definitively account for the loss of degraded energy (via the principle of entropy), the earth’s capacity rate to replenish renewable resources and recover waste, nor the earth’s inherent natural capital itself, but rather attributes resource depletion and an increase of entropy as generators of wealth (Martinez-Alier, 2009). Waste is a big driver of ‘successful’ capitalist economies through practices like planned obsolescence, unnecessary and unequal movements and trade of materials already existing at the local level, and even the waste of food. Not only does waste make money, but so do disasters. In what author Naomi Klein dubs ‘disaster capitalism’, government authorities and global powers impose free market regulations after a natural disaster, debt crisis, or military occupation in a “crisis exploitation” where private interests (foreign and national) overtake public services (2007). Notably, trends of energy exploitation also tend to follow war and disaster, in geostrategic strategies employed by powerful actors (Ruppert, 2004).

Fossil fuel energy is the major fuel of the economy and for growth (Heinberg, 2011, Douthwaite, 2011), from the emergence of societies, to industrialization, and the modern flows of goods and services (Sorman and Giampietro, 2012). Confronted with the reality that the world’s conventional oil discoveries have already peaked in 2006, according to the International Energy Agency²⁷, and while its demand continues to grow²⁸, the ability to

²⁶ The growth paradigm derives from and is maintained by complex, multi-level factors in the cultural, social, political, power and ecological dimensions evolving from a multi-scaled historical process (see Bonauti, 2011, Fotopolous, 2010), maintained by the dominant political economic ideology and system of capitalism, which demands infinite growth (Graeber, 2011).

²⁷ <http://www.energybulletin.net/stories/2010-11-11/iea-acknowledges-peak-oil>

²⁸ An indication of peak oil could be signaled by the ramping and environmentally destructive exploitation of unconventional petroleum sources (and lower quality) such as Alberta’s tar sands, which according to Herweyer and Gupta has an energy return on energy invested 5 to 1 (<http://www.theoilrum.com/node/3839>). Mass production of ethanol also has low energy yields

control fossil fuel resources is paramount in feeding the growth system (Heinberg, 2005, Hornborg, 2009), maintained by and maintaining the military industrial complex (Ruppert, 2004) and inextricably tied to money and other wealth creation (Douthwaite, 2011). Seen as a cause to the crisis, mirroring similar sentiments by peak oil proponents, is that when the world's total amount of energy falls, a degrowth is inevitable (see Douthwaite's analysis, 2011; Sorman and Giampietro, 2012²⁹).

As fossil fuel supplies become more costly to discover, exploit, and distribute, all other petro dependent global industries are also consequentially affected. We are not only facing a peak in conventional petro energy sources but very possibly, a peak in 'everything': some minerals (including those some of the non-renewable energy infrastructure depends upon), fresh water, arable lands, grain production, and wild fish stocks (Heinberg, 2007). In the exploitation of raw materials and manufacturing of consumer goods, and externalization and export of waste (including pollution-producing production as in CO2 emissions) from wealthy countries to the poor, an "ecological debt" is accumulating, owed to the South by the North (Martinez-Alier, et al., 2011)³⁰.

But will the West/North be instigated to a position to 'pay' what is owed? As resulting from the recent crises, richer nations are already 'degrowing' (or 'stalling' [Heinberg, 2011³¹]), if by following current trends in drops of GDP in what is being dubbed a "growth crisis". A decrease in GDP (in wealthy countries) is being welcomed by the degrowth movement in

compared to inputs, especially considering it is still dependent on petroleum. For more on this argument see Heinberg's post on Peak Denial - <http://www.postcarbon.org/blog-post/985668-peak-denial>

²⁹ They present a quantitative analysis based on social metabolism to demonstrate the dwindling energy constraints on perpetual economic growth resulting in an unavoidable economic degrowth, entailing a downscaling of the current size and pattern of socio-economic systems.

³⁰ Contributions like Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History*, and editors Hornborg, McNeill, and Martinez-Alier's book, *Rethinking Environmental History*, aid in supporting the position also in the creation of a historical debt in by the mass utilization of nature, through examples of European expansion, colonization and industrialization, has affected peoples with less power – the 'other'.

³¹ <http://www.postcarbon.org/article/941201-end-of-growth-update-neither-a>, also recognized by Daly, 1999

that, as currently measured, it could signify a “possible manifestation of ecological limits to growth” (Kallis, 2011. p.874), but is not what degrowth is calling for, as the GDP measurement system presents limits in its representations of wealth (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010, p. 1744), nor does its fetishism for determining growth provide encompassing insight with the fetishism *of* growth (Kallis, 2011; Martinez-Alier et al., 2010)³².

Debt-fuelled growth manifests into unsustainable increases of debt, disproportionately incurred and displaced, where public debt is owed to private lenders and banks, whom hold the power to create money (“in effect, the privatisation of money creation” [Johanisova and Wolf, 2012]). Essentially money is issued through bank debt (Douthwaite, 2011). Practices of fractional reserve banking, also premised upon reinvestments of capital (capital begets capital – see Bonaiuti, 2012l) contributes to ever-increasing exponential debts. Nor is debt necessarily a reflection of decreasing availabilities of resources³³ limiting consumption expenditures which is central to economic growth, creating a clash between resources and assets available to the increasing demand for consumption (or new ownerships or claims); thereby also, without new generations of ‘capital’ or wealth (unless speculated at higher values that what they’re ‘worth’), surmounting to financial debt which is unrepayable (Anielski, 2007).

Degrowth further rejects the mainstream remedial actions, programs, and proposals for sustainable development and ‘greening the economy’ that are still confined within the growth paradigm, which the movement views to be insufficient and failing (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010). Further, siding with Herman Daly, Kallis “argues for limits on the scale of the economy rather than hoping for technological, efficiency or dematerialization miracles”

³² However, the degrowth movement does recognize then that indicators and a “metric” for measuring degrowth is difficult to assess by numbers, disputable parameters, and qualified variables such as ‘equality’, except as Kallis notes, such indicators (like throughput and welfare) could be used and developed to “capture different aspects of sustainable degrowth” (2011, p.876).

³³ Succinctly said, “The essential feature of money is that it is a legal claim to wealth over and above the wealth in existence, all of which in an individualistic society is already in the ownership of others independently of this claim (Frederick Soddy, *Virtual Wealth*, 1934. p.40, quoted in Mark Anielski, 2009).

(2011, p.874).

Degrowth does not deny ingenuity nor progress, nor growth of the potential for a sustainable future, in that it is not a call to “an impossible return to the past or a uniform de-growth model that is imposed from on high” (Latouche, 2009, p.62). Nor does degrowth mean a de-growing of everything for everyone, but a ‘selective degrowth’ (ibid). Specifically, transformative changes must begin with the main actors contributing to the crises: “international elite and a ‘global middle class’ [who] are causing havoc to the environment through conspicuous consumption and the excessive appropriation of human and natural resources”³⁴.

While the means for a degrowth transition, “beyond the slogan” is not a decidedly set map³⁵ (Cattaneo et al., 2012, p.515), or whether by solely voluntary measures to degrow is conceivable (Kallis, 2011), authors do not believe changes should come about through forced policies or through what degrowth advocate Serge Latouche calls “eco-fascism”, referencing Cornelius Castoriadis (2005. p.246), where “ecology’ could very well be integrated into a neo-fascist ideology” in scenarios of crisis, shortages, and ecological disasters (2009. p.95).

Instead, seeing the crisis as an opportunity in the search for post-growth, post-capitalist alternatives, degrowth advocates believe changes should come about from the ground (Kallis, 2011), and the trajectory of degrowth should be understood to be a societal voluntary project, proposing values of “sharing, solidarity, equality and fraternity³⁶”

³⁴ Degrowth Declaration Barcelona 2010

³⁵ Latouche believes there is a danger in deciding upon a regimented set of solutions right away or forming even degrowth political parties, seeing a “premature institutionalization of the de-growth programme in the form of a political party would lead us into the trap of mere politicking” (p.95). However, others believe in order to reach the mainstream in the strategy for reform, integrating the language of degrowth into the political arena is necessary, but these traditional attempts in the mean time remain marginal (Demeria et al., 2011).

³⁶ While I have problems with the use of the word fraternity, to imply a bonding between men or a sense of brotherhood, I take Latouche’s choice of word here to originate from France’s *liberté, égalité, fraternité* motto of the French revolution, to mean more broadly comradery.

(Latouche, 2009. p.94). To realize these values Latouche says we must ‘decolonize the hegemonic imaginary’³⁷.

Bioeconomist Mauro Bonaiuti states that the “consumer imaginary is the *only* shared imaginary” in this liquid society (Bonaiuti, 2012, p.531). This liquid society being “mobile, transient, precarious” (ibid), based on the dissolution of social ties and replaced by market ones, even commodifying human relations, which he also claims characterizes post-modernism.

As mentioned in the introduction, Demaria et al. (forthcoming) state there are clearly identified opponents of degrowth actors, however, these opponents are not called by name or explicitly identified in their paper. One reason they don’t do this may lie in the difficulties in delineating who are opponents, or who are even actors. I believe this can be illustrated by how Bonaiuti points out, growth “has not only been the choice of merely a few people in power”, but has been a choice by common people (apart of Western modern civilization) themselves³⁸.

However, as this thesis in part explores, a ‘degrowth imaginary’, as it continues to captivate and evolve, and as mentioned, not only under its specific banner, but in and amongst similar movements (such as the solidarity economy), has some grounding to replace the consumerist one.

There are many challenges in the idea and efforts towards changing, supplanting, or transitioning the predominant consumer (or hegemonic) imaginary, notably in considering the fragmentation within and between the many alternative movements supporting these

³⁷ See Appendix 3 for an explanation of the term, imaginary. In reference to the hegemonic imaginary, degrowthers characterize it also by materialism, individualism, development, capitalism, consumerism, and ultimately, growth

³⁸ By this we can include ourselves as also being the ‘opponents’ the degrowth movement seeks to fight.

changes (ibid, Serrano and Xhafa, 2011, Day, 2005)³⁹. Authors Serano and Xhafa purport that literature prescribing alternatives to capitalism is often “too abstract or too broad, and susceptible to multiple interpretations“ (2011, p.2). I believe this kind of statement, while perhaps pertinent to some cases, feeds the giant machine that creates and maintains hopelessness, rendering ideas and efforts towards alternatives “an idle fantasy” (Graeber, 2011, p.382) and in what Serano and Xhafa themselves refer to as the dominant ‘there-is-no-alternative’ (TINA) dictum. This could be explained by, as Kallis references Slavoj Zizek, “it is much easier for us to imagine the end of the world than serious social change” (2011, p.879).

Instead, like North follows Gibson and Graham by focusing on the “conditions of possibility rather than fundamental limits to possibility” (2007, xxvi), perhaps the shared ideas and strategies of degrowth can provide some critical hope. Some degrowthers like Latouche, argue that degrowth is the only project that can “renew the political left” (Catteneo et al., 2012, p.515).

In my introduction, Enric Duran states that the degrowth movement proposes a change in system. Although most degrowthers believe the current capitalist system is not compatible (Kallis, 2011: Fotopolous, 2010) and clearly stated as being “fundamentally anticapitalist” (Latouche, 2007, p.91), efforts to find and accommodate allies⁴⁰ in recognition that a

³⁹ I agree with Serano and Xhafa in referencing Harnecker, that the Left, if we are to understand ‘the Left’ as being representative of and restrained to position on and in the political spectrum, is in a crisis of theory, as well as being marginalized and relegated to the sidelines in institutions and moderated by more mainstream institutions (including NGOs) offering seemingly palpable alternatives which require little change from the average western lifestyle.

⁴⁰ In a special forthcoming issue of the journal *Sustainability*, editor and ecological economist Nicolos Kosoy claims that other social movements and views that “promote degrowth but do not call it as such” should also be more deeply considered, particularly from Latin America, as well as the distinctively North American brand of research on “economic valuations of ecosystem services and other non-market values”.

http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special_issues/degrowth Interestingly, although the Montreal degrowth conference in May 2012 was to represent the Americas, many European speakers participated, in what they called an international conference. However, the 2012 Venice conference labelled itself the third international conference, even though it could be seen as the fourth.

'transition' is paramount, there remains debate and contention, not in the actual need for degrowth, but in the how.

I agree with Duran and most degrowth proponents who argue capitalism cannot function within the goals of degrowth (and vice versa), and on its 'accord' is a system with an end date drawing near. Anarchist David Graeber finishes his book, *Debt*, with the supporting forecast that capitalism as we know it will unlikely exist within a generation or so (2011, p.381). He doesn't speak to what could arise to take its place and neither do degrowth proponents conclusively. Degrowthers don't necessarily support other traditional political economic systems and ideologies (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010) that have failed either by being forcibly encapsulated by the dominant forces of the international competitive market systems, or in choosing to grow (Kallis, 2011 referencing Fotopoulos, 2009). As Kallis defends, the recognition for and diagnosis of degrowth is foremost key, that there is an absolute need for a systemic change in politics, institutions, and cultures maintaining the growth ideology and what we know as "capitalism", and it is "better" to remain pluralistic on what could be a post-capitalist alternative (ibid).

But in support of the plurality approaches of the project, what are the points for unity as a way forward? Specific proposals and policy recommendations are still being debated, and leads to further discussion on whether the majority of people are willing to hear the message of degrowth, let alone be convinced to voluntarily act towards a transition. As Bonauti relays, "the formation of a shared imaginary is the premise necessary for any common action" (2012, p.530). Herein lies the challenges and opportunities in planning for and realizing common degrowth actions, beyond finding greater unity in its opposition and recognition for radical change, but in a transition towards a better unknown.

2.2 Describing a Degrowth Vision, Multidimensional transition from the multidimensional crisis

Although the project is diverse in sources⁴¹ and proposals, and in a process of formation,

⁴¹ Refer to Appendix 4: Degrowth Sources

core values have arisen from its continued deliberation. These values, I believe, are comprehensively delineated by Schneider et al. (2010):

- Support an extension of human relations instead of market relations
- Demand a deepening of democracy
- Defend ecosystems
- Propose a more equal distribution of wealth

In the next subchapters, I will relate these values in the concepts I use to help qualify a degrowth vision in the goals of a sustainable and equitable downsizing. Following Demaria et al.'s position that degrowth as referred to a 'system of ideas and values' is too simplistic, I also refer to its constitution as a comprehensive vision (forthcoming).

Degrowth, in the search for autonomy, is not a utopian project (Bonaiuti, 2012, Futures), compared to the utopian views of the market capitalist ideology (Polanyi), but the essence of the project is transitional (also comprehensive and multidimensional). The methods and mechanisms for a degrowth transition are not outlined in a set systemic map of concrete terms, but existing and proposed forms are being explored in the political and economic forms of work, production, democracy, ecology, ownership, and more⁴². Transformation of systems, institutions, and values are part of the transition goals. My focus comes from some of degrowth's main proposals, in a convivial re-appropriation of tools: networking in the solidarity economy, (re)localization, establishing democracy and autonomy, and voluntary downshifting, using organizational models of the social enterprise, and utilizing mechanisms like alternative currencies, where the various strategies of degrowth are applied. In my discussion I will present how CIC applies this vision in practice.

2.2.1 Strategies of Degrowth

Borrowing from Demaria et al.'s paper (forthcoming), I will present here the strategies of degrowth, ranging from opposition, alternatives building, and reformism, that I will later

⁴² Refer also to Appendix 4: Degrowth Sources

relate to CIC's approaches. These strategies, as prognosis (ibid), involve various tactics (on local to global levels), and forms the basis of many proposals and critiques, a multi-approach platform inspired by historical forms of practice. The diversity of degrowth's sources, they argue, is also the precondition for the diversity of its strategies and actors (ibid).

First, *opposition* as a strategy for degrowth encompasses oppositional activities and principles to a wide range of issues that make up and perpetuate the growth paradigm, embedded also in the culture of resistance. These actions can occur on a mass to small scale, case specific and broad campaigns. Actions of protest utilize tactics on different fronts, such as economic, judiciary, political, media, and cultural which can involve boycotts, direct action, civil disobedience, lobbying and campaigning, blockades, law suits, educational outreach, media hoaxing, critical mass, and more.

Perhaps this is a first, but maintained step in degrowth, whether opposition is direct or non-direct. Confronted with or being victims of injustice, waste, and destruction, the very disagreement with the system and those actors complicit in perpetuating these problems is to break and disconnect from, analyze and critique the hegemonic imaginary and inherently oppose it. This process involves a shifting of values, which the degrowth movement upholds cooperation over competition, citizen over consumer, and sustainability over accumulation (Fournier, 2008).

Second, *alternatives building*, while still resonating as a strategy of opposition (i.e. Gandhi's "be the change you wish to see"), resulting from and part of a value-shifting process, is presented by the degrowth movement mostly in the individual and community practices of downscaling. Movements of voluntary simplicity is supported, countering, as Schor aptly describes, consumerism as an ideology (1998), the far-away and overarching concentrations of political and economic power, and the reliance upon goods and services along the global chains of production and consumption. Strengthening human relations and ties to nature are also part of this process. Outreach and education can also be attributed to

this strategy, such as through dissemination of information like the film, *Life After Growth - Economics for Everyone*⁴³.

Alternative building initiatives range from “radical ‘exit from the economy’” (Kallis, 2011, p.876) to community gardens and shopping locally, but united on the insistence in promoting the “non-chrematistic value of local, reciprocal services” (Schneider et al., 2010, p.512). Some forms of alternative building may be established in collectivizing and creating organizations (like the CIC), utilizing one’s agency to influence one’s own individual behavior, and to contribute to shared and networked efforts.

When speaking to ‘alternative’ I reference the definition by Serano and Xhafa (2011), as I believe is suiting to describe this strategy of degrowth, including CIC’s and broader efforts in challenging and changing the dominant capitalist system:

We define ‘alternative’ as an on-going multidimensional, non-deterministic process of people’s economic and political struggle beyond the capitalist logic, whether macro, meso or micro, to change their circumstances and simultaneously transform themselves in the process. Full development of human potential based on equality, solidarity and sustainability through democratic participatory processes is at the core of an alternative.

Third, *reformism* is a strategy informed by proposals for changes to existing institutions, and what Demaria et al. deem the most controversial. This seems to be true throughout the degrowth literature and conference proceedings that charge changes cannot be made to a system that is inherently flawed by processes that are slow, corrupt, hierarchical, and misrepresentative by capitalist (or as some authors also refer them to, ‘market’, which I believe them to mean ‘free market’⁴⁴) economies which are engrained in and serve the imaginary of growth.

⁴³ <http://vimeo.com/10871269>

⁴⁴ Following North, I agree “that we should not ascribe the term “capitalist” to market-based activities a priori” (2007, xxvii) supporting Graeber also, that markets are a means of fostering

However, Kallis notes that “a sort of consensus” arises from this area of strategy, specifically “institutional and policy changes at the state level” for reforms to a smaller, decentralized, and relocalized economies in a redistribution of wealth (2011, p.876). This could include programs for integrations with existing autonomous initiatives. Another proposal is that some institutions that with reform should be preserved, such as those that serve democracy and justice (Martinez-Alier, 2009). Moreover, the reformist stance still supports “the development of deeper, more participative and direct” institutions and methods (Demaria et al., forthcoming) in autonomous organization, alongside changes to the current system. To reiterate, the project (in recognition of a crisis of democracy) rejects that policy and institutional changes should occur from a top-down, authoritarian manner, that “it emerge organically from the ground, rather than dictate it from any intellectual or political height” (2011, 875)⁴⁵. Degrowth authors also recognize problems with certain approaches like technological and efficiency improvements to deter consumption by the rebound effect, whereby these improvements, costs go down, and more may be consumed or surpluses deferred elsewhere⁴⁶. The idea of caps is generally supported (Kallis, 2011, Schneider et al., 2010), but, the project also recognize the dangers in cap and trade systems, such as extending the commons to the realm of the market, instead of being protected (Schneider et al., 2010)⁴⁷.

Demaria et al. also mention research and acting on different scales (local, national, global) as separate strategies in their paper, however, I see these as being embedded within the

and maintaining social relations. Markets economies, in the development of today’s predominant economic system, I refer to Graeber’s broad description as gone through “the breakup of older systems of mutual aid and solidarity, and the creation of a world of cold calculation, where everything had its price” (2011, p. 327). He cites examples throughout his book of certain times, places, and cultures where some market economies in the past having integrated or were built upon stewardship over the commons, based upon human relations established by trust⁴⁴ (see also Graeber, 2001). Degrowth, I understand is to integrate social and ecological principles into market relations in the goals of sustainability and justice.

⁴⁵ For example, Degrowth proponents reject policy recommendations like population control and closed border policies. For further information see Appendix 4: Sources.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 4: Sources

⁴⁷ See Appendix 4 for more on this topic of valuation of externalities and the commons.

others as sub-strategies or tactics within all fields and arenas. Within the degrowth academic discourse, and notably the Research and Degrowth group in Barcelona, I learned that many proponents are also activists, and where activists and academics are working together in a tradition of post-normal science and action research, such as working with environmental justice organizations, social movements, and spurring the first international conference on degrowth (Demaria et al., forthcoming, Martinez-Alier, 2012, and Martinez-Alier et al., 2011).

Additionally, the degrowth project maintains a plurality of sources of study, strategies, and actors. Networking and building allies across scales and similar movements is seen as an important effort, such as with global movements for democracy, solidarity economy networks, and alternative local projects, however the movement recognizes its ability and stage in coordinating effective actions at larger scales to realize the main goal of reducing absolute consumption (Demaria et al., forthcoming).

In the following subchapters, the various strategies of degrowth are also evident in the solidarity economy, relocalization, autonomy and democracy, and alternative currencies movements, concepts I relate to a degrowth vision and to the example of CIC.

2.2.2 Solidarity Economy

The solidarity economy generally refers to the global network of alternative, grassroots economies, and as a 'new' form of production and exchange (Primavera, 2010). It encompasses forms like cooperatives, fair trade, DIY (Do It Yourself), autonomous or entrepreneur initiatives, community currencies, 'prosumer' (both producer and consumer) organizations, and more.

The solidarity economy is an emerging concept and process, which like degrowth, is in continual development, a "movement of movements", while maintaining a "transformative commitment of shared values" (Miller, 2010, p.1) such as solidarity, cooperation, equity, sustainability, democracy, and pluralism (ibid). Reorganizing the economy as a means to foster and uphold these values is related also to the concept of economic democracy, which

degrowth authors Johannisova and Wolf define as “a system of checks and balances on economic power and support for the right of citizens to actively participate in the economy, regardless of their status, race, gender” (2012, p.562).

The term, *economía solidaria*, transpired during the Spanish Civil War, as a means for economic organizing, and has spread throughout Europe, Latin America, and Canada, from the 1970s, and becoming popularized in the 1990s in the face of neoliberal policies that have dictated ‘democratic’ global and national institutions up to the present (Primavera, 2010, Miller, 2010). The idea is closely linked to ‘social economy’, which can be viewed as “commercial and non-commercial activity largely in the hands of third-sector or community organizations that give priority to meeting social (and environmental) needs before profit maximization” (Amin, 2009, p.4). Although social economy implied more “to supplement or compliment the existing social order” (Miller, 2010, p.2), today this is countered by the idea that social economy can also mean ‘alternative economy’ (Amin, 2009).

Like the degrowth project, and where tension arises, different strategies and strains are applied, from working within the dominant market economy to reinforcing the development of new systems, new societies in both transitional and supplanting aspects (for examples, see Primavera, 2010). However, as author Primavera puts it: “the knowledge accumulated through consolidated initiatives...are essential for new interventions in promotion a new paradigm of thought and action that can lead to a redistribution of wealth, especially in the most unequal regions in the world” (2010, p.42).

Also like degrowth, this movement is concerned with encouraging the diversity and plurality of alternative forms of economy which challenge the destructive and oppressive elements of the hegemonic imaginary while maintaining a set of shared values and “expanding popular access to social and political power” (ibid). Currently the solidarity economy’s oppositional stance is mostly focused on countering neoliberal capitalism, compared to degrowth’s multi-dimensional opposition to the growth paradigm. Connecting and the conjunction of these two movements/concepts is a crucial space for ‘solidarity’ and networking.

2.2.3 Social Enterprises and Cooperatives

Although they don't mention solidarity economy, degrowth authors Johanisova et al. do contend that literature focused on the social economy, social enterprise, and third sector is often concerned with alleviating the problematic conditions set out by the predominant economic system, instead of focusing on changing the system itself (2012). They point out that some forms of the social economy have been legitimized in the political economic sphere (such as cooperatives or voluntary work), where others (like community currencies and umbrella groups) are rarely. Within this discourse, their paper further develops the concept of the social enterprise and the integration of non-market capitals as being a means to create a base for a degrowth economy, which I believe belongs to the 'autonomous' ideas of solidarity economy as it is described by Primavera and Miller above.

First, Johanisova et al. define social enterprises as being "organisations involved at least to some extent in the market, with a clear social, cultural and/or environmental purpose, rooted in and serving primarily the local community and ideally having a local and/or democratic ownership structure (one member-one-vote rather than one-euro-one-vote)", with further characteristics of a de-emphasis on profit-maximization, contributing to meeting basic needs for a community (which they claim decreases the call for growth), a focus on small scale operations, and which utilize local resources and products (2012, p.5). Second, after expanding the concept of economy to include non-monetized elements like nature and social spheres (using Henderson's model of the economy as a reference), they outline the use of the concept non-market capitals, quoting Bruyn, as a means for "restoring the economic base of community and returning economic controls into the hands of the local people" (p.6). Negative externalities would be recognized and encapsulated while positive externalities would be produced by the "small, locally-rooted enterprise" (p.5).

Following Polanyi and Gandhi, they espouse we cannot reduce natural and human capital into commodities to be entered into the market, sold, and traded devoid of ethical

considerations, sustainability factors, and their intrinsic values⁴⁸. Instead, these capitals (which they list to include examples of “land, finance, workspace or housing, physical equipment, knowledge, etc.”) and the cost associated with them should be “controlled democratically on a non-profit basis, ideally by the local community” (p.6). The social enterprise may integrate or ‘protect’ non-market capitals, listing examples like community land trusts, communal currency systems, social enterprise umbrella groups, and agricultural cooperatives, which should be under democratic, local control (and ‘ownership’) in order to some degree, escape the logic of profit maximization of the globalized market economy, as well as in adherence to a protection and sustainable management of the commons.

As CIC utilizes a cooperative model as means for enhancing autonomous controls, I describe cooperative, referring to the definition by the International Co-operative Association (ICA), as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA). Cooperatives may be production-based, and worker-owned, operating for or not-for-profit, and intentionally competing within the capitalist market system or may be in integrated and umbrella forms like CIC. Enterprise implies business, but should not be restricted to, as it also can mean more broadly an initiative, or organization as in the definition of social enterprise above.

2.4.3 (Re)localization

Latouche’s main proposal of the degrowth project is in the promotion of (re)localization (2009), which implies producing and consuming locally and reducing the scale of the economy. This approach is argued to be not only a measure to reduce energy use and high entropic manifestations, but to empower local decision-making, encourage relations of familiarity and trust, create deeper understandings of environmental stewardship, and to uphold and discover cultural diversity. He also applies the slogan, “think globally, act locally” in the project’s “realization begins at the grassroots level” (ibid, p.44).

⁴⁸ This idea is also extended from Marxian critiques.

'Re' is placed in brackets to reference Latouche's 8 R's - Re-evaluate, Reconceptualize, Restructure, Redistribute, Relocalize, Reduce, Re-use and Recycle. 'Re' is to replace 'over' as in over-production, over-development, etc., but 're' in reference to localization implies a movement and focus back to the local and towards community rebuilding, and "relocalize the economy" (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011, p.8), being, as Bernard Lietaer states, "not a contradiction with the trend towards a global civilization, but a necessary complement to it" (Douthwaite, 2011, Foreword).

This concept and idea is popularly cited throughout degrowth and alternative movements literature under the reasoning as expressed above, organized in various forms such as cooperatives, ecovillages, and through alternative currency models. Efforts towards localization is also considered as a means of safeguarding against what is seen as an inevitable degrowth, or "collapses" of centralized energy and financial systems (Douthwaite, 2011).

Further arguments supporting a degrowth position for (re)localization and smaller scale economies are:

- Profit maximization tends to lead to growth and (as capital begets capital) imbalances of power/wealth, thus smaller scale enterprises, especially in a social enterprise form as defined above, are better suited in serving and meeting the basic needs of local communities (Johanisova et al., 2012). This too could foster localized mixed economy rather than an export-based one, for example, cash crops;
- Proximity and via a more direct and invested interest could cultivate enhanced local monitoring of consumption, resource use, and conditions of ecological surroundings;
- Eco-localization, defined as such by those that forefront ecological principles, in limiting dependence on the global chains of production/consumption, could decrease overall energy use and environmental degradation (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011).

- Social ties, enhanced by a local or closely networked scale, would be strengthened, particularly prompted if/when “constrained by resource scarcity” and lead to cooperative and decentralized approaches (Bonaiuti, 2012), such as autonomous and collective self-organizing at the smaller scale allows are more participative and direct form of decision-making within the political and economic spheres;
- Localized economies could foster a more enlightened sense of responsibility and understanding towards the common good;
- If localized areas were more independent upon their own resources, there would be less chance for exploitation of the south (Latouche, 2009).

From these perspectives, the use of democratic decision-making, alternative currencies and economics, education, and cultural engagement, are to encourage the development and protection of the local, while its focus serves to also support economic democracy and environmental justice.

2.4.4 Autonomy and Democracy

In what Romano calls a “localist fetishism” in the degrowth discourse, and although this criticism is somewhat countered by degrowth proponents’ advocacy of pluralistic and multi-scale approaches, he questions the assurances and claims that strengthening local democracy would ensure an upholding of ecological values and a decrease in consumption, with ethical considerations. He also expresses concern that with more limited opportunities that a degrowth scenario may present (in perhaps the sense of being constrained by limited resource use, or as he states through the confines of a local frame), democracy may actually be threatened, as he premises its definition on there being an abundance of opportunity for the mass of ordinary people (referencing Crouch, p.3). Even though Latouche notes the efforts towards autonomy does not equate to the establishment of a local autarky (2009, p.48) and maintains trade and the movement of people should be kept open between the locals, which Romano acknowledges but contends that the relocalization project still comes from a “privileged reference point is the independent and enterprising man” and “would ultimately require from its members a tireless over-commitment and/or a savage state of deprivation” (p.6) and still the potential of control from the outside.

However, the idea that democracy would be further eroded by a more localized concentration of power (power that conceptually should still be distributed evenly within from the (re)localization ideal approach) runs counter to the positions of Ivan Illich. His main thesis, as described by Cattaneo et al. (2012), finds that an uneven distribution of power correlates to larger scales and increased levels of complexity in a system, where the general population hands over decision-making power to an expert elite to manage these technologically complex systems, resulting in an erosion of democracy. In Illich's words: "As the power of machines increases, the role of persons more and more decreases to that of mere consumers" (1973, p.23). Thereby Illich made a case, which these degrowth authors speak to, that "only small systems can be democratically and collectively controlled" (Cattaneo et al., 2012, p.516). As a means for a just distribution of power, Illich developed the idea of 'tools of conviviality', in which conviviality is to mean the "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment", or the "opposite of industrial productivity" (1973, p.24).

This idea is supported also by Cornelius Castoriadis in his work and advocacy of autonomy in the idea of a "self-institutionalizing society" (this term is used by Demaria et al., forthcoming), who also claimed that in the dogmatic pursuit of growth, expert decision-making has usurped collective input (Cattaneo et al., 2012). Autonomy, as defined by Castoriadis, is "the project for a society in which all citizens have an equal, effective chance to participate in the legislation, government, jurisdiction and, finally, institution of society", or is to mean "making one's own laws (both on institutional and economic levels), self-determination and explicit self-establishment" (Bonaiuti, 2012, p.47, 30-50), which as Bonaiuti reiterates, is limited or non-existent in the "long chains of the global economy" (ibid). In recognizing the limits of democratic input and power in the economic sphere, Deriu reflects, the "imaginary that forms the basis of democratic consensus is historically

based on the promise of growth” (2012, p.553)⁴⁹.

Bonaitu also distinguishes between ‘democracy’ and ‘autonomy’, based on Castoriadis, Illich, and others’ criticisms, that autonomy has decreased along side the growing of democracy, in the paradoxes where direct democracy becomes limited in relation to the growth in scale of the democratic institutions, noting also problems of conformity in mass societies, no matter the political and economic ideologies (2012). Democracy in this context, and not the processes which degrowth promotes, is seen as “a political system in which elites or minorities alternate in the government of a country” (Bonaiti quoting Schumpeter, 2012, p.525), or as Fotopoulos sees representative democracy as being “the political complement of the *system* of the market economy” (2010, p.106). The degrowth movement is thereby challenged in examining the mechanisms by which democratic systems, as influenced by the growth prerogative, can be changed to reclaim the autonomy and power of the individual, the local, and the common good over competitive interests of the free market imperative. From Illich, Bonaiti stresses “an autonomous, or convivial, society reserves for itself the possibility of a direct and efficient control over the ‘how’ of production, that is to say, over the economic and social conditions of the production of wealth” (2012, p.525). The search for and establishment of autonomy through tools of conviviality supports degrowth’s deepening of democracy in order to redistribute wealth and power, and organizational forms like the assembly, cooperative, and social enterprise.

Degrowth proponents consider democracy in various forms, “such as liberal, deliberative, direct, radical, inclusive, etc.” (Cattaneo et al. 2012, p.516), including proposals for changes within parliamentary democracy or complete “radical overhauls” of political-economic systems that re-institute local economies (ibid, p.517). As CIC represents a collective search for autonomy outside the system, establishing and enforcing its own institutions in a deepening of democracy, my focus is the alternatives-building strategy within this set of

⁴⁹ In his paper, Deriu also recognizes however, the “emancipatory role played by [the] free economic initiative in the construction of political democracy” from historically tyrannical authorities (2012, p.554).

proposals, and I use the democracy in the sense of Castoriadis' autonomy and Bonauti's relation of democracy to scale, which I will speak to further in my discussion.

2.4.5 Voluntary Simplicity

Voluntary simplicity is also a concept often cited throughout degrowth literatures as one proposal for 'living better with less'. This movement (also oriented mostly in the West/North) is based on a voluntary effort to reduce consumption as a means to achieve happiness through examples like reducing working hours, localized or self produced food production, skill sharing, cohousing⁵⁰, and an overall transition from consumer culture (Alexander, 2012, p.11). Its central theme is described as: "by *lowering* our 'standard of living' (measured by income/consumption) we can actually *increase* our 'quality of life' (measured by subjective wellbeing)"⁵¹. Voluntary simplicity movements are described in having achieved a more holistic understanding of their rejection to consumer culture in exploring associated "environmental, psychological, and social costs" (Heinberg, 2011, p.284), and engage in social activism like Buy Nothing Day.

Similar to the voluntary simplicity movement, the downshiffters and simple liverers that Schor compares in her book (1998), even if by motivations to voluntarily reject consumer culture, seem to still be unaware, or don't care, to challenge hegemonies of power sustaining consumerism, confrontations which are more explicit in the degrowth and solidarity economy movements. Instead, they have decided to reject excessive consumption lifestyles by reducing work hours and earning and spending less money, motivated by the want to overcome the stress to uphold high consumption lifestyles or bogged down by debt and overspending (Schor, 1998, p.22). And as Schor describes, they are not back-to-the-land types like similar, previous movements of the US, but are of the mainstream and have started to explore other values. In another US example, those who engage in voluntary downshiffting or simplicity efforts (or 'eco-happiness') based on 'green consumerism' or

⁵⁰ See Lietaert (2009) and Cattaneo and Gavalda (2010) for cohousing and rural squats as small scale and collective housing projects in relation to degrowth.

⁵¹ Voluntary Simplicity: The Poetic Alternative to Consumer Culture
<http://simplicitycollective.com/start-here/full-simplicity-essay>

even 'sustainable anti-consumerism' (such as No-Impact-Man, Colin Beavan), in recognition of the needs for 'right-sizing'⁵², are based upon positions of and support, what author Correia calls, bourgeois eco-capitalism, bourgeois environmentalism, and bourgeois primitivism (2012). Further, echoing some of Romano's criticisms, Correia asks can the pursuit of happiness in a privileged environmentalist position, "serve as the terrain of collective anti-capitalist struggle, or will it, a` la Beavan, merely reinforce existing class privilege" and further perpetuate divisions of wealth and 'nature's allocations' (p.109)?

Romano contends that the degrowth position, in terms of the value-shifting and actions required of the modern subject, is built upon the utilitarian attitude it says to reject, and the project would encourage an "intensified, complete rationalization" (2012, p.6), comparing the ethics of Protestant entrepreneurs. Regarding the challenging aspect of 'voluntary', he summarizes his opinion by: "A 'saint' proposal for voluntary degrowth will never be very attractive, especially in our society, where the logic of consumption gives rise to a race for offering attractive lifestyles, regardless of their wisdom, and beyond good and evil" (ibid).

However, these voluntary simplicity and downshifting movements do perhaps show, as Kallis relays⁵³, that "the desire for a simpler, secure and more communal life resonates with a large part of the population, well beyond radical environmentalists" (2011, p.879). If these desires could translate into the value shifts called for by the degrowth project⁵⁴, it

⁵² For descriptions of the proposals for right-sizing, refer to the Conference Proceedings from the Paris Degrowth Conference, 2008, which is described at the global level to mean "reducing the global ecological footprint (including the carbon footprint) to a sustainable level."

⁵³ Kallis does compare and base this idea to how the US economy of the WWII instigated people to voluntarily downshift, where even "conspicuous consumption became socially ostracized well into the 1970s" (2011, p.879). I believe there was a certain amount of voluntary measure in motivation, "for the good" of fighting fascism, however, much of these efforts could arguably have come from the real necessity to be frugal and the nationalistic war propaganda driving popular sentiment at that time.

⁵⁴ Although some people have made these efforts towards voluntary simplicity because of the recent financial crisis in a position (at least initially) of a kind of necessity, degrowth supports these choices towards a transition be made freely. These choices, to be made by the global middle-class and rich, and if to be done voluntarily, would perhaps take a certain degree or position of privilege (and likely some courage) to critique their own positions and within their

could provide grounds in positioning people to extend a sense of community (to a global community) in the call for consumption to go down where ecological footprints have exceeded and support people in places “where ecological impacts are low relative to their biocapacity, to increase their material consumption and thus their ecological footprint” (Martinez-Alier et al. 2010, p.1743).

Including and between these two competing sentiments of cynicism and hope are the many points of access and instigation for the mainstream in the West/North to act, given as impetus, a serious crises and collapse, conflicts with oppressive institutions, and/or an ‘awakening’ of sorts⁵⁵. While the degrowth project ideally calls for actions beyond voluntary simplicity (and rejecting ‘green consumerism’ as confined to ‘green growth’), notably by Kallis’ dispute that “the capitalist, market economies in which the majority of us live today can conceivably degrow voluntarily and stabilise into a steady-state” and thereby defending the need for post-capitalist alternatives (2011, p.875), it maintains support for the plurality of strategies and tactics to reach it goals. From the reformist strategy, radical changes to institutions (like Kallis lists, of property, work, credit and allocation) could foster such value-shifting. However, therein lies a catch-22, or paradox, - for such institutional changes to made by the people (ideally from the grassroots), the people should have voluntarily come to want to push for such changes (and be empowered to do so) which may have required ‘inspiration’ by these changes.

Further, expectations for voluntary simplicity are not exclusive to the West/North, nor are all citizens and non-citizens (immigrants, refugees, and non-status peoples) there be expected to follow the degrowth project wherein some positions of privilege are required to ‘escape the economy’, but also in the ‘third world’, the ‘developing’, the ‘peripheries’ where the rich dominate over the poor. Before much of the institutional changes being deliberated

corresponding social circles, typically by having access to education and flows of information situated in channels not easily as accessed by or apparent to the mainstream.

⁵⁵ By ‘awakening’ I mean that through different personal experiences, positive and/or negative, collectively and/or individually, can contribute to a shifting of values, or “transformation of self” (Bonauti, 2012) towards well-being, connections with nature, and caring for others. This is related to the meaning of life source of degrowth, see Appendix 4.

can be realized, the degrowth movement maintains its strength in its opposition and for revolutionary social change, as inspired by its many sources and alliances, established through all degrowth strategies.

2.4.6 Alternative Currencies

Alternative Currencies is often pointed to in the (re)localization and degrowth projects as a mechanism for community building and to increase citizen control over the economy (economic democracy) and stewardship for ecological sustainability in encouraging smaller scales of production and consumption in regionalized trade and hence more localized control. In their arguments that the current system of money creation inhibits degrowth, proponents are currently questioning and researching alternative financial and monetary institutions and mechanisms that could help foster the project (Douthwaite, 2011; Kallis, 2011; Johanisova and Wolf, 2012; see Degrowth international conferences proceedings). Implementing debt-free regional and local currencies is one proposal to foster a smooth degrowth (Doutwaite, 2011) and to repoliticize the economy. Others include, as inspired by Fredrick Soddy and Georgescu-Roegen, to tie (some) money creation to biophysical realities and energy to discourage growth⁵⁶. Conceptualized as a technology (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011), or tool (North, 2010), we can view alternative currencies as part of the degrowth project as a re-appropriation of tools, and as one of Illich's tools of conviviality.

I use the term 'alternative currencies' (AC), outside of the conventional, for-profit monetary system, to refer to the varied citizen driven (and sometimes publicly initiated⁵⁷) trading

⁵⁶ For further explanation and a proposal for a time-based local currency see Ruzzene, M (2008) and related examples of proposals, see Mark Anielski's Genuine Wealth Accounting System (2007) as a basis, Douthwaite's Ecological Money Proposed systems (2011), Margrit Kennedy's Interest and Inflation Free Money (1997), and Hornborg's paper, Possible Money and Impossible Machines (2011).

⁵⁷ Where there has been some experimentation and success in integrating alternative currency initiatives as supported by the state, there is also concern that in doing so, a dependency upon the state could negate the autonomous and locally empowered nature of the projects (Dittmer, unpublished manuscript: Primavera, 2010). Further concern is the co-opt by mainstream political and economic forces and values – see the Mondragon example in Spain (Miller, 2001), as well having to 'compete' or exist within the limitations and confinements of motivations, resources, and actions of the growth economy.

networks, money creation and currency models used and proposed around the globe. They can also be referred to community, social, local, and complimentary currencies. The latter can be distinguished on its own accord, existing to compliment legal tender money, versus an alternative currency set apart from it. However I include complimentary currency⁵⁸ as still being ‘alternative’ given it still provides an alternative from the official system, and is generally initiated for the purposes of pursuing alternatives⁵⁹, as well as being known to simply be interchangeable with ‘credit’ (Primavera, 2010).

Throughout our ages, different forms of money, as a means of exchange, creation of credit, and cancelling of debt has emerged in communities and cultures around the world outside the forces of power which institutionalized or claimed authority to its issuance and control (see Graeber, 2011). Arguments about “the role of money and the market in human life” were centered in all the major religions and arguments about debt have been “set amidst revolts, petitions, reformist movements” since early Christianity (ibid, p.80). In more recent history alternative forms of money have arisen as political praxis for utopian socialist projects in the 19th to 20th century (North 2007, 2010), in cases of shortages of money and financial crises (such as the development of Argentina’s Barter Networks⁶⁰), practices for community building, economic inclusion, and (re)localization, and as social movements to directly challenge capitalism (North 2007)⁶¹.

Well known contemporary forms of alternative currencies are the Local Exchange Trading

⁵⁸ CIC utilizes complimentary currencies (in that they exist alongside the system and are ‘pegged’ to the Euro currently), however their function is to serve CIC’s goals for transition from the official system.

⁵⁹ Refer back also to Serano and Xhafa’s definition I use for ‘alternative’ (2011).

⁶⁰ The Barter Networks came about before the 2001 Argentinean crisis, arising, beyond “financial compensatory” needs (Primvera, 2010, p.49), but from its initiators’ “scepticism against the contemporary economic system” whom did not apparently have personal economic problems (Lundkvist, 2009, p.7).

⁶¹ Although debates about the nature of money and debt have continued (but more in dissenting circles), North believes that these arguments have not challenged how the mainstream economy is organized, and that “apart from key moments when state-issued money changes and money can drive social protest or mobilization, protest is far more likely to challenge the way the economy is organized and make moral claims about the validity of the way resources are allocated” (2007, 1).

Schemes or Systems (LETS), time based currencies like Ithica Hours, paper currencies or scrip, and combinations of these (as in the case of CIC⁶²), which are based worldwide with millions of members (North, 2007).

I borrow here Peter North's description of how AC typically work:

To begin trading, members of the network create a form of currency that they agree to accept from each other, which they back by their "commitment" to earn, at a later date, credits from someone else. The currency may be in the form of a note, a check, a scorecard, or just an entry on a computer. Members trade with other members of the network at markets or by contacting each other through a directory or a notice board, paying each other with the currency they have mutually created and give value to.
(2007, p.1)

LETS, originating from Comox Valley, Canada in 1982, can be ascribed by the above, it specifically, as per the LETS website⁶³, utilizes a virtual accounting system for its currency(ies) where a unit of currency is created as credit for the seller and debit for the buyer at the moment of transaction for goods or services. All users start their accounts at zero, and depending on the network or group, may set certain credit limits. This system was popularly implemented in Argentina's Barter Circles, used by an estimated 6 million people (out of 36) practicing barter within the networks (Primavera, 2010).

The virtual online system of the Community Exchange System (CES)⁶⁴, originating from South Africa, networks AC from 34 countries, used typically by members utilizing LETS as a means for remote and interregional trading (amongst participating users) and a means for accounting (or record keeping). CES also offers a service of posting members' regional and

⁶² CIC mainly utilizes a combination of LETS and paper currencies in their exchange network model. CIC also borrows from SEL ('grains of salt'), founded in France in 1994, which is system for exchanging goods, services and local knowledge with an emphasis on social bonding for trading, relating also to a "moral valuation of time" (North, 2007, p.xiii).

⁶³ <http://www.gmlets.u-net.com/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.ces.org.za>

local organizing of postings, exchanges, in addition to posting monthly lists of needs/wants via email lists.

Different goals determine the function of currencies and sometimes certain benefits (like environmental sustainability) may not be intended by the users (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011). Moreover, AC “can be found in projects of an absolutely neo-liberal character” for purposes of profitability (Primavera, 2001) or politically neutral such as for the LETS founder Michael Linton (North, 2007)⁶⁵. For the purposes of this paper, AC, as utilized by CIC and towards advancing the degrowth project, are qualified as being intentional for social change. However, I maintain a broad definition of AC (trading networks, money creation, and currency models) to relate to the establishment of credit and exchange for social change, instead of delineating AC solely by the use of a currency or one model.

Additionally, the creation of money as an activity and the main functions of AC as a means for exchange should be understood as being not-for-profit. The three main functions of conventional money, as a medium of exchange, store of value, and unit of account, are not all always utilized by AC (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011)⁶⁶. As CIC mainly uses LETS, I will be mostly referring to the functions for exchange and accounting, although certainly there is value to the currencies used, they are not typically designated for storing value or backed up by a commodity in order to dissuade accumulation, speculation, and money as profit in

⁶⁵ AC can also be found in projects supporting small-scale for-profit initiatives in the relocalization and degrowth projects, still aligned with alternative economic practices and for purposes of revolutionary transformations (as in the case of CIC).

⁶⁶ Following North, and not to dismiss the importance of analysis and research for money uses, especially within the degrowth project, the test is whether these or new resistant forms of money can achieve what their creators set out to, and not if alternatives “fit any checklist of what constitutes money” (2007, p.75). See also Douthwaite’s explanation of the different functions of money and proposals for new money functions (2011). Currency models can be coupled with or imbedded within alternative banking models where loans are needed, serviced within or outside the currency system that’s being used (examples include Ithica Hours issues non-interest loans, or Salt Spring Dollars which gives out community loans but at interest). Non-interest loans are more typically supported to avoid the stores of value and in rejection of debt-based money. Accounting principles which guide loans issuance (and money creation), are ideally to be related to measurable material and energy flows to basic human needs, in the goals for ecological and social sustainability.

and of itself (for example, LETS was organized to a “value free” free ethos [North, 2007, p,118]).

Here I will speak how AC relates to degrowth values of protecting ecosystems, a deepening of democracy, supporting human over market relations, and towards a redistribution of wealth.

AC typically begin at the local and regional levels, although they may become networked across larger territories such as in Argentina and via CES. They are utilized in movements for (re)localization, particularly characterized as eco-localist, which Dittmer describes “in that they aim to create more materially self-reliant communities”, “rather than a project towards local autarky” (unpublished manuscript).

Within the localized or regional scale, AC are to stimulate a local ‘economic multiplier’ where money recirculates, in a mutual credit form (Longhurst and Seyfang, 2011) and facilitates local exchanges. Some systems reward ecological behaviour in incurring points for recycling and using public transport and others in directly providing credit for green and small businesses under agreed ecological principles (ibid). Green Party LETS proponents in the UK argue that by “discriminating in favor of local produce and local trading networks” energy costs are reduced and members would be subtly ‘greened’ (North, 2007, p.90). North presents also Manchester-based ‘Green Anarchist’s’ support for LETS for living outside of capitalism and “recover the self-reliance that, echoing Polanyi, they felt communities had before expropriation from the land under enclosure in the eighteenth century” (ibid, p.92). Where people had been dependent upon goods and services offered in the mainstream economy, choosing to use AC is to encourage self-production, and a DIY approach in exchanges and sharing of skills.

Where some problems arise, however, is in sourcing material needs for local production not found in the territory, or when in an extended circulation, businesses may find legal difficulties ‘spending’ the currency they have received for outside supplies or paying employees. The credit abundance in LETS is to deter members from creating goods,

services, or labour time contributing also to businesses holding a surplus of credits that they cannot spend (Douthwaite, 1998). Further noted, that if people were to leave the system after incurring debt or 'commitments', credits remain in the system as negative values. However, the open publication of individuals account balances is supposed to deter abuse (Primavera, 2010).

Longhurst and Seyfang conclude that their proponents argue that AC can lead to environmental sustainability, but these potentials remain unfulfilled (2011). It's difficult to assess, without empirical studies that the process of (re)localization or eco-localization (in physical and energy terms) has occurred through the establishment of AC, which would require, for example, an in-depth and well used accounting system and measures of energy flows. Likewise, whether AC encourages, as they should be thought to, a decrease in consumption/production, would require further research, including how and if non-market capitals are being protected in their integration. But considering other factors which deepen users' involvement, and thus stakes, AC are useful for serving other functions for repoliticizing the economy and economic self-management.

AC are generally to be managed democratically and open to equal member participation in determining rules and use. Administration is to be transparent, and held accountable to all members. In support of autonomy and deepening of democracy, AC can be seen, depending on its intenders, to facilitate "mircopolitical resistance" (North, 2007). As seen in the anarchistic approaches, Dittmer states that exchange networks (or AC) connected to "counter-culture price-setting practices" (AC seen as resistance) "participants have been able to partly redirect their means of livelihood in directions not permitted by the mainstream economy" (unpublished manuscript)⁶⁷. In decentralized and highly networked forms across regions (like in Argentina's Barter Clubs) AC can help foster interregional

⁶⁷ However, people may recourse back to the mainstream economy when faced with, for example, limited resources, which can entail "the surrender of counter-culture values" (ibid, referencing North, 1999).

trade where resources are lacking at a smaller, local scale⁶⁸.

Encouraging participation at the human level, understanding the economy along social ties, and local/community benefits and costs contributes to supporting an extension of human over market relations all factor into the principles of reciprocity and mutual aid.

Further, money is given value by those that place faith and trust in it; “ultimately money is trust” (Bernard Lietaer, 2001, p.371). In this sense, AC are backed by values of trust (in the sociological and not economic sense [Graeber, 2001]), and, in North’s description above, by commitment. Documented exchanges, as in the case of LETS and use of CES, are open for all members to see online, encouraging trust relations. In the LETS case, there is no interest on exchanges, and open negotiations between traders⁶⁹, however, prices are typically set at a standard rate, although are open to a sliding scale. Networks may decide to set lower prices for local goods and services to encourage local spending.

Barter fairs present spaces for consumers and producers and other members to interact face-to-face and facilitate deeper understandings of where and how goods are produced (i.e. local food) creating potential ties to the local environment, and to the people and labour. Workshops, meetings, and other activities are typically hosted here too. AC can be conceptualized as multi-barter systems (Primavera, 2001) and even though currencies may not be used, direct barter of skills exchanges and goods (such as in the gift economy⁷⁰) takes place as well (which may not always be recorded).

Primavera describes a proper use of AC, referring to Argentina, “in those places where its printing, distribution, and control are linked to an accountable transparent system with

⁶⁸ Here, perhaps some tension can come from an entanglement of scales where, if administrative forces take over as a centralized power.

⁶⁹ Dittmer notes, discriminatory social problems, such as racism and sexism, can arise in the aspects of open transaction, in “this laissez-faire approach” (unpublished manuscript), but within an open network, these problems may be addressed in meetings and discussion to develop associated ‘checks and balances’.

⁷⁰ Promotion of the ‘gift economy’ by MAUSS. See also Graeber (2001).

equitable distribution” (2001, p.8). By exchanging through closer degrees of knowing and trust, AC should facilitate a deeper caring for others also. AC encourage a sharing of resources, as is suggested LETS has done (Seyfang, 2001) perhaps in recognizing shared needs.

Through the intentions and opinions of their users AC seem to concurrently reinforce the degrowth values mentioned.

2.5 Summary of a Degrowth Vision

I described a degrowth vision according to values: Support an extension of human relations instead of market relations, Demand a deepening of democracy, Defend ecosystems, Propose a more equal distribution of wealth, and attempted to integrate them within the concepts and movements of solidarity economy, social enterprise, (re)localization, voluntary simplicity, and alternative currencies.

These proposals as ideas, and as per some literature based on case studies sourced here, may not demonstrate an effect in absolute terms a measurable decrease in production and consumption, but I believe these to be part of the foundations for a shared imaginary, the new cultural story (Kallis, p.878), and grassroots movements that challenge established paradigms (ibid, p.874) searching for more meaningful and empowered lives, and within the degrowth framework, applying and enacting strategies of opposition, reformism, and alternatives building.

In application to my case study, I will discuss how CIC enacts this vision through processes of self-institution and self-management, supporting Castoriadis’ idea of a revolutionary project, being, “precisely, the reorganization and reorientation of society by means of the autonomous action of individuals” (1998, p.50), connecting with the degrowth proposal: “Reducing the scale of the economy, re-appropriating technological tools and self-instituting new spaces of choice and social interaction outside of market money exchange are seen as part and parcel of a deepening democratization process” (517, Cattaneo et al., 2012).

I have broken down the components for presentation and discussion of how CIC enacts a degrowth vision, utilizing convivial tools, into the following:

First I will present and discuss how CIC confronts the hegemonic imaginary, its members' motivations in a shifting of values, and CIC applications of the strategies of opposition, reformism, and alternatives building.

Focusing then on the alternatives building strategy, I follow Latouche's idea of the local degrowth project in having two interdependent sides: political innovation and economic autonomy (2009, p.44), and present CIC's political-economic organizational structures and decision-making models, and economic models.

Finally, I will discuss how, and some of the challenges and tensions in the search for autonomy, including how in the action to seek its main goals, CIC experiences in practice, and to which it mostly 'self'-acknowledges, through organizational processes of mediation in discussion and consensus-building.

2.6 Relation to Human Ecology

As an emerging concept and theoretical framework in human ecology, as well as ecological economics (Martinez-Alier, 2010, p.1741), and political ecology (Jessep, 2012), the idea of degrowth provides multi-dimensional area of study from which to provide diagnosis and prognosis against the dominant growth regime and imaginary. Given the multidisciplinary nature of human ecology, this area of study, complex also in nature, within is well suited for investigating the "range and types of human adaptation during times of growing scarcity of material and energy resources"(Garcia, 2012, p.549). I do not endeavor to enter into the more 'hard science' or biological fields, and focus on more the social and political elements of study, but reference some research (in my theoretical section) that is based on energy and material flows to make this bridge.

The degrowth values I mentioned are interwoven and mutually enforcing and dependent,

reflecting the idea that no system has parts that are exclusive from each other, nor systems within, such as like nature, requires study in the interaction of all its parts towards a greater understanding of the whole (Worster 1994, p.22).

Therein was one of my challenges in describing a degrowth vision as I wanted to capture the larger picture of CIC, speaking to certain elements to compare to. Describing a degrowth vision alone presents a major challenge, for the version I describe, even though based on my understanding and what I believe are agreements in academia and the movement, is only one of many 'shades'. Also, many of the proposals and concepts discussed here in promoting degrowth values do not necessarily present a conclusive way forward across all scales and cultures, but can be demonstrated in the specific actions of individuals, communities, and initiatives.

While a power and class based analysis may not be always explicit within the degrowth discourse⁷¹, challenges to power arrangements on the political and economic spectrums are presented throughout the recommendations for a degrowth change, especially inherent in the calls for institutional changes, and the support for social equity and ecological sustainability, as demonstrated in Schneider et al.'s paper, 'Crisis or opportunity? Economic degrowth for social equity and ecological sustainability' (2010).

I believe this study and in relation to the degrowth trajectory reflects also a recognition to "the limits of nature, and the limits of power itself" (Heinberg, 2007, p.27) as suited to the field of Human Ecology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The Role of the Researcher - I moved to Barcelona, Spain in June 2011 for an internship with the CIC, working as the Photocopy Coordinator for 3.5 months and later as a videographer and editor, living in Barcelona until February 2012. Working at the CIC

⁷¹ This, according to John Bellamy Foster in the article, "Capitalism and Degrowth: An Impossibility Theorem" (2011).

allowed me to integrate into the organization and utilize participant observation as an instrument of analysis. I also had access to members of CIC with whom I interviewed and participated in questionnaires, and greatly contributed to the richness and breath of my research. Later I joined the Research and Degrowth Group (R&D) also in Barcelona, helping with English edits, and creating their bimonthly newsletters. Within, I was able to attend their reading circles as a passive participant. Joining R&D gave me entry to current research and opinions which greatly contributed to my knowledge and understanding of the degrowth trajectory.

3.1 Theoretical Considerations

CIC Case Study

Meyer states that employing a case study methodology proves useful when examining an organizational framework while aiming for analysis of a particular phenomenon in the organization. This is especially the case when researching little understood processes or behaviors (Meyer 2001), as in the case of the CIC. A case study, broadly speaking, is a systematic analysis of a delimited phenomenon, which occurs more than once in society. Dooley states that “Case study research emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships” (Dooley 2002; 335). While questions of a case study’s generalizability are often raised, it is my intention to not attempt generalizations in regard to the CIC because of questions of validity such an endeavor would be based upon (Stake 1995). Instead, I strive to examine the CIC as a particular case, in the hopes of contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of degrowth.

The *case* in a case study can range from a specific institution such as a church parish, a school, or a family or a social phenomenon such as a revolution and focuses on the *how* and *why* in a particular subject (Stake 1995; Leonard-Barton 1990).

Perhaps the major weakness of the case study is its flexibility and diversity in developing the structure of the case study, which as Meyer argues, can lead to description without meaning (Meyer 2001). While flexibility is a weakness in the case study research strategy, it also is one of its greatest strengths. A case study allows for custom-made research in

which theoretical considerations and research instruments can be tailored to contours of research subject and, if executed with care, can lead to rich and meaningful findings.

3.2 Method Instruments

Participant observation

Being an ‘employee’⁷² and member gave me the opportunity to observe the organization in action (meetings, sociality, implementation of goals), but ultimately as a participant to experience and understand how CIC functions from the inside. Further, in earning the CIC alternative currency, Ecos, I was registered on the Community Exchange System (CES) website and my earnings are recorded virtually, from which I could trade online or purchase goods from the CIC stores (my expenditures later updated to the system from a paper accounting system). From the ecobiotiga (ecostore) in Barcelona where I at times worked, I was able to purchase for example, locally produced juice, bread and eggs, as well as interact with those that produced the goods, or those distributing them to the store on their behalf.

As a community based on trust, I was able to gain trust so that I could contribute freely, interrelate, and access points of view that I otherwise may have not been privy to. I was able to more easily integrate into the larger Indignados movement, engage in informal conversations, and participate in the protests alongside people I knew.

Throughout the process, I maintained field notes of my observations and interactions during and after meetings, protests, and in my work tasks.

Interviews

Arranging structured interviews were at times difficult on and off site. Under circumstances I was armed with a recording device and a translator at meetings for video projects, and

⁷² I place the term employee here in quotations because of the fact that employees are also members, and volunteers in part, as workers donate some of the value of their work in-kind. At the time of my internship CIC workers were paid 3 Ecobasicas/hour (the Eco being 1:1 to the Euro).

different CIC related activities, using a field of prepared questions, I was able to conduct semi-structured interviews lasting typically between five and twenty minutes, documenting in real time or from which I would later recall and write into my field notes. I also engaged in an online written dialogue with CIC members, although this proved difficult due to language barriers. Given these challenges, however, I was able to conduct in-depth interviews on the topics of CIC organization, (re)localization, banking critiques, and alternative currencies. Vado, a key CIC informant, proved particularly helpful, providing interviews via skype, over the span of 2.5 months, from which I kept notes, and usually gave him prepared questions in advance. Our conversations then continued through questions and answers via email throughout the remainder of my stay.

Questionnaires and Surveys

As I became more knowledgeable in my research intentions I developed a questionnaire survey (Appendix: 10), which I sent to seven key persons of CIC of which I received five back, some of the participants in this questionnaire wanted their identity anonymous. I provided a translated Spanish (checked by a native speaker) and English version via email with the request of receiving it back in one week. I conducted this survey, prior to knowing that questionnaires are to be set-up after conducting qualitative research as recommended by some methodology theorists (Olson, 2004) and as a pilot venture (Seidman, 2006). I developed this first questionnaire to not only clarify understandings with persons I had already interviewed, but to evaluate their responses as a basis for a second questionnaire survey sent out to the larger CIC membership via the common CIC email list, (which I also communicated to the first round of survey participants). Of these I only received four.

Text Analysis

I had mentioned that in creating my surveys, I had first qualitatively engaged with people in CIC in order to gather the information I needed from interview and survey participants. Before interviewing, other scholars recommend that literature reviews and readings should be kept to a minimum before engaging with participants, “lest it contaminate the view and the understanding of the researcher” (p.37). Although I didn’t have this in mind while engaged in my fieldwork, I was limited to accessing all of CIC’s literature, including its

history of inception, due to my unfamiliarity of navigating their extensive online networks of information, and language barriers. I was familiar with the CIC before coming to Spain through online articles, concepts, and readings developed in degrowth literature, cooperatives, local money systems, as well later having joined the Research & Degrowth group; all expanded my academic understanding of degrowth.

However, my minimal understanding of CIC did spur me to seek it out through face to face interaction of those I was working with, exposing me to positions and opinions I could not garner through online discussions; however, sometimes their own base of information was sometimes lacking also. Finally, through many frequent attempts at increasing intervals and time spent, I was able to locate some of the key documents and records which aided me in providing the context and background of CIC's development. Further, unless, google-translated, I paid and traded for translations of mandate-based CIC texts, excerpts from Duran's book (2009) and articles by Didac-Costa (2011, 2012). In these texts I discovered further how the degrowth discourse had influenced the imaginary of key CIC participants and the organization.

Ultimately though discourse analysis, I illuminate the similarities in principles and ideas of degrowth to those communicated by CIC via publications, online discussion and proposals, and through interviews and a survey. Discourse, as applied to this research, is understood as "talk and texts as parts of social practices" (Potter, p.105) and as "diverse representations of social life which are inherently positioned (Fairclough, p.123). How the social practice of degrowth is being applied by CIC is my main concentration for this research. Degrowth presents a framework for critique of the growth and capitalist discourse, and proposals for solutions. As CIC and its members engage similarly in the practice of critique and proposal solutions, I am interested in drawing upon their common use of degrowth language in relation to what CIC practices on the ground. Through a discourse analysis I will explore how the academic language of degrowth is interpreted by CIC activists and vice versa in respect of the tradition of what Martinez-Alier and degrowth proponents mark as post-normal science.

Chapter 4. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter I present my findings with discussion: how degrowth strategies of opposition, reformism, and alternatives building correlate to CIC's actions on the ground. Through interviews, questionnaires, informal discussions, and participant observation, I relay CIC members' statements of values and motivations for joining CIC. Focusing on alternative building, I then present the political economic models and decision-making methods of CIC in support degrowth's objectives of a deepening of democracy and (re)politicizing of the economy, relating to (re)localization and voluntary simplicity efforts to de-scale consumption in the consideration of ecological limits within regions.

4.1 Comparing Strategies in Action and Values

CIC has largely emerged through voluntary, grassroots efforts, which Kallis defends as a necessary condition of the degrowth project (2011) even if by instigations of the crisis as in Spain.

Like degrowth, CIC does not see itself in being a utopian project⁷³ and maintains a flexibility and an open adherence to experimentation and plurality of approaches in reaching its objectives for transition. Here I will show how CIC utilizes opposition, reformism, and alternatives building strategies while maintaining a network across scales and different movements.

4.1.1 Opposition, Confronting the Hegemonic Imaginary

Resounding degrowth advocates, CIC and its members generally, are openly opposed to the growth-based system, sharing similar sentiments against debt-money creation, competitive and profit-driven economies, social and class-based inequalities, and environmental degradation. As one strategy of degrowth, I present here the ways in which CIC enacts opposition in social, political, and economic realms.

⁷³ Although, via its principles, utopia is a goal: Transition based on the day to day to convert utopia into reality (Appendix 1).

CIC was born from a foundation of opposition, which required of its founders and members a shared imaginary in denouncing materialism, individualism, and corruption, and of the institutions and cultural mechanisms upholding these concerns, which CIC deems to be inherent of the capitalist system. These positions are not only made clear in its listed principles, but elaborated in a lengthy document⁷⁴ on the CIC website in a vast collection of resources including critiques of conventional money and capitalism, Duran's book, *Disobeying the Banks*, (2009) information from degrowth networks in Catalunya, and rationales and how-to's for the development of CIC.

Before CIC's inception in May, 2010, in late 2008, Duran and colleagues on the website Podem⁷⁵ provided advice and support for acts of financial civil disobedience like defaulting on loans. In hundreds of posts, that have continued into 2012, 'community defaulters' have shared their stories in refusing to pay their debts at high interest rates and many at risk of losing their homes and still having to pay back the loans.

In a continued effort, the civil disobedience campaign was since developed, Dignidad Rebelde (Rebel Dignity), "to promote ways in which people involved in the rebellion and self-organization come together to perform civil disobedience actions that support the construction of alternatives to capitalism"⁷⁶. Suggested actions involve refusing to pay taxes, insolvency fines or seizures, and self-incrimination in squatting foreclosed homes, in solidarity with arrested individuals⁷⁷. Like Duran's act of expropriation (which Demeria et al. cite as an example of oppositional activism [forthcoming]), the 'right to rebel' campaign was based upon a historical precedent, specifically the disobedience to the military through the Military Spending War Tax in the Declaration de la Renta (Rebel Meeting, April 10th, 2011). Some core CIC members and in an expanded "affinity group of activists" worked to launch the campaign by the 500,000 copy distribution of the publication, ¡Rebelaos!, throughout Spain on March 15th, 2012, in attempt to not only promote disobedience as

⁷⁴ https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/pg/dokuwiki/1594/doku.php?id=doc_coop_cast

⁷⁵ <http://www.podem.cat/es/moroses>

⁷⁶ <http://antigua.derechoderebelion.net/acciones-de-desobediencia/>

⁷⁷ <http://www.derechoderebelion.net/>

listed above, but to outreach also to the Indignados movement towards realizing and enacting alternatives. They state in their manifesto: “We could focus on the criticism about the abuses to which we are subject and limit to complaint and mobilization, but we prefer to devote our effort and energy to developing practices based on self-management, cooperation and mutual aid”⁷⁸.

In affiliation with the CIC, these acts of disobedience have been typically accompanied by tactics of dissemination, education, and outreach, in examples as mentioned above, the publications of Podem and associated websites, social networking websites of CIC⁷⁹. Besides participating in the occupation of Placa Catalunya during the first months of the 15M movement, CIC has hosted meetings and workshops for strategic planning and cooperation with the movement, as well as reaching out to autonomous networks and integrated cooperatives throughout the country to ‘join forces’⁸⁰ in oppositional activism and alternatives-building.

The oppositional acts that CIC employs and is in affiliation with can be seen as examples of, or the manifestations of the tension between autonomy and the oppression by dominant institutions (social, state, economic, etc.) (Bonauiti 2012, 524-534). Forms of opposition as claims to autonomy are often met with further attempts to manipulate and ostracize, or through violence (like the police response to the mobilization and occupy tactics of the Indignados movement, families being forcibly evicted from squatting their foreclosed homes, and even a firebombing of a space of one of the Ecoarxes, Terrassa⁸¹) or legal charges, perhaps such as those against Duran for his financial acts of disobedience.

I inquired also to how the Indignados/15M movement, arising initially as a form of

⁷⁸ <https://www.rebelaos.net/>

⁷⁹ cooperativa.ecoarxes.cat, n-1.cc

⁸⁰ <https://www.autogestionaos.net/zanon-corte-ruta-expropiacion>

⁸¹ In a statement by the Ecoarxa, they declared the firebombing as an terrorist attack against social movements and struggle in the city of Terrassa.

<https://cooperativa.ecoarxes.cat/pg/blog/read/65107/terrassa-respon-pateix-el-llenament-dun-cctel-molotov-al-seu-local>

opposition, had affected CIC membership numbers, and the organization itself. At a 15M workshop hosted by the CIC I met a Catalunyan woman who had lived in the US and other parts of Europe during her youth, also a proud participant of the feminist and environmental movement of the 60s. She remarked on how she and those in her age group have continued to be going out on the streets and meetings in Spain, but the youth have only recently joined en masse, much to her pleasure. Given the Indignados movement is largely 'youth' driven, I'm not sure if by the majority of older ages in members, how the movement has contributed to CIC's growing numbers in memberships. Based on the nine respondents from the questionnaire, the age of members is diverse – from 29 to 53, majority being in their 30s. These findings were supported through my participant observation, while there were many young and older adults (including families) involved as well.

Duran responded that there had been a steady growth in members of CIC's last two years before and after the movement arose. Didac-Costa reflected that most people involved in the barter and mutual economy "are more or less the same people that they were 10 years ago".

Duran noted that what had changed was in the Indignados movement's development into more localized branches and assemblies, which he said amplified the acceptance of organizational and decision-making practices like those being used by CIC, such as open proposals by consensus (Personal Communications, 2012). Degrowth authors Cattaneo et al. also relate the 15M movement as inhabiting moments of Castoriadis' project of "direct democracy", which includes as a response to the threat of society's autonomy, "processes where collectives in a rapid surge of self- determination take matters [i]n their own hands, and decide to question and reclaim institutions from experts" (2012, p.516). CIC, I believe represents a more poignant example, as a collective rather than a social movement even though in less numbers, of "direct-democratic claim to self-institution" (ibid), which I will present in following subchapters.

Duran reflected that while CIC participates in this mass movement, it is more focused on

self-organization to alternatives outside state control, whereas the 15M movement hosts a wider variety of proposals, extending to oppositional activism and reformist strategies. In recognizing the shared philosophies and strategies of self-management and organization of the 15M movement, CIC hosted a workshop August 4-7th, 2011 at the Calafou ecovillage, and another at the end of October, 2011 for tactics sharing and in particular proposals for how to approach voting for the upcoming November 20th national Spain elections⁸².

4.1.2 Reformism

However, CIC does not exclude its efforts from reformist strategies, as per the example spoken to above. The degrowth trajectory sees merit in to pursue the goals of degrowth on multi-scales through changes in existing institutions; CIC also enacts this strategy by encouraging, supporting, and facilitating a decentralization of power through the structure of ownership and economic exchange within the system. As an umbrella cooperative, CIC provides legal, political, social, and economic structures to smaller social enterprises such as cooperatives, collectives, producers, and consumers to assemble and interact outside the current system while maintaining a reflexive reliance on it also in the goal for transition. CIC's interests are served by the maintenance and progress upholding the legal rights of cooperative ownership and assembly.

The ecovillage, Calafou⁸³, a partnered project of CIC's, is one example of collective ownership over space, but where some space is individually controlled and others are

⁸² More than 100 people attended the weekend meeting mostly in strategizing for the elections and ideas on how to turn in their ballots. It was noted that no one idea was to be enforced and all individuals and groups were free to decide on which strategy they felt most appropriate they should act on. Some of the ideas I heard: turning in blank ballots, strategic voting, and entering in 'Indignados' candidates. One particular campaign (<http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-20n-promueven-presentacion-reclamaciones-mesas-electorales-denunciar-injusticia-sistema-20111116141942.html>) promoted the timing of voting as a means of protest by handing in legal documents of complaint against the corrupt and unrepresentative electoral process (instructions - http://dl.dropbox.com/u/26500216/DoRiYakiTU_Reclama_ante_la_mesa_electoral.pdf).

⁸³ See Appendix 5

shared. Another CIC project at the time of my fieldwork was to turn a private newspaper that had gone bankrupt into a cooperative called Mas Publico⁸⁴.

4.1.3 Shifting of Values

In speaking with CIC co-founders and current members, via questionnaires, and through participant-observation, I sought an understanding of motivations and shared values beyond those documented in stated principles⁸⁵. Most, almost all of those I inquired to bestowed dissenting viewpoints on the corruption in and from the capitalist system, marked by alienation, consumerism, materialism, homogenization, and individualism⁸⁶. Instead, as echoed in degrowth values, members champion cooperativism over competition, citizen over consumer, and sustainability over accumulation. To reflect this, following is a sampling of the statements made by CIC members since joining the cooperative in answering if and how their personal values had changed:

“I learned to share more, worry more about the needs of the community as a whole, and to listen and lead to the views of all.”

“I always felt that cooperation should have a much bigger place in society, and accumulation of material wealth was never important. Maybe my values haven’t changed but now I can name them more clearly.”

“I have become an anarchist... but yet I am not radical. Actually before I did not trust the system. I have only extended some concepts. And now I realize better how power works.”

“I draw constantly from the community spirit of the CIC and Ecoarxas, which reduces my natural individualism and keeps me full of life.”

⁸⁴ <http://maspublico.org/proceso-de-constitucion-de-la-cooperativa/>

⁸⁵ See Appendix 1

⁸⁶ See Appendix 10: Responses to Questionnaires

But what motivated people to join in the first place? Answering, people generally responded via the questionnaire that they were looking for living alternatives outside the capitalist system. In the Barcelona Ecoarxa ('Econetwork'), where I spent most of my fieldwork time, I was in a position to observe and interact with a range of CIC members living in the main urban center and those visiting from other Ecoarxas to ask this question. There also, members responded that they had been seeking alternatives, hearing about the CIC from friends, housing squats, seminars, Podem publications, and the internet, some having prior involvement and varying interests (from local, organic food production, use of alternative currencies, degrowth, holistic health, to 'green' energy) with other cooperatives, community groups, and social movements.

As an antecedent, CIC came together through the networking of prior existing collectives, cooperatives, and Ecoarxas in Catalunya, and further formulized through the brainstorming of some individuals seeking to utilize alternative economic models as a means to strengthen and spread the solidarity economy in the area through "principles of trust, respect and collaboration, and the joint will to build new worlds that are more just and sustainable" (Money System Workshop Report, 2009). Further, the motivations for many in joining CIC correlated to the crises for the purposes of meeting basic needs – a stated objective of the cooperative.

Throughout Duran's book (2009) and as per discussions on the Podem/17-S website, proposals to integrate actions and groups, and foster an organization to support autonomous and community relations and exchanges were typically coupled with statements regarding these efforts as a response to the crises. The lack of job opportunities and cuts in social programs, resulting in a growing of discontent manifested by the 15M/Indignados movement, further laid out conditions and acting as an impetus for CIC's formation.

Relating what I see as two main conditions for CIC's formation, prior existing networks and the 2008 crisis (and responses to), to why members would be wanting to form an

alternative society, I wondered if members were motivated by voluntary measures (voluntary simplicity) or conditions of necessity, or both.

Author Bonauti states that the search for autonomy is a “search for awareness, an exercise of the transformation of self, an attempt to capture the subconscious dimensions of our imaginary and realize how far the risk of being controlled by the ‘other’ is continually hidden from them” (2012, p.525, 524-534). While I cannot comment insightfully to one, or any person’s process in this transformation, CIC and its members display their search for awareness through forms of opposition to control, in face of diminished economic resources, but there were those whom had meditated conditions (perhaps supporting networks, access to different education) inspiring them to seek alternatives.

It is difficult for me to assess, and if solely motivated by, the degree of necessity in joining CIC to meet basic needs, unless on a person-by-person basis. In the questionnaire, my asking of members’ motivations in joining CIC was intentionally kept open so they might tell of personal stories in detail. Unfortunately, this non-personal form of inquiry was not well suited for obtaining the personal. Instead, most of my impressions were formed through participant-observation in the field by getting to know people and their integration within CIC.

The following observations and stories do not necessarily represent all members, nor can speculations arise only from the sparse sampling of age, income ranges, class, and educational backgrounds⁸⁷, however given that the region is considered ‘developed’, most people I spoke with and surveyed have been conditioned by a ‘western’ environment, and typically more privileged in the sense of having access to basic amenities and ‘advanced’ technological infrastructure (if even by them being there to ‘steal’ from⁸⁸) even though most members have low incomes or earnings in Euros, or are ‘socially excluded’ (Personal

⁸⁷ Further sampling of income ranges and people’s economic welfare is needed as part of a more accurate understanding of motivations by degrees of necessity or ideological reasons.

⁸⁸ Although ‘stealing’ is certainly a disputable word, I witnessed members taking food from mainstream chains (including local, organic stores), riding public transportation for free, and squatting in unused buildings.

Communications with Vado, March 17th, 2012), not to dismiss their real struggles either. I also note here that in meetings and on site, I did not notice many visible ‘minorities’ outside of Spanish and Catalunyan culture, although in the 15M squares and in protests, there were greater numbers in relation to visible locals.

In the urban setting of Barcelona, some of those that were working at the Barcelona biotiga (eco-store) were living in squats to cover their housing needs, and earning Ecos to spend generally on food available through CIC. Others paying for rooms or apartments in Euros had to supplement their income earning Euros elsewhere, but still sought opportunities within CIC to cover some basic needs, or acting as producers also by selling baked goods, produce from rooftop gardens, and crafts, or offering services such as design, handy work, and accounting. One friend whom I made while working at the biotiga had been traveling throughout Europe from Argentina, settling in Barcelona saying because it was an activist and anarchist hotbed. Without a EU passport she could not find a job earning Euros and from the squat she was living in, had heard about the CIC and began working at the biotiga, earning Ecos could purchase some food.

Another Catalunyan friend and CIC member, also who lived at a squat, had been a groundkeeper for a corporate office building, earning enough for other basic needs, quit his job because of what he said were ideological reasons. A Brazilian who used to be a banker in Rio Dejanaro, discovered he had major ideological differences with his job and decided to move to Barcelona, join a squat and music collective, later becoming a member of CIC and took up residence at Calafou⁸⁹. Enric Duran came from a middle-class background, and although he shares in his book that his family did not always share in his idealism, he was given support. I was told by those at Infoespai that the space was owned by his father and donated to Duran. Ironically, in what used to be a bank, Duran would live in the back office space on a couch where I also worked. Co-founder Didac-Costa has a degree in sociology and told me he grew up in a wealthier neighbourhood of Barcelona. Through his education and travels to South America and specifically in Brazil, he learned of barter fairs and local

⁸⁹ Even though I sought out specific people out to interview, I was somewhat constrained by my own social circles, to those I was ‘naturally’ socially attracted to and attractive by, and importantly by my language barriers.

currency models that he later shared in the forming of the Montseny Ecoarxa. In some of my visits to the Calafou Ecovillage and at CIC meeting, I would ask members whether most of them and considering others came from 'middle-class' backgrounds. Most answered, 'yes', and inferred that it took a certain amount of privilege to be experimenting as they are, even if spurred by the crisis in real losses of livelihoods and incomes (fieldnotes, 2011).

Further, I asked Didac-Costa how many CIC members had been supporters and beneficiaries of the capitalist system before joining. He responded, "it's difficult to say, but I would say that maybe 20% are people that had a 'regular' life, without alternative ideas" (Personal Communications, 2012).

This question had initially arisen after speaking with a man who had invested into an apartment at the Calafou Ecovillage and had been working there three weeks when I first visited. He used to be an engineer. In 2008, he lost his job and found out the company he was working for wasn't paying his taxes and owed \$10,000 to the government in back taxes. "I worked in the system. Had a sports car and an apartment in a high rise. I got all the things I was supposed to for living in the system, and then the system rejected me. This is why I am here. But in the future, I would like to go to somewhere like Australia, make some money and come back here and start a NGO." He then said he would go back to the system if he could. He lamented that he's tired of the food and misses meat, that they have been eating the same thing all the time, works all day, and often there's no food until midnight (personal communication, July 31st, 2011). In communications with Calafou residents in a later visit this man had left the project.

Besides representing what seems to be a minority viewpoint within CIC (regarding his willingness to go back to system), I was initially struck by his willingness to leave his locale, given the (re)localization focus of project. I had been before pondering the importance of nationhood, in particular the Catalunyan sense of identity, as a variable in establishing mutual support and community in CIC, and in support of (re)localization, considering Catalunya's history for independence. 'Catalana' is in its name for as reasons it states: it's based in the province of Catalunya.

CIC does support the concept of ‘no borders’ of the global solidarity economy and inclusivity to all members, local and foreign. However, its worth noting language and culture seems to be a binding point, considering also its own history of maintained resistance in markedly anarchist traditions⁹⁰, which are often cited in strategies of collective and autonomous organizing. Any obvious feelings of Catalunyan nationalism were never openly or apparently expressed in the field or in CIC documents, although in one questionnaire, one person responded that CIC’s decision-making process was “a bit Spanish” (Appendix 10). Although I’m unclear as to what this implies, when I first began attending meetings in June, 2011, Catala would be spoken, however as more people joined that had moved from other parts of Spain or Latin America, meetings would switch to Castellano to accommodate newcomers, including myself for easier translations (field notes, 2011).

Besides by CIC’s policies of inclusion, and based upon its open reliance on the official system, I take from Didac-Costa sentiments to follow, that some members also express an understanding towards others in the difficulties in rejecting pervasive consumer culture and pursuing voluntary simplicity.

...there’s different trends of degrowth ideas and anti-capitalist ideas. One idea is a simple life completely, and getting rid of everything...and I believe is good to some extent. But I don’t think it is possible to apply that to many people. As for me I believe that the idea is not to get rid of everything material, but to find other ways to have a comfortable material life. Okay, because maybe, you, me, Enric and many people in these social movements, are open to get rid of computers⁹¹, rid of cars, but not many

⁹⁰ CIC has evolved from bedrock of historical activism, not only in anarchistic and unionist traditions, but also in the continued cooperative movement in Spain (Didac-Costa, personal communications, 2012). See also Catteneo et al., 2010.

⁹¹ I note here that there is a heavy reliance upon technology, specifically computers (witnessing most work activity in ‘offices’ by CIC members to be done in front of a laptop, reliance including the organization of exchange via CES. Myself, I still would have a difficult time giving up my computer as a means for networking, research, writing, and video editing, although support an

people are. But many people are able to get rid of ...many things that imply sophisticated civilization. But even if this is valid at least for us to imagine, for our parents, your mother, we cannot force them to get rid of a materialistic life. And I don't want that because it's not an obligatory revolution. But my mother won't get rid of materialism, so what we need is to create the alternative, we have electrical cars, we have electrical bicycles, we have ecological devices, like solar panels, etc, so for me the idea is not to get rid of electricity for instance. I have some friends who are in Montseny. They don't want to have it because they believe it's bad. This is a very minimalist / militant position in society. You want to make a transition with that? We will make a transformation when the 99% of society is able to receive energy without needing the nuclear central power and oil and central power stations. Which instead should be in relation to local energy. In relocalization. So in the CIC, it is not to go to people and make a campaigns to say get rid of electricity but to create jobs by making machines that allow us to make energy in our houses, in our communities and relocalizing energy and material production and food and everything. It's not so much to get rid of materialism but to give elements to be able to get rid of some part of that.

Didac-Costa's statement reflects a rejection to a utilitarian and rationalization approach, that with the emphasis on 'voluntary', more people may be encouraged to join and align themselves to the alternatives they are in the process of building. Further, I also believe his sentiments recognize a danger in codifying opposites or under-ranking oppositions (Bourdieu, 1979, p.4,9-10) in decoding hegemony and still performing under the sense of one's whole social being as a means to protect one's interests, even if it relegates the person to a lower rank and confines them to the classificatory system they oppose. Bourdieu argues that becoming a detached observer can create a static position inherently subject to rules, rather than being intersubjective, to form a false impression of reality (class powerpoint, HEK07, Susan Paulson, Feb 2010).

open ecology application (open source, recycled materials) and increased use of biodegradable materials for components.

As mentioned, my impressions are somewhat constrained. People did not often share backstories that elucidated specifically when and how a major shift in values occurred which may have motivated them to join CIC. Most people relayed they held the values reflected by CIC's principles prior to joining and prior to the crises, but noted the 2008 crisis was a definite point for instigation. Members seemed motivated not only because of prior held ideals but spurred by, like degrowth advocates, feelings of urgent necessity for change, now and for the future.

4.1.4 Interpretations of Degrowth within CIC

As this discussions seeks to question how CIC is enacting degrowth, I present here how degrowth is interpreted within CIC. The definition and explicit application of degrowth is not evident in CIC's open publications, although stated as an ecological principle and qualified in an updated document, under principles of economy: "measurement of degrowth: CIC shall direct and guide producers based on demand", from which I interpret to imply a recognition of bioregional limits, and members' adherences towards voluntary simplicity and downshifting⁹².

I present here the varying interpretations via Duran's book (2009), feedback from member questionnaire's and interviews with Duran in 2011 and co-founder, Didac-Costa.

Duran during and after his expropriation of money from the banks, was involved with the degrowth movement in Catalunya, supported in his book, and conveying an informed understanding of the framework such as by:

Degrowth brings ecological thinking on the limits of the planet and philosophical critique of the concepts economic growth and sustainable development, unmasking consumer society. The new movement also proposes alternatives based on concepts such as relocation and conviviality. Its main precursors find Nicholas Georgescu-

⁹² The latter impression made by CIC's other principles, promoting a 'letting go of materialism' and promotion of the localized, solidarity economy. See Appendix 1.

Roegen, one of parents of ecological economics, and versatile thinker Ivan Illich. At this point I think that perhaps degrowth can be an appropriate umbrella to build this movement stronger... (p.64, google translated).

In response to, 'Would you associate the CIC social organization as a working example towards degrowth?', Duran's thinking of degrowth as a point of convergence seems to have changed:

I think that what generates group cohesiveness is the overall organization because at that moment I did not speak of degrowth, not the word in itself but the actions that are attached to it and this cohesiveness is now presented in the way in which we do things at CIC.

The important group cohesiveness cannot be generated with theory but only with practice, degrowth in terms of theory is not an important cohesive theory. You can manifest your agreement with certain ideas but you don't arrive at anything. The important thing is to unite that cohesiveness with concrete actions. (Interview, March 27th, 2012)

I'm not sure why since his growing experiences with CIC and the 15M movement, that Duran's feelings on the importance of mentioning degrowth theory has changed. Perhaps the rallying slogan of degrowth is not as well known as it once was (even though the 15M movement in Barcelona has its own degrowth group). Perhaps this could be influenced by ideas like Romano's that degrowth "condemns itself to dwell in a moralistic sphere, without connecting to the flesh and soul of real social actors" (2012, p.5), or as Cattaneo et al. reflect on Romano's position, that "degrowth favours expert knowledge", saying also that it "reproduces the depoliticizing technical bias that it seeks to avoid" (2012, p.519).

Other members, like Didac-Costa, relates CIC efforts towards autonomy and self-management and support of open source ecology and the commons, to the degrowth proposal for relocalization. However, in a conflicting statement in response to my question

if he saw degrowth as a movement to unite the fragmented left, he argued “not necessarily”, that degrowth, like ecology, could be taken from a right-wing or fascist perspective, and didn’t believe degrowth really had to do with upholding democracy, nor did it discuss revolutionary or social issues deeply (personal communications, 2012).

From the questionnaire, about half of the respondents said they didn’t believe degrowth as a social movement that could unite a fragmented left, but most agreed that degrowth is inherently anti-capitalist and that CIC is a working example towards degrowth. One respondent mirrored Enric’s sentiments in saying, “CIC projects are practical examples of the theoretical degrowth movement, as you only can convince people to participate in practical things not in a theoretical thing... theoretical food can not be eaten” (Questionnaires, 2012).

To counter Romano, based on my participation and inquiries in the field, as well as from in the tradition of post-normal science methods utilized by many degrowth authors, including the Barcelona degrowth conference which they say “resembled the assembly based, self-organized deliberation model that was adopted by the 15M movement” (ibid, p.517), most of the degrowth academics I met through the R&D group were also activists on the ground, being the flesh and soul of real social actors⁹³. However, in the case of opinions of some CIC members, there is some disconnection with the values of degrowth being discussed in academia⁹⁴, from the actors of CIC.

4.1.5 Alternatives Building

In the prior section of the discussion, I described how CIC enacts both the oppositional and reformist strategies of degrowth, exploring the conditions and members’ values that lead to and informs CIC’s continued formation. Through proximity, prior existing networks, a sense of shared values in opposition and in a quest for alternatives, as well in the exigency to

⁹³ See Fournier (2008) on the degrowth movement’s foregrounding of democracy and citizenship, and Demaria et al. (forthcoming) on the degrowth movement’s on the ground.

⁹⁴ See also special issues Futures on degrowth and democracy (2012) and from the Journal of Cleaner Production on degrowth theory to practice (2012).

cover basic needs in face of Spain's crisis, CIC foremost represents the alternatives building strategy of degrowth, in a focus on the transitional steps towards a post-capitalist utopia⁹⁵.

Whether CIC and its members align and self-identify with the evolving framework of degrowth, they demonstrate degrowth promoted processes of self-transformation aligned to mentioned values, as coming from a privileged place in the West/North, I believe represent a collective effort confronting divisions. Further, as expressed by practices in political and economic autonomy (using tools of conviviality) presented in the next chapters, I believe CIC supports, as an example of, degrowth's prime objectives of "decentralizing and deepening democratic institutions and repoliticizing the economy" (Schneider et al, 2010).

4.2 CIC Political Economic Organization

As a means for decentralization and upholding local and individual autonomy, CIC utilizes the models of both the cooperative and assembly.

(The following information was collected from CIC internal documents⁹⁶ and based on communications, my observations, and participation in the field.)

4.2.1 Organizational Structure

CIC is legally registered as the Sociedad Cooperativa Catalana Limitada (SCCL)⁹⁷, as a comprehensive ('integral' in catala) cooperative. This framework hosts a mix of different modeled cooperatives, social enterprises, and regional networks as members (workers-run, service oriented, and regional Ecoarxes), as well as individual memberships, whether they

⁹⁵ A utopia is not referred to or explicitly described in CIC literature in the shared sense, but is implied by their discussions and actions in imagining its potentials (Didac-Costa, Interview, 2012).

⁹⁶ Including the Guide to Host the CIC (2012), downloaded from https://cooperativa.ecoarxes.cat/pg/dokuwiki/1594/doku.php?id=guia_cast and CIC Training Slides provided by Stephan (via email), used with permission.

⁹⁷ See Act Cooperativas Integrales: Law 18/2002 of cooperatives in Catalunya (5 July 2002) and The Law of Spain Cooperativas 27/1999 (16 July 1999)

are consumers, small businesses, or prosumers⁹⁸. Self-described, they are “consumers and users for both goods and services, whom within exercise the right of self-organization”. CIC also partners in projects such as the Calafou ecovillage, Mas Publico newspaper, and a ‘workshop’ for food processing and production, Riudellots.

Registered as a non-profit entity, stating its “purpose is not to achieve a profit economy”, CIC is run by a volunteer board, other volunteers and ‘employees’ whom receive minimal basic remuneration (through a ‘separate’ currency of Ecobasicas) for their work in internal management (which I speak to further in the next subchapters).

In essence, CIC acts as an umbrella in which forms of inter-power is beholden by the sovereign rights of individuals and (bio)regional networks which makes up CIC (from the supra to the nucleus to the personal). It further extends its networks to other territories in Spain (at a ‘supraterritorial’ level) and beyond (as part of a solidarity economy, whether as state projects, or other similar self-managed networks) to other self-defined and legally organized comprehensive cooperatives.

To exemplify this, I’ve included here a conceptual structural map and geographical map of the other Integral Cooperatives in Spain and Ecoxarxes in Catalunya along an ‘increase’ of importance of autonomy to the nuclei and individual levels, made by CIC⁹⁹:

⁹⁸ See Appnedix 2 for types of CIC memberships.

⁹⁹ See Appendix 7 for translation of titles in sequence.

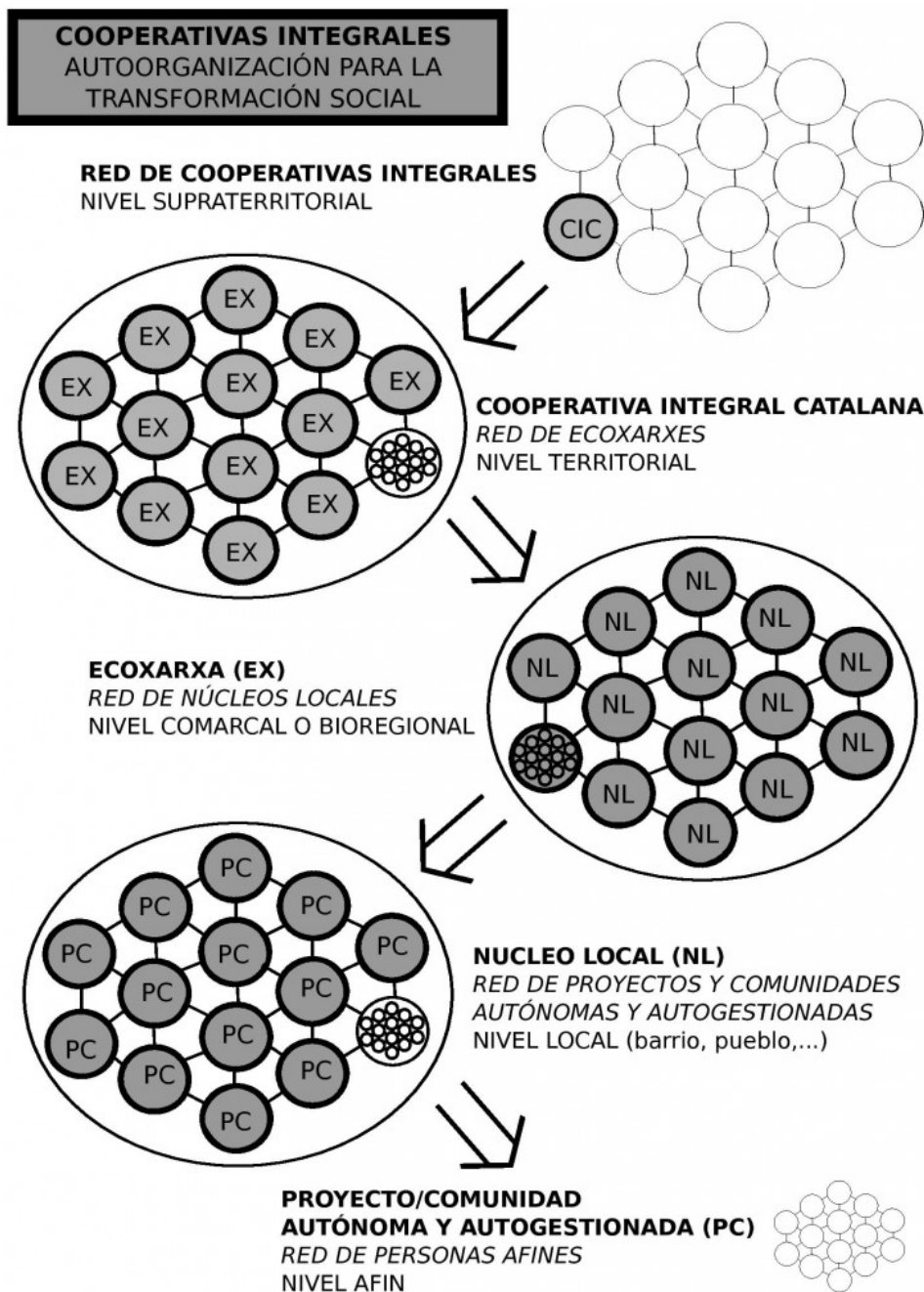


Figure 1: CIC Conceptual Map, CIC, Licensed Creative Commons, accessed April, 2012

Mapa de Cooperatives Integrals i Ecoxarxes

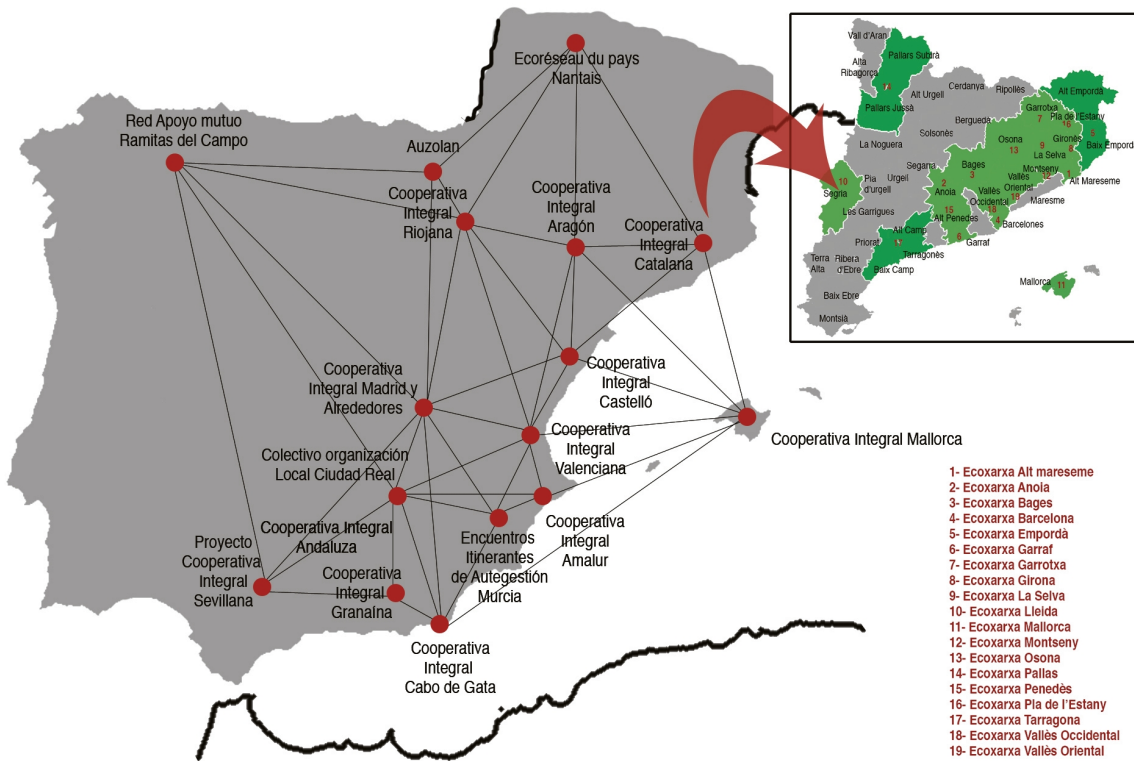


Figure 2: Map of Comprehensive Cooperatives and Ecoxarxes, CIC, Licensed Creative Commons, accessed April, 2012

(Although this map lists 19 ‘Ecoxarxes’ of CIC, I was told throughout my fieldwork and after that not all of these networks are active and tend to fluctuate in participation (13-15 were typically cited as core Ecoxarxes). As well, although I cannot verify at this time, the interaction between the Integral Cooperatives remains largely ‘conceptual’.)

4.2.2 Internal Organization

Core members, including Duran, generally make up a form of ‘administration’ for CIC, which its board, and members recognize. I was told that these positions are generally to be voted upon (in both their creation, by CIC assemblies and with whom they are filled by, determined mostly internally), as well as based on a sort of rotation, voluntarily depending upon availability of people, and a bases of needs and skills. Where sporadic tasks are needed, people are to be paid 5 Ecos per hour. A new cooperative was further set up to

facilitate and provide payment for those working in CIC's operations fulltime (or 15 hours plus per week), in a monthly income of 350 Ecobasicas, providing also housing and access to basic needs such as food (remuneration through CIC's AC, Ecobasicas, is explained in next subchapter of economic models).

Members are also invited to become involved in the Working Committees (or Nodes) to facilitate and envision the organizational structure and management of CIC, which are: 1) People, 2) Communication, 3) Economic, legal and production, 4) Coordination, 5) Needs exchange and 6) Coordination of Central Purchasing (CCC). Additionally, there are thematic groups working on the issues and needed services for collective well-being, such as, education, health, food, housing, energy, and transportation, and commissions to facilitate intercommunications and guides for decision-making between them. Common services are further organized across nodes, networks, and regional scales (although still supporting a decentralized structure) into central coordination for purchasing of goods and internal services (legal, photocopying, web hosting, and accounting).

The internal organization requires of members varying degrees of commitment and volunteer hours, dependent upon their level of interest and involvement, as it is not mandatory.

Within these forms of networks, collectives, and projects, people tend to organize in the form of assemblies. CIC promotes and applies the model of assembly to its associated 'political bodies' for debate and decision-making¹⁰⁰, described as "assuming a horizontal space, where all voices are heard and respected"¹⁰¹. The assembly is open to all, including non-members.

The following are different processes for decision-making of CIC and its affiliated and internal networks.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix 1: CIC principles

¹⁰¹ Organizational proposal to the 15M, Cooperativa Integral Catalana, October, 2011

4.2.3 Decision-making Models

Participation of members in the decision-making processes of CIC is a mix of consensus, participatory, deliberative, and direct democracy, the model for use, depending on the type of meeting, range of action, and focus, is typically decided upon beforehand, but tends towards consensus. CIC also recognizes, that within its integrated members, networks, nodes, and thematic groups, each assembly decides how to participate, not to exclude the individual, but openly promotes decentralized and autonomous decision-making¹⁰² to strengthen the autonomy of the local and maintain open space for participation and inclusion.

As per the assembly model, members (and open to non-members) are invited to join the CIC permanent and general assemblies / meetings (both held monthly open to all members). Permanent assemblies are attended by permanent groups, representatives and delegates of those groups, (but still open to all members where anyone can make a proposal for the agenda), officially requiring a minimum amount of members, as well as hosting discussions on whether decisions and work should be applied to the nodes, working groups, or up to the individual. These are typically held in Barcelona. General assemblies tend to deal with ongoing issues, which are labelled within as for information, discussion, or decision-making, and held in a different place (usually at a Ecoxarxa location, or associated project like Calafou). Both assemblies deal with decisions that affect all actors of CIC, but those that prove to need further discussion and deliberation are more suited for the general assembly.

In support of transparency and accountability, draft agendas of the meetings are to be sent out to all members via email and through 'the social network of CIC'. As well, all previous agreements are revocable through consensus in the self-recognition of experimentation, and maintaining an openness to improvement.

¹⁰² Guide to Host the CIC (2012), translated in part by Mattia.

As per the CIC guidelines, assemblies will reformulate proposals until consensus can be reached, but also recognizes that in the consensus model that there are occasions of ‘staged false consensus’, where “in order to accelerate the processes of decision making, ignoring a (small) minority that opposes the proposal (consensus ghost)”, as well as “the risk of having troublemakers or ‘trolls’ in the assembly to prevent systematically reached consensus”¹⁰³.

Deliberative democracy, is typically used for more technical decisions, which can be defined as beyond a simple counting of votes, but a practice which degrowth author Diriu says “includes gathering information, meetings between different experts, simulations, the definition of priorities and the construction of shared proposals can help to contain purely individualistic interests” (2012, p.559). Examples of when this form has been applied are usually regarding technical issues of CIC currency valuations and internal payments¹⁰⁴, which still relies on a form of consensus, but takes votes for determining direction.

In an example of “re-appropriating technological tools” (Catteneo et al., 2012), and applied for such models above, CIC developed a platform for ‘proposal management’ called the Decision Support System (DSS)¹⁰⁵, which, as the name describes, is a tool to allow virtual participation in decision-making assemblies, in compliment with the threads of discussion on CIC’s online social network¹⁰⁶ for deliberations and voting. This was created also as an aid for contributions across the territories and regions for extended use for those that cannot easily travel to meetings. However, in personal communications with an active core member, it was also recognized that not all members of CIC were necessarily in advantageous positions to access the internet for their participation in DSS, further speaking to other limitations for informed decision-making which I found for myself, and in conversations with others, that significant amounts of time were typically required, which

¹⁰³ Organizational proposal to the 15M, Cooperativa Integral Catalana, October, 2011

¹⁰⁴ A specific example involved multiple proposals regarding the relation of the AC, Ecobasicas to Ecos, that were deliberated online and in meetings, then voted upon also online, votes that were accounted for also in a physical meeting (Vado communications, 2012, and website).

¹⁰⁵ <http://dss.cooperativaintegral.cat/> See Appendix 8 for further description and its practical use.

¹⁰⁶ <https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/> - which is hosted and apart of the nonprofit ‘technopolitical’ organization, n-1 (<https://n-1.cc>), which is part of the expanded virtual project of the Lorea networks (<https://lorea.org>).

may have contributed also to low numbers of participation at times (motivations for involvement).

A lot of deliberations and decision-making within CIC regards the economic support of its members and the tools they use, which may be seen, and are at times, complex. However, this also provides a means and access to engage politically in economic decision-making, empowering members to make decisions on their own behalf, and in hearing other's opinions (particularly regarding shared needs) in consideration of the community as a whole. Where people feel ill-informed on the mechanics of the models and their use of them employed in CIC, the organization has been making increased efforts to host workshops and trainings on these issues, and beyond their use of alternative economic means of living, members are encouraged to become more involved, as well through volunteer time – which may be 'compensated' through food, lodging if viable and available.

4.3 Economic Models & Mechanisms, Tools of Conviviality

CIC states its aims as being: To build a network of cooperative economic relations and solidarity between people and social enterprises, to get out of the market rules and not controlled by the state. To make CIC a space to promote and grow organic products and local services necessary for our day to day needs, and promote new projects related to self-employment to meet real needs.¹⁰⁷

Like degrowth, CIC rejects consumer capitalism, and conspicuous consumption, and instead attempts to foster economic, market, and consumption relations based upon human needs and meaningful relationships between members, in attempts to recognize also the benefits and limitations of their ecological surroundings.

The cooperative model recognizes each member equally (rather than the one dollar, one vote shareholder right) in promoting "fair economic relations between producers and consumers, [utilizing] cooperative guidance to make the calculation of fair prices based on

¹⁰⁷ Guide to Host the CIC (2012)

their costs and needs of consumers”¹⁰⁸. Further, exchanges between partners are not considered a commercial transaction so the VAT (government tax) is 0%¹⁰⁹. Through the legal protections of the cooperative, CIC also has ‘volunteer’ legal advisors and lawyers as members to help provide legal services to all members. As well, as a legally recognized cooperative, CIC is in a position to receive package discounts from cellphone services, which as the accounts are internally managed, members may pay in part with the CIC alternative currency, Ecobasicas.

Exchanges take place at fairs, and ecobiotigas (including free stores), which are referred to as Shopping Centers, located and managed by the assembly of a core Ecoxarxa or corresponding local/nuclei, or are arranged virtually utilizing the Community Exchange System (CES) and by emails sent out of CIC lists of wants, needs and offerings. Coordination of Central Purchasing and Stores is an internal management service/store which coordinates and attempts to track the movement of products between regions and associated ecobiotigas and centres which is to offer products to all ecoxarxes at the same price, provided the products are not perishable. It essentially also buys products on behalf of CIC to distribute goods where they are needed or demanded amongst networks and user, as well as ‘internally’¹¹⁰.

To support the aims, from their welcome guide, CIC defines its economic model¹¹¹ based on:

1. Sharing of Resources and Space (and Donations) – “Sharing refers to the common enjoyment of a resource or space” to develop closer inter-personal relations and foster community building.
2. Bartering - “Barter is the exchange of goods / services for other goods / services” in non-monetary forms, also known as the free economy.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Legal taxes are paid by the CIC to the government as a registered cooperative.

¹¹⁰ This is an involved process in tracking of purchases, depending upon the source and type of currency used. See Appendix 9: Excerpts of Communications with Vado (CIC currency manager).

¹¹¹ See ‘Defining the economic model of CIC’ online for links to deliberations on key issues: <https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/pg/pages/view/70267>

3. Use of Community Currencies – referred to as “Form of money used to assign a value to goods and services to those areas where the traditional barter share and cannot be carried out”

a) ECOcoop (COOP) – “used to assess the trade and purchase / sales”, and is ‘accessible’ to “those who don’t live in a bioregion [or Ecoarxa] with its own social currency can use the ECOcoop”, and is only to exist in virtual form.

b) ECObasic (CIEB) – “form of basic wage. It is not ‘accumulatable’ nor exchangeable, and only those receiving the basic wage will be entitled to use it”, which can be used to buy goods and services through the Central Store or internal services (allocations of these are thought to be available to all members, but in positions approved by the assemblies).

c) Use of the Community Exchange System (CES)¹¹²

d) Virtual Euros – “Euro Virtual Trading it's an application of the CES system to be able to move Euros between CES accounts without the need of making transactions between real bank accounts”, according to Vado, CIC had not yet implemented this feature (Personal Communications, April, 2012).

e) Official Euros – “for dealing with the capitalism economic system and concluding charges and payments that are still not 100% integrated with the community [solidarity] economy”, but is refused as a means for exchange.¹¹³

In CIC, money is ‘created’ by forms of exchange, utilizing the LETS model, while, recognizing local currencies of participating Ecoarxes, which may also use a time based model. CIC’s two different currencies (together, they are referred to as ‘Ecos’, which some of the Ecoarxes also use as a basis) are based upon separate accounting principles, as they serve

¹¹² CES helps document and organize economic activity, providing a transparent tracking of accounts and exchanges of each user, where one can post and modify bids and offers, comparing to other exchanges on the network, which as Didac-Costa further notes: “Thus the control to potential abuses is decentralized and collective”, remarking also that “It simplifies enormously the organization of a LETS kind of network, which until recently meant a hard work in the coordination of accounting, which now becomes automatic” (2012).

¹¹³ Following this description, is a disclaimer qualifying why Euros are refused for exchange, summarized, that through its private issuance via debt, it promotes competition and corruption. However, Euros are still accepted within CIC in ‘informal’ exchanges in conjunction with Ecos and/or barter, but not accounted for within the CIC accounting virtual AC system.

different but similar functions. Ecobasicas essentially do not merge with Ecocoops, although they are ‘service’ created, they are ‘backed’ or balanced by products which are available within CIC. My understanding that this separation (as a recent change) was not only a way to track and balance Ecos being created through internal labour¹¹⁴ and consumption, but to resolve a growing internal debt in CIC¹¹⁵. Ecos are also accounted separately from Euros.

Ecos may also be ‘bought’ by Euros or accounting an inflow of Euros through membership fees and payments for goods and services to help compensate for needed expenditures within the institutions and infrastructure of the ‘official’ system¹¹⁶. Although prices are still pegged also to the Euro to some degree (based on members dependence upon it, and means to guide valuations), goods and services are negotiable between users and tend to be set lower in Ecos to encourage local spending within CIC. Values for (re)localization and autonomy building are in essence reflected in the price. Further, in promoting local ‘business’ in the offering of services, some members, in becoming autonomous service providers, relayed this encourages repairing and recycling (like in open source ecology), skill sharing, and providing local self-serviced health and education services, is also seen to contribute to a decrease in energy use.

Direct barter, and integrations of local currencies (virtual and paper, particularly) that do not utilize the CES, do not use an internal accounting system, or if they do, do not update it to CIC, is not numerically accounted for on CIC’s ‘books’. Considering this as well, at this time, I cannot give an accurate reflection to the extent of use of the various AC that CIC

¹¹⁴ A separate ‘cooperative’ was since set up to facilitate an internal structure for CIC ‘employees’, called RECA:<https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/pg/pages/view/53213>

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 9 on communications with Vado regarding recent decisions in creating this new accounting stream and dealing with the CIC ‘debt’.

¹¹⁶ CIC also receives substantial anonymous donations in Euros, ‘rumored’ to be received by Duran well beyond the amount of Euros (almost 500,000) that he expropriated from the banks in 2008. When I asked Duran about whether he had received donations to cover the CIC ‘debt’, he only replied that there was no debt (Personal Communications, 2012). Unfortunately due my time and access limitations, I did not verify CIC’s books for entries of donations, however, based on communications with Vado, I will briefly speak to CIC’s ‘debt’ in the next subchapter.

utilizes. However, most Ecoarxes have begun utilizing only virtual currencies and updating their records of transactions later to CIC (Didac-Costa, 2012).

CIC Ecoarxes allow a -100 unit debt, expanded to -500 when the user starts offering goods and services,¹¹⁷ which is to encourage consumer members to become prosumers. CIC also allows members to be only consumers if the member doesn't have something to currently offer may exchange or *buy* Ecos with Euros, pegged approximately 1:1 (Didac-Costa, 2011, emphasis his, see also Appendix 9 on the compared valuations).

Where members may be limited for self-initiation and financing of entrepreneurial ventures, CIC developed the Cooperativa d'Autofinancament Social en Xarxa (CASX - loosely translated, cooperative of social self-finance in network). CASX was launched March 15th, 2012 (the same day as the Rebel leu vos action) based on a June proposal through the Indignados Barcelona network. CIC states that CASX is the first financial cooperative that does not charge interest, based on non-fractional banking like credit unions (inspired also by democratic, non-interest JAK bank in Sweden, and Banca Etica - Italy, Fiare - Spain, for their sustainability and social loan principles), and creates a reserve fund for collective projects. Criteria for projects "should meet certain social criteria previously agreed political and ecological as well as being strategically attractive to social transformation"¹¹⁸.

4.4 Tensions and Challenges in the Search for Autonomy

In my fieldwork, there didn't seem to be a real question of solidarity between members and of CIC, nor *serious* dismissals to make efforts to deal with problems, however, lacking of resources (labour and time) influenced how decisions were made at times, and tension did arise by internal power relations, which the models of organization sought to rectify. In their goal of self-sufficiency in the creation and maintenance of a new social economic

¹¹⁷ This is according to Didac-Costa [2011], but during that summer were discussions at meetings to set the negative limit to -300 for all users (field notes, 2011). This would have to be verified in examining meetings' minutes.

¹¹⁸ www.casx.cat

system, but in a recognized dependence (in-part and by degrees) upon the current capitalist system, some of CIC's main challenges also lie in the compromise to maintain autonomous organization within the structure they fundamentally oppose.

While some members like Didac-Costa, as relayed in a previous subchapter, seemed to maintain a reflexive recognition to this dependence, others, whether for ideological or practical reasons, expressed discontent with the project and left CIC. This may seem to support Romano's idea that because of a "multiplication of possible visions" cannot easily lead to a shared vision (2012), CIC's political economic structures and models maintains a space of flexibility and reflexiveness for change in a morphing shared vision, constituted by the ever-changing individual visions guided by its clearly stated principles and aims towards a self-institutionalizing society.

However, this is not to say that those that came into 'conflict' with CIC were without cause, nor that CIC as an organization can yet fully provide for its members a complete safety net (so to speak). One member who was working at the CIC Barcelona biotiga volunteer had vocalized wanting to quit. She was not living in a squat, could not earn enough Ecos to supplement what she needed to earn in Euros for rent¹¹⁹. In a following meeting of five people, including a CIC boardmember, she was told CIC could not increase the 3 Ecos she is making per hour, although there had been some discussion to increase the hourly earnings to least 5 Ecos (which this has since been changed to). Soon after she was able to find part-time work at a café for her need in Euros. I did not find out how the 2 Eco increase aided in her purchasing power to meet basic needs within and outside CIC, but I presumed her increase in Ecos purchasing power alleviated dependence on Euros for goods (and possibly services) to be directed towards her rent.

Members outside urban centres, acknowledged in CIC, were more easily positioned to benefit from the local exchange structure, such as being able to more easily find housing in rural where prices were lower or exchangeable for space with home owners. At CICs first

¹¹⁹ Ecos, then, could only be used to pay for mainly basic food stuffs and most extensive exchanges occurred at the local Ecoarxas outside of the city.

AGM in July, 2011 (field notes), it was noted that there were some people who operates only by Ecos (in rural areas), and they should be supported rather than the people trapped by the Euro system. At the meeting someone said that this may exclude then those who work in Euros. A suggestion followed that those they pay in memberships in Euros (one of CIC's sources for Euros) should be taxed in order to strengthen the Ecos system. It was then acknowledged there would be danger in creating a difference of rich and poor because of the euro and eco split system¹²⁰.

CIC, in attempts to also recognize (im)balances of currency flows, or more generally, wealth, also set up its own internal cooperative, RECA, for CIC 'employees' receiving Ecobasicas¹²¹, in adherence to maintaining the autonomous structures of the local and Ecoxarxa memberships (a sense of autonomy to scale), when the debt that had been incurring within CIC was arising, in part, due to internal expenditures that the overall membership did not see as directly benefiting all members. Ultimately however, RECA was created to support expanding its internal capacity in meeting basic needs of members, as almost a form of social security, and is of focus, lest, as communicated on its website, CIC devolve into "another capitalist society out of control"¹²².

CIC also relies on anonymous donations, amounts on the 'books' I did not verify unfortunately¹²³ – although these amounts are cited openly at AGMs and through 'annual reports', but donations to Enric Duran directly (and to be distributed amongst projects)

¹²⁰ Refer to Appendix for discussion on later attempts to balance the Ecos debt (from which this discussion had arisen), which at this time was sitting at approximately 15 thousand Ecos on the books (which in 2012 grew to 27,000 – See Appendix 9), where consumers or purchasers were buying goods but without a backing of Euros, goods, or labour (working for the cooperative or in exchange for other goods and services can also be counted towards earning Ecos). The 'tax' suggestion at the time of writing was not implemented.

¹²¹ September 29th, 2012, Vado updated me via email that "CIC's basic rent currency, ecobasic, is evolving well. This is a very interesting moment because CIC will show the big potential that it's own complementary currency system has. Ecobasics are flowing and will act as a machine that will put ecos on move too".

¹²² <https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/>

¹²³ Again, I was confronted with navigation and translation difficulties via the CIC website to verify this information.

were rumoured to have surpassed the half million Euros he expropriated. For specific projects, such as the more recent publication and distribution of ¡Rebelaos!, organizers sought out donations in euros from crowdfunding activities.

In the questionnaire I asked if since joining CIC, members shared more of their personal resources within CIC and/or community. A few people didn't understand the question, those that did answered generally yes - in time, knowledge and services, and one person interpreting assets to mean 'tangible assets', replied no. To elucidate which I believe demonstrates tensions from the different interpretations of ideologies in sharing of resources and assets, here are Didac-Costa's feelings on this:

To understand the cooperative and ecoarxas, the important thing is not so much what has happened until now, but what can it be. I talk to so many people and they say you are supposed to be so cooperative. And I say, what can you expect? We are still in the capitalist life. We still have rent to pay. We still have jobs where we receive pay and are not sharing it with everybody. Even if we are anarchists, I don't know anyone who sharing his revenue with other people, so there is no anarchy. To understand until now, we are still just at the beginning, one year or two years now, of working on something really big, with high expectations. It's like the 15M movement. If you want to analyze it, you say, okay, you can say how many days we were in the square. To me it's about the system and how people are beginning to gather and share information.

Although CIC members are not sharing their revenues directly, according to Didac-Costa, the use in AC to facilitate local exchanges could be considered a means of sharing and maintaining wealth at the local level (also a recognition of non-market capitals). He estimated that between 20-80% purchases were with local currencies, noting a higher use in rural areas, referring to Montseny Ecoarxa that 60-70% of their economy was in local currencies and self sufficiency projects. Didac said he required at the time of interview 300 Euros/month, residing at Calafou (2012). From the questionnaire, two respondents estimated that their use of Euros had gone down by 50%, another relayed he did not try to use Euros as an activist principle, while the other four said by very little or not at all.

However, most people responded that they consumed less, one noting that this was in part due to a dwindling income in Euros, and another by self-attempts to have a less consumerist lifestyle (noting, not because they had “reached [their] economic objectives at CIC”).

As an example of ideological tensions, a member decided to leave CIC because, as she relayed, that she did not like that the Euro was still being used, and that if CIC did indeed represent a movement and an example of an alternative to capitalism, they would only use the Ecos. ‘K’ had been working for the CIC Barcelona biotiga in the mornings and loved the idea of CIC, wanting to contribute to actions and people towards a post-capitalist society. She told me that she however saw the CIC still seemed hierarchal in its activities by being told to be creative and independent in her actions, but still receiving ‘orders’ from Duran with no chance for inter-communication.

The above story also speaks to internal conflicts of relations, particular to organizational capacities. In late June, 2011 meeting, and at following meetings it was recognized that CIC faces the challenge of more and more people wanting to join but not having organizational, financial, and human resources capacity to manage these requests. Duran said, “people need to make money, have jobs, maintain a life,” referring to the idea that the organization needs to pay people fairly to run it. At that time Duran was handling all of the membership requests, having to answer 50-70 emails per day. The board and membership has recognized Duran in a leadership role, which was evident by all of the meetings I had attended, he lead and moderated them. One member reflected to me that he thought of Duran as a practical automaton, but in a positive and respectful light, and visibly emotionally moved, that he couldn’t believe how dedicated Duran was the to project. Duran wasn’t the only person that I could see putting in extraneous hours. I witnessed a core of five to ten people, just within CIC, and these numbers grew and rotated during my stay there, who were always typing, talking, and engaging (not to mention constant bags under people’s eyes). At Calafou in the cumulative twenty days I stayed there, people would get up early in the morning, eat breakfast and have a meeting setting the agenda for the day and work beyond dusk. The dedication by many was evident.

Does this speak to what Romano (2012) thought “would ultimately require from its members a tireless over-commitment and/or a savage state of deprivation” in working towards the goals of autonomy and self-sufficiency? Or could also this potentially speak to the creation of ‘expert’ positions in CIC¹²⁴, or present an example to a conflict with institutions of the CIC? I cannot comment or speak for everyone, but from what I witnessed and experienced, a tireless commitment (over?) was definitely enacted by some. Like ‘K’, I myself became frustrated in the lack of communications and transparency at times, which I attributed to my language barriers and potential cultural misunderstandings, however, in time, realized that the organizational capacity was indeed limited¹²⁵.

Ultimately, I believe such tensions and challenges are inherent in social and social change organizations, like all human forms of relation, if in the searching for autonomy may come into conflicts with ‘institutions’ even within CIC, certainly do not compare to those conflicts with state and market forces that respond with, as Bonauti describes, mystification, exclusion, and violence (2012).

More than mutual affinity, relations in CIC, internal to the organization, and by exchanges of goods and services, required a certain level of trust. Through my interviews and fieldwork, I did not find specific and obvious examples of tensions in this regard, although this issue was recognized and spoken to at meetings in its general sense for the need of trust.

¹²⁴ I refer here also to creation of roles and positions internal to CIC, my position as photocopy coordinator being one of them. Initially my position had not been approved by the assembly, but after the creation of Ecobasicas and the internal ‘cooperative’ or working group of RECA, proposals for new positions are put forth for approval to the assembly, which Vado stated, this “procedure can force CIC to be transparent and to break some possible circles of power” (March, 2012, Personal Communications, see Appendix 9).

¹²⁵ See Appendix 11: Excerpt of Personal Reflections on my CIC Position (August, 2011)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

To conclude, I believe Cooperativa Integral Catalana's maintenance of a shared vision within its mechanisms for inclusion, flexibility, and experimentation contributes to informing the potential form of a wider shared imaginary. This may not be one labelled as degrowth, or perhaps labelled at all (unless revisiting history 100 years later), but if following projections of an evitable degrowth and decline, Western civilization and the dominant hegemonic imaginary will be forced to dramatically change in all facets of life.

Referring back to my introduction, members of the CIC, for whom the crisis has in part hit, have endeavoured on a path of behavioural change. While my findings show that some members' own visions of degrowth are not fully inline with degrowth literature, nevertheless the CIC shares principles and beliefs of, and strives for a *degrowing* society, utilizing tools of conviviality in both its political and economic modelling and structures supporting the main degrowth's objectives of a deepening of democracy and (re)politicizing of the economy, voluntarily downscaling, and seeking autonomy for local projects and empowered individuals. CIC has enacted its degrowth multidimensional vision by striving for a more holistic understanding of the crisis facing our current society and by working toward enhanced inclusivity to be uninhibited by the repressive and un-egalitarian nature of our current monetary system under capitalism.

Albeit further questions and contradictions remain to be studied to inform the 'bigger picture' and to consider weighted variables such as changing external power forces between different scales; for example if by viewing the control of energy as a holding of power, when conventional fossil-fuel energy declines, how will this affect distributions of power? Or from declines in fresh water? Current measures, policies, and attempts to service the earth's populations' basic needs, considering the current ecological crisis, have not alleviated poverty and global imbalances of wealth. How will continual and then drastic declines affect the global poor? The future is unforeseeable, but if the present is telling, a optimistic forecast requires radical changes to be made by the West/North, at the individual, community, regional, national, global, and inter levels. Through a zero-sum lens, physical resources will have to be distributed and shared throughout the globe, while

maintaining balanced and healthy local systems. The choice then continues to be whether for the common people in their remaining positions of relative privilege to allow the concentrations of power to be further consolidated, and their democratic and autonomous rights to be further eroded, or to follow examples efforts like CIC.

Complimentary and more in-depth studies in material flows, energy throughputs analysis, consumption patterns, political economics, trades in goods and services, or by methods such as the multi-criteria evaluation (MCE), would help to gain deeper understandings of how the political and economic models employed here could lead to comprehending whether and how degrowth is or could be occurring.

Appendices

Appendix 1: CIC General Principles and Aims



(CIC Logo)

General Principles

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

- Concern for the common good and importance for the well-being of the individual.
- Letting go of materialism.
- Cooperation and solidarity in social transformation.
- Transition based on the day to day to convert utopia into reality.
- Direct relationship between practical action and theory.
- Cooperative and inclusively networked society for all.

SOCIETY

- Equity and social justice.
- Equality in diversity.
- Self-and mutual support.
- Commitment and self-evaluation.
- Share with society our practices.

ECONOMY

- Address the needs of people above all other interests and each contributing according to their means.
- Exchange based on solidarity.
- Promote non-monetary forms of exchange, free economy, direct barter, community economy.
- Establish fair economic relations between producers and consumers: cooperative guidance to make the calculation of fair prices based on their costs and needs of consumers.
- Measurement of degrowth: CIC shall direct and guide producers based on demand.
- The ECOcoops never be converted into euros and will not accept any interest on ECOcoops loans.

ECOLOGY

- Ecology and Permaculture.
- Degrowth and Sustainability.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

- Democracy: direct, deliberative, participatory.
- Self-management and decentralization.
- Transparency.
- Subsidiarity: from local to global.
- Assemblerisme (Assembly system)

*The aims of CIC*¹²⁶

Stated Objectives of the CIC:

SHORT TERM

- Maintain co-operative network of economic relations without state intervention, and promote organic products and enhance local production in a free exchange of goods and services.
- Maintain socio-economic model that guarantees coverage of basic needs outside of the capitalist system.

LONG TERM

- To stimulate the flow of Eco currency and reducing social cost in euros.
- Reduce price of products or green for sale direct producers.
- Promote self-employment.

Appendix 2: CIC Membership Types

- Socio service:** would be subject to legalized economic activity and who participates in the comprehensive cooperative to have economic exchanges with other partners, but that does not use the cooperative to make invoices abroad.
- Partner prosumer:** the fellow would be in addition to consuming goods and services, produce (producer + consumer), and make economic exchanges with other partners, both in euros and social currency.
- Partner of consumption:** is characterized by eating only within the network, both in euro and euro currency.
- Partner autonomous:** would be participating in the cooperative and be integral to both economic activity outward in euros, to have exchanges with other partners in both euros and social currency.
- Socio related.** A type of partner who does not pay fees, but its involvement is necessary to put on the register of members and does not have rights or duties within the cooperative.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Aims and Principles translated from the CIC Training Guide (created November, 2011) and can be downloaded here: <https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/pg/file/read/68748/diapositives-formaci-la-cic-des-de-0>

¹²⁷ This CIC brochure text is google-translated from the original Catalan, August 15th, 2011. I have made a few minor changes but still need to have these verified from a professional translator. (<https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/pg/pages/view/53980>)

Appendix 3: Describing the term, Imaginary

Imaginary, in the degrowth movement, follows Castoriadis' definition, being: "the unceasing and essentially *undetermined* (social, historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of 'something'. What we call 'reality' and 'rationality' are its works" (1998, p.7). From my understanding and in relation to society and movements, imaginary is referred to the make-up, representation, and projection of collective values, the understanding and play of ideas upon reality, and the enactment of them. Better, as Bob Jessop describes, imaginary is a "mental map' ...which many actually help to construct the reality that they purport to map" (2012, p.17) in the way that "imaginaries often include prospective and descriptive elements, anticipating or recommending new lines of action, which may guide present and future (non)-decisions and (in)actions in a world pregnant with possibilities" (ibid). The dominant social economic imaginary (collective and individual), as the degrowth movement refers to, is characterized by materialism, individualism, development, capitalism, consumerism, and ultimately, growth.

Appendix 4: Sources of Degrowth

The popular notion, as presently accepted of "de-growth"¹²⁸ arose from the works of bio-economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen beginning in the 1970s in his dispute against the free market logic of growth in observing bio-economic implications via the law of entropy, like Soddy did similarly in the 1930s.

Also like Soddy, Georgescu-Roegen recognized the problems in the creation of credit as representing the creation of real wealth (Demaria et al., forthcoming). He proposed a "bioeconomics program" for a "necessary decline of the economy", (Lavallois, 2010. p.

¹²⁸ Degrowth was first coined in French, "Decroissance" and holds more positive connotations (Cattaneo et al., 2012). The use of the word degrowth in its English translation is currently being disputed within the movement as to whether the negative connotation of the word will effectively capture and resonate accordingly with a mainstream English audience (via attendance at latest international degrowth conference in Montreal, 2012). Kallis supports the 'de' for the "active nature" in ridding "the imperative of growth, institutionally and mentally" (2011. P.877).

2272), a decline or degrowth he also viewed as inevitable (See also Bonaiuti, 2012). Although he had initially sided with, he contended with the Club of Rome's "mild views" on growth which followed after their 1972 published *Limits to Growth* in that growth must not only cease, but decline (Levallois, 2010). He also criticized sustainable development, as defined by the 1987 Brundtland Commission and as characterized by economic growth, being "one of the most toxic recipes", as it became a dominant approach within environmental discourses and political policies (Bonaiuti, 2011, p.xi).

The founder of *bio-economics*¹²⁹, ecological economics (Bonaiuti, 2011, Hornborg, 2009), the latter which Georgescu-Roegen however distinguished himself being apart from (Levallois, 2010), and of degrowth (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010), his works influenced economists like mentee Herman Daly who developed the concept of a steady-state economy (SSE) based on Georgescu-Roegen's bioeconomics and John Stuart Mill's writings on the stationary state (Kerschner, 2009). As defined by Daly and co-author Joshua Farley, the SSE is: "The economy viewed as a subsystem in dynamic equilibrium with the parent ecosystem/biosphere that sustains it. Quantitative growth is replaced by qualitative development or improvement as the basic goal" (2004, p.440). SSE is conceptualized as a zero-growth economy based on sustainable levels of stock and throughput; stock being capital (natural, human-made, and humans themselves) (ibid), and throughput being, "the flow of natural resources from the environment, through the economy, and back to the environment as waste" (ibid, p.6). Both SSE and degrowth take into account the rebound effect, which is an increased efficiency in energy production does not prevent growth in consumption (as also explained by the Jevons Paradox [see Polimeni et al., 2008]). Degrowth is based on the idea that economic growth in being "bound to non-renewable energy and material sources, post unrealistic expectations of efficiency improvements" (Kallis, 2011, p.87). Further problems arise in replacing conventional energy with renewable energy sources that are of low energy yields (ibid) and where renewable energy

¹²⁹ Which Bonaiuti notes represents a new paradigm to the standard neo-classical and Marxist approaches to economics (2011).

production is dependent also upon finite resources such as solar energy capture being dependent upon rare elements such as indium (Kerschner, 2010).

Environmental scientist and degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis explains that “sustainable degrowth can be defined from an ecological-economic perspective as a socially sustainable and equitable reduction (and eventually stabilisation) of society’s throughput” (2011, p. 874: Martinez-Alier et al., 2010), similarly approached to Daly’s description of the SSE. While there may not be an absolute consensus (Kerschner, 2010: Martinez-Alier et al., 2010), degrowth thinkers see the SSE as an optimal goal through degrowth (Kallis, 2011), but not necessarily as a means in itself, nor a goal that can actually be necessarily attainable due to the socio, technical, and political complexities in achieving it, as degrowth is also (ibid). Georgescu-Roegen himself outwardly rejected Daly’s concept for not including a declining state, and which the degrowth movement criticizes, particularly of Daly’s approach to SSE, as being institutionally top-down (ibid), as well in a “possible incompatibility between foundational institutions of market economies and the goals of degrowth to a steady-state” due to the power imbalances within this schema (Kallis, 2011, p.875).

Additionally, in what remains an “uncomfortable topic” in the degrowth movement, both Daly and Georgescu-Roegen agreed a decrease in population would be favorable in regards to the planet’s carrying capacity; however, a marked departure is where Daly supported a proposal of tradeable birth permits, (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010: Kerschner, 2010). Degrowth proponents, typically anti-Malthusian (ibid), see that a drop in population will be inherent in following peak and drop trends (like the limits to growth forecast), however, the focus for degrowth, is that this decrease should occur in a voluntary, peaceful, and sustainable way, recognizing the principles of ‘open borders’¹³⁰ and reproductive freedom.

¹³⁰ Degrowth stands behind the progressive idea of ‘open borders’ – especially in lieu of increases of refugees from environmental and social conflicts, compared to the protectionist and anti-immigration stance of US based organization, which Herman Daly supports, <http://www.carryingcapacity.org/whatis.html>

Today, Georgescu-Roegen's original idea of degrowth and work in bioeconomics has been revived and is supported by activists and academics as a cornerstone of degrowth (Kerschner, 2010, Bonaiuti, 2011) in that "conventional economic accounting is false not only as it disregards the physical and biological aspects of the economy but because it cannot reflect societal well-being" (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010, p. 1744).¹³¹

Cattaneo et al. note, the degrowth project includes more than an assessment of our biophysical limits (2012) in that degrowth combines and does not embrace a single philosophical current (which themselves cross over into one another) (Demaria et al., forthcoming). In their 2010 paper, Schneider, Kallis, and Martinez-Alier outline five intellectual, philosophical, and social movement sources of degrowth, being: culturalist, democracy, "meaning of life", ecology, and bioeconomics (described above). Demaria et al., in following Flipo (2007), define these currents as sources, and add justice as another main source of degrowth, in order to find a common definition of degrowth. Following I will describe these sources as they pertain to the understanding of the degrowth project and shared vision, which will be delineated further in my theoretical section for relating to my case study.

The ***culturalist source*** has roots in anthropology and is derived from analysis and critique of the development model imposed upon the south by the 'hegemonic imaginary' (Demaria et al., forthcoming) and where "development has come to signify an indefinite growth" (Castoriadis, 1985, p.25). Drawing from post-development theory, in the writings of Arturo Escobar and other prominent critics of development, degrowth critiques uniform development, as culturally and economically dominated by the west/north, which includes a critique of sustainable development as a 'catch all term' for remedying ecological and social problems and imbalances. It is seen as an oxymoron because development is neither sustainable nor self-sustaining (Latouche, 2009, p.9-10).

¹³¹ For related examples of monetary proposals, see Ruzzene, M (2008), Mark Anielski's Genuine Wealth Accounting System (2007) as a basis, Douthwaite's Ecological Money Proposed systems(2011), Magrit Kennedy's Interest and Inflation Free Money (1997), and Hornborg's paper, Possible Money and Impossible Machines (2011).

In recognition of the imperative for the rich to degrow, Latouche notes that, paradoxically, the idea of degrowth was also born in the South, specifically in Africa where projects “for an autonomous and economical society in fact emerged from the critique of development” (2009, p.56). To reiterate from the introduction, the degrowth movement does not propose a degrowth for poorer countries or populations, and recognizes people’s sovereign rights over their resources, livelihoods and cultures, supports a sharing of innovations, and movements across borders, in promoting global justice and sustainability (resounding sentiments by the anti-globalization and solidarity economy movements).

This source also criticizes the dominance of market values over human values, and calls to politicize the economy in order to decolonize the imaginary while reprioritizing and reimagining economics (Fournier, 2008). This includes a return to the study of oikonomia (stewardship and well-being) in being the original grounds for economics (Hornborg 2010, Anielski 2007), to include the social dimensions of practices, markets, and exchange, instead of by measures of chrematistics and the “commodification of human relations” in which self-interest, accumulation, and utility maximization are priorities of today’s economics (Demaria et al., forthcoming). This source also comes from work in feminist studies, such as Marilyn Waring’s work to recognize ‘informal’ labour of women (1989).

Marcel Mauss, Serge Latouche, Karl Polanyi, and Marshall Sahlins are authors often sourced in this analysis (ibid). Some of the proposals in the culturalist stream promote expanding and reordering political economic values including cooperativism and reciprocity, and changes in “value-articulating institutions” (ibid).

The *quest for democracy* source includes changing such institutions to allow for and increase democratic measures and values, politically and economically. Critics of this source recognize the lack of democratic influence in relation to the economy, technology, the environment, and the growth prerogative (Demaria et al., forthcoming). In a degrowth transition and in the pursuit and realizing of the goal to consume and produce less (including a redistribution of wealth and power), this should be done in a “socially

emancipatory and democratizing way” (Cattaneo et al., 2012). The linkage of increased democracy to sustainable living as a degrowth goal is explored through proposals ranging from making radical changes to existing institutions (ibid: Schneider et al, 2010; Kallis, 2011) to demands for “completely new institutions based on direct and participatory democracy” (Demaria et al., forthcoming, p. 13). In these strategy ranges, prominent proposals include efforts to (re)localize democratic processes (although still questioning whether smaller inherently means more democratic [Romano, 2012]), democratize and collectivize businesses (such as cooperatives, or one-member one-vote policies), enhance autonomous decision-making and organization (thus more diverse across scales), distribute justice, and reclaim the citizen over the consumer.

Intellectual influences on this source include Ivan Illich for his development of the idea of ‘tools of conviviality’, Cornelius Castoriadis for his work and advocacy of autonomy in the idea of a self-institutionalizing society (Demaria et al., forthcoming).

Following is an excerpt from Castoriadis from his book, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, that efforts to stop growth would require a radical transformation of society

P.20 (Cast), Even the most ‘radical’ reactions to have emerged from within the dominant strata have not, in reality, questioned the deepest premises of the official view. Since growth creates problems which are impossible to control, and, what is more, since all processes of exponential growth must inevitably run up against some physical limits sooner or later, the ‘radical’ response has been ‘no growth’ or ‘zero growth’. No consideration has been given to the fact that, in the ‘developed’ countries, growth and gadgets are all that the system can offer the people, and that to call a halt to growth was inconceivable (or could only be done with violent social upheavals) unless there were to be a radical transformation of social organisation as a whole, including the psychic organisation of men and women (1975, p.20).

Another source is the *meaning of life and well-being*, which encompasses the seeking and efforts towards happiness and well-being, through movements in “spirituality, non-

violence, art, and voluntary simplicity” (Schneider et al., 2010), or what Demeria et al. call the “need for an inner revolution to accompany the transformations required in the outer world” (2011). I believe this source also includes what Bonauti marks in the search for autonomy is “a search for awareness, an exercise of the transformation of the self” in relaying Castoriadis thoughts on the autonomous individual being able to see the subconscious self and as influenced by controlling forces of the ‘other’ (2012, p.525). This growing awareness also allows for plurality of values in a collective project, which art and spirituality may spark and aid in both the individual and shared processes in alleviating the fetishism of growth, and better, as Kallis describes Latouche’s phrase, the ‘decolonization of the imaginary’, “an active process of liberating thought, desires and institutions from the logic of growth, productivism and accumulation for accumulation's sake” (Kallis, 2011, p. 877).

The degrowth projects shares in approaches like the Simpler Way and the eco-village movement, but goes further than building alternatives outside the system to include it within main society also (2010, Fotopoulos). Degrowth also finds similarities in the project of Transition Towns (TT) in the ‘transitional’ sense, grassroots approach, and strategy to reach the mainstream, but goes beyond the TT’s focus on peak oil and climate change (focused on apparently to simplify the issues for easier access and engagement of the mainstream) and question the “whole socioeconomic model” at also the intellectual level (Padilla, 2010, p.2). Other examples exist in Schumacher's 1973 *Small is Beautiful*, and Latouche’s 8 R’s – Re-evaluate, Reconceptualize, Restructure, Redistribute, Relocalize, Reduce, Re-use and Recycle (‘re’ to replace ‘over’ as in over-production, over-development, etc.) (2009).

Also related to this source is the critique to the cultural values related to consumption, in the challenge to understand the deeper meanings and connections of the materials we consume to relative social interactions in an analytical effort to create new ideas on how we can enact positive change (consumption as both material and meaningful [Susan Paulson, class presentations, 2011]). By virtues of enjoyment and even a sense of moral fulfillment (i.e., defending by spending – 911 United States, citizens were encouraged to spend as a

means of supporting the war economy), spending has come to define who we are (Schor, 1998, p.5) and how we relate to one another. We are all sold one standardized ideal status (ibid, p.10) – basically being rich - through calculated and manipulative channels of marketing from cradle to grave, leading people to believe we can achieve this standard if we work hard enough, and people do, but rarely are able to obtain this ideal. And even if we do, as Schor demonstrates in her statistical surveys, people feel they never have enough at every income level (1998, p.14,15). This data also relates to the Easterlin Paradox which describes the correlation between the “increasing importance of materialism in one’s life and lack of happiness” (Demaria et al., forthcoming, referencing Kasser, 2002).

Happiness economics, which researches the determination of “the relative strength of the relationship between the objective conditions of a person’s life and their life satisfaction” (NEF, p.56) also supports this degrowth source. While in academia, the definition of well-being is still debated (NEF’s NAWB: Alexander, 2012), the idea is encapsulated by one of the mottos for the degrowth movement, being: “Moins de biens, plus de liens – Fewer goods, more relationships” in promotion of the good life (Fournier, 2008). The degrowth project recognize a need for the integration of well-being as part of society’s valuation system and ethos. Although the degrowth movement is not directly promoting specific alternative indicators, elements from alternative measurement systems that could replace those based on the growth imperative, such as with the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), economist Mark Anielski’s Genuine Wealth Assessment, and the New Economic Foundation’s proposed National Accounts of Well-being, do encapsulate variables and indicators such as happiness, equality, and poverty, as Kallis sees important (2011), that could lend to a more accurate and fairer understanding of measurement for a sustainable degrowth transition. Note: rather than progress implying develop (growth as an inevitability [Heinberg, 2011]), the GPI and Heinberg call to extend its meaning to qualities of sustainability and well-being.

Another degrowth source is grounded in *ecology and defending ecosystems*, from which some the above indicators (like the GPI), as well as the Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA), attempt to account for the valuation of ecosystems - ecosystems which are perceived in degrowth as having “value in and of themselves”, but also beyond an “accounting approach”

(Demaria et al., forthcoming). Related also to the bioeconomics source, this idea lends itself again to replacing chremastics with a more holistic measure of wealth like that of oikonomia, a shared idea of many environmental and social movements pushing for environmental justice (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010).

The degrowth movement, however, sees problems inherent in determining the valuation of “externalities” and the commons, holding skepticism towards price valuation or marketization of such things like ecosystem services, pollution, and domestic work, and mechanisms such as caps and trades, which are still currently set at insignificant levels and are “mediated by the profit motive” (Kallis, 2011, p. 877-87). While a monetary valuation of natural capital does at least demonstrate its services on the books, the movement recognizes the danger of commodification of the commons – where essentials to life (for humans and the sustainability of ecosystems) are put on the market to the highest bidder. The commons signify the idea that what belongs to one, belongs to all, including future generations (Barlow, 2008, p. 6). The commons is a universal, but one that appropriates cultural and local perspectives which define “the practices that determine how nature is appropriated and utilized” (Escobar, 2006, p. 4). The principles of the commons were established on a basis of existing and foreseen abundance in careful collaborative management (Barlow 2008, p. 4), contrary to the notions of an everlasting abundance of everything¹³².

As relayed by the organization behind the GPI, Redefining Progress, the original Greek meaning of ecology “makes reference to awareness of the "house", or studying the earth and understanding how all of the parts are meant to fit together compatibly”¹³³. Related also to the well-being source, is in the shift of values in viewing ourselves as part of nature, rather than merely benefiting from it. As Castoriadis states: “It is essential to insert the ecological component into a radical democratic political programme. And the imperative to do so is all the greater in that the challenge to the values and orientations of contemporary

¹³² See Elinor Ostrom’s research on implementing and upholding principles of long-term sustainable management of the commons at the local level through collective self-governance.

¹³³ <http://www.ecologicalfootprint.org/>

society, which is implicit in such a project, is indissociable from the critique of the imaginary of ‘development’ on which we are living” (Latouche, 2009 quoting Castoriadis 2005: 246).

In the challenge of what Hornborg calls the need to politicize the environment, but also ecologize the world-system (2007, p.4), degrowth finds alternatives to the idea of “decoupling of ecological impacts from economic growth” (Demaria et al., forthcoming) with what they call a *res communis* approach, implying “an integration of humans in nature while ‘rights of nature’ might come to mean a rearguard action to preserve what remains and create areas of ecosystems regeneration” (p.9). Given the degradation of the world’s ecosystems, this is one strategy, amongst others as mentioned in other sources combined, to lessen the earth’s burden from human activity.

Justice has been the last source added, but Demaria et al. recognize other influences such as feminism, political ecology, non-violence, and more (2010). This source, however, is integral in the overall degrowth discourse in the recognition that a “degrowth of inequalities” should be the first degrowth (ibid quoting Paul Aries, p.14). This position has several explanations. First, the idea that wealth will trickle-down to the poor, where such wealth is being primarily consumed by the globe’s minority with the want and power to consume more, is rejected by degrowth, in that instead of wealth, it is waste which flows down to them (pollution such as carbon dioxide emissions [see Martinez-Alier, 2009]). Or, to exemplify global inequalities, ‘waste’ may indeed not flow to the poor - where by the tragic injustice that an estimated 17 000 children die of starvation in this world per day¹³⁴, the waste of food is rampant in the West¹³⁵. Economic growth, development, and aid, as the conventional catch-all approaches for poverty reduction, have largely been means to usher in concessions and measures for privatization of public goods and services, even the language and efforts promoting universal rights could be “market-based ethics as a mask for the restoration of class power” (Harvey 2005: 179). Second, degrowth recognizes the disproportionately placed environmental (and economic) conflicts and violence in poorer

¹³⁴ <http://www.wfp.org/content/hunger-kills-17000-children-day>

¹³⁵ <http://www.amazon.com/Waste-Uncovering-Global-Food-Scandal/dp/0393068366>

countries and areas, ecological unequal exchange, as well as poor people's immediate dependence for survival upon the services of the environment, in what Martinez-Alier calls "the environmentalism of the poor" (2009, p.1111). Further, as Demaria et al. explain, the point of redistribution between and within rich and poor countries, is not a problem of population as the issue, but of lifestyle differences (or inequalities) in consumption and energy use.

In the 1980s, 90s and onward, neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and decentralization that have dictated structural adjustment programs and development concessions on loans given to developing countries by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank ushered in a wave where public institutions and management of resources sold to corporate bidders on the open international market. Lenders of these concessional loans maintained that the purpose of the financial aid was to help countries develop their social and economic structures to compete globally while sustaining themselves nationally. Through policies of privatization, neoliberalist proponents argued that by facilitating a market of competing financial stakes, resources would be managed more efficiently (Ferguson and Derman 2005: 66). However, the effects of privatizing and selling the control over local resources and institutions were and are largely negative (Agrawal 2005, 205); it has become evident that the neo-liberalist agenda was not promoting individual basic rights but creating a world-wide economic sweep for global elites to maintain power, excluding not only local interpretations and mediations of resource management (Ferguson and Derman 2005: 65, Agrawal 2005: 43), but of the local's right to exercise power.

The idea of justice extends into the idea that an equitable distribution of wealth, and efforts towards it, seems to foster enhanced sustainable management (through also shared stewardship) and overall well-being (see Alexander, 2012). Martinez-Alier suggests putting in place institutions of redistribution for a prosperous living of the poor (where some 'growth' is still required to achieve sustainable and healthy standards) and a degrowth of the rich, which given that a decrease is already taking place in the west, along with what could be seen as a global awakening to the problems of growth and capitalism, a socially and ecologically sustainable transition could take place (2009).

It's worth noting here also that the first proposed element of Georgescu-Roegen's bioeconomic program was "the production of all instruments of war, not only war itself, should be prohibited completely," as well as the recognition that underdeveloped nations be aided quickly in achieving "the good life" including through as Levallois relays, a free movement of people across borders (2010, quoting Georgescu-Roegen 1975, 377–378).

Appendix 5: Description and Impressions from the Field of Calafou, the Techno-industrial Post-Capitalist Ecovillage (Ecolonia)

Ca L'Afou describes itself as "a space for alternative economic, technological and housing in a fully cooperative, peaceful and sustainable way, based on consensus and a smaller environmental footprint."¹³⁶ The Ca L'Afou project is partly 'managed' by CIC (including the associated local ecocarxas) and the individuals themselves, contributing to the sustainability of the village in integration with the Indignados movement and other solidarity economy movements, in the overall CIC project to provide the basic elements of an economy: production, consumption, finance, and its own currency.

CIC has partnered in taking over a lease on this large piece of property [about 1.5 hours east of Barcelona](#). The place was built at the end of the 19th century originally as a home and yarn factory, then a textile factory until 1975 and turned into a paper mill. A fire destroyed the buildings in 2004¹³⁷. The land hosts 35 houses (40 m² and four rooms each), 12,000 m² of industrial buildings, a small school, communal dining, theater and church. The place is being purchased collectively by a housing cooperative associated with Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC).¹³⁸

¹³⁶ "The space of the Calafou will become a post-capitalist colony" by Suarez Anna, July 29th 2011 in regio7 - <http://www.regio7.cat/anoia/2011/07/29/lespai-ca-fou-cabrera-convertira-colonia-postcapitalista/157522.html>

¹³⁷ Information and photos can be accessed at the Historic Catalan website, Pobles de Catalunya, <http://www.poblesdecatalunya.cat/element.php?e=4344>

¹³⁸ Article explaining Ecolonia by S.Didac-Costa, <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=124362>

In the email announcement, CIC proclaimed it “has begun its irreversible process for its collectivization under the future ownership of the Cooperative Integrated Catalan¹³⁹.” Eco-sociologist and CIC member from Montseny i EcoXarxes Ecoseny, S. Didac-Costa [writes](#):

The post-capitalist and post Ecolònia is a project of industrial collectivization, a proposed eco-estate cooperative and sustainable we are beginning to organize. ... We want to make here a new model of ecological and cooperative industrial estate, with forms of property and labor collectives, which incorporates the unique experiences of collectivization and workers' control carried out in Catalonia during the Spanish Revolution, excluding fortunately the difficult and tragic context Civil War and fighting international fascism, gained through collective buying and arranging an early stage production space in a collectivist regime.

Though there is rumored to be asbestos in some of the industrial buildings, apparently the housing, which one can rent to own one of the small apartments for 100 Euros per month, does not have asbestos. The full cost of the apartment, if purchased, is 25 000 Euros. The cost would not include interest and would not increase over the 20.83 years it would take to pay off, if I have read correctly. The overall cost of the land purchase would be 400 000 Euros and a planned 200 000 for renovations and upgrades. Although Calafou/Ecolonia is intended to be cooperatively held, individual or family living space must be purchased, Didac-Costa explaining the arrangement as a transitional stage, “halfway between private property and a complete collectivization of the residential spaces.”

The production spaces can be rented 1 Euro per m2 per month for collective and individual projects. CIC will be utilizing some space as well to develop, in Didac-Costa’s words, “industries whose manufacturing ecological elements are in line with what we expect to see and live in a more sustainable world and degrowth, elements that help to eco villages and

¹³⁹ Sent to the CIC general email list, publicaciocrisi@llestes.moviments.net, July 14th

similar proposals to make suitable arrangements, such as solar water heaters, windmills, electric bicycles, free software and hardware, etc..”

This [post-capitalist techno-industrial ecovillage](#) experiment is seemingly reminiscent of the American 60s and 70s counter culture movement inspired by R. Buckminster Fuller’s philosophy and use of geodesic domes, back to the land, systems thinking, and the use of [“cybernetic technology \(computers, Internet, TV, radio, etc.\) in attempts to undermine authoritarian social structures and to create their own realities.”](#) (also related to Illich’s convivial tools). Ca L’Afoú’s plans for income-generating and self-sustaining projects include gardens to hacker clubs, compost toilets to manufacturing solar panels, clay ovens to developing open source telecommunications. The overall project as [written on the CIC website](#), “seeks to facilitate the sharing of ideas, goods and resources to encourage a natural synergy, become a place for social innovation, technology and policy based on self-responsibility and cooperation, and where the productive economies in the service of people, giving access to resources and tools to the realization of their creative potential.” The Calafouproject near echoes Manhard Schlifni’s description of the American counterculture of 60’s hippy anarchist’s dreams of a post-industrial society “free ‘flowering of personality’, the ideal of organic community, the adventure of ethnic diversity, the exploration of further reaches of human nature, life lived gently on the planet, and the alternative economy”.¹⁴⁰ Where information technology was seen as an integral aspect (for most in the that movement¹⁴¹) for communications and socio-economic progress free from the for-profit motive in a non-hierarchical means of organization, so do most at Ca L’Afoú. A large component of the inhabitants are at least proponents, and designers of free software, copyleft material and hacking. The very use of the Community Exchange System (CES) in the CIC and in Ecolonia, is another example in how the internet has expanded time and space beyond the local but in supporting relocalization and regional networks.

¹⁴⁰ [“Creating Alternative Futures”](#) (2005)

¹⁴¹ See also Adam Curtis’ latest film, [“All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace”](#), in particular, part 2: [The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts](#) in the counterculture application of ecological oriented cybernetics for utopian ‘resistance’ living.

Some members at Calafou spoke to me also of their anarchist roots, resounding how North describes Green Anarchists in their support of LETS: “The anarchists were keen to reconnect in some way to the land they lived on and to live comfortably within a self-supporting framework—that is, to reembed economic relations that capitalism broke up in the rush to create markets and facilitate factory-based production” (2007, p.92).

Perhaps some of the Calafou inhabitants remember related past movement in a romantic notion, as most people there are older than 30 – about 2/3rds are in their late 30s to late 40s, 1/6th in their mid 50s to early 70s, and 1/6th in their mid 20s to mid 30s. I have yet to ask some of the older generations (one core member just celebrated her 48th birthday with her family, including her 1 1/2 year old son, on-site along with other collective members) if they recall the back to the land movement.

An excerpt from my Aug 4-7th field notes regarding Ca L’Afou’s organization:

I’m trying to understand the social fabric and interpersonal relations of those establishing Calafou. Relations between inhabitants, like meetings at CIC, are consensus-based, and are mostly openly opposed to a hierarchical arrangement in structure, but if agreed when needed, that the 'managerial' positions be rotating (which accommodates also the high flows, coming and going of people). I'm not sure how well this is functioning, but on the surface it seems to be, for the work committees such as for the kitchen, communications & technology, introductions and welcoming, and the various groupings working on the infrastructure itself.

All the apartments are now full, and this is the only building designated for residential use. However, the demand continues to grow and more people are being added to the list for wanting to invest and live in Calafou. Didac says that CIC people have been thinking of developing another Ecolonia.

In the American case, many of the collective, back to the land projects did not last, and like most counterculture movements attempting to achieve ‘progressive’ realities (typically

radical, typically against power paradigms), I hope that Calafou will not meet the same fate. While this collective wants to maintain the industrial and technological benefits of modern society but outside of the capitalist framework, I think ideology and the conditions of a technical reality to achieve the ideal will clash and may have some negative effects.

When visiting again August 18th to the 23rd, I began to understand the tension between the idea of Ecolonia being communal and open to sympathetic people versus those feeling burdened with the financial responsibility, but wanting to 'capitalize' on free labour and the solidarity of a larger community, including the Indignados movement. This is evident by ever-changing rules on how much labour one should be putting in if one is a solidarity visitor and the expectation to still contribute in Euros for the meals. Some visitors and inhabitants tell me there is a lack of communication, even with daily morning meetings to discuss the work plans of the day and to any problems.

Socially, there is not supposed to be a hierarchical arrangement, however, I feel I detect them already – alpha males (hippy and punk rock anarchists alike) and den mothers dictating the rules of the day and of the game. There is supposed to be a circulating of leadership roles on the committees and work groups, but too many people come and go. Those financially invested remain.

Photos of Ecolonia at Ca L'Afou:

(courtesy of Zoraida Roselló Espuny, used with permission, 2011)





Appendix 6: Indignados/15M Statement

Taken from the acampada Barcelona website is [statement](#) example reflective of the ideals behind Indignados (google translated from Catalan):

We're learning. We redefining territory, organizing ourselves through assemblies of districts, towns and cities. We are rediscovering solidarity practice, stopping the evictions and evictions of our neighbors. We have banished the submission before the disaster cuts, taking health centers, and is proposing to resist self-managed models.

We have revolutionized the way we inform ourselves and coordinating, developing an independent media network that allows us to move against the confusion produced by big media. We have been taking action to buildings in Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, has served as faculty, are occupying schools and Heads. We have five months while continuing to learn and create, and this has only just begun.

They, the capitalists have followed through with its austerity plans and their financial coups. They want to make our lives an austerity plan. While we make promises of a good life in exchange for extraordinary sacrifices. But it seems clear that this is impossible if we keep a good life. Along with the promises, fear the euro sinking, sinking Greece, Europe sinks, all sinks. They have not learned anything. They thought that manifestaríem forever, teach us to finish coming home and wait. They could not be more wrong.

We, that is all, not only have learned that no one represents us and that all their promises are false, we have also lost their fear. We have gone from anger to action. We decided to act.

Our choice: the Action.

Appendix 7: CIC Organizational Conceptual Map (English Translation)

- Comprehensive Cooperatives self-organization for social transformation
- Integrated Cooperatives Network SupraTerritorial Level
- Cooperativa Integral Catalana Network of Ecoarxes
Territorial Level
- Ecoarxas (Econetworks) (EX)
Network of Local Cores, County / Bioregional Level

- Local Nucleus (NL), Network of projects and autonomous communities and self-managed locals (neighborhood, village, ...)
- Project / State and Self-managed (PC) Network of like-minded people RELATED level

Appendix 8: Decision Support System (DSS) from Field Notes

CIC outlines that the methodology of decision-making is flexible, depending on the range of action (geographical, parties involved and affected, etc) in participation – local to the ‘global’ and vice versa. Transparency and open communication is key to invite participation, but in understanding the limitations in being able to achieve it, ie.: shortcomings of virtual space (if being used for decision-making) being truly democratic because not everyone has access to it where the most “disadvantaged sectors do not have the resources for such participation”¹⁴². However, this form of organizing ideas, proposals and a means for voting upon decisions where there are geographical and logistical limitations for broader and inclusive decision-making, CIC has developed a platform for proposal management through the [Decision Support System](#) (DSS), which, as the name describes, is a tool to allow virtual participation in decision-making assemblies, in compliment with the threads of discussion on CICs [online social network](#). In the ‘How to’ section of the site, they explain:

“The participatory development of proposals and the outcome of the assessment affects the virtual decision-making assembly, in the search for consensus in the group. In the same way that the 15M movement promotes changing the constitution to legitimate participation by means of virtual Citizens referendums and decisions at the state level, the CIC should define the importance of participation in their own virtual making assemblies. Since June, 2011, the DSS has been used to act as a support for the participatory elaboration of proposals and virtual meetings, maintain a record of proposals, and to legitimize decisions of the assembly.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Document ‘CIC Organizational Proposal for 15M’ from July 30th CIC Meeting at Calafou

¹⁴³ Google-translated with a few edits:

http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?client=safari&hl=en&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&r

Currently two collectives are using the system, the CIC and Basic Rent. There have been a range of proposals, discussions and decisions made, such as, 'Distinction between partners 'committed' and partners 'prosumidors' reflected in the statutes of the CIC', 'Management of collections of outstanding contributions of members of the CIC', 'Proposal for Transparency Seal of the Cooperative Integrated Catalan' and 'Concerts and Bars'. However, the participation has been evidently limited (and proposals that look fairly important in a timely resolving have been sitting for months) in that, so far, the largest number of member users involved in a 'decision' has been 15, and of these, only a handful of users are active throughout the threads. This is due to, likely, that there are few people aiding in the management of CIC, and from what I've seen (by the bags under people's eyes) and heard (the continuous remarks by members of how overworked Enric and others are) these few people are putting in strenuous and long hours. I am still learning how to navigate the system, including the challenges of language, in order to figure out how many decisions have been actually approved, but when I begin further research into the constructs of CIC operations, I will understand this better. How the discussion in the 15M movement utilizing CIC decision-making models has progressed and whether these proposals (in using the DSS) have been implemented, I'm not entirely sure of. The DSS website itself does not indicate that they have yet been used by the broader 15M community in Barcelona or throughout Spain.

Appendix 9: Excerpts of Communications with Vado (CIC currency manager) on CIC's Alternative Currencies (March, 2012)

Sheryle: I was planning on using my Ecos (now understandably Ecobasicas) to pay for translation services of texts and interviews – will I still be able to do so? Or are my Ecobasicas restricted to a separate accounting exchange system, unless agreed to by a particular seller/user (locally and on the larger CES)?

[url=translate.google.com&twu=1&u=http://dss.cooperativaintegral.cat/comFunciona.html&usg=ALkJrhiIjMraFTufZsb3gxOXFMaHfmkwqg](http://translate.google.com&twu=1&u=http://dss.cooperativaintegral.cat/comFunciona.html&usg=ALkJrhiIjMraFTufZsb3gxOXFMaHfmkwqg)

Vado: Ecobasics will flow independently of ecos, with not merging with them, so they can be accounted and complete its cycle until they get back to the original account. Ecobasics are always backed by products at the central store, in this new system, and are a currency much more liquid than the ecos – within the CIC monetary system, because they can be used in the public stores (and to access other public services) to buy any product no matter if it is priced in euros or in ecos, while in ecos you can only buy the ecos part of products price. So, CIC would be willing to exchange your ecobasics for ecos, if CIC had ecos to exchange.

Ecobasics are not backed by services, recently 9000 were issued, creating insecurity in other ecoarxas. In CES, debt is still created through the issuance of money (only difference, there is no interest).

Sheryle: How does the CIC dissuade the profit motive, while markets still must thrive to ensure the well-being of the collective and the individual members?

Vado: firstly, CIC promotes a community economy at a local level, that can be described as big family economies in which all members share tasks and benefits and take care of the group as a whole. At a global level (within the CIC and the 'ecoxarxes'), the CIC's currency is defined with having no interest attached to debt, which is always a mutual credit debt. Finally, CIC's uses its own currency to leave national currency administration to the community, not to individuals, so we try that all tasks were payed in CIC's currency, not in euros.

Vado: “All new allocations for basic rent tasks are decided by the assembly, but actually no basic rent tasks are being accepted, due to the economic situation. “

Sheryle: I'm wondering what you mean by 'economic situation' in regards to the above – do you mean CIC's economic situation or the mainstream economic situation? Obviously, both the CIC and its 'mainstream' environment are interconnected, and CIC dependent on the larger societal system, but I'm guessing you mean CIC's?

Vado: yes, I'm talking about CIC's economy which is tied to the financial crisis as a context from which CIC is born. CIC's is mostly composed by socially excluded or auto-excluded people which get introduced into a new set of possibilities, into a really bigger space. So, CIC's partners fee must not be paid in euros; it can be paid in ecos or in working hours. This means that we have a huge challenge which we can only face by means of an increasing level of coordination that, in fact, only consists of increasing the empathy and cohesion between all of us.

Sheryle: Also, my position as 'photocopy coordinator' wasn't approved initially by the assembly, I believe, and I'm and wondering if the creation of new positions is now addressed by the assembly?

Vado: this occurred just when I was starting applying the new basic rent procedure which includes that all new basic rents allocations must be available for all members, equally; then the working group of Basic Rent makes its proposal for the selected member and assembly must approve it or reject it. As you can guess, this procedure can force CIC to be transparent and to break some possible circles of power.

Sheryle: Will there be enough Euros to pay for CIC Euro expenses (i.e. – rent on a shopping centre, or a photocopier machine)? How is this calculated?

Vado: R/ I don't think it is calculated neither. New expenses are assumed when it is possible. CIC's economy is still not big enough for having an investments plan, but I think the time will come soon.

Sheryle: In regards to solving the problem of the 27 000 unbacked units (or could we call it a debt?)

Vado: yes, it is a debt to the communities network. CIC must accept its Central Store to be paid in ecooops by all ecoarxas' stores that received an excess of currency units issued by

CIC, as exchange for products which CIC will have to buy in euros, and then return those units back to the account from which they were issued.

Sheryle: CIC, as in the whole organization, will buy-back goods in Euros to the original producers of those goods, where they had been paid for by the Ecoxarxa stores/botigas in EcoCoops?

Vado: Yes. Take the case of the 'Ecoxarxa de Barcelona' (CES code: BCNA). CIC's imports from BCNA exceed CIC's exports to BCNA in about 7000 ecos. This is a negative balance related to BCNA. So CIC must offer to BCNA a plan to recover a 'zero' balance with it. Gradually, CIC should accept from BCNA this amount of ecos in exchange of CIC's central store products and this income in ecos may be returned back to the CIC's public account which issued them, in order to reduce its accumulated negative balance. CIC can not use again those ecos to buy nothing, because the purpose is to eliminate those ecos from the circulation, as part of the unbacked units issued by CIC. So, in order for CIC to maintain the offering of products at his central store, CIC will need to use euros or ecos from other positive accounts to buy them. Ecobasics backing process will take place firstly and in the same way.

Sheryle: In using CES, do you, and the overall consensus at CIC, feel that using a 1:1 ratio based on the national currency (in CICs case, the Euro) creates any kind of advantages or disadvantages between international users that base their currency value on their national currency?

Vado: Using 1:1 ratio, is, in words of Tim Jenkins (the CES' creator), a practical matter, because the CES is a medium of exchange and users only need a point of reference to make their prices. But when a community grew up and evolved enough to need his own prices system, I believe we would be aware of the problem of taking this 1:1 ratio with national currency, which is always tied to inflation. So, at XXI JA I introduced my proposal for breaking this ratio. We could choose a certain year as a reference for prices and calculate from year to year the new ratio according to the values of accumulated inflation that

national administration provides with high accuracy. So, from year to year, we would see how the value of CIC's currency would increase compared to the value of the national currency, which would hold an annual devaluation due to inflation. . If you are talking about the exchange of ecos for euros by a public account then, in order to apply this measure we just should to take the correct ratio (ex: 0.9:1) not 1:1. What CIC's is doing anymore is giving ecos to CIC's partners as an exchange for their payments for the annual fee, which is not correct.

Sheryle: Do you know where the CES community is discussing this issue? Has any other CES community started to base their own currency basement on their national currency from a year of reference (not now)?

Vado: I think that any of the communities is doing this at the present but I'm not sure (there are near to 400 communities!). Communities are still very young to take care of it.

Appendix 10: Responses to Questionnaires

Note: These were roughly translated using google translate so there is some loss in grammer and meaning.

Personal Info

Name	Age	G	Education, Work	Estimated Annual Income	Place of Residence	Date since becoming member of CIC	Type of Partner
Anonymous	39	M	Environmental Engineer, Translator, Local Currency Administrator for CIC	2000-5000 Euros 150 Ecos + exchanges unaccounted for in CES	Barcelona	Ecoaxarxa BCN – February 16 th , 2010 CIC – Fall, 2010	Socio Autonomo, (Autonomous Partner)
Vado (Salvador Soler)	39	M	PHP Programmer Autodidacta, Currency Administrator for CIC		Fontcoberta (Girona)	CIC – about two years ago Excoaxarxa Girona – one year	Socio Autonomo (Autonomous Partner)
Maite	38	F	Economic Management of the CIC	8400 Euros, 480 Ecos	Barcelona	CIC – September 2010 Ecocoope Gracia – August	Socio Autonomo (Autonomous Partner)

Mattia	33	M	Biomedical research and Restoration-Catering	Up until last summer 21K, now I dont need more than 10K, and I get them with no probs.	Barcelona	2011 Jan 2010, both CIC & Ecoxarxa BCN	Consumer up until last year and now a Prosumer Partner
Anonymous	40	M	Licensed Vet		Tagamanent		Prosumer Partner
Claudia Graglia	51	F	Yoga Teacher	5000 Euros	Barcelona	CIC – 2 years Ecoxarxa Barcelona – 1 year	I worked with the Garraf ecoxarxa working few hours a week. I'm using the CIC consumer and now I have a definite position Support
Anonymous	52	F	Retired Teacher	6600 Euros 0 Ecos	Tarragona	CIC – since its inception Ecoxarxa Tarragona – since joining CIC – June, 2011	Consumer Partner
Marta	29	F	Graduate of Public Administration, Helpdesk Technician currently	20 000 gross	Barcelona	Ecoxarxa Barcelona – July, 2011	Consumer Partner
Youri Heinz Vallribera	35	M	cold fusion industry and occupation in the field, also helped craft gastronómica fair ride.	5000 Euros		CIC – 1 Year, 3 months	I am a member of the CIC, I worked in the ecoxarxa de Gracia

Issues

Motivations in Joining CIC (Q2 -1)

Gaglia - I found a magazine Podem in a bar in a squat and then contact with Enric Duran, then participate in a meeting at Red Networks and from that moment followed in touch

A - Where action to develop and innovate in education and although CIC was born and had much to begin work until I found that walking could be a good place for it.

Marta - I'M IN TRANSITION TOWARDS A PERSONAL LIFE OUTSIDE THE CAPITALIST WORLD.
- ADVICE FOR THE TRANSITION FROM THE CITY LIFE TOWARDS A LIFE IN ECOVILLAGE

Youri - I heard of a cooperative which encouraged the degrowth, the turning back. To do this we must start from the beginning.

A - Started with ecoarxa because I liked money-less exchanges of services and products and then became CIC member to make invoices of euro bills

Maite - I had known Enric Duran for quite some time and had collaborated with him on a previous project. I joined CIC because I am related to its principles.

Mattia - I got to know the CIC by following the seminars and speeches of E.Duran and the other people linked with the publications "Crisis" and "Podem". I joined the CIC for keeping being connected and updated about them, and because of my growing sensibilities forward ecology & degrowth, two important endpoints of the CIC reasons.

Vado - Searching the internet about alternative economic models of capitalism

How would you describe CIC?
(Q2 -1.1, Q1 -4)

Gaglia - As a project of connecting people interested in an alternative model to capitalism.

Marta - ONE OF THE BEST integral MOVEMENTS THAT exists AND COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL LIFE TOWARDS A VALID ALTERNATIVE FOR THE FUTURE

Youri - ? A set of people seeking to become self-sufficient in food how much energy and environmental sustainability, we seek to relate-and autoorganizarnos us to the path of self-respecting and loving people

A - An experiment to build a parallel economy based on different values and least relying on the state ruled by self organization and self management

Maite - As a set of people who are carrying out a process of social transformation.

Mattia - A social movement, *Integral* as it embraces/regards the whole society and each fields.

Vado - As a comprehensive economic model suitable for the transition and the paradigm shift from monopoly capitalism to a new society based on a global network of communities or cooperatives, focusing on maintaining a community based non-monetary economy locally and an economy - probably monetary, interest-free inter-community level.

Are you involved in any of the working nodes or working groups? And if so, which ones? (Q2 -4)

Gaglia - I have participated in working group buyers, in Barcelona and Vilanova i la geltru. I currently do not participate in any working group

A - Education and specifically EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

Youri - No

Mattia - facilitadorxs de salut 2012
grup de treball del curs de facilitadorxs 2012
CIC ENTERTAINMENTs
Grup de socis de la CIC prenent part a Fires i Festivals de Catalunya amb les activitats proposades per la difusió dels principis i venda dels productes dels productors/obradors de mateixa. Grup preparat al interacció amb el entorn multicultural de events de escala internacional.

SHA SALUT HOLISTICA AUTOGESTIONADA

Aurea Social
[14M 18h PROX ASS]Espai on s'estan desenvolupant, serveis públics autogestionats en el camp de la salut i de l'educació

Motivations and benefits in staying (Q2 -5)

Gaglia - I met a horizontal operation, at first many people knew, we were like friends ... but now that the project has grown and not feel the same ... there are people that I have no such affinity and I have a close relationship.

Marta - Support and Emotional Training

Youri - The group of people who are participating and exchanging ideas and trying to reach conclusions, especially for the welfare of the planet and ours. The think and believe that another way of life is possible and we need more people to be much better as it greatly facilitates the development of ideas and practice.

Since becoming a member, Consumption overall of goods & services more localized? How much of your consumption (goods & services come from CIC? (Q2 -6, Q1 -5)

Gaglia - It has changed my way of eating, but not consumer goods and services of the cooperative a minimal part too

A - no consumption of the CIC. I contribute and collaborate! I am not alone in a city (I'm in Barcelona, Tarragona and Tortosa) so I cannot focus on consumption.

Marta - I mostly BUY IN THE COOPERATIVE OR LOCAL SHOPS AND ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Youri - need to revisit translation, The truth is that now consumed soon, since I live in Esplugu de Francolí on ecoxarxa aproprada has no hi, but if I try to eat in petites or altres consum co-ops. The hi Grace ecoxarxa consumeixo sucre, oats, salt en tant tant i oli, olis Essentials. The rest I use the outside but always local.

A - There used to be a time when i bought small amount of food for ecos, but that was negligible (theory/consciousness and praxis are far away still for me as you see), i am still not member of a food coop as non in my neighborhood is accepting ecos, still not a member of a ethical bank either because non offers all services which offer conventional banks

Maite - Something more localized than before, at the moment only consumption of fruits, vegetables and some other product of the ecocoope.

Mattia - Yes, definitely. And of higher quality, and cheaper. At the moment about 50% of what I consume it's a CIC product.

Vado - I'm not very active at the level of exchange. To my time tasks on a voluntary coordination in both the CIC and in the ecoxarxas

Consumption decreased?
Recycle more?
(Q2 -7, Q1 -6)

Gaglia - yes, recycle more and use less

A - Yes

Marta - LESS CONSUMPTION GOODS, RECYCLING AND AS I CAN NOT RECYCLE MORE!

Youri - Yes, there is the possibility of exchanges, which makes getting something you need and getting rid at once of something that has no use for you.

A - Yes but this is mainly due to dwindling Euro income i guess or dwindling motivation to sell my time to projects where i cant share the values, i have lived for longer time with little consumption already so the potential is not to big /at least as long as i live in a flat which i have to pay in Euro in a city (an not a community outside the city (i am searching for that)

Maite - yes

Mattia - partially

Vado - Yes, but I think this is why I'm shifting into a less consumerist point of view and life style (not because we've reached yet our economic objectives at CIC)

Share more of your personal resources within CIC and/or community?
(Q2 -8, Q1 -7)

G - No, I have always loved to share but before the CIC

A - Yes, share knowledge and services.

Marta - I have been collaborating intensively THIS PAST SUMMER WORKING IN THE ECOCOOPE

Youri - Whenever I can, I share my assets in the cic how voluntary

A - Sorry i don't understand the question nether in Spanish nor in English, I don't share tangible asset nether with CIC nor any kind of community.

Maite - Yes

Mattia - Now -2012- I mostly share with my cooperative bro&sistaS.

Vado - Basically I donate my time

Do you feel a closer

G - Yes

relationship with the people you engage with economically and a greater sense of trust? (Q2 -8.1)

Has your use of Euros decreased since being with CIC and about how much (estimated percentage)? (Q2 -9, Q1 -8)

Marta – Yes, definitely.

Youri – Yes, you feel.

G - Has not diminished, perhaps has changed ... for example instead of spending on clothing as traveling expenses or eating healthier

A - for now I have NOT decreased my intake of euros. K is a topic I think I have yet to address soon k.

Marta - AND REDUCING COSTS TOOK MORE TIME: I HAVE NO INTERNET, NO PAY RENT, I GO BY BIKE, ETC

Being in CIC I have not been reducing more

A - Very little, negligible, more related to dwindling income

Maite – Yes, about 5%

Mattia – 50%

Vado - Yes, I try not to use euros as an activist principle

Do you feel well-informed and knowledgeable about the CIC's organizational structure and how it functions? (Q2 -10)

G – No.

A – Yes

Marta – Not much

Youri – Yes

Do you feel CIC's decision-making process is participatory, democratic, non- hierarchical and transparent? Why or why not? (Q2 -10.1, Q1 -9)

G - I think sometimes decisions are made without a participatory process

A - is transparent and democratic

Marta – YES, ALL DECISIONS ARE EXPOSED TO MEMBERS. ONLY Those PROPOSALS that come forward and from PEOPLE WILLING TO MAKE PROPOSALS

SA - It is participatory, but the problem is that those who don't dedicate big amount of their time (or even full time, can sometimes not work in the working group where these decisions are prepared and discussed, and the assemblies only can be used for little discussion and mainly decision. As well there is the consensus principle you might feel

social pressure to not vote yes to not block it, but that depend on the person. The hierarchy is still not completely overcome as it is marked by time dedication. Those members who dedicate a lot more time can guide the decision process in their interest. Those persons who don't have the time or don't take the time to participate in the assemblies in all parts of Catalonia have small amount of right to decide (i know that there is a software called digital decision system , but i never used it

Maite - Yes, the most important decisions taken at meetings.

Mattia - ? Intelligent democracy, transparent ...a bit "Spanish".

Vado - Yes I do, but I have learned that these values should be protected from [an ongoing basis to keep them](#), especially in the assemblies

Do you believe CIC's structure and your involvement will lead to a re-distribution of wealth between its members? Why or why not?
(Q2 -11, Q1 -10)

G - Do not know

A - I hope so. and above all hope that we know support each other in a climate of trust

Marta - Do not know

A - Far to early to decide this. The practical economic effects are after such a short time for me are not tangible. Its more an interesting learning process than actual economic change or even redistribution.

Maite - I hope so, because the idea is to leverage the tools to enable partners to meet their needs within the scope of the CIC.

Mattia - A better one for sure. Mainly because the people I see and meet through the CIC seem more transparent and focus on keep being so and improving each part of the society, so that redistribution of wealth will be necessary.

Vado - Yes, just by the fact that the economy promotes a

volunteer-based community and is in itself a redistribution at the local level is growing continuously. At the global level - within the CIC, we are developing a basic income project is sophisticated enough to gradually implement a redistribution of resources among all partners.

What do you see or hope the outcomes of being involved with CIC will be? For yourself, the larger community and globally?
(Q2 -12, Q1 - 11)

G - Consciousness that another way of life is possible

A - is still an open structure ROADS

Marta - for the community

Youri - ? It is a self-organizing system that allows people the freedom of his actions free, responsible and respectful, sharing in community or not and having the opportunity to develop a common project out of the capitalist system and love the environment and people.

A - Learn to overcome excessive individualism/egoism, promote cooperation instead of competition, resilience local production and currency and experiment with new kinds of housing and working, like a life social lab, promote self organization structure, for a day when father state wont be there to help and make sure that this will not result in lots of dead or violence as well promote a society where money is less/least important and where exchanges and gift play a bigger role, a society where family is not so important any more , but a larger community takes care of each other the larger community might learn to copy some of the experiment and learn from the result and mistakes made, global impact is not so important for me, what i like in CIC is that nobody gets excluded, even after failure, (s)he just gets a different tasks where failure dos not have destroying economic o social effects on the CIC

Maite - Changes in favor of self-management of our lives, less dependent on current system.

Mattia - By focusing on the society in which we are living I think all other necessities will be solved as well, consequently.

Vado - To Contribute to the realization of the paradigm shift

What do you feel are the main challenges for you to achieve a life of sustainability and equality?
(Q2 -13, Q1 -12)

G - Being determined to change the parameters. It depends, because in Argentina (is where I come) is more difficult, I have fear of gangs .. feel less freedom but I have not tried .. I have a project to apply there concepts of CIC

A - equality? espain catalonia and are extremely macho culture and shed weight is always difficult. Tmb in the CIC. But the will and awareness and work on it.

sustainability? now work harder to create and maintain structures. And it works tmb in the economy "material" lettuce, potatoes ... We still have not entered in the exchange of "services" that is my natural field.

Marta - LEAVING CAPITALIST NOWADAYS THAT MADE MY CONCERNS AND DEVELOP AND SPIRITUAL WORK OUT OF BARCELONA IN A RURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Youri - That all consumption is self-local proximity, as they can be fair trade or craft. Be generous and accepting. Valuing natural resources and waste it ... it gives us, we receive, we turn to give cyclic.

A - The difficulty to start with your self instead of pointing to others
the fear of the people to lose safety, security and wealth and social status,
equality always implies that somebody has to step back from power, comfort,
change is mostly defined as a risk and not as an opportunity
as well the lack of experience in long term self/internal motivation and organization and not relying on external incentives like money or broad social acceptance

Maite - Learning to work more collectively and cooperative rather than individualistic and competitive.

Mattia - ? Understanding the priority we should give to ecology and degrowth will make the whole job, so the education about them and its diffusion.

Vado - To Maintain the sovereignty of the assembly

Since becoming a member of CIC, have your personal values changed, and if so, how?
(Q2 -14, Q1 -13)

G - I have become an anarchist. Devalued more than before everything related to capitalism, but yet I am not radical. Actually before and did not trust the system. I have only extended some concepts. And now I realize better how power works.

A - I'm back to relate to the world, I again have friends, who had renounced it.

Marta - NO, THEY ARE THE SAME. SOME OTHERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED or REINFORCED because they were very idealistic

Youri - My values have not changed, but have been expanded!

A - I always felt that cooperation should have a much bigger place in society, accumulation of material wealth was never important, may they don't have changed , but now i can name them more clearly.
As i am at the same time in a different social movement which is called transition towns its even more difficult to determine what changes account for CIC and what for TT.

Maite - I learned to share more, worry more about the needs of the community as a whole, and to listen and lead to the views of all.

Mattia - Any value , just the consciousness that they are right and should be put into practice. Now and with any compromise.

Vado - I draw constantly from the community spirit of the CIC and ecoarxas, which reduces my natural individualism and keeps me full of life.

What do you feel are the main challenges for CIC currently, and foresee in being?
(Q2 -15, Q1 - 14)

G - To grow and not die trying

A - Pull out the social currency to leave the capitalist consumption. Getting a high fiscal disobedience% (only then doblegaremos the system) and people are sick!

Marta - SIMPLICITY, COMPETITIVENESS, ORGANIZATION

Youri - ? The CIC as such, has many challenges but I will say in short that is self-organizing, creating a network of like-minded people to share, in committed relationships, organization commune, in the lowest power, always fair trade, where freedom the person is respected and that cremos an economic slowdown and consumption is necessary for all. We must go back

A - In CIC i am missing the management of emotions which result in big personal changes, spirituality is almost absent , everything is quite head guided, , the other challenge i see is to motivate people to stay a longer period with EX/CIC, is saw many people coming and disappearing and there was as of now no real intent to ask them why . That is an enormous loss for CIC or could be a huge potential positive blow to the development

Maite - Score more involvement or more permanent involvement of the partners.

Mattia - Going on, growing nationally and in all Europe and

Vado - Building trust to their environment, showing themselves responsible for their decisions and actions and, especially, to transmute the negative wave of pure rejection of the system

Into a positive wave in search of balance.

Do you think the models and principles of CIC could be adopted within mainstream society, and if so, how?
(Q2 -16)

G - I think it's difficult for most people to understand and apply the operation will be approved to the extent that people need a change

A - Of course! the nature of being human is that MAN! and the prevailing system only works on values and feelings.

Marta - IN GENERAL WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT. I BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD ACT ACCORDINGLY WITH WHAT YOU THINK. COMPEL OTHERS, EVEN BE A BETTER OPTION FOR ME LIFE SEEMS DANGEROUS. CHANGES ARE SLOWLY AND PRODUCED FROM THE INSIDE, THAT IS, THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE.

What have been the benefits (and limitations) in using CIC's social currencies under LETs and CES for yourself and

G - Benefit is that I have consumed food echoes paying won collaborating on work for the CIC. The limitation is self-created (change the chip)

CIC?
(Q2 -17)

A – question 9

Marta - BENEFITS = ALL; PROBLEMS: YOUR USE IS NOT EXTENDED BY THE COMMUNITY

On social movements, degrowth

Do you know of the concept, degrowth, and if so, would you associate the CIC social organization as a working example towards degrowth (socially and economically)?
Q2-1, Q1-1

G - Yes, could be associated perfectly with the CIC

A - material and decrease growth of human values! PER DECREASE (the material) and grow (in humans). THIS IS OUR SLOGAN.

Marta - GENERALLY, IS ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CIC, BUT NOT A CLEAR OBJECTIVE, NOT BY THE DAILY STRUGGLE.

A - Yes, i think CIC projects are practical example of the more theoretical degrowth movement as you only can convince people to participate in practical things not in theoretical thing in a theoretical house you can not live, theoretical food can not be eaten...

Maite - Yes, one of the "bases" of the CIC is to learn to live with less

Mattia – Yes

Vado - Yes, totally. The anti-capitalist and community character leads to a model based on consumer needs and community care.

Do you see degrowth as an inevitability?
Q1-2

A - Yes, the party is over because of resource limitation and limits to waste and emission capacity

Maite - Yes

Mattia – Yes

Vado - As inevitable as the collapse of the capitalist system

How does CIC defend ecosystems?
Q2-2

G - Not understand the question

MA - I do not understand the question

Marta - [SELF MANAGEMENT](#)

As a strategy of degrowth, do you see possibilities of change within institutional reform of government and markets? Why or why not?
Q2-3, Q1-3

G- I see possibilities for change, because it is full of assholes who think that all is money

A - in the traditional system until you do not stop ALL BROKEN! UNCONSCIOUS CHILD ABUSERS ARE ONE WITH NO POWER! not see them now!

Marta - WHILE THERE IS POTENTIAL TO RESTRUCTURE ALL THE LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM SPANISH (CIVIL, PLANNING, LESGISLACION AGRICULTURAL IMPORTS EXPORTS, ETC), CHANGING THE PARADIGM OF THE STATE, BACK TO A MODEL OF COOPERATIVE WITH COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT OR THE NATURALIZATION OF ALL REAL PRODUCTION, ETC. THE BAD NEWS IS NO POLITICAL PARTY THAT WILL DO ANYTHING FOR THE DEGROWTH, BUT WE KNOW THAT IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE

A - Governments are too much influenced/bought by a small money wealth elite to be interested to make meaningful reforms,

Maite - No, because it is inherent in our system as opposed to degrowth, continued growth. And this is not reformable, root must be changed.

Mattia - Only when we will get so big and powerful that even the economy and the authorities will have no other chance.

Vado - Yes, although I perceive different lines of action that we all share. In my case, I think the system should be transformed, not destroyed. It should be complemented by a network of exchange systems, diversified that breaks the monetary monopoly. The principle challenge is that for some of these systems to achieve such a degree of maturity and social support is they need to be accepted by the government, starting with the city as a means of partial payment of taxes and remuneration to officials.

Do you believe technological efficiency gains will aid in the goal of degrowth?
Q2-4, Q1-4

G - Do not know

A - yes! used with conscience YES!

Marta - I HOPE THAT IS THE OBJECTIVE TO BE PURSUING

A - No, technological efficiency gains in the past always turned into higher consumption (according to a law named....?)

Maite – Yes

Mattia – Will be useful

Vado - Totally. Without these advances (internet, mobiles, etc ...) would not be possible the extension of individual visions overviews for each individual, which is taking place in an obvious way around the world. This change of view is linked to the acceleration in the exchange of information by alternative means between all users.

Do you see degrowth as a social movement and means of uniting people (uniting the fragmented left in Q1)?
Q2-5, Q1-5

G – Yes

A – Yes

Marta - YES, BUT THE COMPANY WILL NOT FIND THE INFORMATION IS **ONLY** WAITING FOR THE SHOW FOR TV. YOU HAVE TO JUMP TO THE MASS MEDIA AND I BEGIN TO DISCLOSE indoctrinate

SA - No, many left don't want hear about degrowth, peak oil and so on, they insist only on redistribution and growth

Maite – No

Mattia - It's not a politics matter.

Vado - I see it as a process of natural evolution of society, not as a means for anyone.

Do you believe degrowth as being inherently anti-capitalist?
Q2-6, Q1-6

G – Yes

A - I do not like capitalism are your values and feelings that underlie it. but the economy (the power of the GEM according to Japanese tradition is undeniable real value!) is its practice, the practice of psychopaths in what differ.

Marta – Yes, Absolutely

A - In the last year i came to that conclusion as there is no economic growth without interest and ready available cheap resources
for me bank interest in the root problem, which constantly redistributes wealth from the poor to the rich, but which needs a growing material base which is not existing

unlimited, so capitalism is not a sustainable model for a limited planet with limited resources

Maite – Yes

Mattia - As well, inevitably if properly pursued.

Vado - Yes, from the standpoint of a degrowth activist, I interpret this process as a result of systemic failure of capitalism.

Do you self-define as anti-capitalist? An anarchist?
Q2-7, Q1-15

G – Yes

A – Answer 6

Marta - ANTI-CAPITALIST. Anarquista form of utopian

A - I don't like the word anti , better post-capitalist.
(because it's very easy to say what you are against, but the tricky thing is, what are you for ...)

Anarchists until very few years were for me were people who do violent things to the state Monopoly on violence (police etc) or private property(that picture was mostly build on electronic media perception. That has changed profoundly due to work in cic, now for me anarchism is a way to promote self organization and self empowerment the best experience ever was the amazing functioning for self organization in may 2011 on plaza catalunya. There i pictured first time that: “entre todos lo podemos”,

Maite - I think that the capitalist system benefits only a minority, and is intended to make it happen, so from this point of view I think anti-capitalist

Mattia - An individual using rationality.

Vado - Anti-capitalist and follower Silvio Gesell's economic model, based on money that loses value over time.

What are your main critiques of the current mainstream economic, political and social system in Spain (and elsewhere if relevant to you)?
Q2-8

G - The people (the people) has no power of decision, governments not much ... I think work well under pressure. The information circulating is false or never know if it's true.

The international community does nothing to prevent wars.

Unchecked exploitation of natural resources.

Total Incoscienza regarding the nature, care of this.

The system generates deaths all the time.

Generates psychological disorders, emotional and physical. It is normal for people to take pills for anxiety generated by the system then you sell them. Etc, etc, etc.

A - VERY RELEVANT!

Marta - WE HAVE A SYSTEM AND antipolitical ANTISOCIAL AS I UNDERSTAND THE POLICY. WE Havia individualism and hedonism UNPRECEDENTED

How do you interpret Enric Duran's statement "The right of rebellion is not just a proposal for coordinated civil disobedience, but also a strategy of action that wants to go deeper into the view of a world committed with self-management and the construction of alternatives to capitalism.¹⁴⁴"? As an alternative to capitalism, how do you believe CIC is implementing this idea?
Q2-9

G - Okay, Enric is a committed activist and intelligent. I think the CIC is a non-violent self-management can work in informing and performing alternative projects.

A - I have already responded! capitalism is destructive because it works with negative values. Feber attributed to Christian values capitalism greed, distrust, disrespect, jealousy, selfishness and irresponsibility. THESE VALUES POWER TODAY CAPITALIST ECONOMY AND THAT'S NOT WHAT WE WANT!
CHANGE IN AN ECONOMY BASED ON HONESTY IN CONFIDENCE IN SHARE IN THE APPRECIATION OF THE OTHER (INSTEAD OF CONTEMPT AND FARM) TO THE LIABILITY IN SOLIDARITY IS THE WAY THAT YOU HAVE CHOSEN PEOPLE CIC. WORK ON IT. THERE WILL BE HARD TO GIVE IN TO THAT REACT! FROM THERE THE FISCAL INSUMISION! THE REBELLION OF THERE!

Marta - TAKING IS PRETTY GOOD, BUT I THINK IF YOU WANT TO GET A LOT FROM THE BEGINNING TO LOSE A BIT BY THE WAY AND MANY EFFORTS diluted

Are you involved in acts of financial acts of disobedience? If so, what are they?
Q2-9.1

G - No

A - I am out of the overall system. I'm not interested. It does not give answers to my needs and respond to the needs of others HUMAN GROWTH.

Marta - No

Are you involved in the Indignados movement? If so, how has the movement impacted your involvement with CIC? What are your

G - No

A - has reached many in the movement of outraged the ranks of the CIC. The CIC began before a walk and when the various assemblies of 15M arose continuity and

¹⁴⁴ From Enric Duran's statement released and on video: <https://vimeo.com/37035293>

hopes for the future of the combined efforts of CIC and the Indignados movement?
Q2-10

necessarily looking at the big picture came to the Cooperative. Representado has more work. Meet more people, fighting with unbridled machismo that exists, the manipulations

not cease, be patient, eat some brown (figuratively!) but it was a great awakening consciences of many who live in the desert ideology of capitalism (or materialism) exacerbated. CIC and work for the SER 15M not the HAVE!

Marta - YOU KNOW THE MOVEMENT OF CIC outraged HOPE I HAVE BUT NOT AS A GROUP, BUT HOW SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS AND WANT TO BE RELEASED AS HUMAN BEINGS

Do you believe that resistance is as important as practicing the principles of CIC in action?
Q2-11

G - Do not know

A - YES resistance is important. The principles of the CIC? I have already talked about them (and there are triptychs there) HONESTY, TRUST, MUTUAL SUPPORT, APPRECIATION, LOVE (k does not mean sex necessarily) LIABILITY, ECOLOGY, NATURE return to it as the great Mother, the great teacher who teaches you ALL if you have enough sensitivity ...

Marta - YES, RESISTANCE AND PRACTICE ARE CONSEQUENTIAL

Anything to add:

Mattia - Every step of the CIC so far had been perfectly coherent with the setting up of Catalunya as a possible degrowth-bioregion, anyway more assistance will be probably needed by the cooperative in a hopefully upcoming second phase of the mission that is gonna be when the CIC will be a majority in Catalunya.

Appendix 11: Excerpt of Personal Reflections on my CIC Position

(August, 2011)

I visited Ca L'Afou a second time that Thursday (August 4th) and finally was able to get a conversation in with Enric, after being told by him upon my arrival that I would have to arrange a meeting at Ca L'Afou, but he had no time for me over the next four days. Luckily at a Saturday night Ecolonia celebration set up in one of the empty buildings with electronic music, blue lights, neon paintings and organically sold beer, I noticed him standing next to me eating some crackers alone. I jumped at the opportunity to ask about some of the problems I've been having:

- How can we resolve the problems of the outstanding photocopy debt? He replied that from the 500,000 Euros he stole from the banks in 2008, Infoespai received 200,000, inferring he owes nothing for any of the photocopies he has been making for [Podem newsletters](#), CIC related copies, and the 15M movement.
- How will CIC pay for the photocopies? (no payment is required for CIC photocopy needs – including those of all the Ecoarxes) I did not get an answer for.
- Is there a CIC representative or manager for the CIC Barcelona Biotiga at Infoespai? No. Shouldn't there be? No answer.

At this point a man who had been listening in intercepted in our conversation with raving support of Enric's position (which was: 'yah, you gave the money!'). Enric walked off and I said I hoped we could speak again soon. Another meeting will hopefully occur when I visit Calafou again this weekend, but I recognize also that it may help to have a translator. Enric's English is limited, although better than my Castellano, even though we correspond well via email, when we do.

My experience in the management of non-profit organizations in the environmental and activist 'realm' (from fundraising, marketing, human resources, campaign management) has impressed upon me the need in its operations for sound bookkeeping, transparency, open communication and inclusion.

I am finding difficulties working under this particular anarchistic approach, which while focusing on self-learning, motivation and preservation, is lacking somewhat in the 'rules and guidelines' I have found useful in helping maintain, sometimes complex, operations of an organization. In the latest meetings, CIC has recognized the need to "resolve problems of contribution, collaboration, transparency, sharing of information (to members and outside, especially in lieu of the 'revolution'), legal protections, as well as forming more active committees." I now have a better understanding of these problems.

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