

**The Slow Revealing of Change:
Decision Making Processes in Grassroots Collectives as Stories and
Fractals of Adult Learning and Personal, Social and Ecological Change**

by

Erika Isabella Zárate

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ABSTRACT

THE SLOW REVEALING OF CHANGE: DECISION MAKING PROCESSES OF GRASSROOTS COLLECTIVES AS STORIES AND FRACTALS OF ADULT LEARNING AND PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CHANGE

Erika Zárate

University of Guelph, 2014

Advisor:

Professor Al Lauzon

The decision making processes of social and ecological change grassroots collectives (SECGCs) do not only promote change at a community level, but are exemplary enactments of such change. These processes are principled, critically reflective, relational and self-organized, and more so when there is a high degree of connectivity within and between individual SECGCs. SECGCs embody narrative and fractal behaviour that, upon assessment, could contribute significantly to their organizational learning, and subsequent social and ecological change work. In order to assess the self-balancing fractal nature of SECGCs, this research study proposes the use of a Fractal Organization Model and its accompanying table of characteristics of self-balancing fractal SECGCs. The model contains four elements, or nodes, that represent the existing or potential strengths of a SECGC membership, its value and belief system, its decision making processes, and its collective actions for social and ecological change. However, in addition to understanding the nodes of a fractal SECGC, it is also imperative to explore and assess the relationships between these nodes. By evaluating the context, nodes and internodal relationships, the potentiality of four capacities can be determined. The four capacities of a fractal SECGC are resiliency, adaptability, innovation and self-organization, and contribute to a SECGC being an effective agent of social and ecological change.

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Abbreviations

	Original Name	Name in English
15M	Movimiento del 15 de Mayo	May 15 Movement
AMI	Associació de Municipis per la Independència	Association of Municipalities in support of Catalonia's Independence
ARÇ	Assessorament de Recursos Legals i Financiers per a les Cooperatives	Legal and Financial Consulting for Cooperatives
CASG	Consorci d'Acció Social de la Garrotxa	Garrotxa Consortium for Social Action
CBDMP		Consensus-based decision making processes
CIC	Cooperativa Integral Catalana	Catalan Network of Cooperatives
CIHR		Canadian Institute of Health Research
CIR	Comitè d'Integritat en la Recerca	Committee for Integrity in Research
CIS	Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas	Centre for Sociological Research
CiU	Convergència i Unió	Convergence and Union (the ruling right-wing, Catalan independentist party)
CNT	Confederación Nacional de Trabajo	National Federation of Labour
CTSEC		Communication and Technology for Social and Ecological Change
CUP	Candidatura d'Unitat Popular	The People's Candidates (a grassroots left-wing political party)
EAA		Environmental and Agroecological Activism
ECAE		Ethical Consumerism and Alternative Economies
ETSEC		Education & Training for Social and Ecological Change
HHRA		Health & Human Rights Advocacy
IDESCAT	Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya	Catalan Institute of Statistics
NGO		Non-governmental organization
NSERCC		Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada
PAS	El Pas – Associació Amics del Camí	The Crossing (or The Step) – Association of Friends of the Cultural

PCR		Trail of Catalonia
PRBB	Parc de Recerca Biomèdica de Barcelona	Political and Cultural Revindication Biomedical Research Centre of Barcelona
SEC		Social and ecological change
SECO		Social and ecological change organizations
SECGC		Social and ecological change grassroots collectives
SSHRCC		Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
UAB	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	Autonomous University of Barcelona
UOC	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	Open University of Catalonia

Glossary of Catalan Terms

Catalan	English
<i>Arrán</i>	A nation-wide Catalan anti-fascist independentist youth movement
<i>ateneu</i>	a centre for community-based political debate
<i>autogestió</i>	the self-organization and self-management of SECGC needs, so that a SECGC can be fully self-sufficient
<i>autogestionat</i>	being able to self-organize and self-manage collective needs, in order to be fully self-sufficient at a collective level
<i>autopoiesis</i>	the self-balancing behaviour of systems
<i>autopoietic</i>	having a self-balancing systems nature
<i>calçotada popular</i>	a traditional community meal whose central dish is roasted onion with red pepper sauce
<i>col·lectiu</i>	collective
<i>conscientització</i>	critical awareness and engagement
<i>Crear és resistir, resistir és crear</i>	To create is to resist, to resist is to create
<i>crisi</i>	crisis
<i>de base</i>	grassroots
<i>decreixement</i>	Literally translated as “de-development”, <i>decreixement</i> is both a belief and a movement, and values small-scale self-sufficient initiatives over larger scale ones, or ones that aim to grow instead of aiming to create other small-scale initiatives.
<i>El camí es fa al caminar</i>	The path is made by walking
<i>els Makis</i>	The Catalan guerrilla movement of the 1940s, during the early years of the Franco Dictatorship
<i>Els mestres de la república</i>	Teachers of the Spanish Revolution
<i>Fira d'Entitats per a la Soberania</i>	Food Sovereignty and Social Change Fair

Alimentària i per al Canvi Social

<i>Generalitat de Catalunya</i>	National Government of Catalonia
<i>indignéu-vos!</i>	get outraged!
<i>La República</i>	The Spanish Revolution; or, the Republic of Spanish States
<i>llibertari</i>	libertarian anarchist
<i>Maulets</i>	<p>A Catalan anti-fascist independentist youth movement, whose origins are Garrotxan, but which became a national youth movement (1988 – 2012). Now known as <i>Arrán</i>.</p> <p>Or, the Valencian-Catalan soldiers who fought for Catalonia in the War of the Spanish Secession (1701-1714), which Spain won on September 11th, 1714. This anniversary is celebrated every year as the national holiday for Catalans.</p>
<i>okupa</i>	a squat; or, a squatter
<i>okupar</i>	to occupy, reclaim or squat a physical space, such as a building or public square.
<i>passillisme</i>	hallway decision making; decision making that occurs outside formal meeting spaces, but that impacts the whole SECGC
<i>passivisme</i>	passive role in decision making, or “passing” during group decision making processes.
<i>permuta</i>	traditional trade and barter system in Catalonia
<i>popular</i>	of the people, popular, or grassroots
<i>propositiu</i>	In the field of consensus-based decision making, the English term is “propositive”, extending beyond the term proactive to include the specific acts of making proposals and proposing alternatives in order to contribute towards the search for collective solutions.
<i>revindicació</i>	revindication, or the active reclamation of one's rights
<i>solidari</i>	an action or person that demonstrates solidarity
<i>treball de processos</i>	process-oriented world work facilitation

1 Prologue

Autumn had just begun to paint the leaves orange and red when we first gathered at the Freedom House¹ in Garrotxa, Catalonia. There were seven of us, and we all shared the same dream, the dream of a just and sustainable present and future. As the ideas for new projects began piling up, someone voiced a question that loomed over the group – which one of these projects will we select to make all of our hearts sing? And another person answered by asking, which path will we choose to make all of our hearts sing? We did not ask ourselves many other looming questions, especially those concerning our differences or our favoured and fall-back personae in times of plenty and in times of crisis. Nonetheless, that day we made a commitment to learn together, teach together and build together, and during the next few years, we journeyed collectively towards a dream of equity, dignity, and sustainability. After a time, we found that our paths often meandered, and far at times, from that which we had initially planned, and that our goals often differed, and greatly at times, from those initially proposed. And in the end, we all left the project in the hands a new collective eager to continue the work, so that we could nurture our dreams on more familial scales. Our years together were full of monumental challenges as well as small triumphs and big lessons. Such as the lesson that neither discord nor unison are capable of what harmony is capable of, that many hearts singing in harmony can help build the layers of resiliency and sensitivity needed for enacting dreams of social and ecological change. But other looming questions remain. Why do people sing together? By choice, or necessity, or both? What informs their choice? What conditions create their necessity? How

¹ Freedom House is the English translation for the name of one of the surviving farmsteads that were liberated by revolutionary peasants from their feudal lords during the Tribute Revolution in 15th century Catalonia.

can they learn to sing in harmony? And how similar is their chorus to the songs of others?

2 Introduction

This research study explores why and how people decide to create and participate in grassroots collectives, and how their experiences can serve as stories and fractals of change processes and adult learning in other places and on other scales. The community being explored in this study is made up of social and ecological change grassroots collectives (SECGCs) working in Garrotxa, Catalonia, located in northern Spain. The research is conducted using constructivist inquiry and is informed by Quechua Indigenous and Anarcha-feminist ontologies. Several qualitative methods were used to gather raw data, although document analysis was also conducted so as to better explore and understand the context, characteristics and discourses of social and ecological activist work in Garrotxa. The theoretical foundation of the data analysis was built upon facilitation, adult learning, communication power and fractal organization theories, however, several other theories also informed the overall understanding of grassroots decision making processes.

The findings and discussion chapter of this research study first explores the context of SECGC work in this rural county, namely how past and present political and economic events have shaped the strategies and behaviour of social and ecological movement building. This is followed by a critical review of the relationships within and between the different sectors of social and ecological change work. Next, the philosophical foundations and operational dimensions of internal decision making in SECGC are outlined and analyzed. Lastly, SECGC decision making is critically explored as a small-scale fractal manifestation of social and

ecological change and adult learning at larger scales.

2.1 Context

2.1.1 Hope amidst the ashes of crisis and paralysis

In 2008, Spain began free falling from the stratospheric heights of housing speculation and interest rates, hitting rock bottom in 2010 with the collapse of the entire banking sector and record high unemployment rates (Calvo, Gómez, Mena, & Jiménez, 2011). By early 2011, the country was firmly in the grip of economic crisis and political paralysis, and growing social unrest. Inspired by the Arab Spring, social movement organizers put a call out for a nation-wide protest against political corruption and austerity measures. Thus, on the 15th of May of 2011, the 15M movement was born.

An estimated six to eight million people across the country took part in the protests, occupying main squares in 58 cities, and garnering nearly 80% of public support (RTVE, 2011; Calvo, et al, 2011, CIS, 2012). The movement had multiple voices and multiple demands, but there was a consistently similar way of deciding who spoke and what was demanded. In brief, horizontality, autonomy, solidarity, and self-organization were guiding principles of the assembly process of decision making. There were no leaders nor political ideologies that directed this movement. Instead, meetings were facilitated by small teams of people whose main objectives were to encourage participation, assess consent, and maintain a big picture perspective of the decision making process.

The 15M movement inspired a rapid growth not only in grassroots collectives across the country,

but has also been linked to a growth in cooperative business models and in the sustainability sector in general, especially in the autonomous state of Catalonia (CIC, 2013; BioCultura, 2014). Catalonia, a culturally, linguistically and historically significant state for Spain, has also witnessed big changes on the political scene. The People's Candidates (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular), a grassroots assembly-based party, won three seats in the 2012 elections, the first time it presented itself at national elections (IDESCAT, 2012). More recently, during the May 2014 European candidate elections, another new assembly-led political party We Can (Podemos), surprised the nation by winning 8% of the seats representing Spain. Also of political importance is the upcoming November 2014 referendum in Catalonia, where citizens will vote whether or not Catalonia should separate from Spain, and polls indicate a strong yes in favour of secession (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014). Lastly, since Juan Carlos I, the king of Spain, abdicated the crown to his son and heir, Felipe de Borbon, in June 2014, protests have erupted across the country calling for the end of the monarchy and the beginning of a republic or collection of republics².

2.1.2 Movement in the land of volcanoes

The north-west Catalan county of Garrotxa (see Map 1) is home to 55,000 people and boasts a diverse and vibrant ecology, due in part to the presence of the peninsula's only volcanoes (IDESCAT, 2013). This region has also hosted nationally significant movements, such as the first revolution against feudalism in the 15th century, the Catalan guerrilla movement *Els Makis* in the 1940s, and two of the largest national environmental campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s

2 The Spanish monarchy was abolished for nearly 40 years, until it was resurrected by the Franco dictatorship towards the end of the regime, in 1975.

(PAS, 2013). Since the nation-wide grassroots 15M movement, this rural county has also experienced a boost in social and ecological movement building. Currently, there are 91 self-identifying organizations for social and ecological change in Garrotxa county, of which 46 operate as consensus-based grassroots collectives (Adjuntament d'Olot, 2014; CASG, 2014). These figures are surprisingly high given the small population size and geographic isolation of this rural area, however, they make more sense when current and historical factors are

Figure 1: Garrotxa County in relation to Catalonia, Spain and Europe

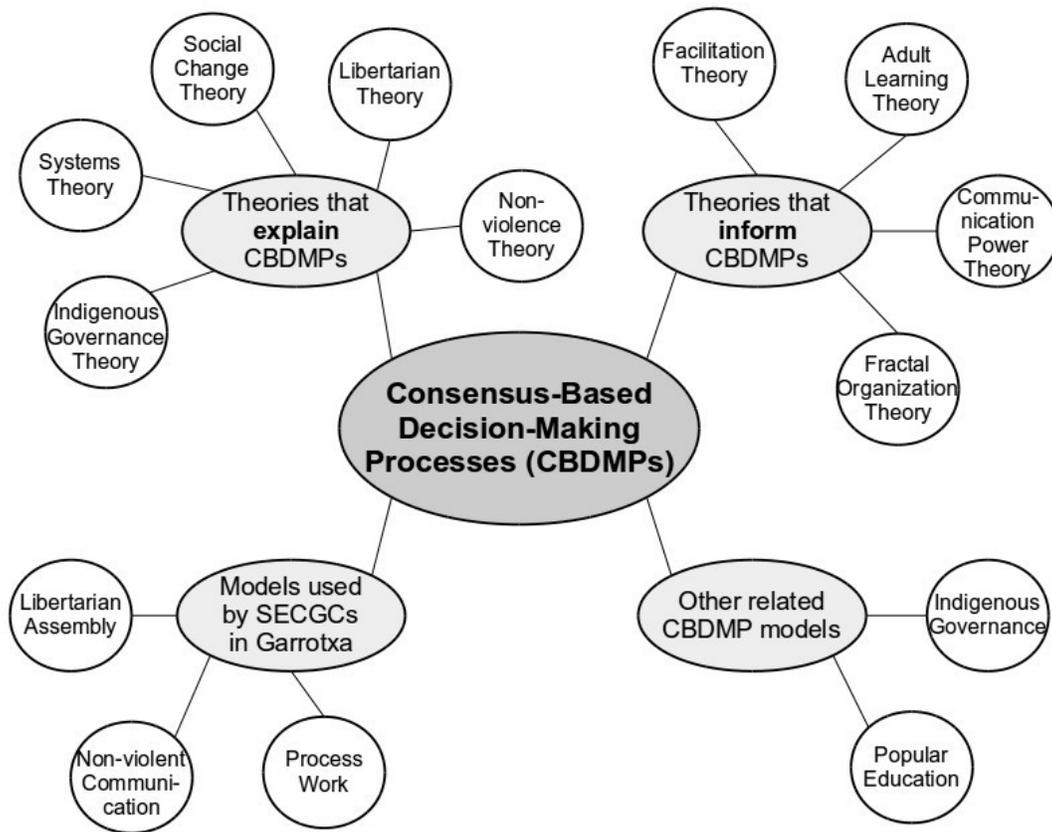


taken into consideration. Given the historical and contemporary experiences in movement building, and given the current social, political and economic climate, the SECGCs in the Garrotxa region make prime candidates for the purposes of this research study.

2.2 *Decision Making Processes of SECGCs*

SECGCs are characterized by the work they do and how they do it. As the term implies, SECGCs are groups of people based in the community who work voluntarily to effect social and ecological change in their communities. By working in collective, SECGCs generally make decisions by consensus, and often with the assistance of an internal facilitator. In the Garrotxa region, certain factors affect how meetings are facilitated and how consensus is determined, including collective members' levels of experience in grassroots organizing in rural Garrotxa, their socio-cultural and political affinity with the group's values. In order to support and inform the analysis of decision making processes of SECGCs, previous research on facilitation, adult learning, communication power, and fractal organization is reviewed. The three facilitation models that are in practice amongst SECGCs in Garrotxa are also presented in the literature review. Figure 1 (below) presents a mind map of the theories and models related to consensus-based decision making processes.

Figure 2: Theories & Models of Consensus-Based decision making Processes



2.2.1 The theories that inform SECGC decision making

There are many theories that help explain how SECGCs make decisions (see Figure 1), but the author of this study proposes that four theories are foundational to SECGC decision making processes in Garrotxa. These include facilitation theory, adult learning theory, communication power theory and fractal organization theory. Facilitation theory is preceded by similar deliberation and governance theories of Greek and Indigenous origin, among others, but the contemporary “father” of facilitation theory is Carl Rogers. Rogers book “Freedom to Learn”

(1969) significantly impacted how educators and counsellors approached group learning and group processes, by suggesting that facilitators are active participants of the learning process and not passive observers. Many academics have written about adult learning, however, this study will showcase the works by Paolo Freire (1993), bell hooks (1994), Henry Giroux (2003), David Kolb (2002) and Adriano Pianesi (2009), who discuss adult learning respectively as popular education, critical pedagogy, transformative education, action learning and unlearning. Manuel Castells, David Graeber and John Gaventa discuss the concepts and dimensions of power and counterpower in the context of social movements and decision making and Janna Raye (2014), Miguel Aguilar (2013) and Felix Bivens (2011) contribute ideas regarding fractal patterns in human social systems.

2.2.2 The facilitation models used by SECGCs in Garrotxa

The three facilitation models explored in the literature review are the Libertarian Assembly Model, variants of the Non-violent Communication Model and the Process Work Model, also known as World Work. Literature on libertarian assemblies do not structure the process in model form for the main reason that, as a libertarian process, each collective, culture, and context determine their own interpretation of how to apply libertarianism to decision making. Nonetheless, the author of this study recognized similarities between the application of libertarian assembly in different contexts and for the purposes of this study has outlined a model based on the foundational principles of this process (see Figure 8). The variants of the Non-violent Communication Model are Beatrice Brigg's Consensus decision making model (2000), Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (NVC) model (2003), and John Croft's

Dragon Dreaming model (2008). All of these models are consensus-based and apply the theory of non-violence (Lederach, 2005) in how decisions are made and how conflict is approached. Lastly, Arnold Mindell's process-oriented World Work model (2002) distinctly addresses tensions and conflicts in group decision making, emphasizing the important learnings that can come from collectively recognizing conflict.

2.3 *The Research Process*

2.3.1 *Research Goal and Objectives*

This research project seeks to contribute to the understanding and strengthening of grassroots social and ecological change collectives. In order to address this goal, this project will identify and analyze the internal decision making processes of collectives in Garrotxa, Catalonia. As such, the four research objectives are:

1. To analyze the context of social and ecological change work in Garrotxa
2. To determine the ethical and philosophical foundations of internal decision making processes within SECGCs in Garrotxa.
3. To examine the operational nature of these internal decision making processes.
4. To explore the relationships between SECGC internal decision making processes, adult learning and social and ecological change processes.

2.3.2 Conceptual Framework

This research study has been conducted using constructivist inquiry and is situated within the ontologies of Quechua Indigeneity and Anarcha-feminism. The literature on facilitation, adult learning, and communication power are strongly founded in constructivism and share some characteristics of the aforementioned ontologies, lending consistency to the analysis and discussion sections of this research study. The epistemology and ontologies of this research study are also reflective of the participating collectives and the work that they do. The SECGCs in the Garrotxa region are not bearers of Indigenous knowledge pertaining to consensus decision making, but nearly all are anarchist bearers of endogenous knowledge pertaining to the assembly model of decision making and some of the SECGCs have similar knowledge of how to live and work in sustainable interaction with their environment, given their applications of permaculture. Thus, the multiple connections between the epistemology and ontologies of the author, the literature reviewed and the collectives being studied add to the overall congruity of this thesis.

2.3.3 Methodology

This research study employed four qualitative research techniques in order to gather primary research data. The bulk of the data came from twelve semi-structured interviews, conducted with founders and/or primary internal facilitators of old and new SECGC's in the Garrotxa regions. These findings were compared against data gathered from two key informant interviews, conducted with leading Catalan facilitators representing two main models of facilitation; the non-violent communication model and the process work model. Eight

participant observation sessions were carried out, corresponding to four different SECGCs. A group debrief was also conducted in order to have research participants verify, challenge and add to the initial findings of this study, of which eight of the twelve interviewees participated. Document analysis provided additional information in order to establish a more thorough understanding of the context of social and ecological activism in Garrotxa. The coding and analysis of the raw data was facilitated by the use of mind mapping, charting, and the tracking of themes and concepts. Overall, the research collection process went as scheduled, however, before beginning the writing of this thesis, one of the twelve semi-structured interview participants withdrew their consent to participate in this study and their comments and insights have thus been removed from all sections of this document.

2.3.4 Ethical Considerations

The research process adhered to both the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board (REB) requirements as well as to the government of Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2010). Upon careful review of both the guidelines and policies of the University of Guelph's REB and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, three ethical considerations were noted. Obtaining free, informed and ongoing consent of research participants was of primary importance, and this was obtained by an REB-approved consent form. Privacy and confidentiality was another ethical concern, and all participants were informed that every effort would be taken to safeguard their private and confidential information, but that given the small circle of activists, and the small population size of the county of Garrotxa, these efforts were not presented as entirely fail-safe. Lastly, the author of this paper

has been involved in social and ecological change efforts in the Garrotxa region for several years, and is consequently on familiar, and in some cases friendly, terms with some of the research participants. Given the possible conflict of interest when selecting research participants and when analyzing the data, care was taken to make sure that all stages of the research process were as transparent and unbiased as possible, while recognizing that the researcher's connections with a few of the collectives is a strength as well as a challenge.

2.4 *Significance of this Study*

Overall, this research study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how grassroots collectives in Catalonia organize themselves and engage their communities in social and ecological change initiatives. While there is a growing collection of research on the 15M movement, there is scant literature available in English, Spanish or Catalan regarding the internal decision making processes of the 15M, its spin-off SECGCs, and pre-15M SECGCs. The regional focus of this thesis serves to spotlight a county whose pre-dictatorship history of activism and revolution has been well-chronicled, but whose contemporary feats of collective actions for social and ecological change have yet to be explored in literary format, aside from one book that discusses anarcho-sindicalism in present-day Garrotxa. In order to address the gap in knowledge and information regarding SECGC activity in this region, and in order to better contextualize the analysis of their internal decision making processes, chapter five of this thesis presents an overview of current Garrotxan SECGCs, followed by a network analysis of these collectives. This preliminary overview and analysis may serve to push the frontier of research and understanding concerning the values, objectives, modi operandi and community

contributions of SECGCs in Garrotxa, Catalonia and socio-politically similar regions in Spain.

In addition to gathering information and analyzing the context of SECGCs in the Garrotxa, this thesis also covers a systems-based fractal analysis of social and ecological change work. To date, only one chapter has been published in Spanish, with an article in English written on the same research, which discusses fractality and the use of Twitter during the first year of the 15M. The analysis of fractality and multifractality has been applied to human systems, but literature is not readily available regarding the fractal analysis of communities dedicated to social and ecological change. This thesis discusses this concept in detail in chapters six and seven, due to insightful comments made by interview participants. Lastly, there is existing literature on consensus-based decision making, however, there are very few published works available that present models of consensus-based decision making, and none that present models to capture libertarian assembly processes specifically. This is likely due to the amplitude of variants of libertarianism, and thus of decision making processes. Nonetheless, in chapter three of this thesis, a working model is proposed in order to capture the libertarian assembly processes in use in Catalonia, and in chapter eight, a fractal organization model is presented in order to assess the fractal nature of grassroots collective decision making processes.

2.5 *Limitations and Assumptions*

There are several limitations and assumptions that underlie this thesis and the primary and secondary research that inform it. One of the principle limitations of this study is the information gathered by twelve representatives of twelve different SECGS in order to explore and analyze the motivations, operations and struggles of these SECGSs as whole entities

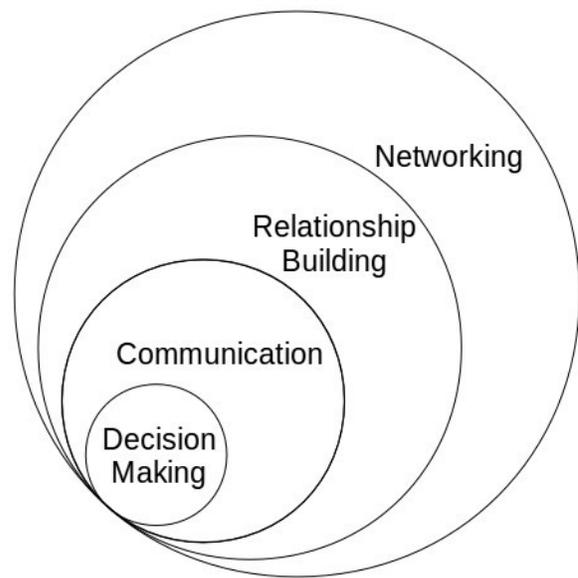
composed of multiple individuals. This research study accepts that while no single member can fully and accurately represent an entire group, measures can be taken at the interviewee selection stage to address this limitation. This assumption is validated by fractal theory, which states that there is a self-same relationship between the parts of a complex system and the system itself (Bivens, 2011; De Florio, Coronato, Bakhouya & Di Marzo, 2012; Aguilera, Morer, Barandiraran, & Bedia, 2013; Raye, 2014). Another limitation faced by the researcher at the research and analysis stages was the translation component, as none of the primary research was in English. Certain terms used by interviewees, especially those relating to contemporary social movement contexts, do not have direct translations into the English, and as such the English translation does not fully capture some of the nuances and relationships that these terms imply. A glossary has been included at the beginning of this study in order to address this limitation. Also related to the context of this research study is the regional limitation that it supposes. La Garrotxa is situated within the culturally and linguistically distinct state of Catalonia, an autonomous region of Spain, and inferring conclusions of this study to other contexts without taking into consideration the distinctive qualities of these other contexts would lead to inaccurate analyses.

As mentioned in the previous section, another limitation to this study is the lack of literature regarding fractality and social movements, contemporary SECGCs in Garrotxa and libertarian assembly processes. The lack of existing research on these topics presented a significant challenge when carrying out the research and analysis components of this study, as more information would have helped to better ground the questions asked during the interviews as

well as to better inform the analysis of the data collected.

There are two groups of assumptions that underlie this research study, and which originate from previous studies and from the researcher's experience in facilitating SECGC decision making processes. The first group of assumptions considers decision making as an integral part of networking, which itself is a systems phenomenon (see Figure 2). Breaking down this assumption into concentric concepts, decision making forms an integral part of communication, which is integral to relationship building, which is integral to establishing networks.

Figure 3: Assumptions About Decision Making as Integral to Other Processes



The second group of assumptions concerns decision making within SECGCs in the context of Garrotxa (see Figure 3). Given that collective processes in Catalonia are influenced by historical and contemporary social and ecological movements, a common characteristic of collective decision making at the grassroots is the principled decision to work by consensus. Consensus generally implies that the internal decision making processes are facilitated, either internally or externally. It is then assumed that facilitation creates conditions for the emergent quality of decision making, namely adult learning at the personal and organizational levels. There is a

cyclical relationship between emergent learning and the decisions taken by consensus. Finally, the process goal of SECGC decision making is social and ecological change, which is a result of decisions made at the personal and collective levels.

Figure 4: Assumptions about implications of SECGC decision making processes



3 Literature Review

The following literature review first explores different definitions of the terms grassroots collectives, social and ecological change and consensus, along with their Catalan equivalents. The definition of terms is followed by a critical overview of the theories that inform and explain consensus-based decision making and then presents facilitation models that are relevant to social and ecological movements in Catalonia. Facilitation theory is largely grounded in adult learning theories and communication power theories, however, fractal organization theory also provides a useful lens for interpreting patterns and relationships in SECGC decision making processes. Systems theory, social change theory, libertarian theory, and non-violence theory also play significant roles in grassroots decision making in Catalonia. Aspects of these latter theories will be discussed in connection with the other theories and in the review of the facilitation models, rather than being treated as foundational to consensus-based decision making processes (see Figure 1). The three models that are reviewed are the Libertarian Assembly Model, the Non-violent Communication Model, and the Worldwork Model, as these are the models that are present and in practice amongst Garrotxan SECGCs.

3.1 Definition of Terms

In order to fully understand and appreciate the theories and facilitation models of consensus-based decision making, there are three key terms that must be explored. The concept of grassroots collectives is primary, as SECGCs are the protagonists of this thesis. Definitions of social and ecological change, understood as an example of systems change, will also be critically

reviewed. Consensus is a transversal ideal in the context of grassroots decision making in Catalonia and as such will also be explored and critiqued, using contributions by Quaker, libertarian, Indigenous and social change scholars and activists.

3.1.1 Grassroots Collectives

The Catalan term “col·lectius populars”, and its closest English translation “grassroots collectives” are compound terms of two concepts closely related to social movement building. The term “col·lectiu” is directly translated into the English as “collective”, whose Latin root “collectivus” meaning “gathered together”. In the context of social and ecological movements, numerous academics and grassroots groups agree that a collective refers to a group of individuals who organize for a common purpose and who share decision making power (Polletta, 2002; Causton, 2008, Gelderloos, 2010, SAC, 2012, GEO, 2014). The Sprout Anarchist Collective further defines collectives as “practical examples of counter institutions that are egalitarian, voluntary, and anti-authoritarian” (SAC, 2012, p8). Catalan authors Raimon Portell and Salomó Marquès and American author Sam Delgoff emphasize the historical connections of the term in their respective books, “*Els Mestres de la República*” (Teachers of the Spanish Revolution, 2006) and “The Anarchist Collectives: Workers’ Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution, 1936–1939” (1996), sharing that it was first used at the turn of the 20th century by libertarian groups who began organizing community-based agricultural initiatives and community-based resistance efforts against the Spanish monarchy.

The term *popular* in Catalan and Spanish is directly translated into common English as “of the people”, although “popular” is common in more academic contexts. While the term was in

frequent use before and during the Spanish Revolution of the 1930's, its use became contentious after it was misappropriated by dictator General Francisco Franco. Franco was the supreme leader of the puppet political party *Partido Popular* (The People's Party) and reigned Spain from 1939 until his death in 1975. In recent years, social and ecological activists in Catalonia are consciously re-appropriating the term in order to shift its meaning back to its original essence, with the term being used in the new grassroots political party *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* and to describe community feasts, such as the *Calçotada Popular*³. Nonetheless, some Catalan SECGCs still prefer to identify themselves instead as *de base* which has many translations in English, including “grounds”, “basis”, “foundation”, “support”, as well as “grassroots”.

“Grassroots” according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is defined simply as “the most basic level of an activity or organization [in which] ordinary people [are] regarded as the main body of an organization’s membership” (2014). This straight-forward definition does not capture the activist connotation of the term, which author Sarah van Gelder (2011) details in her book “This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement”. Van Gelder uses the word “grassroots” to characterize entities that are local and informal, a position echoed by Michelle Causton in the publication titled “Grassroots Governance: Governance and the Non-Profit Sector” (2008). Van Gelder also mentions that the conscious absence of political and state involvement in grassroots movements helps avoid the institutional co-option of the collective purpose of these SECGCs. Catalan historian Marcel Surinyach elaborates this position further by insisting that any state involvement will not only impact the goal or mission of the grassroots

3 A typical Catalan meal that consists of roasting large amounts of large spring onions and serving them with red pepper sauce and a paella rice dish.

collective, but their overall capacity to connect with community members and to network with other grassroots collectives (2013). The relationships between Garrotxan SEGCs and municipal and national institutions will be assessed in chapters five and seven of this thesis, taking into consideration the range of relationships, from antagonistic to collaborative, and exclusive to inclusive.

3.1.2 Social & Ecological Change as Systems Change

In order to keep this section short, this section will only review current literature on social and ecological change as systems change, while recognizing that this literature is informed by previous scholarly work by Margaret Mead, Mikhael Bakunin, Karl Marx, Noam Chomsky, Stéphane Hessel and Fritjof Capra, among others. Traditional ecological knowledge as well as the writings of ancient Sumerian, Mayan, Greek and Chinese philosophers were also used to inform some of the following literature being reviewed, but such works will also not be concretely discussed. This section will begin with authors of contemporary social change theory, followed by authors of ecological change theory, most of whom frame their analyses within systems theory.

In his 2007 article, “A Three-Fold Theory of Social Change and its M&E Implications”, Doug Reeler describes three types of social change. The first is emergent change and refers to the “day-to-day changes” (p9) that come from ongoing processes of learning from and adapting to complex and/or dynamic environments. Transformative change happens when a system, social or ecological, experiences a crisis or an extended period of stagnation. The result of this change process means that either a new balance and/or composition of the system has been struck, or

that the system has expired. Lastly, projectable change is one that is brought about by defining goals and planning corresponding actions in order to achieve these goals for system change. Given the Catalan context of rapid and dynamic social, economic and political changes, it is important to have a solid understanding of the nature and implications of transformative change, while persisting on the path of emergent change. Projectable change is applicable for concrete actions, but is less relevant to the discussion of this thesis topic. Reeler also co-wrote the “Barefoot Guides to Working with Organizations and Social Change”, in which the Barefoot Collective explores the role of local and ancestral knowledge in effecting and supporting social change, especially that of the emergent kind (Reeler, van Blerk, Taylor, Paulsen & Soal, 2009). This is important to keep in consideration for the writing of thesis, as many of the SECGCs participate in ecological movement building, informed by scientific as well as traditional ecological knowledge.

The concepts of balancing and reinforcing feedback loops is discussed by Pennie Foster-Fishman, Branda Nowell and Huilan Yang when writing about systems change in their 2007 article “Putting the System Back into Systems Change: A framework for understanding and changing organizational and community systems.” According to these authors, before identifying leverage points for systems change, it is important to assess the interactions in the system(s). The first type of interaction is called “balancing feedback loops” and is when system parts stabilize the influence of each other, which leads towards system stability or system stagnation. The second type of interaction is “reinforcing feedback loops” and is the continuous escalation of the outcomes of the interactions in a system, creating either “a virtuous or vicious

cycle” (p210), but with the overall characteristic of instability. While their proposal for identifying leverage points requires more depth in order to be adaptive to diverse contexts, their discussion of feedback loops is applicable to the discussion sections of this thesis.

Brian Christens, Carrie Hanlin and Paul Speer, in their 2007 article “Getting the Social Organism Thinking: Strategy for systems change” define systems change as “any alteration in social, economic, environmental or political systems that affect human communities” (p230). In order to effect systems change, the authors posit that there are four criteria that must be fulfilled. First, society has to commit to simultaneous changes at both the individual and systems level, in order to break the dualistic perspective of change processes. Second, attention to creating more connections and thus greater complexity in the system will also contribute towards positive social change. Recognizing and understanding power relationships is also a fundamental step before taking action towards a new social order. Lastly, searching and finding connections and points of leverage is also needed before changing human systems. According to Donella Meadows, author of “Finding Leverage Points to Facilitate System Change” (2009), leverage points are often counter-intuitive and that while there are numerous places in which people can intervene in a system, the most effective leverage happens at the social paradigm level in order to provoke not just a shift, but a change in the dominant paradigm. For the purposes of this thesis, the concepts of personal and group change processes, interconnectivity, power dynamics as well as leverage points all contribute towards a network analysis of decision making within and among SEGCs.

The foremost Catalan scholar on social change is Manuel Castells. In his 2012 book “Redes de

Indignación y Esperanza” (Networks of Outrage and Hope), he examines the emotional roots of social change. Referring to the theory of affective intelligence, he explains that while fear of powerful people and institutions has a negative (paralyzing) effect upon social change, enthusiasm has a positive (mobilizing) effect. For example, when people's right to live with dignity is extinguished, when they can no longer feed, clothe or house themselves or their loved ones, they are more able to shift from fear to a sense of deep outrage. When a critical mass of people share this feeling of outrage, and when these people are able to share their feelings of outrage with each other, they are more likely to feel a sense of hope. Castells builds upon the existing theory of affective intelligence, suggesting that it is the combination of outrage and hope that drives people to participate in collective actions for social change, and not just one or the other. Castells application of these suppositions to the case of the 15M movement is rigorous and analytical, adding strength to his overall arguments that emphasize the role of emotion in social movement building. Francesca Polletta also makes these connections in her book “Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements” (2001), co-written with Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper, and in which they (passionately) argue that academics need to pay more attention to the emotional drivers of politics and social change and present critical analyses of the kinds of emotions and roles that emotions play in the unfolding of social movements. More recently, Stéphane Hessel, perhaps having read Polletta's book, or perhaps simply because of his 93 years of experience witnessing war, corruption, social protest and revolution, wrote an essay in 2011 to the people of Spain, titled “Indignaos!” (Get Outraged!). The essay called people to rise up against the virulent corruption that was leading to what eventually became the worst economic crisis in contemporary Spain. Three years later, the last sentence of Hessel's paper can

still be found on posters in Barcelona's metro, and spray-painted on train station walls across Catalonia, telling people that “to create is to resist, to resist is to create” (2011, p17).

Another Spanish language contribution to understanding system change, but with a focus on both social and ecological change, is the concept of *autopoiesis*. Coined by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, this term refers to the self-organization of a living system towards a new state of equilibrium. In the 2007 book “Transformación en la Convivencia” (Transformation in Coexistence), Maturana explains that because humans have the capacity to interact socially and establish community systems, they also have the capacity to interact in multiple systems. He postulates that if these interactions are “recurring and cooperative” (p30), the community is able to achieve autopoiesis. This concept is central to understanding the objectives and viability of the work of SECGCs in Garrotxa and elsewhere. Maturana extends his analysis of human system change in his 2008 publication, “Emociones y Lenguaje en Educación y Política” (Emotions and Language in Education and Politics). In this paper, he reflects upon the roles that emotions, language and ethics have when embarking upon systems change, specifically in the education and political arenas. Similar to Castells assessment of how collective hope can lead to social change, Maturana postulates that love can also inspire and propel systems change. However, Maturana adds that any action towards social change must also be informed by social and community ethic. In addition, the use of language must be as communication and not as domination⁴, in order to create the conditions for a change that is in the interest of the whole system's well-being. This introduces the role of power dynamics in social change processes, an

4 This position echoes postulates of Edward Sapir's theory of linguistic relativity which state that different languages have different impacts on how people perceive the world.

aspect that will be addressed in the discussion and analysis sections of this study.

John Croft, author of “The facilitator's guide to Dragon Dreaming” brings together discussions of ecology and social change in his 2011 article “The Nature of Change: Understanding Needed for Change Makers.” In this paper, he uses scientific and mathematical theories to explain change processes that he believes are most relevant to social and ecological activists. The first type of change identified is “instantaneous change” and concurs with Reeler's term of transformative change, if lacking a deeper analysis of the concept. The second type of change is called “smooth change over time” and appears to be a mix of emergent and projectable change, leaning more towards the definition of projectable change given that Croft emphasizes the importance of proper planning throughout the paper, and only briefly mentions the reflection and learning aspects that are central to Reeler's idea of emergent change. While this article may not be useful in strengthening the analysis of internal decision making processes as change processes, it helps to better understand the foundations of Crofts' Dragon Dreaming version of non-violence facilitation for social change.

In “Permaculture: A Designer's Manual”⁵ (2002), Bill Mollison discusses ecosystem theory as well as the impacts of urban and rural development and practices on global ecology. He proposes the concept of permaculture, “the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems”

5 Before publishing this manual, Mollison applied to trademark the term “permaculture” and in doing so received much criticism from social, Indigenous and eco-justice activists. Permaculture was neither a term that he had coined, nor was the act of claiming proprietorship consistent with the permaculture principle of “responsibility for all” or the permaculture ethic of “care of the people”. By attempting to trademark this concept of ecological change design, Mollison defied collective, Indigenous and open-source intellectual property rights. His trademark application was eventually rejected and Mollison's future attempts to trademark other terms related to permaculture were also fruitless.

(Mollison, 2002, p.ix), as a way to counter ecological degradation and effect positive and lasting ecological change. While Mollison also recognizes the contributions of Aboriginal ecological knowledge towards the development of land use practices outlined in this manual, he does not incorporate such knowledge into his discussion about how humanity should approach social and political transformation. His definition of such change can be synthesized by his term “work-netting” (p532) versus the well-known term of networking. Mollison believes that society's most significant limitation to social and political change is due to a lack of work ethic and because of excessive talking and networking. With one solid design, and the right workers who receive the right compensation to implement the design, Mollison declares that change is possible. He fails to acknowledge the roles that dialogue and collective creation could have on creating more resilient and applicable designs for ecological change.

3.1.3 Consensus

After reviewing numerous works on consensus, there appears to be a strong disagreement about its definition. Given the context of this thesis, consensus will be used as defined in part by Beatrice Briggs (2000), José Luis Escorihuela (2007), John Croft (2008), and Mireia Parera (2013) all of whom draw upon the Quaker experience⁶ in social movements, and in part by Marcel Surinyach (2012), Sarah van Gelder (2011) and Frances Shaw (2012) who write about grassroots assembly and consensus. Also similar in nature is the practice of consensus amongst Indigenous nations in North America, from the Tlingit and Haudenosaunee nations of Canada to

6 In Catalunya, activists inspired by Quaker consensus-based decision making often refer to Quakers as being largely influenced by the medieval pacifist Cathar movement. Cathar cities and towns were most prevalent in Languedoc, present day southern France and northern Catalonia, before the Holy Crusade Against the Cathars lead by the Catholic church in the early 14th century, which annihilated these deeply non-violent communities.

the Mixtec and Tlalpanec nations of Mexico. The following section will also present contrasting and diverging definitions in order to highlight some weaknesses and challenges of the consensus process.

Mireia Parera, reflecting upon the contributions of Quaker tradition in present day grassroots decision making, describes consensus as a process of “mediating conflict, managing emotions and creating collective wisdom” (Parera, 2013, p6). She continues on to state that consensus is only one decision making technique, but that it is one that significantly helps group members take full and true ownership of their decisions. Beatrice Briggs is another Spanish-language author on consensus who is also influenced by Quaker tradition. In her book “Introducción al Consenso” (Introduction to Consensus, 2000), she does not directly define consensus, but does give an in-depth description of the five elements of consensus. These elements are presented in a formulaic manner, and include technical, although somewhat obscure, items such as “a solid agenda,... and effective facilitation” (Briggs, 2000, p9). More relevant to social change contexts are the elements of equal power sharing, an agreed common purpose, and the conscious and informed commitment to the consensus process. John Croft explores Brigg's consensus model in his 2008 essay “The Power of Consent”, and further defines the concept by emphasizing that consensus requires participants to be “emotionally present and engaged; frank in a loving, mutually respectful manner; and sensitive to each other” (Croft, 2008, p1). José Luis Escorihuela also discusses the list of five elements of consensus in his 2007 book “El Camino Se Hace Al Andar: Del Individuo Moderno a la Comunidad” (The Path Is Made By Walking: From Modern Individual to Sustainable Community). He subsequently details the two ideals of

consensus-based decisions, namely that they “serve the interest of the group and not of individuals, and recognize the expectations and concerns of all members, without excluding or marginalizing any voices” (p178). While these definitions serve to describe consensus somewhat well, they all lack greater consistency in their presentation and are all missing an explanation of the challenges of consent within the definitions themselves.

Marcel Surinyach speaks of consensus in the context of libertarian assembly in his 2013 book “Fora del Ramat: Anarquistes a la Garrotxa 1995-2012” (Stepping Out of the Herd: Anarchists in the Garrotxa from 1995–2012). When exploring what anarchist society is, Surinyach defines libertarian assemblies as “horizontal and leaderless, where decisions are made by consensus, that is to say, in a society that practices Direct Democracy” (p13). This brief definition wants for more explanation as to Surinyach's understanding of consensus and direct democracy, but may indicate a high level of internalization of the meaning of these concepts and a similar expectation from his readers. In “This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement”, (2011), contributor Nathan Schneider follows in the same vein as Surinyach, explaining that consensus decision making is a common core value of the Occupy movements, along with individual autonomy, decentralization, and equality (p41). Another contributor to this collection of articles, David Graeber, gives an overview of the consensus process as one in which decisions are made democratically, by general assent and not by voting. Graeber justifies the use of consensus by stating that “the way to encourage human beings to act like mature and responsible adults is to treat them as if they already are” (p23), implying that consensus can promote personal and collective growth by encouraging full participation and distributing power

equitably. Frances Shaw also conducts research on the Occupy movement and assembly-led decision making. In her 2012 paper “I Act As the Tongue of You: Open-Source Politics and the Occupy General Assembly”, she assesses various General Assembly processes in order to establish definitions of direct democracy, consensus, and facilitation. According to the Occupy General Assembly in New York, “consensus, based on the consent of individuals within a larger group, is a participatory dialogue used to reach a general sense of agreement by all members of the community” (p3). Neither Graeber nor Shaw explore the boundaries of “general” agreement nor assent, which is identified later in this section by consensus critics as a point of contention. The concept of participatory dialogue is also not explored, however, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* gives a thorough exploration of this concept, and is reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

The practice of direct democracy and consensus has ancient roots which are still alive today in Indigenous communities and sometimes replicated by social movement actors that have witnessed or participated in such forms of consensus decision making (Briggs, 2000; Croft, 2012). Indigenous Studies scholars Bruce Johansen and Alice Mann have written largely on contemporary Haudenosaunee issues and in 2000 published the “Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)”. According to these writers, consensus is the primary mode of governance within the traditional councils of the various Haudenosaunee nations in Ontario, Quebec and New York. In fact, consensus is “one of three bedrock principles of the *Kaya' nere' nhkowa* (Great Law of Peace)” that governs the Haudenosaunee peoples. The consensus process is explained in great length, but an overview of the term's meaning is that it is:

“a long process, designed neither for speed nor for efficiency, which are Western, not Iroquoian, values. Under Haudenosaunee law (and Iroquoian customs generally), the point of council discussion is not to “reach a decision” or “take action” (again, European values), but to achieve the One Mind of Consensus.” (Johansen & Mann, 2000, p61)

The former special advisor to the premier of Northwest Territories, Joanne Barnaby, wrote a policy paper titled “Indigenous Decision Making Processes: What can we learn from traditional governance?” (2009), which shares similar observations of consensus-based decision making amongst various northern Indigenous nations. From her extensive experience and research, and after vetting her research results with traditional elders from different communities in the north, Barnaby shares her definition of consensus as a discussion and decision making process that seeks to understand the different views and approaches of everyone who is impacted by the issue at hand. She continues in saying that “inherent in the consensus process is respect for the roles of all people, including those of women, young people, and elders” (p9). Moving further south, academic Martin Hébert explores consensus amongst the Mixtec and Tlapanec Indigenous nations of Guerrero, Mexico. In his 2003 paper, “Communal Interest and Political Decision Making in an Emerging Mexican Indigenous Movement”, Hébert observes the integral role of consensus within and between Indigenous communities, specifically concerning the issue of land use and land rights, but also as a method of restorative justice used for resolving internal community conflicts. This use of consensus as a method of conflict resolution is a contentious issue amongst some non-violence workers, who consider this an impermissible act of negotiation with the aggressor. Nonetheless, non-violence scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach

argues in favour of consensus as an integral way to explore and resolve conflict (2005). This debate will be explored in more detail when presenting the different models of facilitation.

Most of the above definitions of consensus concur in part with John Heron's definition, found in his 1999 book "The Complete Facilitators' Handbook". Heron, one of the principle academics who write on facilitation theory defines consensus as "the most acceptable solution for all... a decision is reached when the minority agrees that its views have been heard and understood and yet still rejected; and when it assents to abide by the majority view it dislikes the least" (p89). However, there are two important points of divergence. That the minority position is heard but rejected presents consensus as a parody of participatory decision making and direct democracy, and not one that aims to address all needs and concerns of the group in a real and practicable way. Also, agreeing to the least disagreeable option could be interpreted as compromise and compliance by minority voices, versus commitment to and content with the end decision, elements identified as essential to consensus by the previous literature on Quaker, Libertarian and Indigenous perspectives on consensus. Thus, Heron's inconsistent definition of consensus is sometimes used to justify critiques of consensus, constructive and otherwise.

Anna Snyder, in her 2003 article "Critiquing Consensus: An analysis of processes designed for non-governmental collaboration" identifies five main limitations of consensus. These limitations were identified after her research into the consensus process of the International Forum on Women in 1995. The first limitation refers to the suppression of conflict during decision making processes. According to Snyder, people may not voice their dissent and may even falsely agree in order to support the group's goal to reach unanimity. This challenge of the consensus process

is not addressed by the previous literature reviewed, and accurately questions the validity of decisions that arise from a process in which conflicting views are not aired. Secondly, Snyder identifies “tyranny of structurelessness/power inequities” (p44) as a major limitation, because she believes that it is difficult to identify and challenge people who hold more power or hold power over others within non-hierarchical or leaderless groups. Parera (2013) and Mindell (2002) acknowledge this as a concern in consensus-based decision making processes and propose the use of process work in order to make such power inequities more visible so that they can be addressed. Homogeneity is another concern for Snyder as consensus processes require a common purpose and shared values amongst all stakeholders, which is difficult to attain. This is certainly a challenge when bringing together such a large and diverse group of participants, and one that is not addressed by many authors. Despite the difference in scale and purpose, this may still be a concern for internal decision making processes at the SECGC level. Lastly, Snyder observes that time and environmental constraints, such as legal, economic, political and/or cultural barriers, can limit consensus decision making processes. These criticisms are relevant to decision making in grassroots contexts, however, throughout her paper, Snyder misuses the term consensus when referring to the dissatisfaction and disagreement of forum participants with the final “consensus”. According to Quaker, libertarian and Indigenous perspectives, consensus is reached when everyone is content with and feels ownership of the both the process and the final decision.

Other scholars who have published critiques of consensus and propose improvements to the process are Jane Mansbridge and Christopher Karpowitz. Mansbridge and Karpowitz, in their

paper “Disagreement and Consensus: The need for dynamic updating in public deliberation” (2005), contrast the deliberation processes of consensus-oriented public meetings with adversarial public meetings. Their findings are similar to Snyder's in that if conflict is not recognized or addressed in the consensus process, then people are less willing to share different perspectives and thus agreeing to a false consensus. To Mansbridge, “the unsettled question is the degree to which actual negotiations on conflicting interests can be structured into deliberations without undermining the pursuit of the common good” (p355). One possible solution proposed by the authors is the use of dynamic updating, or the “open-minded, ongoing search for the current and potentially changing values and interests of all members of the deliberation” (p348). Mansbridge and Karpowitz conclude that adversarial public meetings produce a higher level of satisfaction amongst participants than the consensus-oriented public meetings. However, like Snyder, the use of the term consensus in this article is inconsistent with the definitions at the beginning of this section.

Samuel Mahaffy, facilitator and author, presents similar suggestions to improve consensus-based processes. In his 2012 book “Relational Presence: decision making beyond consensus”, he discusses the concept of generative decision making, which refers to processes that “recognize that both individuals and organizations, when they open to self-awareness, are always changing” (p21). His main thesis, however, is that in decision making processes, relationships should be paramount, above even the agenda of the meeting or the overall mission of the organization. Mahaffy's concept of relational presence is essentially the act of being simultaneously aware of self and of others, specifically in terms of the emotions, needs, values, and ideas that are held

and shared in a decision making process. This article emphasizes an important emotional and relational element to decision making, and although Mahaffy observes inconsistencies with this approach and consensus, these are less relevant if he applies consensus as defined by Quaker and Haudenosaunee communities.

On the end of the spectrum of dissent of consensus, Bill Mollison describes the term as “an endless and pointless affair, with coercion of the often silent or incoherent abstainer by a vociferous minority” (Mollison, 2002, p530). He believes that consensus is inefficient in terms of time and emotional energy and that the veto power of minority participants can have a tyrannical effect on a group. Returning to the concept of consensus as defined at the beginning of this section, the question of efficiency (time and resources) is not of great import alongside the questions of equitable participation and collective well-being in decision making processes.

3.2 *Theoretical Foundations of Consensus-Based decision making*

This section will begin with an overview of classic and contemporary authors of facilitation theory, followed by a discussion of three key theories that inform the practice of consensus-based decision making. The first is a collection of theories related to adult learning, given that the members of grassroots movements are engaged in processes of change, which involves personal engagement in and learning about such change. The theory of communication power and related power theories also directly impact the understanding of facilitated decision making processes, given the importance of horizontality and dialogue in these processes. Lastly, fractal organization theory supports and informs the understanding of the implications and outcomes of consensus-based decision making processes.

3.2.1 Facilitation Theory

This section will discuss the theory of facilitation as it is treated in the fields of adult education and social movements, and to a lesser degree in the field of psychology. The seminal works by authors Carl Rogers and John Heron will be explored first, followed by a review of definitions of facilitation found in English and Catalan literature by well-known practitioners and authors in the field.

Although the practice of facilitating decision making and conflict resolution processes has existed for millennia, it is psychologist Carl Rogers who is considered the academic father of facilitation theory. In his 1969 book “Freedom to Learn”, he proposes major changes to the relationship between teacher and student, and therapist and patient. Rogers outlines ten principles of facilitation, which appear to be more characteristics than principles, but are nonetheless relevant to the context of grassroots decision making. According to Rogers, the role of facilitators is to support the identification and clarification of the purposes of the members as individuals and as a group, by using a wide range of learning resources. Most importantly, the facilitator acts as a participant learner and is open and accepting towards both “the intellectual content and the emotionalized attitudes, endeavouring to give each aspect the approximate degree of emphasis which it has for the individual or the group” (p164). While it is apparent that Rogers did not participate in grassroots organizing, he did observe mass people's assemblies in Brazil and acknowledges this experience as formative in concretizing his facilitation theory.

The other leading author in facilitation theory is John Heron, whose book “The Complete Facilitator's Handbook” (1999) proposes that there are six dimensions of facilitation, with three

modes to each dimension – hierarchical, cooperative and autonomous (See Table 1). The dimensions of facilitation include planning, meaning, confronting, feeling, structuring and valuing, creating eighteen classes of facilitation. As a pioneer in co-operative inquiry research and co-counselling, his examples often involve academic, therapy or business/human resource concerns. That said, Heron's reflections about the autonomy mode, and to a certain degree about the cooperation mode, in each of the six dimensions provide useful insights into the facilitation of social and ecological change collectives. As SECGCs in Catalonia are generally non-hierarchical and self-organizing in their decision making, the autonomous column of Table 1 would apply to most of the dimensions. The confronting and feeling dimensions may tend towards the cooperative mode depending on the model of facilitation that the SECGC employs. In addition to detailing the approaches that facilitators may take when facilitating decision making processes in SECGCs, Heron's framework also gives structure to self-reflection processes (Hogan, 2002). Facilitators, educators and counsellors could use this framework in order to improve their ability to meet a group or organization's decision making and conflict resolution needs.

Figure 5: Heron's Eighteen Classes of Facilitation

		MODES		
		Hierarchical	Cooperative	Autonomous
DIMENSIONS	Planning	You plan for the group: you direct the planning of the group's learning, deciding unilaterally on the content of the course program and making decisions for the learners.	You plan the program with the group: you are committed to negotiate, to take into account and seek agreement with the views of group members in constructing the timetable.	You delegate the planning of the program to the group: you are getting out of the way, affirming the group's need to work out its course design.
	Meaning	You make sense of what is going on for the group: you give meaning to events and illuminate them: you are the source of understanding what is going on.	You invite group members to participate with you in the generation of understanding: you prompt them to give their own meaning to what is happening in the group, then add your view, as one idea among others, and collaborate in making sense.	You choose to delegate interpretation, feedback, reflection and review to the group: making sense of what is going on is autonomous, entirely self-generated within the group.
	Confronting	You interrupt the rigid behaviour, point to what is being avoided, and do this directly to people and for people – in such a way that those concerned may take up the issue and thereby show some awareness of their avoidance.	You work with the group and its members to raise consciousness about avoided issues and defensive behaviour: you prompt, invite and ask people, consult them, compare and share views with them. Consciousness-raising is collaborative.	You now hand over all consciousness-raising about defensive, avoidance behaviour to the group: you create a climate and learning structures which enable group members to practice self and peer confrontation.
	Feeling	You take full charge of the emotional dynamic of the group for the group, directing its process and deciding how it will be handled: you think for group members, judging what methods of managing feelings will best suit them and their purposes.	You work with the group, eliciting, prompting, and encouraging views, discussing with members different ways of handling feelings: you practice collaborative management of the emotional dynamic of the group.	You give the group space for and delegate to it – the process of managing its own emotional dynamic.
	Structuring	You structure learning activities for the group: you design the exercises and directively supervise their use by the group.	You structure learning methods with the group, cooperating with them in devising how the learning shall proceed: they collaborate with you in designing the structured exercises, and in supervising the running of them.	You delegate to group members control over their own learning process: they are entirely self and peer directed in the design of structured exercises, and in supervising the running of them.
	Valuing	You take strong initiatives to care for group members: you	You create a community of value and mutual respect with	You choose to delegate the affirmation of self-worth to

	manifest directly to them, in word and deed, your commitment to their fundamental worth as persons.	group members: you are inclusive and interactive, collaborating with them as all emerge as self – creating persons.	group members, giving them space to celebrate the value of personal identity and emergence in their own way.
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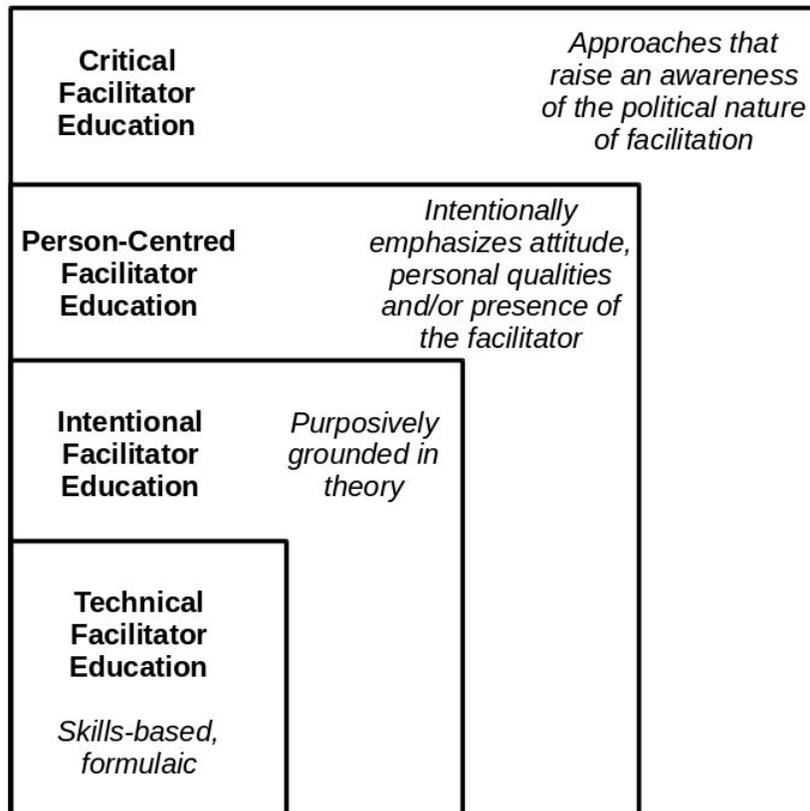
Adapted from sources: Hogan, 2002, p62; Heron, 1999, p16

Contemporary researchers of facilitation theory and practice include Christine Hogan, Glenn Kiser and Glyn Thomas. Hogan is the author of the most current and comprehensive textbook on facilitation available in the English language, “Understanding Facilitation: Theory and Principles” (2002). Although the etymology of the term is from the Latin verb “facere”, meaning “to make easy”, Hogan explains that it is not easy to define facilitation and that there is no agreed definition amongst scholars. For her, based on the literature reviewed and her own experience, facilitation is “a field that has developed in order to help us communicate better as human beings and make more sense out of our world” (p1). She makes the observation that facilitation encourages open dialogue between members of a group so that they can better understand each other's perspectives and assumptions, and can thus make more informed decisions. Hogan's textbook thoroughly reviews many works on facilitation in the fields of management, education, and community development, and her analysis is practical and self-reflective. This analysis could be strengthened by more exploration into the communicative and conflict resolution aspects of facilitation, especially concerning facilitation in culturally diverse contexts and in contexts of conflict and violence.

Glenn Kiser, author of “Masterful Facilitation: Becoming a Catalyst for Meaningful Change” (1997) presents a more results-based definition of facilitation, stating that it is “a purposeful, systematic intervention into the actions of an individual or group that results in an enhanced,

ongoing capability to meet desired objectives.” (p7). He provides a linear model of facilitation that presents group processes as normative and predictable, proposing that a group can change its behaviours and values if the facilitation is highly skilled. This application of projectable change to human behaviour and value systems is flawed given the complexity of these systems, and overall the model is not very relevant to social and ecological movement contexts, especially those in economically and socio-politically insecure environments, such as present-day Spain. Nonetheless, Kiser's inclusion of relationship building and self-evaluation concur with models that approach facilitation in a more systemic fashion.

Figure 6: The Dimensions of Facilitator Education



Source: Thomas, 2008

Introducing a personal emergent learning component of facilitation, Glyn Thomas (2008) describes four styles of facilitation, each with its own definition (see Figure 4). The first is technical facilitation, and is skills-based and prescriptive, while the second style, called intentional facilitation, is grounded in theory as well as being skills-based. The third style is person-centred facilitation and incorporates components of the first two styles, but in addition recognizes and emphasizes “the attitude, personal qualities and/or presence of the facilitator” (p170). Who the facilitator is determines who they are for the group, thus making self-awareness of values and actions central to this relationship-focused facilitation. The fourth style of facilitation is power-based, critical facilitation, and attempts to raise awareness of the political nature of facilitation. In terms of facilitation of decision making within SECGCs, while the first two styles of facilitation are useful for giving structure to meetings and assemblies, the latter two add a self-reflective and critical component that allow the decision making process to deepen and address issues more at the core. This is because these two styles make steps towards transparency in the personal and political (power) aspects of facilitated decision making processes.

In Catalonia, José Luis Escorihuela is the leading theorist on facilitation. In his book “*El Camino Se Hace Al Andar*” (The Path Is Made By Walking), he defines facilitation as “not just a technique, but also an art... it is not enough to apply the theory without getting your hands dirty” (p185). In stating this, Escorihuela emphasizes what Thomas calls person-centred facilitation, and that one has to do deep and ongoing personal work if one wishes to facilitate for change. Mireia Parera, a former student of Escorihuela, is also a writer-practitioner of facilitation with

social and eco-justice collectives. However, in her 2013 article “La facilitació, una eina al servei dels grups” (Facilitation, a tool to serve groups) her description of facilitation varies from Escorihuela's personal work approach, as she also focuses on group process work as integral to facilitation, but does not set aside technical goals either. As such, Parera defines facilitation as a “collection of techniques and skills to help improve group processes so that groups can achieve good results, care for the needs of their members and carry out good and efficient work” (Parera, 2013, p6).

3.2.2 Adult Learning Theories

Theorists on child-centred learning⁷, such as Johann Pestalozzi, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori and John Dewey, profoundly informed the education system in Catalonia in the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century. These advances were radically reversed at the onset of the Franco dictatorship, when hundreds of teachers were incarcerated and dozens assassinated for crimes such as teaching in a language other than Spanish, or teaching content that was not approved by the fascist party (Portell & Marquès, 2006). After the official end of the Franco dictatorship in 1979, there was a fervent overhauling of the public education system. While the teaching methodologies and philosophies were slow to change in the public school system, universities and grassroots activists were able to be more responsive in the field of adult and community education. Their efforts to promote community-based learning and understanding about social and ecological issues were informed by adult learning theorists Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, David Kolb and Adriano Pianesi, among others.

⁷ As opposed to moralistic or content-driven education.

Paolo Freire, philosopher and educator, was the author of one of the most influential texts in the field of critical pedagogy. His 1970 book, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, re-released in 2000, outlines the initial core tenets of critical pedagogy, later developed by scholars such as Henry Giroux and bell hooks. Freire presents a class-based assessment of colonization in Brazil and its impact on the oppressed majority. His book identifies the concepts of dialogue and praxis as core tenets of critical pedagogy, two concepts that are also integral to facilitation. By praxis, Freire refers to the intersection between action and reflection, and which in contemporary use now refers to the synergy between theory and practice. Most relevant to decision making processes in SECGCs is Freire's exploration of the concept of dialogue. During a deep reflection of the meaning(s) of term, he states that dialogue implies a rejection of dichotomies, in which real understanding of and empathy with the other is made possible. Freire characterizes dialogue as participatory, loving and a creative method to liberate oneself from oppression. These characteristics are partly reflective of SECGC decision making processes, which are characterized as horizontal and participatory (Surinyach, 2013; van Gelder, 2011; Gelderloos; 2010; Graeber, 2004), although the emotional and creative aspects of SECGC decision making is not as well documented or explored (Goodwin, Juris, & Polletta, 2001; Polletta; 2002).

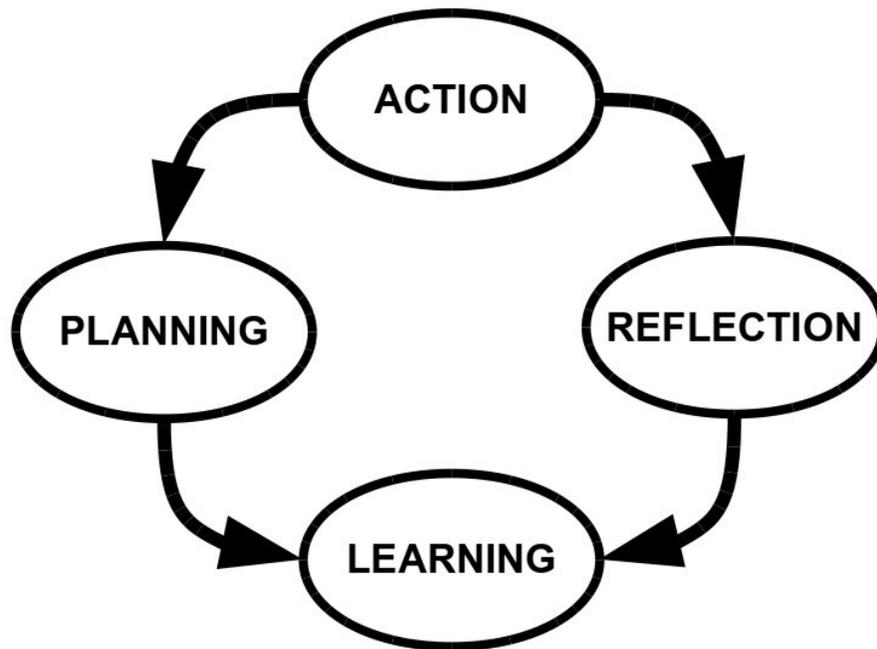
Freire uses the anecdote of a “banking system” to describe the constructed divide between teacher and student. He explains that the classic model of education often consists either of teachers “depositing” ideas into their students, or of a minimal exchange between teacher and students in which ideas are "consumed" by the students (Freire, 2000, p89). A way to encourage critical learning through dialogue is by promoting generative themes. This involves the ongoing

creation of subject matter by students themselves, in order to create a “thematic universe... [which] inaugurates the dialogue of education as the practice of freedom” (Freire, 2000, p96). This idea is echoed by Mahaffy in his writings on generative decision making, which also embraces the personal dimension and dynamic dimension, but in the context of decision making as opposed to learning (Mahaffy, 2012).

Although there are many authors who have explored and written about Freire's work, Henry Giroux and bell hooks are two academics who have contributed significant content and nuances to the theory of critical pedagogy. Giroux expands upon Freire's ideas by developing the concept of radical pedagogy, which “reformulates the dualism between agency and structure... so that we know how to create a school that is significant so that it can be critical, and how to create a school that is critical so that it can be liberating” (Giroux, 2003, p112). In SECGC decision making, this idea contributes to the understanding of the constructed dichotomy of decision making power between the grassroots and institutions, and suggests that the objective of breaking this dichotomy is freedom (as both are imprisoned by this power structure). In her 1994, “Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom”, bell hooks explores the liberation angle further. She coins the term engaged pedagogy, which she says is rooted in Freire's discussion of *conscientization*. hooks' understanding of this term is as “critical awareness and engagement” (hooks, 1994, p14) in which both student and teacher actively participate in, and not passively absorb, the generation of knowledge and understanding. This is reflected in Rogers' idea of the facilitator as a participator in the learning process (1994), and in Reeler's discussion of the generation of emergent change (2007).

The other influential theory in adult learning with relation to facilitation is the theory of experiential learning. This was first explored in children's education by Maria Montessori, Jean Piaget and John Dewey. In the field of adult education, David Kolb is one of the leading authors, creating the Experiential Learning Model, also known as the action learning model. In his 1984 book which launched this model, "Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development", Kolb describes six key characteristics of experiential learning. In terms of facilitation of decision making in SECGCs, one of these characteristics is most relevant. Kolb describes learning as "a continuous process grounded in experience" (Kolb, 1984, p27) which he revises in 2002 as the characteristic "all learning is relearning" (Kolb, 2002, p5). Drawing largely from Freire's theoretical works, as well as Dewey's and Piaget's previous models of experiential learning, Kolb presents the model of a continuous reflective of cycle of action-reflection-learning-planning (see Figure 5). Although he does not make reference to North American Indigenous education models, the Experiential Learning Model is also reflective of Indigenous education approaches, which are largely experiential (Cajete, 1999). As a part of action learning theory, Kolb's model is frequently applied in contemporary contexts of facilitation, adult education and capacity development, and has been linked to processes of emergent change and organizational learning (Reeler, 2007; Reeler, Van Blerk, Taylor, Paulsen & Soal, 2009).

Figure 7: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model



Adapted from source: Kolb, 1984

Adult learning processes also involve unlearning, the theory of which is discussed by Adriano Pianesi in his 2009 article “Journey to Chaos and Back: Unlearning in workplace training programs”. In order for educators to most effectively engage adults in learning, Pianesi believes that they must first “intentionally and deliberately attend to the process of unlearning and then relearning” (p2). Drawing from literature on transformative education, he explains unlearning as both an individual process as well as group one, although both are processes of deconstruction with the purpose of building or changing ideas, attitudes, values, and skills. This is also reflective of Thomas' discussion of person-centred facilitator education, which highlights the importance of learning at the individual and group level (2008). Pianesi presents three behaviours that help facilitate unlearning, namely, an acceptance of where learners are coming from, an open awareness of the emotionally challenging aspects of unlearning, and a

commitment to “nurture an inner dimension of compassion and solidarity” (p4) in learners and facilitators. This classification contributes to a better understanding of unlearning and learning processes that occur during facilitated decision making processes of SECGCs.

3.2.3 Communication Power Theory and other Power Theories

Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and many other theorists have written about power relations in society and politics. However, given the focus of this thesis on the facilitation of social and ecological change collectives, Manuel Castell's theory of communication power will be primarily discussed. Contributions by David Graeber (2004) and John Gaventa (2006) will also be incorporated as they present similar or related analyses of communication and power. Overall, understanding power dynamics contributes to an understanding of oppression, marginalization and discrimination and their external and internal impacts upon SECGCs.

In his most recent book, “Networks of Outrage and Hope” (2012), Manuel Castells returns to the discussion of communication power theory, which he had previously explored in his trilogy on “The Information Age” (1996-1998). This theory is significant when treating topics of social change because it explains two relevant concepts, that of power and that of counterpower. Power, as described by Castells for the purposes of his communication theory, is “embedded in institutions of society and the state itself” (p5), a definition which is grounded in common sense and common experience. Castells' new contribution to this concept of power is that he categorizes the main actors who maintain and exercise power as programmers and switchers. Programmers are people who make rules in the interests of state and other institutions, and then manage these rules, such as policy analysts. Switchers are people within these same institutions

who make sure that power stays amongst themselves. In the context of general decision making, programmers could be seen as individuals who deliver and direct inflexible project proposals/plans or those who dominate discussion and debate (as opposed to dialogue). In this example, switchers would be complicit management, staff or group members who abet the control (versus sharing) of power.

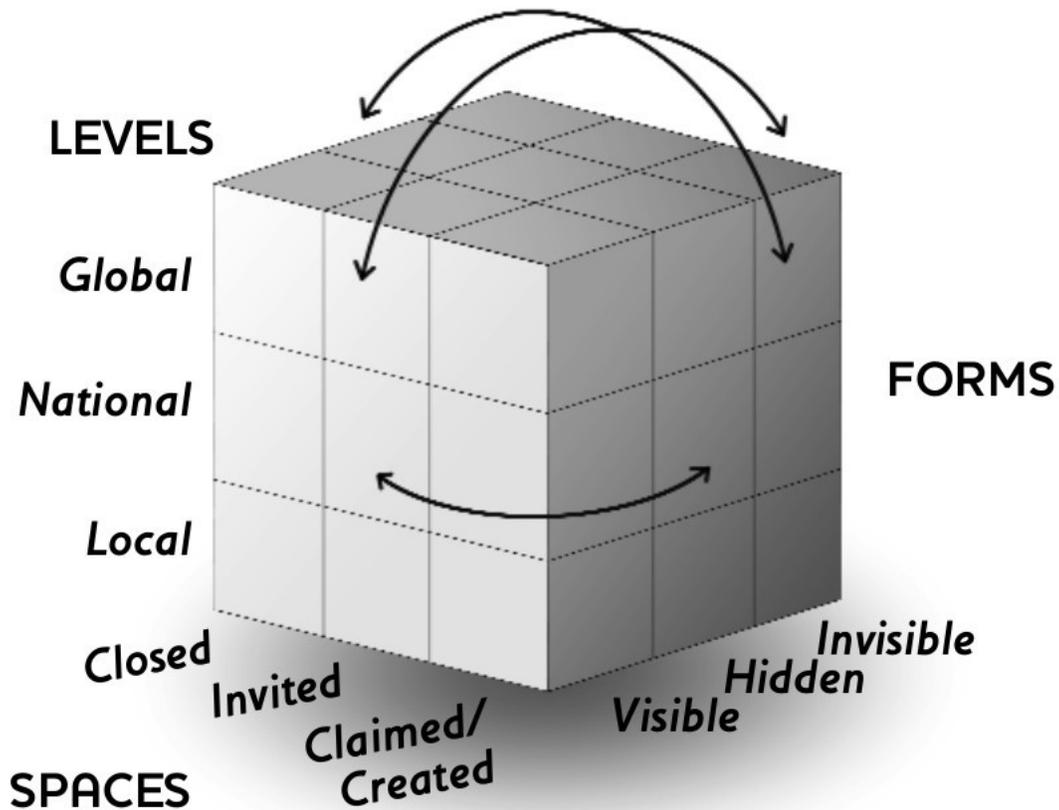
The most intriguing component of Castells theory of communication power is his perspectives on counterpower. This capacity of social actors to defy the status quo and self-represent their own values and interests is the kind of power that lies at the heart of current social movements and SEGCs in particular. For Castells, counterpower has two aspects, “the reprogramming of networks of power and the disruption of dominant switches” (Castells, 2012, p9). In a grassroots facilitation setting, reprogramming refers to the re-articulation of the values and principles of a group, while the disruption of dominant switches refers to the conscious attention to processes of learning, dialogue and decision making for lasting social and ecological change.

David Graeber, author of “Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology” (2002), presents a similar analysis of counterpower in his assessment of various anarchist and libertarian experiences. Upon reviewing his discussion and examples, two key characteristics of this concept can be gleaned. Counterpower is a people's power that depends on their capacity to “imagine a society based on consensus” (p35), which thus allows them to create and maintain such societies or movements. Secondly, counterpower does not have to be juxtaposed against institutional social power. This happens in the extraordinary cases of egalitarian societies, but also more frequently in smaller cases of egalitarian movements and collectives, of which SEGCs are examples or

emulations.

In “Finding a Space for Change: A Power Analysis” (2006), John Gaventa presents the model of a power cube (see Figure 6) to aid in the theoretical discussion of how the forms and spaces of power impact processes of social change. The spaces identified in the article refer directly to the levels of participation that individuals and communities can have in decision making. For example, a closed space is one which excludes civil society, restricting it solely to elite decision makers, “be they bureaucrats, experts or elected representatives” (p26). Invited spaces are found between closed and claimed/created spaces, and are where gatekeepers select members and representatives of civil society to participate in the decision making. While such decisions are informed by community voices, the power still resides with those above, as they are the ones who decide who participates and who does not, thus determining the direction of decision making. Claimed or created spaces are spaces in which grassroots movement building happens, and where community voices are not only central to each decision, but embody each decision. Finally, power can take the form of visible, hidden and invisible power. Gaventa succinctly summarizes the essence of these forms in stating that “the visible form is observable decision making; hidden power is setting the political agenda; and invisible power is shaping meaning and what is acceptable” (p29). The last concept is the most challenging one to address within grassroots collective decision making, as it can occur from without and from within, despite any and all intentions and efforts to uphold common values and principles, such as those of equity and liberty.

Figure 8: The Power Cube



Source: Gaventa, 2006, p25

3.2.4 Fractal Organization Theory

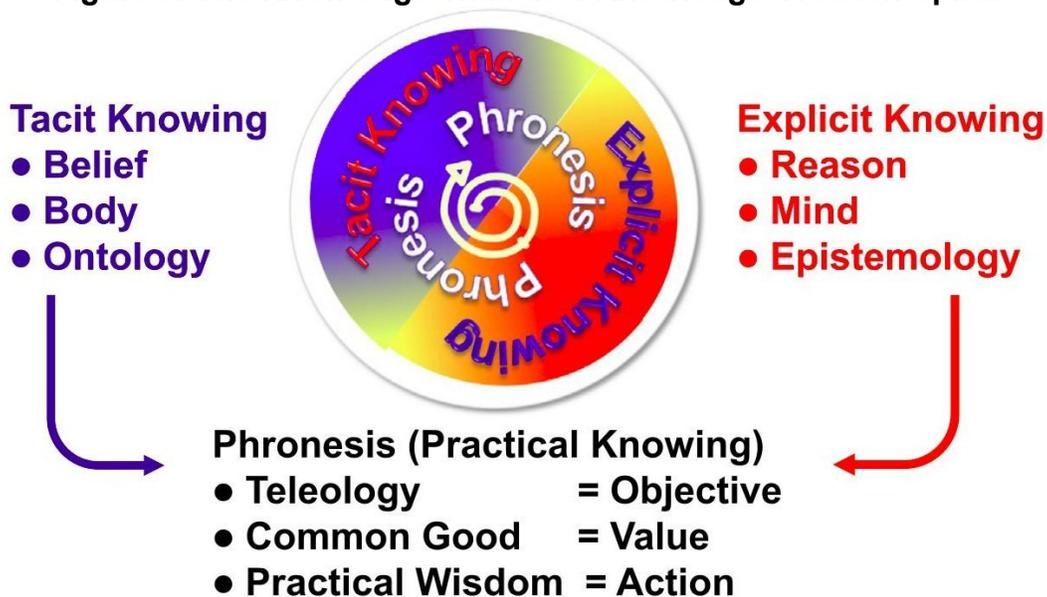
Fractal organization theory, a branch of systems theory, is a relatively new current in organizational management studies and a very new current in social change studies. Authors and academics who are leading the thinking on fractal organization theory include Ikujiro Nonaka (2014), Janna Raye (2014), and Michel Henric-Coll (2014). While their recent published works

focus on decision making in corporate environments, some conclusions could be applicable to SECGC decision making contexts. Fractal patterns in social organizations and social movements have also been investigated by research teams from mathematics and information technology disciplines (de Florio, Coronato, Bakhouya, & di Marzo, 2012; Aguilera, Morer, Barandiaran, & Bedia, 2013). Drawing from Dave Snowden's work on complexity theory, one social studies academic has postulated that change in one part of a higher learning institution can have a fractal effect upon other parts of that same institution, given the right conditions (Bivens, 2011).

Professor Emeritus Ikujiro Nonaka, along with senior fellows Mitsuru Kodama, Ayano Hirose and Florian Kohlbacher make links between fractal organizations, knowledge creation and sustainable innovation in their 2014 article “Dynamic fractal organizations for promoting knowledge-based transformation – A new paradigm for organizational theory”. These authors propose that a company's capacity for sustainable innovation hinges upon their ability to continually create knowledge. This spiral fractal process is one that converts tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, creating new explicit knowledge that eventually becomes tacit knowledge, beginning the spiralling cycle again (see Figure 7). The impelling force of this knowledge creation spiral comes from practical knowledge, also known as *phronesis*, which forms the third leg of the knowledge triad (tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, practical knowledge). Nonaka *et al* believe that the implementation of knowledge is what drives knowledge creation in fractal organizations and is what makes organizations fractal, dynamic, and sustainably innovative. While the authors' discussion of knowledge creation is compelling, there are some major gaps in how they connect the fractal nature of knowledge creation with hierarchical organizational

management. Nonaka *et al* state that leaders can create fractal patterns of knowledge creation by engaging in vertical and horizontal communication. There are two problems with this statement. First, there is an inconsistency inherent to the concept of “leadered” horizontal communication as by definition, horizontal communication is equitable in participation and direction (although this does not forfeit the role of a non-decision-making facilitator). As well, fractal communication does not simply happen vertically or horizontally, but can go in any direction and can also occur simultaneously or consecutively. Lastly, Nonaka *et al* do not mention the role of learning in knowledge creation, despite the implicit and inseparable relationship between learning and knowing. Nonetheless, by proposing connections between knowledge creation theory and fractal organization theory, this article pushes the frontier of how organizational structures are imagined.

Figure 9: The Knowledge Triad as a Knowledge Creation Spiral



Source: Nonaka, Kodama, Hirose, & Kolhbacher, 2014, p139

Janna Raye of Fractal Organization Design (USA) and Michel Henric-Coll of FractalTeams (France/Spain) approach fractal organizational theory from a business management and whole systems theory perspective. Both agree that organizations that have mainstream communication systems and decision making structures are less able to respond to complex contexts of change and conflict. Such mainstream structures are characterized by a leadership that is more responsive to its customers' concerns than to its staff's perspectives, a staff with whom leadership maintains a unidirectional upwards flow of communication as opposed to a cyclic one. In their separate publications, these two authors postulate that by mimicking the fractal geometry of natural systems⁸, an organization has a greater capacity to adapt to change as well as a greater capacity to generate creative solutions to challenges. In addition to increasing the capacities of adaptability and creativity, Raye further elaborates upon the impacts of organizational biomimicry, explaining that organizations that adopt this strategy are emergent ones who also have a greater capacity for vitality and innovation, similar to Nonaka *et al's* characterization of fractal organizations as dynamic and innovative. Raye proposes that there are five qualities that complement the four capacities of fractal organization, namely:

“shared purpose and values that create pattern integrity; universal participation in ideas and solutions for continuous improvement; decision making at functional levels; leadership devoted to universal leadership; and competition energy directed outwards instead of inwards.” (Raye, 2014, p50)

8 Fractal geometry is a concept first academically explored by Benoît Mandelbrot, who states that natural systems, while seemingly chaotic and rough-looking, are actually isomorphic as their self-similar parts strongly resemble the whole, which strongly resembles larger system networks (Mandelbrot, 1983).

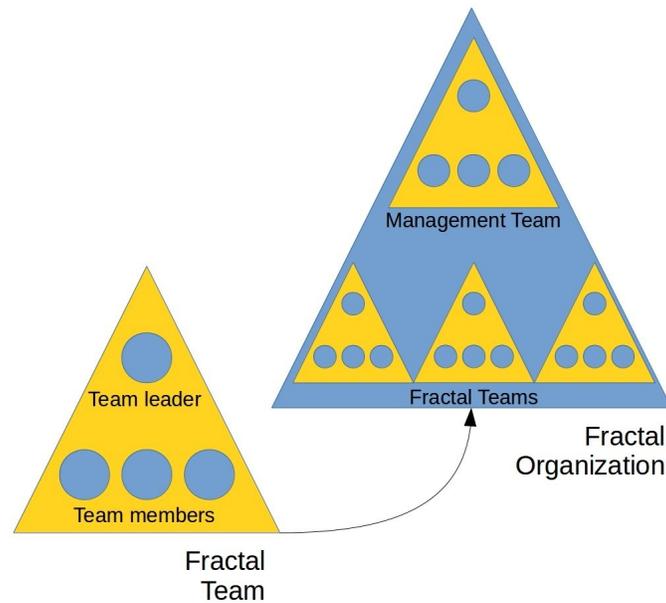
While the framework of Raye's analysis is in a corporate environment, the emergent organization that she describes and the four capacities that she outlines are reflective of SECGC organizational structure, decision making process and internal capacities. Regarding SECGC qualities, members of a collective share a purpose and value system, and participate fully in decision making and implementation (see section 3.1.1 for more detail). Nonetheless, contrary to Raye's description, collectives go beyond participatory decision making at functional levels, as they also discuss and create group meaning and identity (Polletta, 2002). When Raye discusses universal leadership, her points mirror Heron's discussion of the different classes of authority. The latter suggests that a figure of authority based on competence can contribute more towards informed and participatory decision making processes than a figure of authority based on prestige (see section 3.3.2 for more detail). In her article, however, Raye does not explain or reconcile inconsistencies between universal participation and universal leadership with hierarchical management structures, which weakens her arguments on these two points. The concepts of universal participation and universal leadership are in constant tension with the concept of hierarchical social structure when decision making is concerned.

In his book "The Fractal Organization: Management of the Future", Henric-Coll also fails to address this inconsistency between organizational structure and collective decision making processes, an inconsistency that is replicated in his model of Fractal Organization (see Figure 8). His proposal to model fractal organizations is laudably new, but has several weaknesses. Only two other publications include models related to fractal organization theory, but one that only models knowledge transactions within an organization (Nonaka, *et al*, 2014), and the other that discusses fractal organization theory using the mechanistic and arguably dated 1970s Viable

Systems Model (Hoverstadt, 2009). Henric-Coll's model has limited applicability as it does not adapt well to horizontally-structured environments, nor does it capture the timing or direction of communication flows and knowledge exchanges (other than vertical and horizontal ones) such as multi-directional, diagonal and/or simultaneous exchanges. Randomness is also not discussed by Henric-Coll in his chapter on the structure of fractal organizations, nor is three-dimensional organizational growth/reduction addressed or accounted for by the model or its accompanying narrative. Lastly, this two-dimensional model proposes centralized communication, in which the organizational leader at the top of the triangle makes the final decision, after having listened to opinions from other people in the organization. In fractal theory, decentralization is an essential quality that allows systems to adapt to changing and complex contexts.

Nonetheless, in his book on fractal organization theory, Henric-Coll succeeds in arguing the importance of common values in fractal organizations, and concretely names them as goal-orientation, autonomy, and reciprocity. The first value is discussed as outcome-oriented as opposed to process-oriented thinking, which is not reflective of SECGC decision making values, however, the latter two values echo literature on libertarian assembly processes as these identify autonomy as central to SECGC decision making, and explain solidarity as an empathetic form of reciprocity (Graeber, 2004; Gelderloos, 2010; Shaw, 2012). Henric-Coll also goes into greater detail than Raye in describing fractal organizations from a systems perspective, explaining that organizations that operate as fractals are open systems which are non-linear, partially undetermined and more organic than mechanical (Henric-Coll, 2012). These undetermined and organic qualities are also similar to Nonaka, *et al's* characteristic criteria of fractal organizations as dynamic.

Figure 10: Henric-Coll's Centralized Two-Dimensional Fractal Organization Model



Translated and adapted from source: Henric-Coll, 2014, pp90-91

Two other studies related to fractal theory are worthy of mention given their focus of study, although their conclusions are not as directly relevant to the focus of this thesis. A team of researchers from different European universities has developed a complex mathematical model for determining fractality amongst social organizational networks, and specifically those that are service-oriented (de Florio, Coronato, Bakhouya, & di Marzo, 2012). In addition to their conclusions on the properties of mathematical fractal models for human systems, de Florio *et al* also conclude that organizations that operate as fractals are more robust and resilient and have a greater capacity to self-organize (de Florio, *et al*, 2012). Another mathematical study discusses the fractal nature of Twitter feeds during the first few months of the 15M movement (Aguilera, Morer, Barandiaran, & Bedia, 2013). In addition to mathematical conclusions regarding how

to capture social movement networking, this research study powerfully concludes that the way in which people communicate en masse via social media is more socially significant than the actual content of their messages. This emphasis on the importance of process over product is similar to consensus-based decision making purpose and values (see section 3.3.2 for more detail). The researchers also identify the need for future research on “how social media network topology and dynamics correlate with different forms of collective action and self-organized coordination,” (Aguilera, *et al*, 2013, p402).

Lastly, Felix Bivens (2011) writes about fractal theory in the context of organizational learning and change. In his doctoral thesis, “Higher Education as Social Change: Seeking a Systemic Institutional Pedagogy of Social Change”, Bivens specifically discusses the work of David Snowden on complexity theory. According to Bivens, Snowden believes that the application of complexity theory to organizations can impact the way they learn and respond to change, because “...changes in the traits of one subsystem can also lead to wider change across the system, by which those new traits become common at all levels of the organization. (Bivens, 2011, p109). A way of introducing these changes, i.e. new fractal patterns, can be through trial and error experimentation, until a change happens that produces a fractal effect of change throughout the rest of the organization. Bivens does not explore the methods nor the implications of such experimentation, nor does he determine the context required to facilitate positive fractal-generating change, but he does briefly state that the characteristics, operations and networks of an organization are the organizational elements that could behave as fractals.

3.3 Facilitation Models

Practitioners and theorists alike have developed a great number of models of facilitation, designed for specialized use in either classrooms, board rooms, or community/collectivized spaces. In Catalan grassroots movements, the dominant models of facilitation are the Libertarian Assembly Model and the Nonviolent Communication Model, however, more recently the Process Work Model is also gaining popularity. Techniques of popular education, theatre of the oppressed, and Indigenous governance are apparent in all three of these models, and will be discussed where applicable within these reviews.

3.3.1 Libertarian Assembly

Authors of literature on libertarian assemblies, known as “assemblearisme” in Catalan, agree that each collective and each context defines and enacts its own decision making process (Dolgovff, 1996; Graeber, 2004; Gelderloos, 2010; van Gelder, 2011; Shaw, 2012; Barnadas, 2012; Surinyach, 2013). Therefore, a common definition and description of libertarian assembly is not only futile, but inconsistent with the philosophy of anarchism. Despite the ambiguity of the process itself, after an in-depth review of literature available, it is evident that there are (at least) four clear principles that inform the libertarian assembly process. Below is a model that is inspired by this literature (see Figure 9), followed by a discussion of each spoke of the wheel.

Figure 11: Wheel of Libertarian Collective Assembly Principles



1. Horizontality

There is no explicit hierarchical structure in libertarian assemblies, however, power imbalances can exist because of the personal charisma of a person, or because of the accumulation of information, and thus decision making power, in one or a few individuals (Heron, 1999; Croft, 2010a; Briggs, 2000). Dialogue, as understood by Freire, is an important tool in negotiating the power dynamics in each collective, in the effort to achieve equitable decision making power amongst all members of the collective.

Consensus is the primary method for decision making in libertarian assembly, however, not the only one. Although decisions are initially taken by consensus, another decision making process could be agreed to by consensus. For example, a collective could reach a consensus about the

use of delegation or the use of majority voting, and the members would thus (ideally) accept ownership⁹ of this decision (Gelderloos, 2010, Shaw, 2012). This decision would last until a member or group of members either propose returning to the consensus model or propose an alternative model for decision making purposes (Surinyach, 2013; Briggs, 2000 – see Figure 10 for more detail). Additionally, members could propose that they collectively assess the active decision making process, in order to gather information regarding the power dynamics and level of participation of all members and thus address inequities and imbalance.

A practical example of the principle of autonomy in decision making is direct democracy. This is a process in which every member of the collective participates in decision making, operationally applying the previous principle of horizontality (Surinyach, 2013, Graeber, 2004). Direct democracy can also be practised on larger scales and not solely internally, depending on the issue at hand and the position of the collective to open up the decision making process to the greater community. If the issue concerns institutional bodies, and the collective decides to involve them in the decision making process, then their voice will be heard, but measures will be taken to mitigate (and ideally nullify) political and social power imbalance, such as withdrawing veto power, and/or simply only giving the ability to share information, and/or prefacing any institutional statements with contextual information about the institution.

2. Autonomy

Libertarian collectives generally operate independently from institutions and organizations, and although this does not preclude networking, collaboration, or relationship-building with other

9 The word ownership is used here not in the sense of proprietorship, but to explain the acts of claiming and reclaiming.

entities¹⁰, this does imply that collective decision making remains internal (Gelderloos, 2010). Nonetheless, institutions may impact the operations or the well-being of a collective through their policies, laws and practices. Conserving autonomy is sometimes made challenging because of this, but also sometimes because of a lack of experience amongst the collective's membership to operate autonomously.

3. Solidarity

Also treated as the concept of mutual aid, or collective well-being (Graeber, 2004; Gelderloos, 2010), solidarity is the active consideration of the needs of the individual and the group. It is the belief that everyone deserves to be treated equitably and with dignity. In decision making terms, the principle of solidarity demands the equitable distribution of decision making power as well as the awareness of those who may not be able to participate in the decision making process, but who are nonetheless impacted by it, for example young children or incarcerated individuals. In anarcho-vegan and other like-minded collectives, solidarity extends to the awareness of and care about how decisions impact all living beings (Briggs, 2000; Croft, 2010b).

4. Self-Organization

Self-organization, also referred to as self-management, and known as “autogestió” in Catalan, is a principle that has proliferated throughout many Catalan grassroots organizing spaces, not just anarchist and libertarian ones, given the historical influence of the Spanish Revolution upon the popular understanding of social movements and decision making (Barnadas, 2012; Surinyach,

¹⁰ In fact, the more mutually-nurturing networks and connections that a collective develops, the more resilient it is to crisis and the more adaptable it is to engage in emergent and transformative change processes (Gilchrist, 2000).

2013). Often discussed in an economic context, self-organization in terms of SECGC decision making refers to the members' individual and collective capacities to make decisions and organize actions in order to meet their own needs. This internal organization of work and responsibilities occurs primarily through dialogue and without any external intervention, unless requested by the self-organized collective itself (Graeber, 2004; Gelderloos, 2010). Work plans and posts can be changed at any time, after following the process of a group re-evaluation of the current affairs and a presentation of alternative proposals by concerned members (Surinyach, 2013). A limitation of this principle is the capacity of the members to practice self-organization. Self-organization within a collective involves a specific skill set which requires experience and learning and there are few opportunities to develop and exercise these skills in an individualistic society based in authority of prestige and not authority of competence.

In libertarian assemblies, the facilitator role is one that rotates amongst internal members, with rare or exceptional use of outside facilitation. This facilitator role could shift multiple times during one meeting, depending on the interests and needs of the collective (Graeber, 2004; Shaw, 2012). The rotation of the facilitation role is so that no one person maintains control of the flow of decision making, which has been associated to power imbalances for two main reasons. There is a natural social tendency to lend authority to the role of the facilitator, and this role also involves an accumulation of information (Shaw, 2012; Surinyach, 2013). The power exercised by the facilitator could happen during the actual process of decision making, or as a participant member of the process.

3.3.2 Nonviolent Communication Models

Nonviolent Communication facilitation is informed largely by the writings and lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chávez and John Paul Lederach as well as the philosophies of Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Quakerism in addition to some Indigenous ontologies. Leading contemporary contributors to the use of non-violent communication in facilitation are Marshall Rosenberg, Beatrice Briggs and John Croft. Philosophically similar, Rosenberg provides a model that focuses on conflict resolution, branded as NVC (Rosenberg, 2003), while Briggs emphasizes consensus as the foundation for nonviolent communication (Briggs, 2000). Croft draws upon Australian Aboriginal deliberation processes and action learning theory to develop his Dragon Dreaming model (Croft, 2008a; Croft, 2010b; Croft, 2012). Like the libertarian assembly model, consensus is the main, but not exclusive, method used in nonviolent communication. However, there are two key differences with libertarian assembly. Conflict is deliberately addressed and the choice of language is also integral to the practice of nonviolent communication. Techniques of popular education and theatre of the oppressed are also commonly used to facilitate these models.

In “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life” (2003), Marshall Rosenberg prescriptively proposes that there are four distinct steps to communicating nonviolently (see Figure 10). Intrinsic to each step are the two attitudes of empathy and honesty. The first stage is called observation, and in facilitative terms, this refers to the awareness and identification of the actions, positions and feelings regarding an issue being discussed, as well as those of the other people involved in the decision making process. This is followed by the expression of one's

feelings with respect to the observed and subsequently the identification and articulation of one's needs with respect to the issue at hand. Finally, the request stage is akin to the proposal stage of the consensus process, in which a clear suggestion is made that will address the needs of all parties involved.

Figure 12: Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication Model



Source: www.compassionateinteractions.com/nvcmmodel.php

In Rosenberg's nonviolent communication process, the facilitator is an external party who demonstrates the same attitudes of empathy and honesty as those who are participating in the meeting. They do not express personal opinions or feelings, but rather monitor the use of language, ask questions, and express observations in order to support the decision making

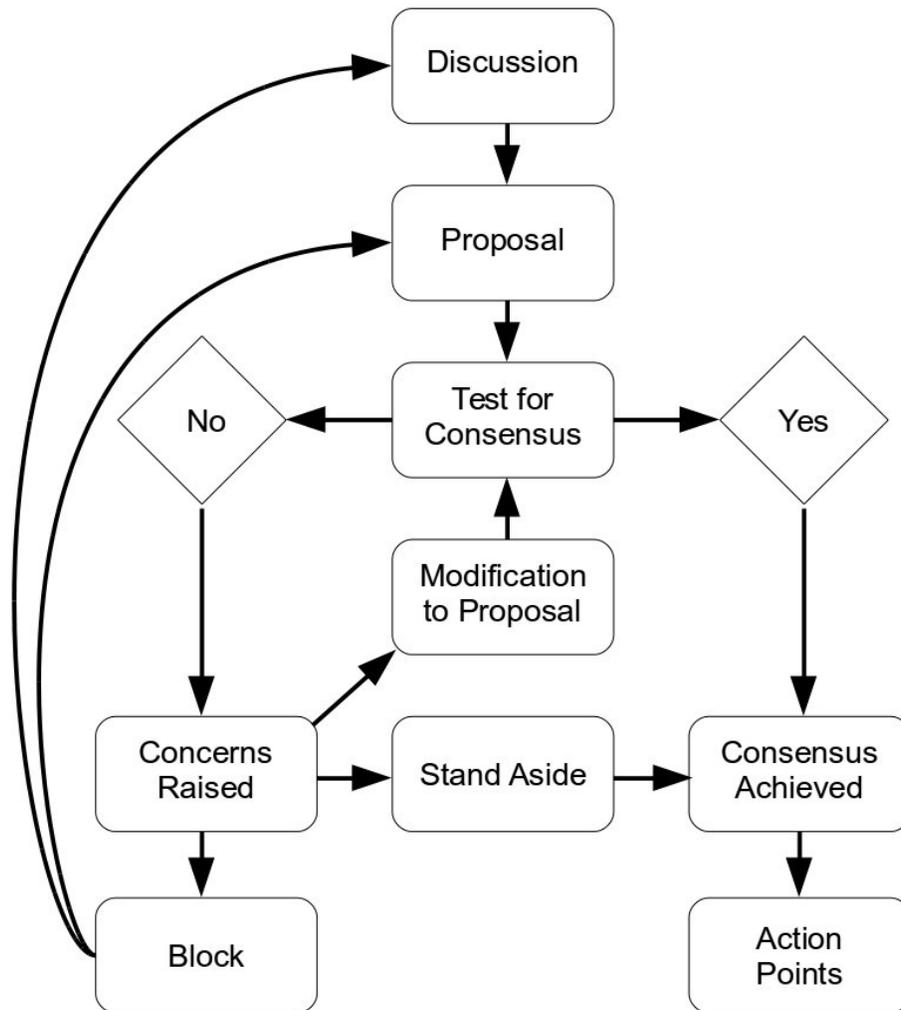
process. In addition to following the agenda of operational matters, the facilitator also attends to conflict resolution either in the moment if the question is operational, or in a sidebar conference if the conflict is interpersonal and involves specific individuals as opposed to the whole group. Criticisms of this approach involve cross-cultural adaptability and the inability to address passive conflict. For example, in southern Europe where communication is more direct, the use of the conditional is perceived as passive aggressive and not as polite and respectful (Parera, 2013). Similarly, the conflicts addressed by the NVC method tend to be more visible and overt forms of conflict, whereas tensions related to more subtle motives, such as different work styles or personalities, do not fit as easily into this model.

Beatrice Briggs is arguably the most influential contributor to how consensus is understood and applied amongst organizations and collectives in Spain, with scholars such as Paco Cascón and Manuel Berenstein covering her work (Cascón, 2007). Briggs' 2000 book, "Introducción al Consenso" presents a clear model of the consensus process, which was later modified by John Croft (2008b) to clarify the use of blocking. Figure 11, below, is a slight modification of Croft's version of the Briggs model, in order to convey the cyclic nature of consensus and further emphasize the proactive aspect of blocking.

According to Briggs, consensus begins with a conversation, from which a proposal evolves. By beginning with a conversation and not a proposal, Briggs believes that the creativity and sense of empowerment of the group are allowed to flourish. After a proposal is developed, it is then tested for approval, meaning that all are in full agreement and consensus is achieved. After consensus lies the technical task of developing a work plan, or action points, and distributing

tasks and responsibilities. In the case of disagreement, the concerns are listened to and reflected upon by the group. The dissenter(s) then has three options. They could present a modification to the proposal, with or without assistance from others in the group, or conversely block the proposal and present an entirely new one, again with or without assistance from others in the group. Lastly, they could stand aside and allow the group to proceed towards consensus. This last option is sometimes problematic, as it requires the person to be fully accepting of the consequences of standing aside.

Figure 13: Briggs' Model of Consensus



Sources: adapted from models in Briggs, 2000, p61; and Croft, 2008b, p4

There are a few challenges when applying the Briggs' model to SECGC decision making in Catalonia. First is its applicability to cross-cultural contexts, as this model was translated directly from Briggs' experience working in Quaker nonviolence actions in the United States of America, and the culture of decision making, and communication in general, in this context is different from the Catalan and Spanish contexts, which are less polite and more overt in

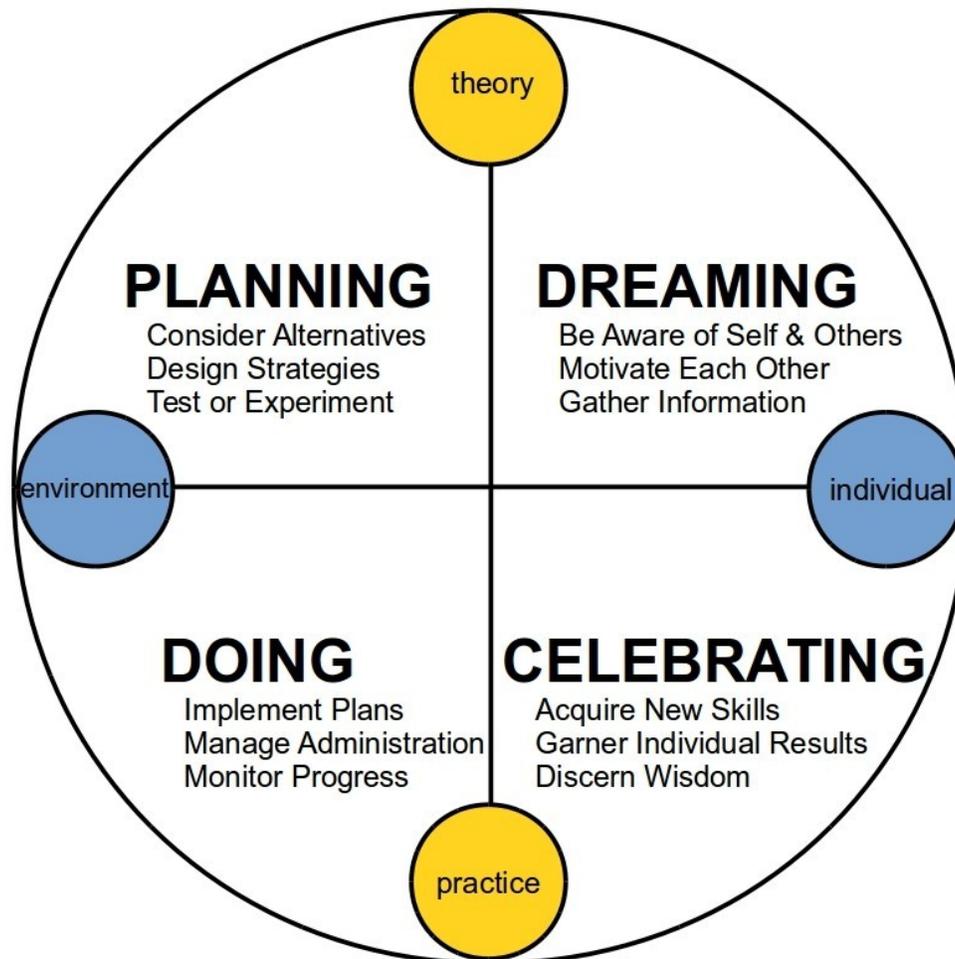
expressing disagreement. Additionally, this model requires practice and experience, and is not necessarily the most applicable for SECGC meetings that are open to the community, however, it is relevant, and applied, to internal meetings. Lastly, the model does not address conflict proactively. Facilitators following this model can, at best, respond (and, at worst, react) to problems raised, but they would need to build another step into this model in order to raise awareness about the highly probable event of conflict, which would contribute to its early identification and, ideally, its resolution.

In Catalonia, the recently developed Dragon Dreaming model (see Figure 12) is most often used in grassroots collectives that are permaculture-based and those who promote positive ecological change. Developed by John Croft, he explains that Indigenous ontology and deliberation systems are the main source of nonviolence teachings in the Dragon Dreaming model (Croft, 2012). Upon review, Croft's project facilitation cycle of Dreaming-Planning-Doing-Celebrating is similar to Kolb's experiential learning cycle of Action-Reflection-Learning-Planning, however the sequence is slightly different and the Celebrating phase is distinctly Indigenous (Barnaby, 2009).

Quoting Indigenous elders and scholars, Croft believes that a project begins with an awareness of personal dreams and the dreams of others. By motivating each other to share and explore these dreams, more information becomes available, from which a project plan can begin to be discerned. The Planning phase is when alternative designs are considered and strategies are developed. The testing and experimenting stage of this phase is similar to the permaculture process of project development (Mollison, 2002), which ensures that a more rigorous plan is

developed. The third phase, Doing, is similar to Kolb's Action phase, but unlike Kolb's model, occurs after the Dreaming (Reflection) phase. This Doing phase concerns the implementation of plans, including the necessary administrative tasks and not forgetting the importance of monitoring progress. Celebrating is the last phase, and refers to the reflection as well as celebration of work achieved, skills built, and lessons learned. It can also be a phase where collective wisdom emerges. Two contributions of the Dragon Dreaming model to SECGC decision making processes are that the model proposes a systemic approach and emphasizes the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This model also involves relationship-building, which Mahaffy (2012), Thomas (2008) and Kiser (1998) all agree are important, if not central to collective decision making.

Figure 14: Croft's Dragon Dreaming Model



Source: adapted from Croft, 2008a, p3

In facilitating the Dragon Dreaming process, careful attention to group well-being is needed at all times. Dreaming can be an emotionally risky business, and requires an environment of trust and safety when it is time for individuals to connect with their dream and share it with others (Croft, 2010b). Facilitators are charged with maintaining a positive and proactive atmosphere during the decision making processes. When conflict emerges, it is treated nonviolently and with the goal of resolving the conflict as holistically and efficiently as possible (Croft, 2010a).

This can prove to be contradictory, especially when taking into consideration the Haudenosaunee perspective of the cyclic nature of consensus, unconstrained by time.

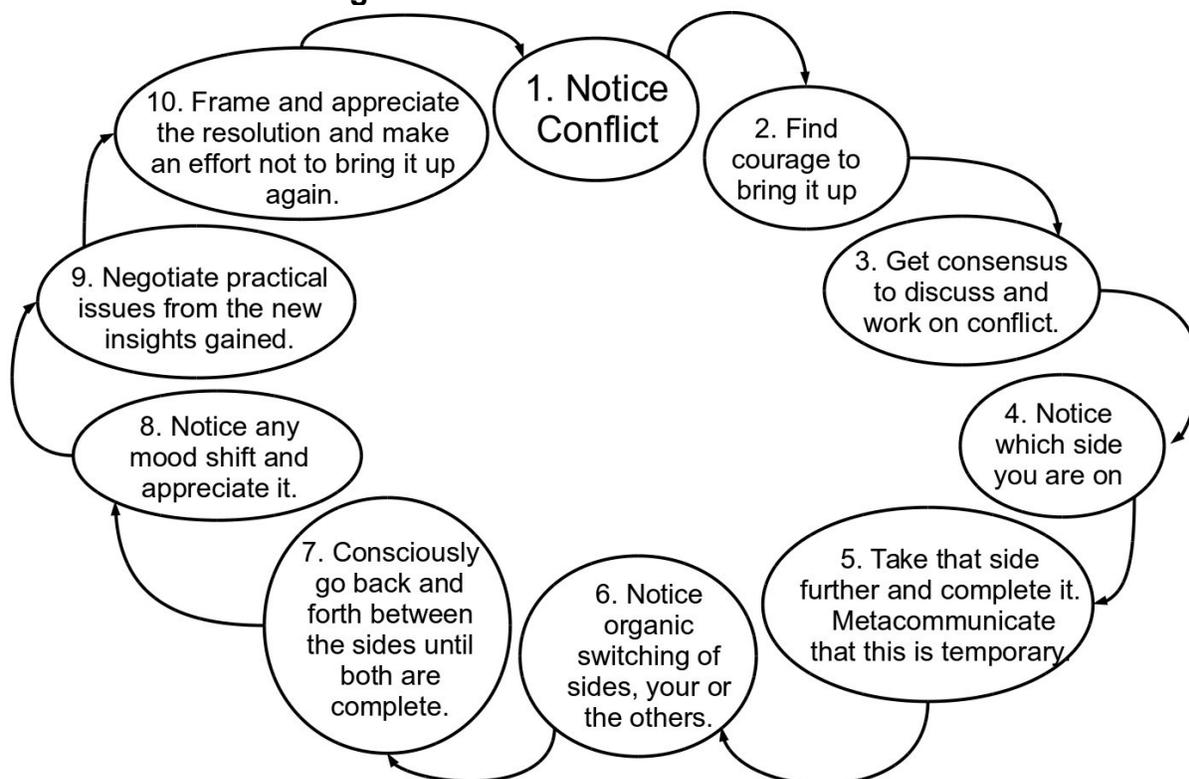
According to Croft, a key quality of facilitators is their ability to use charismatic authority, a concept originally discussed by Heron (1999) to describe a facilitator's ability to simultaneously motivate and empower the collective towards realizing their goals. However, both authors convey that the potential for group cohesion and realization is in fine balance with the potential for group domination when charismatic authority is at play. Two other types of authority are discussed by Croft when explaining the Dragon Dreaming method, one based on prestige and the other based on competence and in which the former has authority because of their status, whereas the latter has an earned authority because of their ability to do something well. This debate about authority can be compared to Gaventa 's power cube diagram (2008), linking the space and form of power to how it is manifested in decision making processes.

3.3.3 Process Work Model

The most recent trend in facilitation amongst SECGCs in Catalonia is the practice of process work. The process-oriented model Worldwork (see Figure 13), known as *Treball de Processos* in Catalan, was developed by Arnold Mindell in 1992 as a way to transform how groups understand conflict. Contrary to the nonviolence facilitation models, the focus is not on resolving conflict, but rather learning from it. Mindell's belief is that important personal and collective growth can emerge as a result of learning from how people live conflict, as in their emotional responses and mental translations (Mindell, 2002). Conflict resolution may not be possible, but through the Worldwork model, Mindell proposes that conflict follows a natural course towards resolution.

He continues in saying that the use of this model does not prevent future conflicts from arising within a group organization, but that the expression of conflict may shift towards less violent and less complex states. According to Escorihuela (2007) and Parera (2013), this work is essential to grassroots organizing as it presents a forum to address underlying tensions and overt conflicts that would otherwise impede the community work of these collectives.

Figure 15: Mindell's Worldwork Model



Source: adapted from www.iapop.com/worldwork/

This ten-step process is relatively straight-forward, however, there are two concepts that add complexity. The task of “metacommunicating” refers to the ability to take on a role and express oneself from within that role. “Roles” is what Mindell refers to when he discusses the sides in a

conflict. Not unlike a role in a theatrical performance, the roles that appear during a meeting can be personified by an individual, but are not considered to be who that individual is (Mindell, 2002). Another aspect of roles is that there are “ghost roles”. These roles are attitudes, values and emotions that pop up during a discussion and can be voiced by one individual and then another, but are not necessarily deeply held convictions about the subject. Rather, they are the voices that help balance a discussion in order to reach a more informed decision (Mindell, 2003).

The facilitator of a Worldwork decision making process is often one who is external to the group, but is sometimes a participant who assumes the task of facilitation, upon consensus of the collective. Additionally, the role of facilitator is a position that can rotate as it does in the libertarian assembly model. The most important criteria of the person or people who facilitate is that they remain as neutral as possible so that they can be most aware of the rational and emotional dynamics of the group. They are also entrusted with communicating their observations back to the group in order to support the collective as it reflects upon and learns from the conflict. Another similarity with the libertarian model is that the group is encouraged to explore and negotiate the power and privilege of each member as the collective strives for equity in the decision making process. While this model could be problematic for SECGCs in that it focuses on wholly on conflict resolution and sets aside the technical and practical aspects of decision making, it does address the weaknesses that the other models demonstrate with regards to addressing conflict.

3.4 *Concluding Remarks*

The theories and models outlined in this chapter have presented numerous arguments in favour

of horizontal organizing as a compassionate and effective path to social and ecological change. Most of the authors reviewed agree that a well-informed and experienced facilitation of SECGCs contributes towards their overall capacity to carry out their respective missions. Many, but not all, of the authors reviewed also believe that consensus, as understood by Quaker, libertarian and Indigenous philosophies, is one of the key methods that contribute to the equitable distribution of decision making power. Academics and practitioners have also attempted to discern the main values that give a just foundation to collective decision making. These values of equity, dignity, and liberty contribute to significant learning and growth within SECGCs, but they may also serve as a foundation for decision making beyond these collectives, for instance, in our homes, in our schools, and perhaps even in the offices of our politicians. Lastly, the concept of fractal organization theory contributes to the understanding, and potential strengthening, of SECGCs' capacities of adaptability, resiliency, and innovation, and their capability to build networks, generate knowledge and engage in organizational learning.

4 Research Methods

4.1 *Conceptual Framework*

This research study has been conducted using constructivist inquiry and is situated within the ontologies of Quechua Indigeneity and Anarcha-feminism. This conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 14 as a pair of glasses. The lens for the left eye represents the Indigenous perspective. The symbol of the chakana, or Andean Cross, is used to visually express the Quechua perspective, as this ancestral symbol reflects the unity of all worlds (realms) and the balance between the feminine and the masculine, the material and the immaterial, the sky and the earth. This idea of balance is one of great import to the author of this study, especially when engaged in facilitation and conflict resolution, as it speaks to equity and justice. This concept is also reflected in the other lens, figuratively.

Figure 16: Conceptual Framework



The lens for the right eye, representing Anarcha-feminist ideals through the image of a revolutionary fist within a woman's symbol, is the Western expression of the author's Quechua identity. Traditional Quechua society is matrilineal and is domestically, if not politically,

matriarchal. Unlike Anarcha-feminism, the Quechua cosmovision is exceptionally hierarchical, however, it also values non-violence, which is perceived by both lenses as the commitment to act without violence, unless all other means have been exhausted. The commitment to act is defined as a public obligation to respond to injustice and oppression¹¹, and incorporates elements of both human and social agency.

As mentioned in the previous section, this conceptual framework will be informed by systems theory as well as literature on facilitation, conflict resolution, non-violence, and libertarianism. All of these theories are strongly founded in constructivism. They also have their origins in or share characteristics of the two ontologies of Quechua Indigeneity and Anarcha-feminism. For example, systems theory shares the same core concepts of wholism and balance that are found in the study of Indigenous knowledge, as well as the concept of autopoiesis, which is integral to the study of anarchism. This research study applies this conceptual framework to identify the connections and divergences of the above-mentioned theories and disciplines in order to better understand the research questions posed. Also in the spirit of this conceptual framework, special attention has been taken to read and include a balance of literature from authors representative of different cultures, languages, creeds, genders¹² and geographic origins.

4.2 Goal & Objectives

This research project seeks to contribute to the understanding and strengthening of grassroots social and ecological change collectives. In order to address this goal, this project will identify and analyze the internal decision making processes of collectives in Garrotxa, Catalonia. As

11 This is also echoed by the common adage, “silence is violence”

12 Female, male and transgender

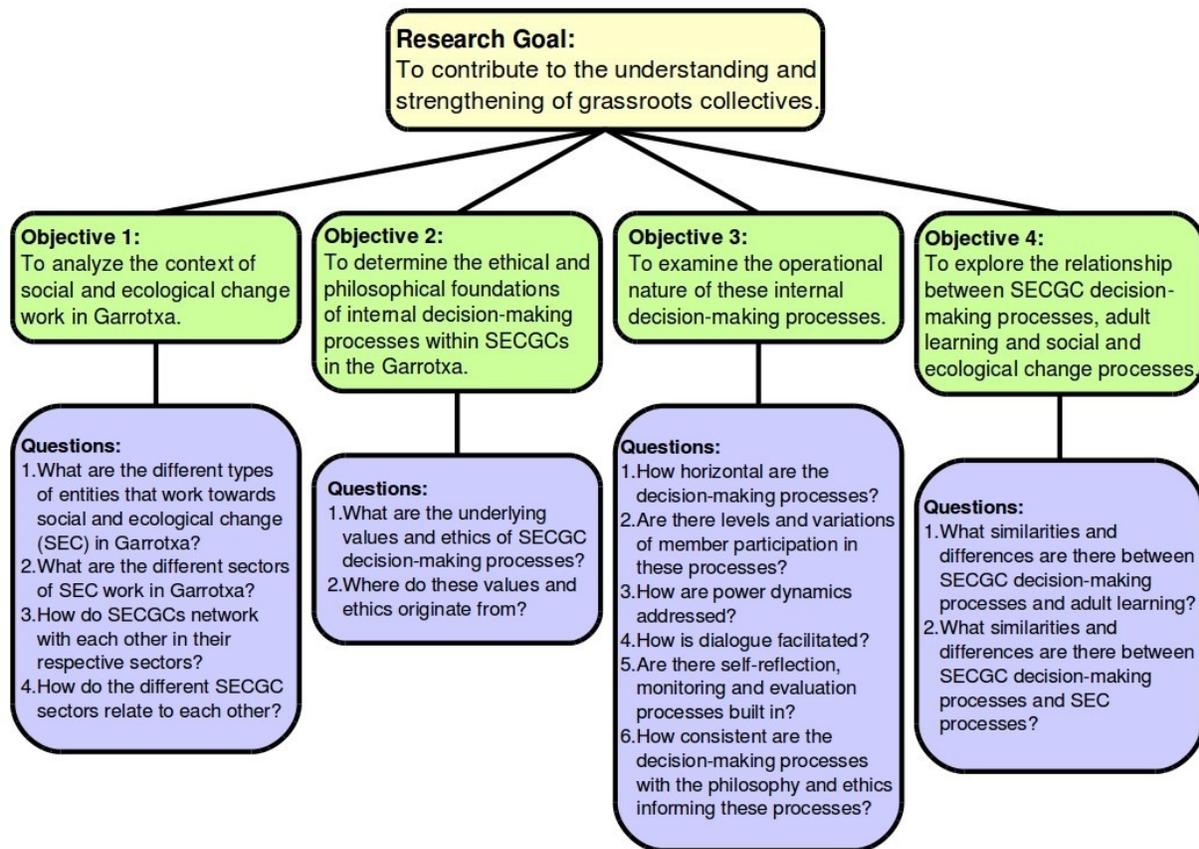
such, the four research objectives are:

1. To analyze the context of social and ecological change work in Garrotxa.
2. To determine the ethical and philosophical foundations of internal decision making processes within SECGCs in Garrotxa.
3. To examine the operational nature of these internal decision making processes.
4. To explore the relationships between internal decision making processes, adult learning and social and ecological change processes.

4.3 *Research Questions*

In order to address the goal and objectives, Figure 15 illustrates the research questions that were explored during the interview and debrief sessions of this study.

Figure 17: Reseach Goal, Objectives and Questions



4.4 Methodology

This research study employed five qualitative research techniques in order to gather primary research data. The main source of the data came from semi-structured interviews, and less so from key informant interviews and participant observation sessions. A group debrief was also conducted in order to have research participants vet the initial findings of this study. Finally, document analysis was carried out so as to address the gaps in the general understanding of social and ecological movement in Garrotxa.

The following sub-sections outline the techniques in more detail, however, the ethical

considerations related to these research methods will be discussed in Section 4.5, along with other research-related ethical considerations. All of the semi-structured interviews were held in Catalan, and the participant observations were mostly in Catalan-speaking environments, with the exceptional comment made in Spanish. The researcher of this study is fluent in both languages, which eliminated the need for translation, which reduced the impact that translation could have had on the interpretation of the questions and the meanings expressed in the interviewees' responses. However, the inevitable translation into English sometimes posed a challenge when communicating the findings in Chapters 5 and 6. In order to mitigate the loss of meaning through translation a glossary has been included at the beginning of this study.

It is also important to note that the researcher worked in community organizing in the Garrotxa for several years prior to beginning her studies. The tacit knowledge of social and ecological movement building in this region thus informed the selection of research methods, and how each method was carried out, as well as how the raw data was interpreted.

4.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Twelve internal facilitators of twelve different SECGCs from Garrotxa, Catalonia were interviewed using the semi-structured interview method, with each interview being audio recorded. The criteria used for selection of the SECGCs is that they comply with the related definitions of grassroots collectives as discussed by Polletta (2002), Causton (2008), Gelderloos (2010), van Gelder (2011), SAC (2012), Surinyach (2013), and GEO (2014). This collection of definitions was ordered into table format in order to facilitate the selection process for SECGCs in Garrotxa (see Table 2).

Figure 18: Selection Criteria for SECGCs

Category	Quality
1. origin	grassroots
2. membership	volunteers or stipended members from the grassroots
3. decision-makers	unpaid or stipended members (and community, when invited)
4. organizational structure	horizontal collective
5. decision making process	participatory and consensus-based (direct democracy)
6. primary collective objective	to effect social and/or ecological change at the community level
7. approach	activist
8. geographical area of work	Garrotxa
9. scope of work	representative of at least one sector of SECGC work

The scope of work of each SECGC was closely assessed during the selection process, in order to ensure a balanced representation of the social and ecological change work carried out in Garrotxa. Table 3 defines these areas and the minimum representation that was sought during the selection process. In determining the minimum representation, the researcher made an incorrect assumption about the education and training for social and ecological change, believing that it was larger that the sectors on health and human rights advocacy and communication and technology for social and ecological change, whereas all three sectors are in fact the same size.

Figure 19: Interviewee representation sought per sector

Sectors of SECGC work	Representation Sought
1. Environmental and Agroecological Activism	Minimum of <i>two</i> SECGCs
2. Political & Cultural Revindication	Minimum of <i>two</i> SECGCs
3. Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies	Minimum of <i>two</i> SECGCs
4. Health and Human Rights Advocacy	Minimum of <i>one</i> SECGCs

5. Education & Training for Social and Ecological Change	Minimum of <i>two</i> SECGC
6. Communication & Technology for Social and Ecological Change	Minimum of <i>one</i> SECGC

The criteria for selecting interview participants from the SECGC was limited to two factors, namely that the individual be one of the members that acts as internal facilitator for the SECGC, and that they are ideally founders of the SECGC, and if not, they have volunteered for an extended period of time with the SECGC in question. Each of the twelve semi-structured interview subjects gave free, informed and ongoing consent to participate in this research study.

4.4.2 Key Informant Interviews

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the decision making processes of the SECGCs who participated in this study, the researcher also interviewed to key informants. The primary selection criteria for these key informants was that their work be representative of the two dominant models of facilitation in Catalonia, namely non-violent communication and process work. Other selection criteria included their level of experience in facilitation and their contributions to the practice and understanding of facilitation in the Iberian peninsula. Both key informants gave free, informed and ongoing consent to participate, and their interviews were audio recorded.

4.4.3 Participant Observation

The process of determining where and when to conduct participant observation sessions was organic, with invitations originating from the SECGCs themselves and not because of requests made by the researcher. The presence of the participant researcher was declared at the onset of

each observation session and observations were recorded using the reflective journaling technique. This technique was used in order to capture critical reflections and early analyses during the participant observation sessions so that connections and further analyses could be made between with these reflections, the interview findings and the literature reviewed.

4.4.4 Group Debrief

After an initial analysis of the research data gathered from the above three research processes, the researcher facilitated a two-hour meeting with many of the individuals involved in the semi-structured interviews. All semi-structured interview participants were invited, but due to conflicting schedules, not all could attend, although all gave their free, informed and ongoing consent to participate in this group debrief session. The debrief began with the sharing of initial findings, and then participants discussed each main area of the findings, either agreeing with, adding to or rejecting these initial conclusions.

4.4.5 Document Analysis

Due to the absence of publications that chronicle current social and ecological movement building in Garrotxa, document analysis was carried out. The documents selected included print and online brochures, information sheets and other short explanations of social and ecological change organizations, collectives, networks and platforms in this region. Specifically, the researcher collected information regarding the total number of SEC organizations and collectives working in Garrotxa, and when possible, the mandates and objectives of SECGCs and their formal relationships with other collectives. The information gathered through this method was

tested against the information conveyed during the semi-structured interviews and debrief session in order to ensure greater consistency and validity. Due to time and resource constraints, there are likely organizations and collectives that are missing from the final list of entities that promote social and ecological change in Garrotxa. Also, a quantitative method, such as a questionnaire or survey, would have better filled in the gaps in the understanding of the current context of movement building in Garrotxa.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Most of the ethical considerations identified below are directly related to University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board (REB) requirements, the research methodology proposed, and to a lesser extent to the expected results published in the thesis itself. This study was designed and conducted following the ethical guidelines of UoG and Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (CIHR, NSERC, & SSHRC, 2010), and also took into consideration the existing Catalan guideline on research with humans (CIR, 2009). It is important to note that there is no law or policy that in Catalonia or Spain that specifically protects the rights and well-being of human research subjects, but that these rights are loosely protected by Spanish and European human rights codes.

4.5.1 Consent

The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2010) states that seeking free, informed and ongoing consent is a research requirement that complies with the policy's core principle of Respect for Persons, one of the document's three core principles. The

researcher recognizes the critical importance of obtaining free, informed and ongoing consent of the participants of this study. As such, all findings included in this study are done so with the verbal and signed consent of all participants. A copy of the consent form is included as Appendix 1 of this study.

4.5.2 Privacy and Confidentiality

After working with or alongside many of the collectives researched, I understand that most of these collectives have a strong interest in raising public awareness about their respective area of work and their practice of horizontal consensus-based decision making. As such, there were no concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality about the SECGC discourses on group facilitation and conflict resolution. However, this was a concern when anecdotes about internal conflicts were shared, and as such, all names, places and other identifying information have been changed in the anecdotes present in this thesis. In addition to this concern, there were some collectives who operate with a certain level of extra-legality or sometimes illegality, and as such, names of facilitators and SECGCs are not indicated in this thesis. However, because of the small size of the region, and the smaller size yet of the community of SECGCs in the Garrotxa, participants are aware that obtaining full confidentiality is not possible. A high level of privacy was ensured through the use of a hacker-free linux-based operating system and through the encryption of all audio and text files containing raw data and working documents.

4.5.3 Conflict of Interest

Through her social and ecological change work in Catalonia over the last several years, the author of this thesis made contacts and developed friendships with many people involved in movement building in Garrotxa. This presented a possible conflict of interest when selecting SECGCs and interview participants, which is why the researcher made the selection process as rigorous and transparent as possible, following a list of criteria that was informed by various sources. At the time of interviewing, the researcher's familiarity with the interviewees presented a strength as well as a challenge. Developing trust with the research participants was not an issue as the information conveyed was rich with personal anecdotes and deep perspectives on decision making. The challenges were to filter out biases and sensitive information from the explanations of how decision making and conflict resolution unfolded in their respective SECGCs¹³.

4.6 Coding and Analysis

The coding system that was originally applied to synthesize the literature reviewed was also applied and expanded in order to analyze the raw data collected during the research process. The mind mapping technique as well as charting and some basic statistical analysis were the main tools used during the coding and early analysis processes. Figure 16 is an e-version of a wall-sized hand-written mind map that was connected with yarn of various colours, which helped

13 In one interview, a research participant expressed discontent about the organization with which the researcher had been previously involved. This created an awkward atmosphere during the interview, so the researcher paused the interview to explore the interviewee's concerns with this organization, and indirectly with the researcher. After research participant expressing their discontent and shared that they did not seek a resolution, the interview was resumed until its conclusion.

identify and classify relationships between elements. The elements of the coding system relate directly to the research objectives of this study, but the multiple interrelationships are not included in Figure 15 in order to keep the image easier to interpret. The decision to code by hand as opposed to using NVIVO or another electronic coding system was due to a computer mishap in which several months of work was lost mid-way through the transcription process and which consequently shifted the strategy from a strictly e-based coding system to a combination of electronic and hand coding.

All of the raw data was in Catalan, including the interview transcripts and the reflective journal, although the codes themselves were in English in order to facilitate the writing of the findings, discussion, implications and recommendations sections of this thesis. The later stages of analysis was aided by the use of additional mind maps per objective, as well as the use of charts and graphs so that patterns were more readily apparent between the decision making processes of the SECGC participants of this study. The Fractal Organization Model for SECGCs (see section 7.3) emerged from the coding mind map, and was tested for validity against the eleven SECGCs that participated in this research study.

Figure 20: Coding System for Raw Data

5 SECGCs in Garrotxa, Catalonia

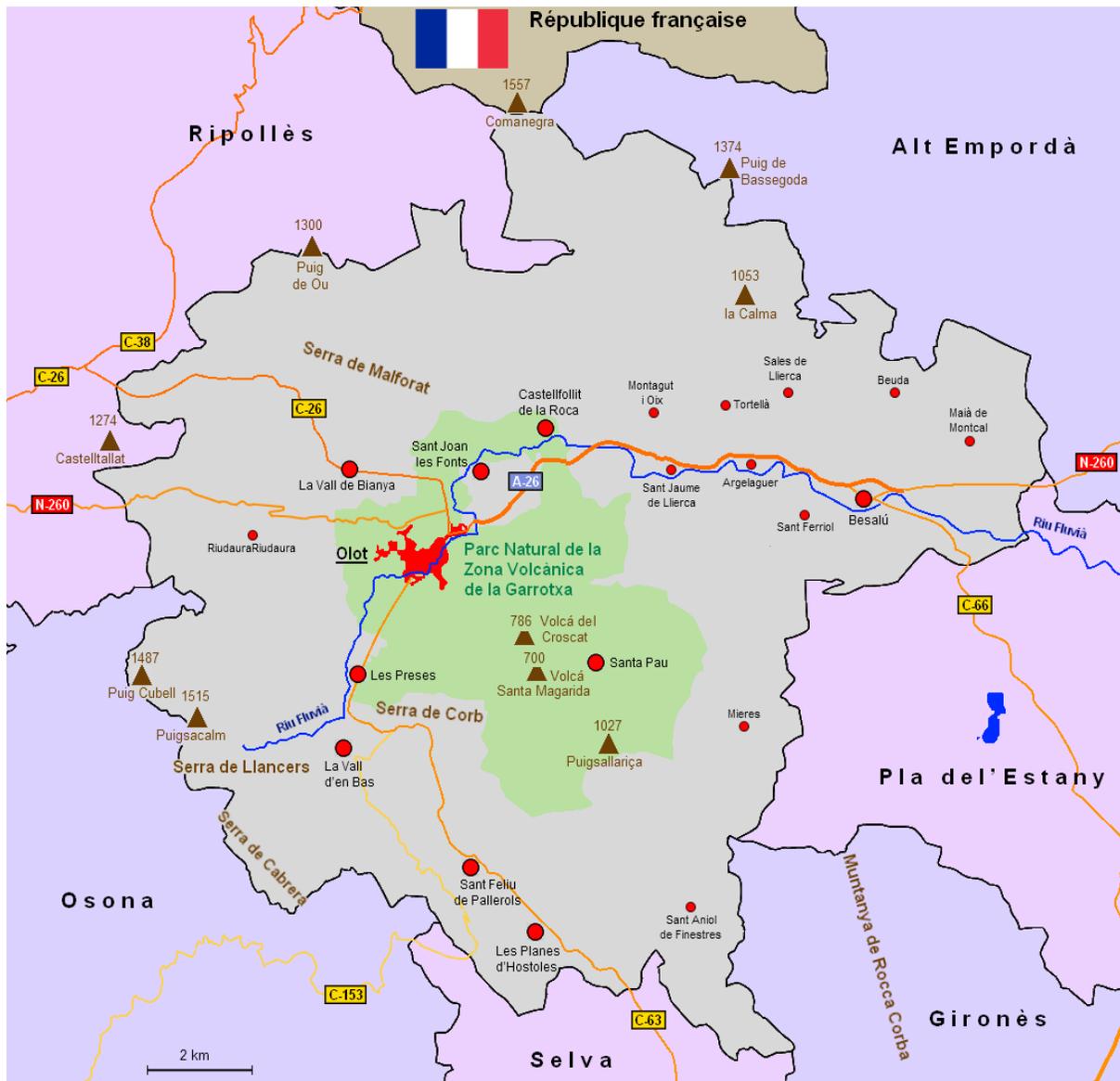
This chapter presents the context within which Garrotxan SECGCs engage in decision making processes. First, a demographic and geographic summary of Garrotxa is presented, followed by a current socio-political snapshot of this region. These sections lay the foundation for a chronological overview of the social and ecological change organizations (SECOs) who work in Garrotxa, from the end of the Franco dictatorship, to the anti-globalization movement of the early 2000s, to the onset of the 15M movement in 2011. This overview explores the terms SECO and SECGC as well as the six sectors of social and ecological change work that SECOs realize. The direct impact of the 15M movement on SECGC work in Garrotxa is also graphically presented and discussed. Due to the lack of information regarding SECOs and SECGCs in Catalonia, and in Garrotxa in particular, the content of this chapter is largely based on primary research collected during this study, which is complemented and corroborated by statistical information from online government sources (CEIC, 2010; IDESCAT, 2011; PAS, 2013, Adjuntament d'Olot, 2014, CASG, 2014) and the online profiles of individual SECOs and SECGCs.

5.1 *Demographic and Geographic Summary of Garrotxa*

Garrotxa is a landlocked county of the Catalan province of Girona, bordering the French Pyrenees at its most northern point (see Map 2). It is the only volcanic region of the Iberian peninsula, boasting over 40 volcanoes and prime agricultural land as well as rugged mountainous terrain. The population is 55,439, with over half living in the town of Olot (IDESCAT, 2011).

See Table 4), and the rest of the population living in small rural towns and hamlets or on farmsteads.

Figure 21: County of Garrotxa



Source: Turisme Garrotxa, www.turismegarrotxa.cat

Although Catalan and Spanish are the official languages of Catalonia, Catalan and its Garrotxan dialect are the most common languages spoken in Garrotxa. Nonetheless, Spanish is the second most common language spoken. According to research participants, this is due to historical factors of linguistic oppression and the internal migration of people from Spanish-speaking states to Garrotxa during the Franco regime, and also because of the relatively recent arrival of large numbers of newcomers from Latin American countries. Other significant newcomer communities originate from China, Gambia and Pakistan (IDESCAT, 2011). Many newcomers were drawn to this region in the late 1990s and early 2000s because of job opportunities in textile and meat packing factories and in the agricultural sector.

Figure 22:: Garrotxa County in Statistics

Category	Value
Area	734 km ²
Population	55,439
Population Density	75.7 people/km ²
Language	Catalan
Number of Municipalities	21
Largest Municipality	Olot (pop. 33,524) – county capital
Primary Economic Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industrial (textile, meat packing, metallurgy, and paper milling) 2. Agricultural (livestock, cereals) 3. Tourism (volcanic interpretation, medieval heritage, cultural activities)
Conservation Areas	Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Conservation Area (120.7 km ²)

Sources: ViuCat (2009), IDESCAT (2011), PAS (2013)

5.2 Socio-Political Snapshot of Garrotxa

As mentioned in the introduction, Catalonia is in the grip of an economic crisis and social unrest due to the collapse of most of the banking sector in 2010, followed by severe austerity measures

which continue in effect today. Although the Garrotxa county is less hard hit by unemployment than the Spanish average – faring three to four percentage points lower – the jobless rate is still at a shocking 16% (IDESCAT, 2013/2014), and in 2013 over 100 families were evicted from their homes, contributing to the total of 1372 bank-owned empty properties in Garrotxa (CUP, 2014).

In politics, there is a generational tension between the traditionally conservative municipal governments and the social and ecological activists of the region. The right-wing Catalan independentist party, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) has been in office in most of the 21 municipalities since 1980, the year Catalonia held its first elections after the Franco dictatorship (IDESCAT, 2011). However, since the 15M movement, the new grassroots representative leftist party CUP has gained ground in Olot, challenging the poligarchic reign of CiU by presenting candidates in the two largest municipalities, Olot and Sant Joan les Fonts. In June 2014, the national *Catalunya Ràdio* announced that polls indicate that the CUP will have counsellors elected to office in Olot in next year's municipal elections. The success of the CUP in Garrotxa is closely related to the presence and strength of the Garrotxa chapter of *Confederació Nacional de Treball* (CNT), the anarcho-sindicalist national labour union, which publicly supports the CUP candidacy in the two Garrotxan municipalities in which it is now present.

In November 2014, Catalonia will hold a referendum to allow its citizens to decide whether or not they would like to secede from Spain. In Garrotxa, 18 of the 21 municipalities have joined the national association of municipalities in support of this referendum (AMI, 2014), and visibly demonstrate their support by hoisting billboard-sized flags of Catalan independence at the

entrance of their towns. National polls project that citizens will vote a strong yes in favour of separation from Spain, if the referendum proceeds (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014).

The tension between the incumbent right-wing municipal governments and the growing left-wing CUP, combined with employment and housing insecurity and an increasing number of SECGCs in Garrotxa creates a climate ripe for social change. The following section will give an overview of SECGCs in Garrotxa, taking into consideration the previously discussed demographic, historical, economic and socio-political context of this region.

5.3 Recent Historical Overview of SECGCs in Garrotxa

The Garrotxa county is home to generations of activists whom have struggled for causes ranging from Catalan independence, to ecological integrity, to human rights in its widest definition. During the Franco-dictatorship, the Garrotxan chapter of the guerilla movement *Els Makis* in the 1940s were one of the last to try and counter the oppressive regime, which maintained a brutal hold over Catalonia and other linguistic and cultural minority states in Spain, until the death of Francisco Franco in 1975. A decade after Franco's death, social and political activist entities mushroomed throughout Catalonia¹⁴, and in Garrotxa the four largest movements in the 1980s were anarcho-sindicalism, political independence, environmental activism, and cultural revindication (Barnadas, 2012; Surinyach, 2013).

The first principle organizer of the anarcho-sindicalist movement was the CNT of Olot, whose

¹⁴ The ten-year time lag on widespread community activism in post-Franco Garrotxa is similar to post-Fujimori community activism in Lima, Peru. The latter has not been attributed to the time it takes to rebuild institutional integrity, but rather the time it takes for a community to rebuild its sense of personal security and level of trust in neighbours and local institutions (Burt, 2012). Another similarity is that youth play a significant role in community mobilization in these situations, given that trauma and activist burn-out are not as frequent amongst this generation as they are for older generations.

lengthy pre-Franco history in defence of labour rights was energetically resurrected by highschool students in the late 1980s and successfully adapted to the contemporary challenges of post-Franco Catalonia. The political youth movement *Maulets*, who are now known as the *Joves Independistes*, first began mobilizing for Catalan independence in the late 1980s in the Garrotxan municipality of Beuda, and who are now a Catalonia-wide political independentist youth movement. Also in the 1980s, *Salvem les Valls* (Save the Valleys) launched a grassroots campaign which succeeded in designating 121 km² of Garrotxan territory as a conservation area, thereby stopping the building of multiple tunnels, a major highway and a hydro-electric corridor through the region. *Ràdio 90* is Garrotxa's present-day community radio with 24-hour programming, and in 1990 was one of the first community radios in the country, promoting Catalan language, music and culture.

5.4 *SECOs, SECGCs and the 15M Movement*

More recent SECGC activity in Garrotxa can be categorized into two phases; pre-15M social and ecological movement building and post-15M social and ecological movement building. This is not to imply that the 15M movement has ceased. On the contrary, it is a vibrant and dynamic movement that has spawned many local collectives and initiatives. The term pre-15M simply indicates prior to the 15th of May, 2011, when the 15M movement began, and post-15M is the period after this date. Before exploring the trajectories of SECOs and SECGCs in relation to the 15M movement, it is important to clarify the distinction between the terms SECO and SECGC and what distinct sectors of social and ecological change these entities address.

5.4.1 Social and Ecological Change Entities and Sectors

In Catalan, a social and ecological change organization (SECO) is called an *entitat solidària d'acció social i ecològica*. The Garrotxa Consortium of SECOs (CASG) defines a SECO as a group of people who:

- “come together freely and in solidarity
- work voluntarily and not for profit
- work towards collective goals that are for the benefit of the general community or a particular population of the community
- collectivize knowledge, activities and resources
- realize short-term or long-term activities” (CASG, 2014, para1)

This definition is more broad than the criteria used to determine SECGCs (see Section 3.1), thereby making SECGCs a sub-category of SECOs. The main difference is that the above definition does not specify either the operational structure, the internal decision making processes nor the relationships with institutional bodies, all of which are integral to the definition of SECGCs. As mentioned in Section 3.1 and in Table 2, SECGCs are non-hierarchical, participatory, and consensus-based activist collectives whose internal decision making processes involve only collective members, and in exceptional cases the wider community. Conversely, a SECO may operate hierarchically, with only one or a few individuals making all decisions, or by voting, and may be supported, guided or financed by a public or private institution.

For the purposes of this thesis, the researcher has established six categories of SECO activity, which are loosely related to the categorization of SECOs by the Municipality of Olot and the CASG, the latter of which uses greater specificity in categorizing SECOs (Adjuntament d'Olot,

2014; CASG, 2014). It is important to note that two of the six sectors that are referred to throughout this study are very new to the Garrotxa region, being no more than a decade old, and another sector had only one active collective at that time as well. The following is general description of each sector, with specific attention to who the member entities are, their length of presence in the region, and the general decision making approaches.

1. Environmental and Agroecological Activism

This sector dates back to the 1980s and includes environmentalist groups, naturalist groups and animal rights groups, and more recently sustainability practitioner collectives and agroecological projects. Most of the member entities of this sector are activist in nature, and most operate autonomously, however many of the agroecological projects are small-scale initiatives that do not operate as collectives.

2. Political and Cultural Revindication

As the most established sector, member entities include grassroots political and independentist parties and organizations, labour rights organizations, Catalan cultural activist groups, artist cooperatives and groups with a political focus, and collectively run community centres which run political and cultural activities. Nearly all of the groups in this section are horizontal and autonomous in their decision making, save one organization which receives large institutional funding and other resource support from local and national governments.

3. Ethical Consumerism and Alternative Economies

This sector celebrated its fifth anniversary this year¹⁵ and consists of two types of entities – grassroots food cooperatives and trade and barter collectives. All member entities are grassroots collectives that practice horizontal decision making.

4. Health and Human Rights Advocacy

As one of the largest sectors of SEC work, it is notable that all member entities are community groups who focus on singular issues, such as health care rights, housing rights, women's rights, newcomer rights or international solidarity with specific regions of the world. Also, the large majority of this sector is composed of non-profit groups and organizations that receive small institutional funding and who do not operate by consensus.

5. Education and Training for Social and Ecological Change

This sector is new to the Garrotxa and is composed of a balance of community-run primary schools that do not receive public funding, and professional training schools with a focus on social and environmental change. Two of these latter schools are not run by collectives and their funding structures are as partially publicly-funded non-profit entities.

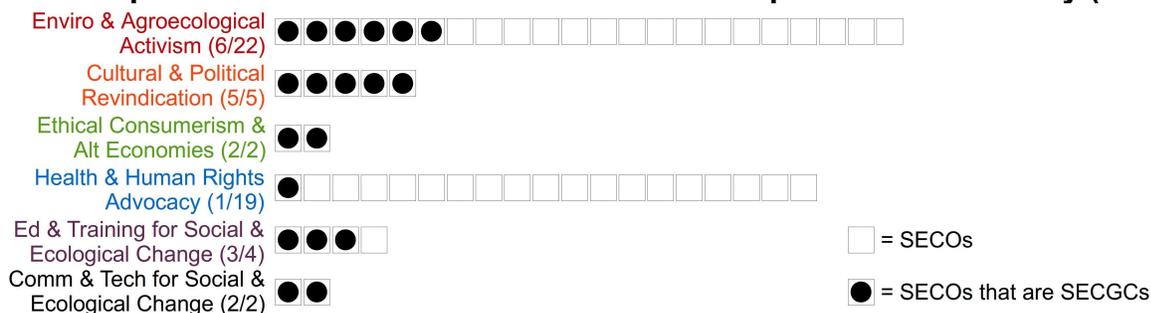
6. Communication and Technology for Social and Ecological Change

Aside from one collective that was established two decades ago, this is another new sector in social and ecological change work in Garrotxa. Member groups dedicate their efforts to share information and provide spaces for debate and community organizing via diverse media, such as

15 The creation of the first grassroots food cooperative in 2010 was marked by the first Garrotxa Fair for Food Sovereignty, in which a community meal was served to over 100 people, with the participation of several local organic and agroecological food producers and two local community organizing collectives.

print, radio, and online forums. All of the member entities are collectively-run, autonomous organizations that make decisions by consensus.

Graph 1: Pre-15M Ratio of SECGCs to SECOs per sector of activity (2010)



Graph 2: Post-15M Ratio of SECGCs to SECOs per sector of activity (2010)

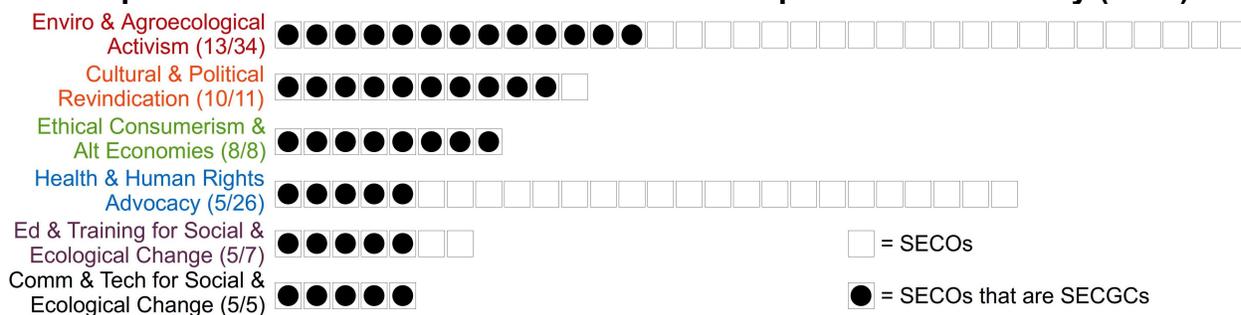


Table 5: Growth in SECOs and SECGCs after the 15M movement

Sector of Activity	Growth in Total No. of SECOs	Ranking of SECO Growth	Growth in Total No. of SECGCs	Ranking of SECGC Growth
Environmental and Agroecological Activism	155%	5	217%	4
Political & Cultural Revindication	220%	3	200%	5
Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies	400%	1	400%	2
Health and Human Rights Advocacy	136%	6	500%	1
Education & Training for Social & Ecological Change	175%	4	167%	6
Communication & Technology for Social & Ecological Change	250%	2	250%	3

5.4.2 SECOs and SEGCs in Pre-15M Garrotxa

At the turn of the new millennium, the Garrotxa region experienced a small surge in social and ecological movement building, with the creation of the ethical consumerism and alternative economies sector and the education and training for SEC sector, and the expansion of the communication and technology for SEC sector. This increase in social and ecological activism and community work has been attributed to various factors, including the participation of Garrotxans in the European anti-globalization movement, Garrotxan youth participating in international solidarity work in Latin America, the *Decreixement* movement (see Story 1) which inspired the arrival of neo-rural¹⁶ farmers and activists from different European cities to this Catalan county. The banking crisis of 2010 was preceded by a notable increase in mortgage rates and home rental prices, which also contributed to more neo-ruralists moving to Garrotxa, where living costs are lower.

Story 1: The Strategic Serendipity of Robin Hood¹⁷

Discontent and grief were percolating and threatening to boil over. Robin saw this, and so did the rest of the Merryfolk crew. They knew who the culprit was, they knew how extensive the corruption was, and they knew that the scandalous thievery had to stop. The consequences were too grave if it did not.

So one sunny morning, Robin walked into a bank. And he signed a mortgage agreement for a modest apartment. Later that week, he went to another bank and did the same, but for a car. Over the course of a year, he went to 39 different banks and signed 68

16 In mainland European academia, the term “neoruralists” is used instead of “back-to-the-landers”. Its definition is somewhat more broad, however, as it includes city-dwellers who seek self-sufficiency in the countryside as well as city-based activists who want to participate in rural community organizing as well as live off the land.

17 Names modified from the factual account of the Temps de Re-volts Collective and its member Enric Duran, also known as Robin Banks or Robin Hood of the Banks (Duran, 2013).

mortgages and loans for non-existent cars and apartments, to the tune of 618,000 dollars¹⁸.

The rest of the Merryfolk were ready on the day that Robin liquidated all of his accounts, to then hand the cash to grassroots collectives in need of seed funding. They sent out an electronic press release that went viral, declaring: “Robin has 'robbed' 492,000 euros from those that rob us the most, in order to denounce them and build alternatives for society.”

That same day, the Merryfolk distributed 200,000 copies of a self-published newspaper titled “*Crisi!*” (“Crisis”). It was dedicated to uncovering the false and corrupt nature of the nation's banking and political institutions. And dedicated to sharing and inspiring solutions. Some were individual and others were collective, and all were small, local and self-managed. The *decreixement* (grow smaller) movement had arrived to Catalonia.

The timing was precisely calculated, but serendipity also lent her favour to the cause. People were ready to hear what the Merryfolk had to say, and their response was overwhelming, rich in outrage and scented with hope. The media joined their chorus. And the banks trembled, no longer able to maintain their farce. A few months later, not a single banking institution was left untouched, and many closed their doors forever. The crisis had indeed begun, but the people were prepared, armed with knowledge, shielded in justice and fuelled by solidarity.

By the year 2010, there was a total of 54 SECOs working in Garrotxa, 19 of which operated as grassroots collectives (see Graph 1). The largest SECO sector was environmental and agroecological activism, followed by the health and human rights sector, while the smallest sectors were ethical consumerism and alternative economies, and communication and technology for social and ecological change. Not surprisingly, the largest number of SECGCs practiced environmental and agroecological activism, followed by political and cultural revindication. However, contrary to its SECO presence, the health and human rights advocacy

18 Canadian dollars.

sector only included one grassroots collective. When the 15M movement began, Garrotxa's already vibrant social and ecological movement received new company.

5.4.3 SECOs and SECGCs in Post-15M Garrotxa

After the 15th of May, 2011, all sectors of social and ecological change work experienced a growth in the numbers of SECOs and SECGCs (see Table 5 for growth percentages and ranking per sector). By June of 2014, the overall total of SECOs reached 91, of which 46 were SECGCs (see Graph 2). In three years, these numbers have fluctuated somewhat, with a general upwards trend towards greater community self-sufficiency. The highest post-15M growth experienced by SECOs overall was in the sector of ethical consumerism, which grew by 400%. The health and human rights advocacy sector grew from 19 SECOs to a total of 26, which although high was the lowest overall growth compared to the other sectors. In terms of SECGC growth, however, this sector increased the most relative to the other sectors, growing by 500%. The education and training for social change sector for SECGCs increased the least, with an additional two collectives being founded post-15M.

Similar to the post-anti-globalization growth in social and ecological work in Garrotxa, SECO and SECGC members in the post-15M context are still largely a combination of Garrotxans with anti-globalization and international solidarity experience and neo-ruralists with agroecological and activist intentions. However, in addition to these movement builders come those new to the activism and other SEC work. These are Garrotxans, other Catalans and international newcomers who are either directly experiencing or witnessing the grave socio-economic impacts of the economic crisis and the accompanying austerity measures. As a result, because of

necessity or choice, these new members have joined the social and ecological movement in an effort to contribute towards a more just and sustainable society. The following chapter presents and discusses the findings of this research study on SECGC decision making in post-15M Garrotxa, specifically exploring how and why SECGCs network, dialogue and make decisions collectively.

6 Findings and Discussion

The research data presented and discussed in this chapter comes from eleven semi-structured interviews (see Table 6), two key informant interviews, a group debrief and eight participant observation sessions, as well as from publicly available information on a wide cross-section of Garrotxan SECGCs. The names and identifying information of all participants have been changed to protect their identities. All semi-structured interviewees were either facilitators and/or founders of Garrotxan SECGC, and were representative of five of the six SECGC sectors (see Table 6). The participant observation sessions were held with four collectives and included a variety of decision making fora, such as internal planning meetings, community assemblies, and conflict resolution processes (see Table 7). The group debrief was proportionately well attended, and all participants who were unable to attend had the opportunity to review and comment on the initial findings. The two key informants were representative of the two main styles of facilitation, namely Nonviolent Communication Facilitation and Process Work Facilitation.

Table 2: Representation of Semi-Structured Interviewees Per SECGC Sector

Area of Work	Number of Active SECGCs	Number of Interviewed SECGCs
Environmental and Agroecological Activism	13	2
Political & Cultural Revindication	10	3
Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies	8	2
Health and Human Rights Advocacy	5	1

Education & Training for Social & Ecological Change	5	3
Communication & Technology for Social & Ecological Change	5	0

Table 3: Participant Observation Sessions

Area of Work	Participant Observation Sessions
Environmental and Agroecological Activism	2
Political & Cultural Revindication	2
Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies	2
Health and Human Rights Advocacy	0
Education & Training for Social & Ecological Change	2
Communication & Technology for Social & Ecological Change	0

The interviews and observation sessions are not discussed individually, but instead perspectives and excerpts are included and explored when relevant to the different sections of this chapter. Given the relationship between networking capacities and organizational adaptability and resiliency (Gilchrist, 2000; de Fiorio, Coronato, Bakhouya, & di Marzo, 2012; Aguilera, Morer, Barandiaran, & Bedia, 2013; Raye, 2014) and given the integral role of communication and decision-making in networking processes (Castells, 2012; Mahaffy, 2012), an analysis of formal SECGC networks is first presented. This is followed by a review and discussion of the underlying principles and philosophies that ground the decision making processes of the SECGCs interviewed. A similarly critical review is then presented about how decisions are facilitated and determined amongst these SECGCs. Lastly, findings that demonstrate narrative and fractal patterns in decision making, social change and adult learning are summarized and discussed.

6.1 Network Analyses of SECGCs in Garrotxa

This section explores and analyzes the formal relationships and rates of connectivity within each sector of SECGC work and between each sector of SECGC work in Garrotxa. The systems-based network analysis method is used as a foundation for these analyses and the relationships discussed are within the context of SECGC decision making and in the context of present-day Garrotxa, Catalonia. The purpose of these analyses is to contribute to a more comprehensive discussion of the philosophies, strategies, and outcomes of decision making processes in grassroots collectives. Due to resource and time constraints, only formal relationships, such as networks, collaborations, partnerships, and agreements, were tracked. This is not meant to imply that informal interactions and relations are less valid or important when evaluating decision making capacities of SECGCs, as the author recognizes the vital roles that friendships and other informal and personal relationships have on social and ecological movement building (Goodwin, Juris & Polletta, 2001; Polletta, 2002; Gilchrist, 2006).

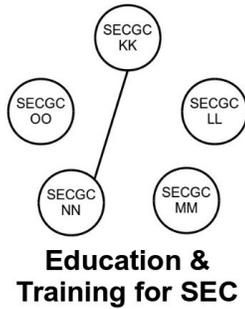
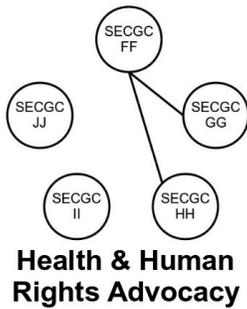
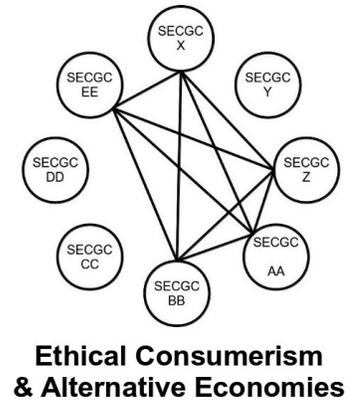
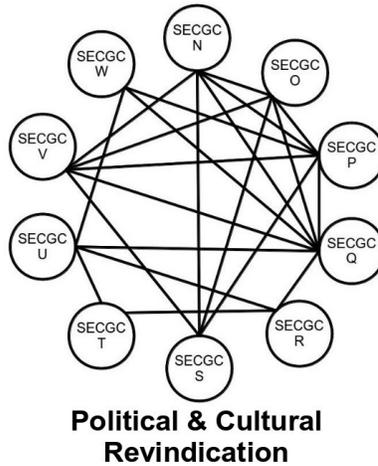
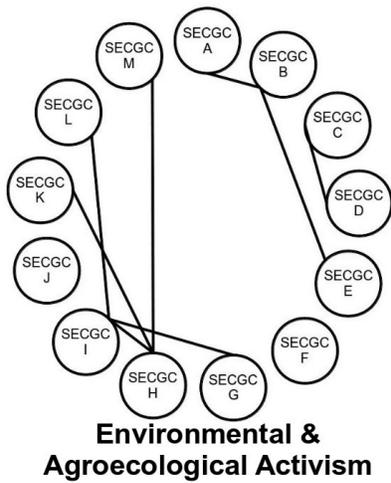
6.1.1 Intra-Sector Networks

The network maps of the six SECGC sectors (see Figure 17) visually demonstrate the formal relationships and interactions between SECGCs, within their respective sectors. A simple finite equation is used in order to quantify the relationships and strength of connectivity present in each sector (see Table 6). There are numerous observations and inferences that can be made when assessing these results, although only those observations, inferences and initial conclusions that most relate to decision making will be named and explored. According to authors Raye

(2014), Henric-Coll (2014), Shaw (2012), Graeber (2004) and Polletta (2002), two indicators of an organization's networking capacities and decision-making processes are the extent to which group values and purpose are shared. Most participants of this research study agree with this, however, some explain that these two indicators are better captured by the concepts of socio-cultural affinity and political affinity. Interviewees also cite previous experience in collective decision-making and collective action as a key determinant of how decision-making processes unfold and how effective networking efforts are.

According to Gilchrist (2000), the level of connectivity is an indicator of the self-organizing capacity of a system, which in this case is a SECGC. She classifies the extreme ends of the spectrum of connectivity as systems with low levels of connectivity and highly similar elements, versus systems with highly diverse connections and highly diverse elements. The former leads to systems becoming stagnant or frozen, while the latter leads to confusion and instability. The challenge for SECGCs is to find the context-specific balance between rigidity and volatility, and thus become a well-connected system perched on “the edge of chaos,” (Gilchrist, 2000, p268).

Figure 25: Intra-Sector Network Analyses of SECGCs in Garrotxa



Before discussing the interconnectivity of each of the six SECGC sectors, the exact rate of intra-sector connectivity is determined per sector (see Table 8). In order to calculate these rates, the total number of possible connections, “N”, is calculated using the equation $(n-1)+(n-2)+\dots+(n-(n-1))$, with “n” representing the number of SECGCs in each sector (see Table 6). The number of existing connections, “c”, are also quantified in this table, so that the rate of connectivity can be calculated, $r = c/N$. The ranking of the connectivity rate is the last column, and sectors are ranked 1 through 6, with 1 and 2 representing SECGC sectors with high connectivity relative to the other sectors, 3 and 4 representing those with relatively moderate connectivity, and 5 and 6 representing the sectors that have low connectivity when compared to the performance of the

other sectors.

Table 4: Rates of Intra-Sector Connectivity

SECGC Sector	Number of SECGCs (n)	Number of possible connections $(n-1)+(n-2)+\dots+(n-(n-1)) = N$	Number of existing connections (c)	Rate of connectivity $r = (c/N)$	Ranking of connectivity rate
Environmental and Agroecological Activism	13	78	8	10.3%	5
Political & Cultural Revindication	10	45	22	48.9%	1
Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies	8	28	10	35.7%	2
Health and Human Rights Advocacy	5	10	2	20.0%	4
Education & Training for Social & Ecological Change	5	10	1	10.0%	6
Communication & Technology for Social & Ecological Change	5	10	3	30.0%	3

The following discussion of each SECGC sector takes into consideration the criteria of socio-cultural affinity, political affinity and previous activist experience when exploring the formal networking results presented in Figure 17 and Table 8.

1. Environmental and Agroecological Activism

This sector has surprisingly low connectivity given the amount of organizing that it does in Garrotxa. Figure 18 shows a visible separation between the environmental SECGCs and the agroecological SECGCs. As the environmental SECGCs have a long historical presence in Garrotxa and are almost exclusively composed of native Garrotxan membership, there is a cultural divide between them and the agroecological SECGCs, whose membership is largely

made up of Catalan newcomers to Garrotxa. There is a fair level of shared politics and values, although the agroecological collectives tend to have a more politicized discourse in terms of resource use than the environmental SECGCs, which are more conservationist and in general do not have a social justice component to their discourse. When assessing the level of connectivity per sub-sector, both fair much better, with the environmentalists rating at 23.8% and the agroecologists rating at 20%, instead of the sectoral rate of 10.3%.

2. Political and Cultural Revindication

This sector has the highest level of connectivity of all six sectors of SECGC work. This high rate of connectivity is likely due to the long record of political and cultural revindication work in the region, which is an indicator of a higher level of activism experienced and also presents more opportunities for more relations to be developed between these SECGCs. The three SECGCs with low connectivity are the activist collectives whose primary focus is cultural revindication, rather than a combination of political and cultural, or solely political, activist endeavours. As explained previously, the membership of this sector is largely made up of people from Garrotxa, and who have similar political and cultural values and perspectives. This political and cultural affinity between SECGCs makes it easier for both formal and informal relationships to be formed, provided there are spaces that facilitate these interactions, such as meetings or fairs.

3. Ethical Consumerism and Alternative Economies

The high level of connectivity in this sector is due to a platform that networks five of the ethical consumer cooperatives on a bi-monthly basis. These SECGCs meet in order to share ideas, and organize and participate in collective actions that promote the ethical consumption of food and

other basic necessities in Garrotxa. Given the newness and medium-size of this sector, the rate of connectivity is uncommonly high, although this can be contributed in part to a large membership of seasoned activists from both Garrotxa and elsewhere, as well as the similarity in their political discourses. Socio-cultural differences between SECGCs are significant however, and it is also important to note that there are three nodes that are not connected to any of the other SECGCs. These include an ethical consumer cooperative located in a remote intentional community, and the two trade and barter alternative economy collectives. The reason for these unconnected nodes could be due to the political and cultural divides between the two alternative economy collectives, and because of the transportation barriers faced by the intentional community's food cooperative.

Story 2: The Convergence of Emergence

It happened so impossibly quickly, so impossibly smoothly! Just a year earlier, the six of them were having coffee and talking about starting a food co-operative. They all agreed that it was absurd that the organic vegetables that they were buying at the grocery store were both expensive and far from local, while their neighbours who grew organically had to go all the way to the big city to sell their wares.

So they threw a “good food” party. Nearly one hundred people came, including over a dozen local organic farmers. Volunteers were plentiful, helping set up the long tables, prepare the ingredients, and cook the gourmet community meal. The feast was accompanied by abundant wine and upbeat music. And the music rung with undertones of chatter and laughter. By the end of the day, the first ethical food cooperative of Garrotxa was formed, and a second was created shortly after.

Now, there were four, but in a year's time, there would likely be more.

What was astounding, they kept commenting, was that it had happened so fast. But upon reflection, they recalled the seeds of

change that were planted years ago. None was new to movement building, they had all travelled, they had all witnessed inspiring stories of self-sufficiency and peaceful resistance. They had been organizing for years. Their friends had been growing organically for years. Maybe this idea had always been present, but ethereal, waiting for the day it could land in an enormous dish, and then into someone's mouth, spreading from word to word, until a critical mass converged and emerged to take action.

4. Health and Human Rights Advocacy

The rate of connectivity is not exceptionally high in this sector, which can be attributed to the newness of these organizations, four of which are post-15M initiatives, and the lack of sectoral platforms or other spaces which facilitate sharing and networking. Also, the membership is a mix of seasoned activists and those very new to social movement building, many of whom have joined these collectives out of necessity in order to best defend their rights to proper housing, health care and social assistance. Despite the low level of connectivity, these new organizations are very active in social movement building in Garrotxa. A future increase in networking power is probable given the similarity in these collectives' political and socio-cultural discourses, which create ideal conditions for future formal relationship building and strengthening.

5. Education and Training for Social and Ecological Change

This sector has the weakest connectivity of all six SECGCs in Garrotxa, with only one existing formal connection. Despite the similar mixed presence of seasoned and non-seasoned activists in each SECGC, there are significant cultural and political divides between and within these SECGCs. As well, two of the three autonomous nodes of this sector are post-15M SECGCs and have thus had little time to establish formal networks

with other SECGCs. The other autonomous node is a collectively-run primary school that is facing challenges by the Catalan Ministry of Education to become registered as a certified primary school and is consequently dedicating most of its extra resources and time to attend to this administrative and legal hurdle. One of the two linked SECGCs is undergoing a major transition, and although the organizational name persists, the membership is entirely new and different to the membership that existed one year ago. This SECGC had used to maintain formal relationships with other SECGCs in this sector and in other sectors, however these relationships were lost during a period of crisis that provoked the current change in membership.

6. Communication and Technology for Social and Ecological Change

Although most of the SECGCs in this sector are post-15M creations, the connectivity rate is high, with all nodes maintaining at least one relationship with another. Except for an online collective, all others are made up of seasoned activists, most of whom are native to Garrotxa. Hence, there is a high level of socio-cultural affinity between these SECGCs. The two separate networks that are visible in this sector's network map of Figure 18 could be due to political differences in these SECGC public discourses. Three of the SECGCs have more politicized and technological approaches to social and ecological change work than the other two, who use more traditional and cultural forms and media to engage their community.

From the above review of connectivity within each of the six sectors of SECGCs, one initial conclusion and three postulations can be made. Connectivity is not determined by the size of the

sector, as the second largest sector, and one of the smallest sectors demonstrated high connectivity, whereas the largest sector, and one of the smallest sectors had the lowest connectivity. The variance in connectivity per sector is likely affected by context-based criteria, such as previous activist experience, and socio-cultural affinities and political affinities between Garrotxan SECGCs.

6.1.2 Inter-Sector Networks

The inter-sector map of the six SECGC sectors (see Figure 18) shows the comparative size of each sector as well as the extent to which they are formally networked with each other. For example, the Political and Cultural Revindication (PCR) sector has ten member SECGCs, therefore it is double the size of the three sectors that have only five member SECGCs. The number of formal relationships between each sector was tabulated (see Table 9) and the thickness of the connections between sectors is reflective to the number of existing formal relationships. In order to more accurately compare the networking behaviour of each sector, the rate of connectivity was also calculated and captured in Table 9. In this table, the number of possible connections in bilateral sectoral relationships (“N”) was obtained by multiplying the number of member SECGCs between the two SECGC sectors in question. This number was divided by the number of existing connections (“c”) to obtain the rate of connectivity, $r = c/N$. The total number of possible connections (“C”) was also calculated by adding the number of possible bilateral connections. The overall rate of connectivity (“R”) was calculated per sector through the formula $R = c/C$.

Figure 26: Inter-Sector Network Analysis of SECGCs in Garrotxa

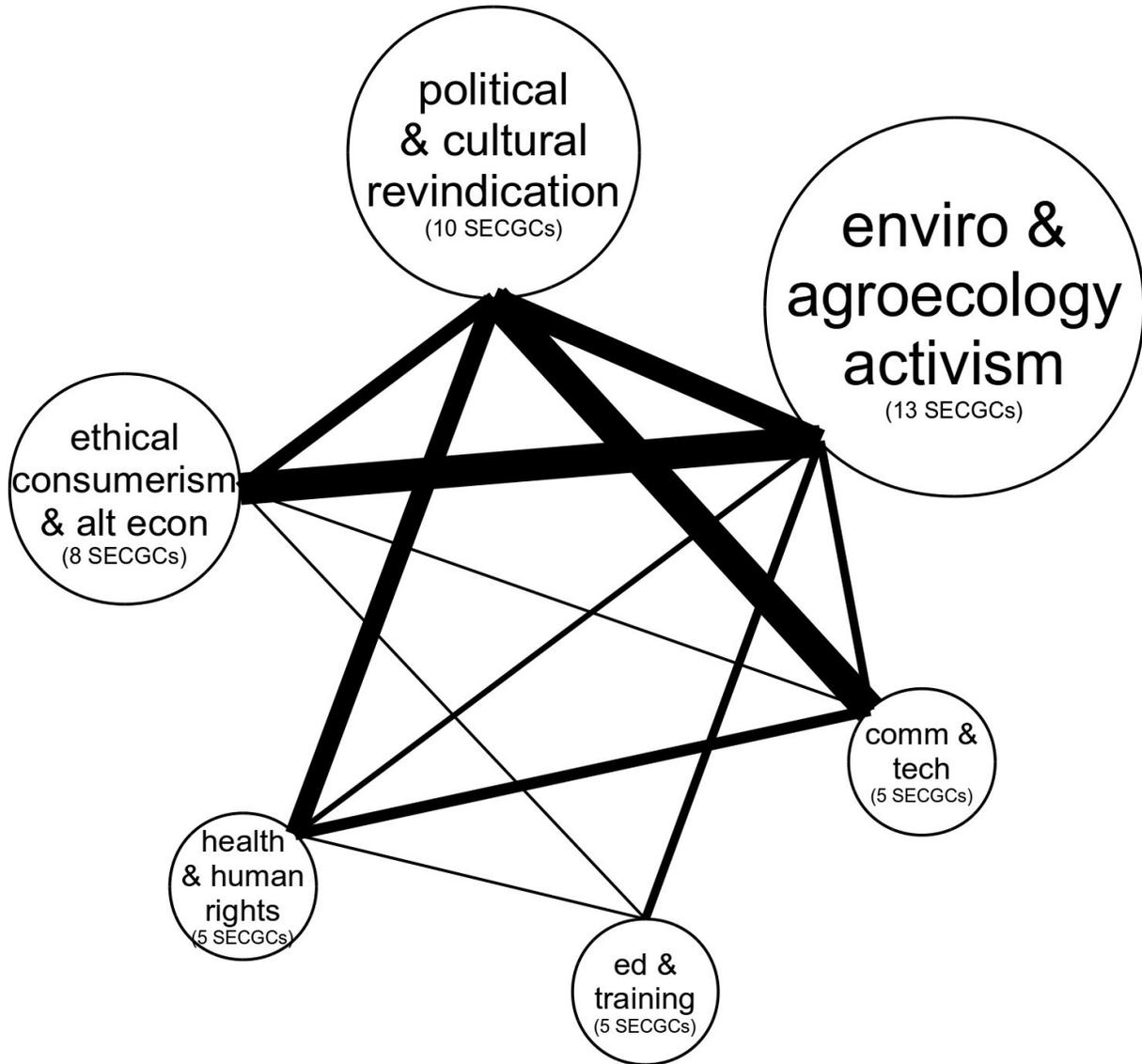


Table 5: Rates of Inter-Sector Connectivity

ROW	Bilateral relationship	Number (n) of SECGCs per sector	Number of possible bilateral connections $n \times n = (N)$	Number of existing connections (c)	Rate of connectivity $r = (c/N)$	Rank of connectivity rating
1	EAA with PCR	13 x 10	130	8	6.2%	6
2	EAA with ECAE	13 x 8	104	11	10.6%	4
3	EAA with HHRA	13 x 5	65	2	3.1%	9
4	EAA with ETSEC	13 x 5	65	3	4.6%	7
5	EAA with CTSEC	13 x 5	65	3	4.6%	7
6	PCR with ECAE	10 x 8	80	5	6.3%	5
7	PCR with HHRA	10 x 5	50	7	14.0%	3
8	PCR with ETSEC	10 x 5	50	0	0%	11
9	PCR with CTSEC	10 x 5	50	11	22.0%	1
10	ECAE with HHRA	8 x 5	40	0	0%	11
11	ECAE with ETSEC	8 x 5	40	1	2.5%	10
12	ECAE with CTSEC	8 x 5	40	1	2.5%	10
13	HHRA with ETSEC	5 x 5	25	1	4.0%	8
14	HHRA with CTSEC	5 x 5	25	4	16.0%	2
15	CTSEC with ETSEC	5 x 5	25	0	0%	11
ROW	SECGC Sector	Possible bilateral connections per sector $(N + N + N + N + N)$	Total number of possible bilateral connections per sector $(N+N+N+N+N = C)$	Number of existing connections (c)	Rate of connectivity $R = (c/C)$	Rank of connectivity rate
16	Environmental & Agroecological Activism (EAA)	130 + 104 + 65 + 65 + 65	429	27	6.3%	4
17	Political & Cultural Revindication (PCR)	130 + 80 + 50 + 50 + 50	360	31	8.6%	2
18	Ethical Consumerism & Alternative Economies (ECAE)	104 + 80 + 40 + 40 + 40	304	18	5.9%	5
19	Health & Human Rights Advocacy (HHRA)	65 + 50 + 40 + 25 + 25	205	14	6.8%	3
20	Education & Training for SEC (ETSEC)	65 + 50 + 40 + 25 + 25	205	5	2.4%	6
21	Communication & Training for SEC (CTSEC)	65 + 50 + 40 + 25 + 25	205	19	9.3%	1

The following discussion of inter-sector connectivity is structured with respect to the different scales of strength of connectivity between sectors, from high to low, and the information

presented is with the objective to be able to more comprehensively assess the decision making capacities of individual SECGCs. In order to make the reading of this section easier, the acronyms for each sector is used. The criteria of socio-cultural affinity, political affinity and previous activist experience is also referred to throughout the following discussion.

1. High Connectivity

Unlike its performance in intra-sector connectivity, placing third, the CTSEC sector demonstrates the highest rate of inter-sector connectivity. Unsurprisingly, the PCR sector has a similarly high incidence of formal networking with other sectors. Upon review of the bilateral relationships between sectors (see rows 1–15 in Table 7) it is apparent that the CTSEC sector has close formal relationships with the PCR and HHRA sectors. Research participants explain that this is indicative of the strong political and socio-cultural affinities between the sectors as well as a high incidence of informal relationships that result in formal ties. The EAA and ECAE sectors have proportionately strong connections between them, reflective of an “agroecological producer – ethical consumer” relationship.

2. Medium Connectivity

Overall, the EAA and HHRA sectors have comparatively mid-range levels of connectivity with the other sectors. In terms of bilateral relationships, the EAA sector has mostly mid-range networking relationships with other sectors, while the HHRA has a balance of mid-range and strong relationships with other sectors. When taking into consideration socio-cultural and political affinity, the SECGC members of both sectors

have divided socio-cultural and political orientations. The environmental activism subsector of the EAA sector has extensive activism experience, as opposed to the agroecological subsector. Similar to the HHRA sector, the agroecological sector is mostly composed of post-15M collectives and has a mix of new and seasoned activist membership.

3. Low Connectivity

The ETSEC sector has the lowest level of connectivity and is the only sector that does not have any strong relationships with other sectors. According to research participants, this is indicative of a lack of activist experience, and significant internal socio-cultural and political disaffinity with other SECGCs. Surprisingly, the ECAE sector also ranks low on connectivity, despite strong relationships with the EAA and PCR sectors. Factors that limit relationship building between the ECAE sector and the HHRA, ETSEC and CTSEC sectors are similar to those impacting the ETSEC sector, and are at times mutual and at times unidirectional.

Comparing the two network analyses per sector, four of the six sectors had similar connectivity in both their intra-sector and inter-sector connectivity performances. This suggests that if a sector is well networked within itself, it will tend to establish good networks with other sectors. Similarly, if a sector has low internal connectivity, it is less likely to establish many relationships with other sectors. Nonetheless, there are two sectors that do not follow this logic, which stresses the influence of context-based criteria on formal relationship building, outside of the common denominators of shared values and purpose. The general trend and the contextual

influences in SECGC sector connectivity could have implications at the grassroots collective level, affecting both relationships within the group as well as their internal decision making capacities. Conversely, the quality and quantity of interactions within a collective could indicate how well these collectives are able to establish relationships with other collectives engaged in similar work, or in social and ecological change work in general.

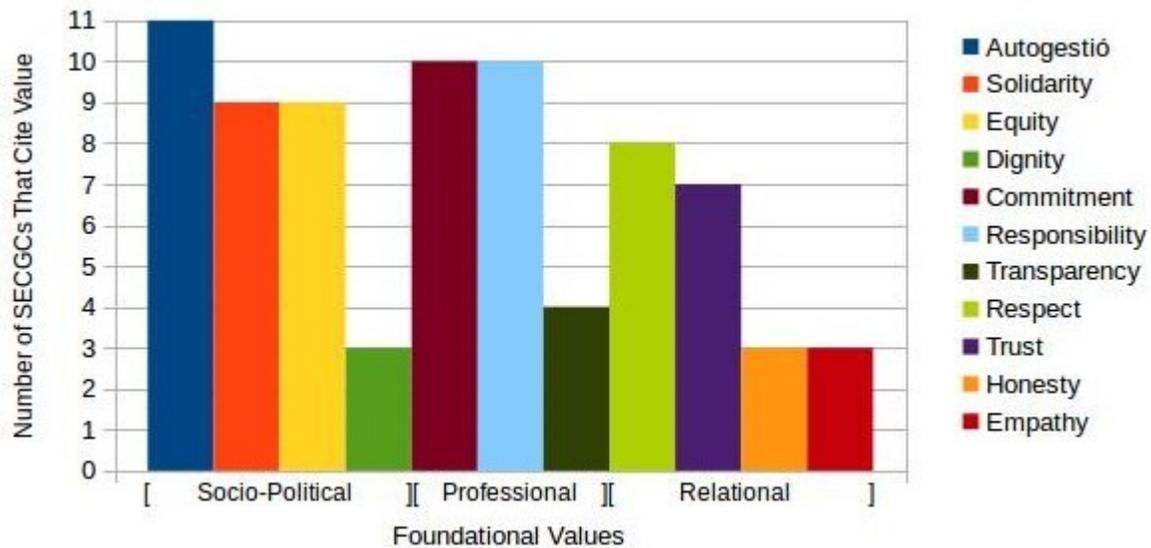
6.2 *Ethical and philosophical foundations of SECGC decision making processes*

6.2.1 Values

Interview participants gave detailed responses when explaining the values that underlie the decision making processes of their respective SECGCs (see Graph 3). Their diverse responses can be divided into three categories; socio-political, professional, and relational. The most commonly cited values were socio-political and professional in nature, with relational values being the least cited. When first asked about the underlying values, respondents mostly named socio-political ones, but after discussing conflict resolution experiences, several interviewees rectified their initial responses, adding professional and relational values. The following review and discussion of values is structured according to the three above-mentioned categories. The application of these SECGC decision making values will be discussed in Section 6.3 when outlining the models and methods of SECGC decision making processes. It is important to note that during the interviews, participants sometimes sometimes used values interchangeably with principles, however, this section will only use the term “value” in order to maintain greater

consistency in the arguments.

Figure 27: Foundational Values of SECGC Decision Making in Garrotxa



1. Socio-Political Values

The socio-political values identified by research participants are *autogestió*, solidarity, equity and dignity. The expression and explanation of these values encapsulate cultural and environmental connotations, but for the purposes of simplicity, the tag socio-political is used. The only value cited by all eleven participants was *autogestió*, whose direct translation is self-management, but refers specifically to the self-organization and self-managing of SECGC decision-making needs in order to be as self-sufficient as possible this area. This implies that all members be capable of assuming a facilitator role in the SECGC, and that other decision making tasks are also distributed equitably and rotate with frequency, such as preparing the agenda, taking minutes or making sure that all members are able to express their opinions. The unanimity in declaring *autogestió* as an underlying value of decision making processes is not

surprising given the historical and contemporary libertarian influences of SECGCs in Garrotxa and given the impact of the Decreixement movement in pre-15M Garrotxa (see Story 1).

Another socio-political value of libertarian origin is solidarity, and was also named by nearly all of the research participants as informing their decision making practices. Solidarity in the context of decision making refers to the attention paid to marginalized voices within SECGC decision making processes, such as those who are new, who have less information or who are socially marginalized due to their race, culture, gender, sexual orientation or other element of diversity. Solidarity was also mentioned by several participants as remembering to address the needs of marginalized members of the general community when engaging in decision making. This understanding of decision making for the common good echoes literature by Mahaffy (2012) and Mansbridge and Karpowitz (2005), who agree that the concept of the common good helps make decision making both principled and purposeful. Extending this concept to include deep ecology philosophy, the value of solidarity was also understood by “Stuart” as “always [being] aware that everything we decide has consequences, big and small, with our friends, big and small”, referring to all inhabitants of her environs. “Stuart” was not a member of an environmentalist SECGC, but his deep ecology perspective is not uncommon in SECGCs who work in non-environmental sectors and in other regions of the world (Briggs, 2000).

Equity was considered of equal importance to the value of solidarity, according to research participants. In Catalan, the term *equitat* (equity) was until recently only used in legal or financial contexts. Over the past few years, this term has started to replace the Catalan terms *justícia natural* (justice or fairness that takes into consideration people's needs), *justícia* (justice

or fairness) and *igualtat* (equality), whose usage in social movement contexts most resemble that of equity in the English. Research participants who used either of these terms or specifically the term equity mentioned two key aspects related to its meaning; equity as participation-based and equity as rights-based. In terms of participation, several respondents explained that equity meant that all members of a SECGC participate equitably in decision making, inside and outside of formal meeting spaces. In terms of rights, a few participants extended the meaning of equity to include attention to peoples' human rights throughout the decision making process. Research participant “Charles” talks about the value of equity in both the process and the end decision, sharing that, “We don't just have to make sure that everyone speaks, we have to make sure that everyone feels listened to, that everyone feels content, at peace, with the final decision.” In this sense, it appears that to “Charles”, the emotional impacts of decision making processes, such as sense of camaraderie¹⁹ and well-being, can act as measures of equity. Briggs (2000) and Gelderloos (2010) both make the connection between equity and well-being in this context, although Briggs concretely specifies that the former is necessary for the latter to exist.

Lastly, three respondents used the term dignity to describe the values and attitudes that uphold principled decision making processes. As it was described by all respondents, this value is also closely associated to emotional well-being, although more as an expression of personal dignity and pride than specifically as an expression of good process. “Helen” shared that, “In the end, it comes down to how people feel, if they feel good about themselves, not just happy, but proud in having participated in a collective [process].” While there are close and overlapping relationships between dignity and solidarity and equity, the term dignity is distinct in

19 Camaraderie understood as mutual trust and friendship amongst people who spend time together.

highlighting the importance of well-being at a deeper and more personal level. Dignity in decision making processes is therefore valuing the essence of personal well-being. Interestingly, all three respondents had international solidarity experience in Latin America, where the discourse on dignity is common and well-integrated in social movement discourse and closely associated to human rights defence discourse as well (PBI, 2013).

2. Professional Values

The three values that fall into this category are commitment, responsibility and transparency. As mentioned previously, these values were not often initially cited when the question regarding values was first asked, but rather emerged as core values in decision making processes after research participants shared stories about tensions and conflicts within their respective SECGCs. This observation was explored in the group debrief, during which many participants agreed that most of their SECGC conflicts were related to work ethics or financial matters.

Commitment was identified by nearly all of the respondents as foundational to their decision making processes. Commitment was specified as relating to the extent in which SECGC members commit to collective decision making processes. One participant insisted that commitment did not mean that every member had to be very active and very *propositive*²⁰, but that they did have to meet a minimum in these two respects. “Frank” explored this idea further, saying that “the legitimacy of the decision is put into question when someone is not committed to the process.” This concept of legitimacy is linked to consensus by Dressler (2006). Similar to

20 *Propositive* is a term that is commonly used in nonviolent communication and libertarian facilitator discourse. Extending beyond the term *proactive*, this term refers to the act of making proposals and proposing alternatives in order to help a collective find a solution together.

the research participants, Dressler believes that a consensus-based process is legitimated by a committed membership, and he insists that the level of commitment needs to be high in order for decisions to be both valid and feasible.

Responsibility is closely related to the value of commitment and was noted as equally important by research participants. As the next step in the sequence of values and attitudes, responsibility is the concrete realization of a member's commitment to a collective, in which they carry out their assigned tasks as agreed by the collective. “John” highlights the impact of a responsible attitude, explaining that, “what we talk about and what we do can be two different things.” In this sense, a lack of responsibility indirectly impacts the legitimacy of a decision by directly impacting its implementation.

Transparency was a value that emerged through different discussions about good decision making process as well as the allocation of SECGC funds. All SECGCs are volunteer-based and non-profit, however, some allocate small stipends to members in recognition of the time and resources that they contribute to SECGC activities. The amount and allocation of these stipends can sometimes result in long discussions that resemble heated arguments rather than consensus-based dialogue. The core of the conflicts surrounding financial matters was attributed to two causes. Some perceived that stipends were inconsistent with their political ideology and were therefore against the notion. Others demanded a high level of transparency when deciding and allocating stipends. In the context of decision making, and using the example of stipends, “Karen” admits that one of the grave errors that lead to the demise of their SECGC occurred when she and three other people, but not the full collective, decided that herself and her partner

receive a monthly stipend in order to cover their living expenses. She shared that, “I think that one of the biggest things that lead to everyone leaving [the SECGC] was because I was afraid of losing our stipends.” “Karen” acknowledged that although she knew that the decision was considered non-transparent by many other members of the collective, she continued to block and veto all alternative proposals presented during meetings because she did not want to lose her or her partner's stipends. Their monthly stipends remained status quo for several years, even after all but one of the collective members left the SECGC. It is interesting to note that “Karen” had assumed that any discussion regarding stipends would have resulted in her and her partner losing their monthly allowance, however, there were likely numerous feasible alternative solutions to this one. It was this attitude of fear that froze the decision making process and opened an unresolved conflict. According to Heron, the manifestation of fear is an “archaic anxiety based on past hurts” and is considered a form of defensive behaviour in group dynamics (Heron, 1999, p63). The complex challenges that “Karen” and her collective faced when negotiating individual needs and collective transparency could have been addressed in part by the existence and application of relational values, such as empathy (see Relational Values).

Story 3: *Passivisme* and *Passillisme*

Amongst nonviolent communication facilitators who work in Catalonia, there are two types of subtle actions that invalidate a collective decision – *passivisme* and *passillisme*.

Passivisme – passive decision making; to be passive or to pass during decision making processes. This affects the level of equitable participation in such processes.

Passillisme – hallway decision making; to make decisions outside of formal meeting spaces. This affects the level of professional transparency in decision making processes.

3. Relational Values

This category of values gathers those that are interpersonal in nature, and include respect, honesty, and empathy. One respondent also cited humility as a relational value, although this was not a value that was shared by other research participants. This category had the least citations overall, and many of the values were identified or emphasized during the sharing of examples of internal tensions, conflicts and crises within SECGCs.

Over half of the respondents identified respect as an important value in decision making processes. In this context, the value of respect establishes a framework for how people should speak and act with each other. Two respondents extended the value of respect to include respect of the environment, and interestingly, one of these respondents was not a member of an environmental SECGC despite having an ecology-based discourse. A few research participants made connections between respect and other values, such as solidarity and equity, naming the latter as manifestations of respect, with respect being more foundational than the other two. Mahaffy discusses the role of respect in relational presence and decision making, writing that relational beings are those who are respectful of differences (Mahaffy, 2012). This understanding and attention to difference – of income, race, gender, etc – is also integral to the definition of solidarity and equity. The majority of respondents explained that the value of respect gained particular importance during the common debate of individual versus collective needs. One respondent shared that she had personal health needs that were not respected by the collective, and that this caused her a great deal of stress. The emotional impact of a lack of

respect can also have other consequences, such as an air of mistrust within a SECGC.

Trust was a value that was sometimes cited in conjunction with honesty and transparency. Nearly half of the respondents spoke of the importance of gaining the trust of other members of the collective as well as trusting other members. In terms of honesty and transparency, “Lisa” shared an example of losing the trust of some external collective members, “the decisions the central committee made were emailed to everyone, but we didn't tell them all directly, so when they came to our centre and saw the changes they stopped trusting me, even though it was the whole committee that made the decision.” The sense of trust in a SECGC is also nurtured by other professional values. Another respondent explained that it was hard for him to trust some of his colleagues after they had committed to participating in a collective action, but did not end up showing. According to Briggs, trust is one of the six foundational values of consensus²¹, and is one of the primary values that a facilitator should begin fostering from the first day of work with a new SECGC (Briggs, 2000).

Honesty was one of the least frequently cited relational values, despite its close relationship with respect, trust and transparency. Respondents explained honesty in the context of decision making as an emotional value as well as a relational one. For example, “Diane” describes honesty as “speaking from your heart”, suggesting that relational dialogue is dependent upon honesty. Unlike transparency, honesty in this sense has a more personal rather than collective dimension, in which the articulation of personal emotions and positions are encouraged, sometimes over and above how they might impact other members of the collective in the

21 According to Briggs, the six values of consensus are cooperation, trust, honesty, creativity, equality and respect (Briggs, 2000, p1).

moment (see Story 4). From a nonviolent communication perspective, Rosenberg (2003) cautions that the way that honesty is expressed is as important as the act of expressing honest statements, and that attention to nonviolent communication is necessary in order to not cause cycles of anger and frustration. Also in terms of nonviolent communication, Escorihuela (2007) talks about the role of honesty as a way to create relationships with other members of the collective, as well as a way to connect with the natural surroundings.

Story 4: Tug of War

When she first joined the collective, “Abigail” often felt frustrated by the lack of planning and organization of her new colleagues. After a while, she started to notice a pattern in her reactions. First, she would not express anything. She would hold her discontent in, until she became so angry with them that she would explode. When her outbursts erupted, they “came out like verbal diarrhoea”, she couldn't tone them down, or much less stop them.

She wanted to improve her responsiveness to these situations of conflict, so one day “Abigail” decided to try a different strategy. Before a meeting, she told her colleagues that she needed to express something, and that it would likely hurt people's feelings. She shared with the collective that she believed it was better for her just to say it early on rather than to wait too long. The group discussed the potential emotional consequences of “Abigail”'s unedited grievances, given their past experiences with them, and in the end all agreed to listen and to try and not react in turn.

The change was slow going, but now, the strategy of “just saying it” seems to work for the group. “Abigail” explains it as “a balance between honesty and respect – but honesty trumps respect if there is a tug of war.”

Lastly, empathy was named as an underlying value for a handful of SECGCs. This value in decision making terms is directly relational in that it seeks to uphold connectedness at personal and emotional levels with other members of the group. Both Escorihuela (2006) and Mahaffy

(2012) discuss empathy in terms of consensus-based decision making, agreeing that empathy is an essential ingredient for ensuring that everyone feels listened to and for ensuring that their concerns are acknowledged at a real and practical level. Two of the respondents share similar perspectives. Using different examples, these two participants coincided in naming empathy as the necessary quality for ensuring that everyone is content with the final decision. “Diane” even goes as far to say that, “even if I don't agree completely, if I know that my people understand how I feel, and if I know that I can live with the decision, I will consent.”

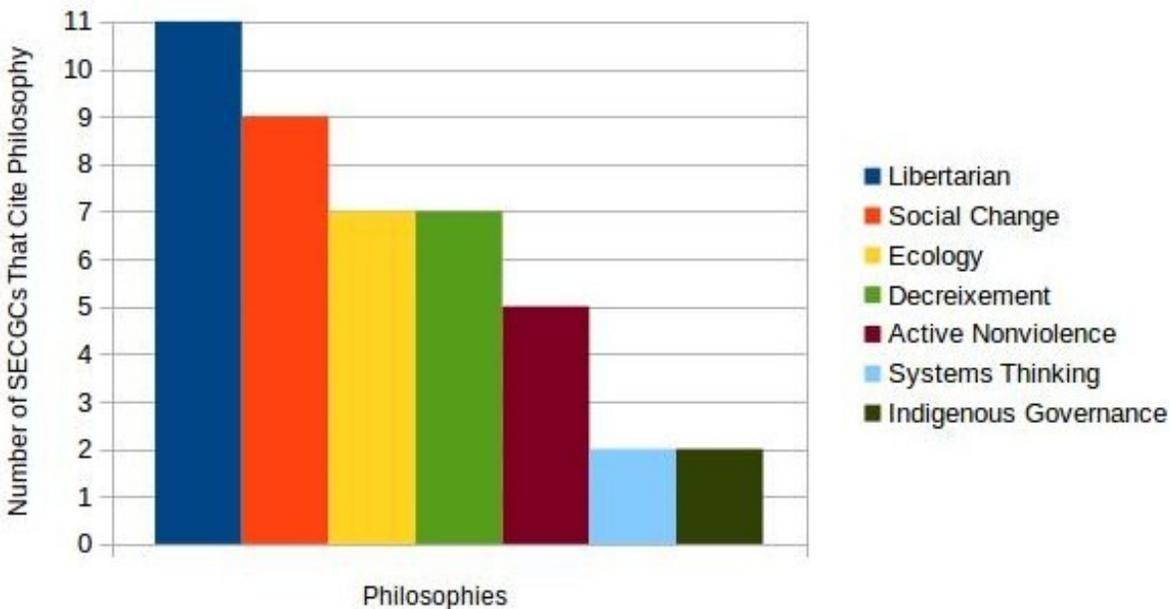
While there was much variance in SECGC core values, one of the surprising results was that most SECGCs had an average of six core values, which appears to be a high number. This could be an indication that SECGC decision making is a heavily principled process. Another surprising result was the emphasis of professional values, namely commitment and responsibility, over all other values, save the socio-political value of *autogestió*. This is suggestive of how important values are when implementing decisions, and that when these values are not upheld, conflicts are likely to happen. In fact, when research participants were asked about the extent to which their values were shared by all members of the SECGC, only two respondents believed that the values were equally shared and applied by all of the membership. Finally, the naming of relational values indicates a reflective and personal dimension to decision making, making such processes not only principled, but conscious ones.

6.2.2 Philosophies

All semi-structured interview participants gave elaborate discourses on the social, political and economic philosophies of their respective SECGCs (see Graph 4). Not surprisingly, the most

common political philosophy that grounded the participant SECGCs was libertarianism, followed by social change, ecology and *decreixement*. The philosophical foundations of these SECGCs were influenced by several factors, although those that most impacted a SECGC's philosophy were the socio-political context that birthed the collective, followed by its membership's cultural origins and past activist experience, and lastly, their past training and academic studies.

Figure 28: Philosophical Foundations of SECGC Decision Making in Garrotxa



In terms of socio-political context, it is apparent that the temporal origin of SECGCs determined their philosophical positioning to a notable degree. For example, older SECGCs in Garrotxa were firmly libertarian and/or environmentalist in nature, while those created just before the 15M movement identified strongly with the *decreixement* philosophy of small-scale self-managed

decision making units. Newer post-15M SECGCs identified themselves as grounded in social change theory as well as libertarian theory, and were more revindicative in nature. “Helen” shared that her decision to facilitate a new post-15M SECGC was a way to revindicate the principles of *autogestió*, equity and solidarity, through consensus based decision making.

Past activist experiences also conditioned a SECGC's philosophical grounding. The few interview participants that had participated in international solidarity actions in Indigenous communities in Latin America made direct links between their decision making processes and Indigenous governance theory, in addition to active nonviolence and social change theory. “John” explains that his years of volunteering in Central America prepared him to be able to “co-create an organization [in Garrotxa] that worked with the tried and true methods of the Zapatistas”. Those who came from anarcho-syndicalist experiences tended to identify more purely with libertarian assembly decision making, and who unsurprisingly also had a clear and succinct statement of values.

The cultural origins of a SECGC's membership body were significant determinants of the collective decision making philosophy. Those born and raised in rural Garrotxa tended to have a different understanding of libertarianism and ecology than those from Barcelona or other urban Catalan centres. The former tended towards more rigid interpretations of libertarianism and less rigid interpretations of ecology, while the latter were just the opposite. This could be a result of the historically insular libertarian resistance experiences of Garrotxan activists, versus an urban libertarianism that was open to many influences. In contrast, when ecologists from urban centres came to Garrotxa, their activist approach was uncompromisingly principled. During recent

major protests against tunnel and highway construction, which had united activists from urban centres and from rural Garrotxa, the urban ecologists presented the unceding demand to stop all construction, while their rural counterparts were slightly more reconciliatory, despite their proximity to the environmental impacts. According to “Brenda”, this was because of the difference in priorities and objectives, especially with relation to livelihood. She explained that farmers did not want the highway cutting across their fields, but that if the company was willing to build underground tunnels so that they could continue farming the same land, “we should learn to cede.”

The past education and training of members of a collective was also noted to influence the philosophical grounding of SECGC decision making processes. Many of the interviewees had participated in permaculture and sustainability workshops and courses, and their resultant understandings of ecology and systems thinking helped inform the philosophical discourses of their SECGCs. Two interviewees who had done graduate studies in systems thinking made the link between this philosophy and that of *decreixement*, and helped incorporate *decreixement* ideas into their respective SECGC vision statements. Both of these statements spoke of the importance of size (small), catchment area (local), and networking for the purposes of whole learning. Lastly, a respondent who is currently studying systems-based process work counselling, also shared that her studies have greatly influenced the philosophy behind decision making within her SECGC. Given that conflict awareness is central to this theory, she shares that during SECGC decision making sessions, she encourages members to identify and working with, instead of against, conflict, in order to promote organizational learning.

There were two major debates about SECGC philosophies that arose when the initial research results were presented for feedback from participants. First, the conflict between ideology and economy was common amongst SECGCs that provided non-profit services. This debate was closely related to the personal versus collective needs debate. Some SECGC members showed greater levels of tolerance for precariousness in housing and other basic needs, whereas other members had firm limits as to what they considered were basic conditions for a dignified quality of life. Another common debate was how inclusive an organization should be in terms of their values and philosophy. Some participants believed that the more alike in thinking that a SECGC membership was, the less conflict there would be during decision making, whereas, other SECGC representatives believed that a rigidly bounded ideology not only did not address the root of interpersonal and group conflict, but it was also contradictory to most SECGC philosophies in that it excluded too many members of the general community. The participants' conclusions were similar to Gilchrist's observations on a well-connected community (2000). The more an organization is able to find their context-based balance, or “edge of chaos”, between inclusive and exclusive philosophical positions, the more adaptable they would be to changing contexts.

Story 6: Inclusive or Exclusive?

Having an open and embracing vision and philosophy statement could have the opposite consequence. In the example of “Owen” and his SECGC, their extensive vision statement tried to include as many activist sectors as possible, and made reference to numerous ideologies and thinkers. After observing that the SECGC's attempt at being inclusive was in fact turning people away because they could not identify with such a wide array of ideas, the SECGC simplified the narrative to a few key concepts.

In conclusion, it appears that all SECGC facilitators interviewed had clear and profound understandings of the philosophical underpinnings of their respective SECGC decision making models. This foundational and ongoing intellectual debate within SECGCs strongly suggests that decision making in SECGCs is both principled and informed. When asked about the extent in which SECGC ideologies were shared by all members of the collective, the overall result was more positive than that of values. Numerous SECGCs expressed that their membership was in strong agreement about the underlying philosophies of their decision making approaches.

6.3 *Operational nature of SECGC decision making processes*

Despite the variety in responses regarding underlying decision making values and philosophies, all SECGCs that were interviewed subscribe to the same model of decision making. This model is a hybrid of active nonviolence and libertarian methodologies, and is a clear product of Garrotxa's socio-political and cultural context. The anti-fascist legacy of activism in this region has lent a strong libertarian ideal to decision making processes, whereas the anti-globalization movement has popularized active nonviolence in these processes. Interestingly, although this libertarian nonviolence model was applied by all SECGC research participants, only five mentioned nonviolence as an underlying philosophy, whereas all identified with libertarianism. The following subsections will outline the similarities and differences in the application of this hybrid model of active nonviolence and libertarian assembly. Specifically, the characteristics, facilitation styles, and treatment of consensus as practiced by Garrotxan SECGCs will be presented and discussed.

6.3.1 The general characteristics

The defining characteristic of active nonviolence and libertarian assembly decision making is that it is consensus-based, however, because consensus is so central to SECGC decision making, it serves as a platform, upon which the other characteristics are understood. The methods of reaching consensus will be discussed in section 6.3.3. It is important to mention that the following list has some cross-over with the discussion on values, simply because the concepts of *autogestió*, solidarity and equity are relevant to both the ethics and the practice of SECGC decision making processes. The content of the following list is informed mostly by the participant feedback collected after initial conclusions were presented to research participants.

1. *Autogestionat*

All research participants shared that their SECGCs aimed to be self-sufficient in the managing of all of their decision making needs. Aspects of this self-sufficient self-management include having an internal facilitator, or team of facilitators, and having a membership willing to “naturally” assume all other tasks related decision making, like time keeping and note taking. *Autogestió* was also mentioned in reference to resources needed for decision making, such as an accessible meeting place and facilitation materials.

2. *Solidari*

Relationships between members and between the SECGC and its community were qualified as *solidari*, or having a nature of solidarity. The principle of solidarity thus informs how people consider each other in decision making processes, in terms of how they consider their own needs

and well-being as well as how they consider the needs and well-being of the general community. Given that solidarity refers to a group sentiment, the importance of a personal understanding of one's own needs and well-being was not captured by this discussion, and only mentioned in passing when empathy as a value was discussed.

3. Equitable

The characteristic of equitable decision making was discussed with regards to the dimensions of power and communication counterpower. As mentioned in the literature review, the lead contributors to the understanding of these concepts are Gaventa (2006) and Castells (2012). Research participants agreed that their decision making intentions were to ensure an equitable distribution of power during the consensus process, and to empower marginalized and disenfranchised members of the SECGC and the community during dialogue.

4. Participatory

As a way to encourage equitable power in dialogue, dialogue must be participatory. This characteristic of SECGC decision making was also interpreted by research participants as including participation in pre- and post-dialogue phases, such as setting the agenda and determining the final consensus.

5. Horizontal

Lastly, power relationships and decision making structures were characterized as horizontal in order to mitigate and address potential abuses of power, be they direct or indirect, visible or subtle. Participants shared that horizontal decision making was akin to decentralized decision

making, in which no one individual or committee is given authority to make the final decision.

6.3.2 The purpose, dimensions and models of facilitation

Unlike facilitators in other organizational contexts, such as corporate or institutional ones, a Garrotxan SECGC facilitator's main purpose is to empower the collective to make its own conscious, principled and informed decisions. In order to do so, a SECGC facilitator employs a variety of dialogical engagement and critical reflection strategies, many of which are similar to critical pedagogy educators.

Heron's six dimensions of facilitation (1999) provide a useful framework for discussing the results of inquiries on SECGC facilitation. The following discussion will also make reference to the modes and models of facilitation. Of the three modes identified by Heron, the most relevant one is the autonomous mode, however, the cooperative one is sometimes applied as well (see Table 1). The two recorded models of facilitation were nonviolence and process work, although the former was significantly more in use because the latter is new to Garrotxan SECGCs and is also more therapeutic in nature. There were no facilitators who solely practiced the process work model with their SECGCs, and only two who applied process work skills when addressing conflict within the SECGCs. Two other SECGCs had at one point hired external process work facilitators to assist them in better understanding their respective organizational crises (see Story 6).

1. Planning

With libertarian nonviolence facilitation, the planning is autonomous in that the group decides

what will be discussed and within what timeframe, however the facilitator adopts a cooperative role when seeking feedback once the agenda is established. Most groups agreed that the planning stage was sometimes haphazard, but not because of the facilitation but because of the participation of group members in attention to such details. According to respondents, a process work facilitator adopts a more cooperative role in the planning stage, with the agenda being a collaborative effort. However, the timing is not an element that is directed in process work, and the group is given autonomy in this respect.

2. Meaning

Libertarian nonviolence facilitation delegates all interpretation, feedback, reflection and review to the group. SECGC respondents agree that this is one of the strengths of their decision making processes, as collective understanding is central to collective action. Similarly, process work facilitation will delegate most of the meaning making to the group, but will stipulate the caveat that conflict is not a negative occurrence, but rather a learning opportunity.

3. Confronting

In theory, the libertarian nonviolence method is to confront conflict directly, but with honesty and respect (see Figures 9 and 10). However, respondents agree that this is a general weakness in group decision making processes, because of a lack of skills and personal awareness of both the facilitator and the membership when dealing with conflict. Nonetheless, conflict resolution is a clear objective in libertarian nonviolence facilitation. On the contrary, conflict resolution is not the objective of process work facilitators. They work cooperatively with SECGC members in the identification and understanding of conflict, with the intention to support the group to

learn how to work with conflict when it inevitably arises. Facilitators of these different approaches agree, nonetheless, that personal development comes from dealing with conflict, regardless if it is through libertarian nonviolence or process work.

Story 6: The Tension Between Understanding and Resolving

“Lisa” had run out of ideas. The interpersonal conflict dividing her group was deeply personal. Half of the SECGC members fiercely wanted her to resign, while the other half fiercely wanted her to stay. So, “Lisa” called a close friend to come facilitate a “conflict exploration” session, a process work method that was gaining popularity amongst social movement collectives in Catalonia.

Her friend arrived with a co-facilitator, and they started the session with “unedited venting”, in which people were invited to express their emotions without worrying about being polite or diplomatic. The venting quickly gained momentum, with one individual dominating the discussion. It became apparent that this person had considerable charismatic authority and influence over others in the group. The two facilitators made this person's role, and the submissive roles of others more visible, and then invited both sides to empathize with the other.

The facilitators had made it clear from the beginning that their purpose was not to resolve the conflict, but to help everyone better understand it. And by understanding conflict, they believed that a group would be able to apply this knowledge towards personal and collective learning and growth. In this case, after a brief guided reflection with the facilitators, the SECGC decided that what was best for everyone's well-being was to part ways, and perhaps in the future create a new SECGC.

4. Feeling

In libertarian nonviolent facilitation, feelings are not directly elicited, although they are often given space to be expressed. Group response to feelings are not facilitated, as the SECGC has

autonomy over this process. SECGC respondents shared that there is a generally high tolerance for a wide range of feelings, from anger to sadness, but that sometimes these emotional processes are not accompanied to their conclusion. Respondents agreed that process work facilitation also did not accompany emotional processes to the end of their cycle. “Karen” appreciated the process work accompaniment, and believed that the subsequent decision to close the SECGC after the process work session was because of a lack of personal awareness and ability of SECGC members to negotiate their emotions and the implications of these emotions.

5. Structuring

The facilitation and engagement methods are cooperatively decided between the facilitator and the membership in libertarian nonviolent facilitation. SECGCs share that these methods are largely dialogue-based, although some SECGCs apply popular education and social theatre techniques, including storytelling, in order to engage and empower SECGC members in decision making processes. Process work facilitators also cooperatively decide with a SECGC as to which popular education and social theatre methods they will employ. However, the purpose of these methods is to both express emotions as well as promote dialogue.

Story 7: The Body Poll

“Terry” loves games. Any chance he gets to play when he is facilitating, the happier he is. Some of his favourite games are the ones he learned while working with social justice collectives in Latin America, like the Body Poll. First, a line is drawn on the ground, and then a statement or proposal is made. Those who are in favour move to the left side of the line, those who are not, on the right side. If there are some who are slightly in favour, but not entirely, they move closer to the line drawn on the ground, and visa versa.

“Terry” believes that using games like this one is a good way to get everybody participating in the decision making process, because full participation requires more than just engaging the mind, and should engage the body and the senses as well. With the Body Poll, “Terry” makes sure that people explain why they choose to stand where they do and how they feel about where they stand. More often than not, rich debates emerge from the game, during which people might shift and counter-propose until a solution is reached or collective understanding is attained.

6. Valuing

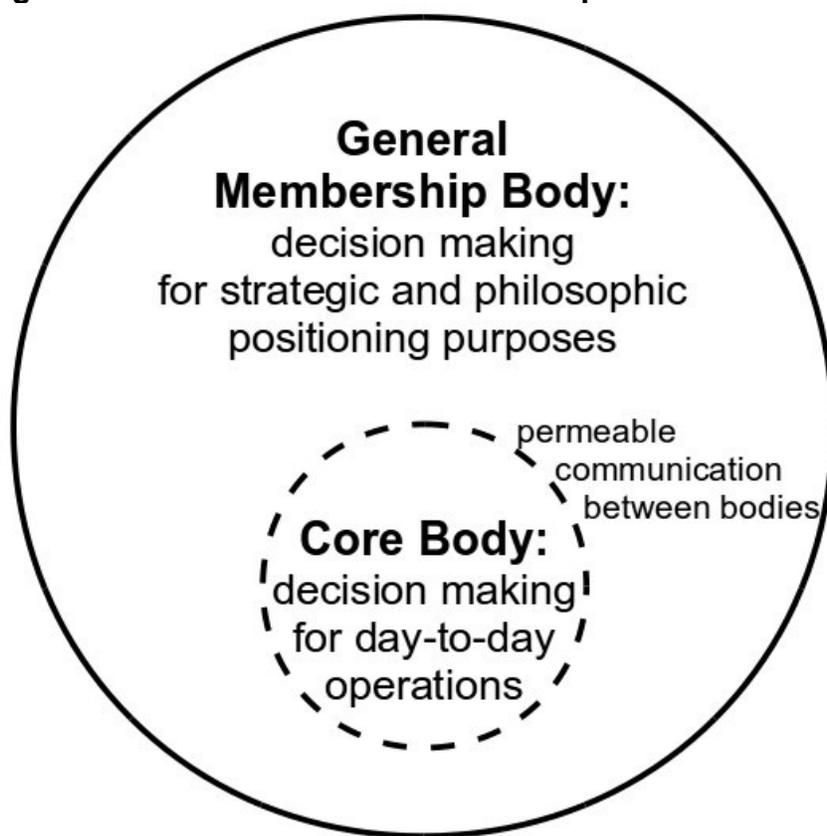
Both libertarian nonviolence facilitators and process work facilitators give complete autonomy to their SECGCs in the aspect of recognition and celebration of the personal and collective journeys of meaning making and community action. Several respondents mentioned the importance of socializing and celebration in their SECGCs, and one group had even established the ritual of going to a bar after each meeting in order to connect more personally and emotionally with each other. Another respondent explained that although her group did not socialize outside of meeting spaces, she believed that this was important for a SECGC to do so. She shared that, “We always feel that there is so much work to be done and never enough time to do it, but I think it is important to also take the time to celebrate what we do.”

6.3.3 The search for consensus

The consensus model developed by Briggs (see Figure 11) has had enormous popularity amongst SECGCs in Garrotxa, with many interviewees owning a hard copy of Briggs' “*Introducción al Proceso de Consenso*” (2000). Nonetheless, there are two significant modifications that some

SECGCs apply to this consensus process. The first is the use of a *nucli dur*, or a “hard core” group within a SECGC that makes the administrative and daily decisions, with the rest of the membership only participating in decision making that involves strategic or philosophic matters (see Figure 19). The second is the use of voting and polling, after agreeing to do so by consensus.

Figure 29: SECGC Core and Membership Decision Making



A *nucli dur* approach was applied by six SECGCs who had large memberships of semi-active members and a smaller group of daily active members. The consensus process in these examples had three common facets. Once or twice a year, the whole membership held meetings to define

or review the annual work plan of the collective and in some cases to organize annual or biannual community actions. Meanwhile, the *nucli dur* was entrusted with decision making related to daily operations, such as what to teach in a popular education curriculum, or how to organize the distribution of donated goods for survivors of home evictions. Lastly, the communication between the core and general membership is ideally permeable, with the core open for feedback from the general membership. Several participants expressed that this last facet of “*nucli dur*” consensus-based decision making was not as transparent as it should have been. However, one respondent shared that they have an open meeting once a month in order to ensure fluid communication between the two decision making bodies.

The second modification to the Briggs consensus process was practiced by two organizations. Voting and polling were agreed by the general membership body, by consensus, in order to make decision-making amongst large groups of people a more fluid process. Polling was practiced by SECGCs that wished to gather minority voices as well as the position of the general majority. According to one respondent, the information gathered during these in-person polls contributed to more informed and conscious decision making, as specific attention was placed on minority voices. This inclusion of minority perspectives is what Mollison calls “tyranny of the minority” (Mollison, 2002, p530), but “Charles” explains that this strategy is useful for testing to see if the direction of an organization or a decision making process is “valid and just”. With regards to the use of consensus-decided voting, in the case of one SECGC, strict criteria were established to limit its use. In this example, voting is practiced under two circumstances, when there is an immutable time restriction, or when the group has reached an impasse, after considering and

debating numerous counter-proposals, and only when this decision is action-based and does not concern re-evaluating the principles of the SECGC. One respondent admitted that voting caused problems within the SECGC when dissenting voices were dismissed concerning the SECGC's participation in a politically-significant European-wide forum, and several members left the collective as a result. Another respondent shared a differed perspective, explaining that “some people think voting is aggressive, but what is truly aggressive is not ceding.” In this respondent's example, certain members of the SECGC gave neither counter-proposals nor significant reasoning for blocking a group decision, thereby “forcing” a vote.

6.4 *Narrative and fractal natures of internal DM processes*

6.4.1 *Stories*

The use of storytelling is common in SECGC decision making spaces because of the cultural tradition of storytelling and because of the use of popular education facilitation methods in these spaces. The stories shared during interviews, participant observation sessions and the group debrief fell into two categories, those that were meant to inspire, and those that were meant to promote reflection. Elements of learning and change were apparent in both of these types, and will be discussed in more detail further on. According to Snowden (2010) storytelling in decision making spaces helps participants learn, develop and change because they are able to connect the stories with previous experience and build their knowledge upon these patterns instead of having to remember discrete pieces of information:

“Our considerable capacity to utilise and blend patterns is the basis of our intelligence, and evolutionary adaptability is more associated with pattern utilisation than information processing. Our ability to link and blend patterns in unusual ways, known as conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002), gives us the ability to adapt rapidly to changing contexts and to innovate critically as well as to use that most powerful tool of explanation, knowledge transfer and teaching, **metaphor**.” (Snowden, 2010, pp1-2)
(original emphasis maintained)

The stories of inspiration were most often about current examples of social change, although in a few a cases referred to experiences from the Spanish Republic, and were useful for engaging and mobilizing SECGCs. Some of these stories recounted initiatives that succeeded in mobilizing groups of people to act, whether in the short term or in the long term (see Story 2). Other stories spoke of the triumph of an oppressed majority over an oppressive minority, such as the reincarnation of Robin Hood on Catalan soil (see Story 1). A commonality observed was the emotional impact that these stories generated in decision making sessions and with the researcher herself. Few were left unmoved or unchanged. During the group dialogue that followed the telling of stories of inspiration, participants often shared their feelings of hope, which were often directly reflective of the feelings recounted in the story. During individual interview sessions, research participants explained that these stories were thought-provoking at a personal level, and that new knowledge came to them afterwards, after the story had settled in their recent memory. One participant explained that these stories were important for learning about what made people act, but most participants agreed that the most important impact of these stories was the motivation they felt to continue doing their work for social and ecological

change. Like most learning that accompanies storytelling, it is the dual engagement of the heart and the mind that helps listeners (and tellers) make the connections with other experiences past and future, big and small. Although the SECGC participants' reflections were largely personal, the researcher also observed that the synergistic sum of these personal experiences was palpable in the collective emotional climate.

The stories that were to promote reflection were of a different emotional nature, but were still compelling. Many of the stories discussed significant challenges or rifts experienced by SECGCs and that were more often than not left unresolved or half resolved. This sense of a pending or missing step in a decision making process generated much active reflection amongst SECGC members. During the vibrant debates and conversations that followed, participants expressed their opinions about what went wrong, and postulated about what could have been done to avoid the crisis or split of another SECGC. This process is indicative of collective learning that is useful for decision making about similar situations that may occur in the future. At times, the use of storytelling turned into a conversation between stories, which the researcher has termed storysharing. For example, after listening to a story about a SECGC which missed an opportunity to organize a community action, a SECGC member shared another story with the group, about other elements that are required for an opportunity to come to fruition (see Story 8).

Story 8: The Math of Serendipity

$$S = (P1 * P2) + O_{(s+f)}$$

According to a guest lecturer on nonviolence theory at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Serendipity (S) is the sum of:

1. the product of Projection (P1) and Process (P2); and
2. an Opportunity (O), conditioned by the attitudes of sensitivity (s) and flexibility (f).

Projection refers to a dreaming stage that results in a concrete vision, while Process refers to the conscious and principled path taken towards this vision. When an Opportunity arrives, the serendipitor is able to take advantage of it because of their sensitivity and flexibility in the moment when the Opportunity arrives.

According to Davies and Dart (2004), the use of stories in organizational learning processes helps organizations understand which activities work, and why, and which activities do not work, and why. This is through the collection of stories of “most significant change” from different parts of an organization, which are then grouped and analyzed so that an organization can improve its practices and take advantages of previously unseen opportunities. This story-based method of evaluating learning and change in an organization was not applied during this research, however, the researcher observed similar patterns between stories and organizational learning to those identified by Davies and Dart. During the telling and sharing of both types of stories, but most visibly with the latter, SECGC participants demonstrated their capacity for reflective dialogue about their core values and their collective vision, with the intention to better define the shared nature of these two essential elements of sound SECGC decision making processes.

6.4.2 Fractals

Some of the processes of personal and collective experiences of positive change explored during interviews and observed during group meetings had self-similar relationships with change processes apparent at the regional and national level. Likewise, experiences of internal SECGC conflict were similar to stories of personal conflict, and conflict at larger scales as well. This self-similarity reminded the researcher of fractals in natural systems²²(Mandelbrot, 1983), whose characteristics are that:

1. all parts of the system share a strong self-similarity;
2. self-similar patterns are visible at infinite scales of the system;
3. self-similar patterns are highly complex;
4. fractals can have varying degrees of stability, from immutable to annihilative.

Given the self-similarity of fractals, by analyzing one part of a system, one can garner a greater understanding of the whole system's organizational patterns (Bivens, 2011). Also, given that stories and narratives help people interpret complexity through pattern recognition (Snowden, 2010), the researcher collected SECGC stories that shared similar elements in order to more clearly identify self-similar patterns. Through the analysis of interview transcripts, it became apparent that SECGCs manifested fractal properties in their experiences of organizational/collective conflict, learning and change.

There were several types of internal conflict in SECGC decision making spaces, although three

²² Examples of simple fractals in nature include snowflakes, snail shells, spider webs, and broccoli heads.

were most frequent. The most common was marginalization, followed by visible violence, and lastly corruption. Numerous stories involved the marginalization of members of a collective by other members of the same SECGC (see Story 9). Several elements were remarkably similar between these stories. One somewhat obvious common denominator was that the people who did the marginalization also felt marginalized by society. A research participant shared that her feeling of marginalization was because she didn't "have a penny", while another shared that he felt marginalized because of the way that he thought, being a staunch animal rights activist. A surprising similarity amongst the stories shared and observed was that many of those who were excluded by their own SECGCs had substance abuse problems. Lastly, a common complaint by the other members of the SECGC were that the marginalized members had dominated the meetings by speaking too much and too long. Different strategies were used to marginalize, such as ignoring the people in question, non-constructively criticizing what they had to say during meetings, or permanently ousting the people from the collective. There were different degrees of self-criticism in the three cases of member expulsion. In one case, there was no collective reflection, even though not everyone was in full agreement about the person leaving. In another case, the facilitator shared that what she saw in the meeting was "like a microcosm of society", where those most marginalized were marginalizing others in turn. She said that while she understood that having an inebriated SECGC member participate in decision making not only affected the decision making process but also the collective's general well-being, she felt that expelling another member went against her personal value system. She also believed an alternative to expulsion could have been found, had the collective reflected more. These examples of marginalization within SECGCs demonstrate a structural form of violence,

however, visible violence was also observed and recorded.

Story 9: Microcosm of Marginalization

They had gathered in the square, united by many reasons. Most were living with financial instability. Many had lost their jobs, some had even lost their homes. Others were there because they felt excluded from the rest of society, marginalized for thinking differently, acting differently, dressing differently. In fact, it was a square full of marginalized people, marginalized for many reasons.

Every day this eclectic group of people met and shared their stories of hardship and exclusion. And every day they debated about how they could best organize themselves to meet their basic needs. Even the understanding of basic needs was hotly debated.

One of the people who came to the square every day was “Peter”. He was strongly opinionated, overly verbose, and always drunk. People began shouting him down when he went on too much, and some tried to ignore him completely. But he still kept coming. Eventually, the group ran out of options for dealing with such disorderly conduct, and someone proposed that inebriated persons should not be allowed to attend meetings. It was a polite way of expelling “Peter”, a known alcoholic. The proposal was met with full approval – save for “Peter”. It was the first proposal that was *not* hotly debated.

At the time, no one thought to question whether what they were doing was really contributing to social change, or rather, upholding the same practices of marginalization that so many of them felt, every day.

Culturally, Catalan activists communicate more loudly and more directly than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, with less attention to politeness. Some shouting and interrupting in a meeting is culturally acceptable, as is the sharing of unminced opinions. Cultural differences aside, there were several cases of visible violence that were shared with the researcher or directly observed by her. These included the exchange of insults, extended shouting matches, and the slamming of

palms or fists on tables. These cases of visible violence affected everyone in the collective, not just those who were directly involved, and sometimes had lasting consequences, such as the resignation of a SECGC member, or the inability of a collective to continue a certain area of work. There was one strong commonality amongst these cases; in how these conflicts began. They often started when one party tried to address a tension or conflict with another party and was faced with silence or negation, instead of openness to dialogue. The second stage of these conflicts often went one of two ways. The first party would continue to press for a response, often more aggressively than the first time, and the other party would either respond with more silence or negation, or with aggression. This inability to collectively address tensions and conflicts in a non-violent way was shared by one member as reflective of the personal challenges of SECGC members. These examples are also reflective of the challenges that societies face in resolving inequity and oppression. When faced with silence, or the direct negation of injustice, a marginalized and disempowered community can feel it has no other recourse but to react with violence.

Two cases of internal SECGC corruption were recorded during this research study. Although overall they were quite distinct from each other, one commonality was that both were cases in which individuals sought small financial gains. In one case, the financial gain was seen by another member of the collective as “non-transparent and purely for personal profit”, whereas members of the other SECGC perceived the individual's transgression as “explicable but not justifiable”, given their personal circumstances. No reflections were made within either SECGC concerning the similarities between these minor cases of corruption and corruption at larger

scales. Nonetheless, corruption is a challenge that faces communities and nations, and can contribute towards financial instability, joblessness and other social and structural problems, depending on the scale at which it occurs.

In systems terms, marginalization, violence and corruption in society are considered vicious cycles (Foster-Fishman, Nowell & Yang, 2007), characterized by complexity, instability and inadaptability. Vicious cycles at macro levels are problems so complex that they require a change in both the foundational values and the process of learning, also known as triple-loop learning (Jenson, 2005), in order to resolve them. Distilling this systems understanding to systems-based fractal theory, marginalization, violence and corruption in SECGCs are also vicious cycles, as unstable as they are complex. In fact, three of the SECGCs who experienced vicious cycles in their decision making dynamics ended up experiencing significant ruptures and had to discontinue their activist work for a time. In two of these cases, the SECGCs hired external facilitators to help them shift out of their habitually conflictive interactions, but in both cases the SECGC members were too mired in the conflict and were unable to change their positions or reactions. This demonstrates that complex problems make SECGCs less stable and less adaptable to what their environs demand.

There were also examples of more stable and/or self-balancing – although equally complex – fractal patterns in SECGC decision making processes. Hope was frequently mentioned during this research study, in personal, collective and regional anecdotes. The most common experience that participants made reference to was the 15M movement (see Story 10). Nearly every interview participant expressed feelings of hope when describing their participation in the

beginnings of the 15M movement, and many explained that this sentiment was also collectively experienced during the protests. Another generator of hope at the personal and collective levels was participating in community events. Several SECGCs interviewed held annual community events, which often involved serving community meals and showcasing local musical talent, in addition to bringing together people interested in social and ecological justice. When describing these events, interviewees expressed renewed optimism and hope about effecting social change. As a participant observer in three of these events, the researcher also shared the feeling that change is not only possible, but that it is being enacted during and through these collective celebratory spaces.

Story 10: Microcosm of Hope

Hundreds of thousands were still gathered in Barcelona's Catalonia Square on the 18th of May, day three of the 15M movement. A local union had donated a stadium-size projector and screen, and at mid-day they bridged a live connection between protesters in Barcelona and their fellow protesters in Syntagma Square, Athens.

A playful conversation en masse began across the unseen sea. One square would begin a cheer, and the other would respond, gathering rhythm and euphoria as the exchange progressed. Language and culture were made irrelevant. Unity and solidarity were what mattered. Shared dreams and beliefs about justice and change. And outrage. And hope. Frontier-free feelings that were deeply personal, wholly collective, and virtually transnational.

Positive expressions of self-similarity were also present in the change processes of collective members, their SECGCs and in Garrotxa. “Glenda” spoke of the steep learning curve that she embarked upon when joining a SECGC two years previous, “I didn't know anything about this before, and I still don't know hardly anything, but I am learning every day.” Related to her

learning process, “Glenda” continued in saying that this learning has changed how she relates to other people during meetings, and how she relates to consumerism. Her SECGC is also going through similar learning and change processes, as they are pioneering an alternative system of trade and barter and this requires considerable reflection and creativity, both of which imply learning and change. Another example of fractal elements in organizational change include SECGC facilitators' personal reflections about facilitation, which were also reflected in the changing behaviour of their respective SECGCs during meetings. One participant shared that in the beginning she was more directive and propositive in her facilitation approach, however, after seeing that the SECGC demanded greater autonomy in the decision making process, she learned to make less interventions and ask more questions while facilitating. This switch from hierarchical and cooperative modes to the autonomous mode of facilitation (Heron, 1999) was described by other interviewees, and often with people who were new to the facilitation of libertarian-based SECGCs, collectives which put great value on autonomy and *autogestió*. At the collective level, SECGCs who reclaimed greater autonomy in their decision making processes also demonstrated higher levels of learning related to these processes as well as an improvement in their ability to self-organize. During one interview, a collective member mentioned that having facilitators structure the meetings in the inception phase of his SECGC was beneficial for all of the members as they learned the basic foundations of consensus-based decision making. However, once members began taking ownership over the decision making process, the facilitator did not need to prepare as much or interject as much during the meetings because the members coordinated many tasks concerning preparation and facilitation amongst themselves. This is an example of an empowered collective that is thus capable of a high degree

of *autogestió*.

The above discussions of hope, learning and change are representative of a stable and/or self-balancing form of fractal organization in which critical processes of learning, action and reflection occur. These processes are similar to Jenson's explanation of double- and triple-loop learning (Jenson, 2005). Both of these types of learning require a change in the foundational values and process of learning, however triple-loop learning emerges from an environment in which learning is impossible, thus requiring a radical change in the learning context and thereby changing the values and process of learning. The current socio-political and socio-economic context in Catalonia has compelled certain elements of SECGCs, SECGC sectors and the larger community of SECGCs in Garrotxa to engage in triple-loop learning, thus demonstrating notable adaptability, resiliency and innovation towards social and ecological change efforts. In an example of a facilitated triple-loop learning process in a SECGC, a research participant shared that “when the external facilitator came, she brought a fresh perspective and she helped us consider an alternative [solution] that we had initially discarded, thinking it wouldn't work.” Internal facilitators can also support triple-loop learning, provided that they acknowledge their personal roles in the collective dynamic and maintain critical awareness and transparency about how their personal positions could impact the decision making and/or conflict resolution processes (Thomas, 2008). The adaptability and resiliency that SECGC members, SECGCs, SECGC sectors and the community of SECGCs are similar to the qualities of open, and thus self-balancing (autopoietic), systems, which also respond well to, and in some cases thrive in, changing and complex contexts (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, & Yang, 2007; Maturana, 2007).

7 Recommendations and Implications

The previous section presented and discussed findings concerning the formal networks and decision making processes of SECGCs in Garrotxa. From these findings, two groups of recommendations can be made, those concerning the operational and philosophical underpinnings of decision making processes within SECGCs, and those concerning the analysis of stable fractal organization patterns within SECGCs. The implications of this research study include future areas of study as well as the evaluation, testing and application of a fractal organization model that can foment self-balancing fractal SECGCs that are resilient, adaptable, and innovative during periods of complex change.

7.1 Decision Making

SECGC decision making processes in their ideal form are principled, critically reflective, *autogestionat*, and relational. Consistent and shared values and beliefs lay a principled foundation to these processes, while facilitation can support a critical, *autogestionat*, and empowered decision making body. Formal and informal relationships amongst SECGC sectors, SECGCs and SECGC members contribute towards wholly consensus-based and nonviolent decision making and conflict resolution processes.

7.1.1 Values and Philosophies

Based on the findings and discussion of the shared and divergent values and philosophies within SECGCs in Garrotxa, the main recommendation for a principally founded SECGC is that the

membership fully agree upon the collective values and philosophy(ies). It is important to clarify that decision making values and philosophies are not only believed by individual SECGC members, but that they are put in practice (as much as possible) during decision making and implementation. A high degree of sharedness and ownership of a SECGC's decision making values and philosophy lends legitimacy to its decision making processes and the resultant consensuses. Sharedness and ownership also give a basis for dialogue when conflict arises that puts into tension or into question the decision making values and philosophies.

Secondly, value and philosophy statements need to be simple to understand and succinct. When engaging in decision making, a SECGC membership body needs to have a solid understanding of the values and philosophies that inform their decision making processes. Having statements that are clear and succinct make it easier to engage in dialogue and negotiation on issues concerning them. This dialogue and negotiation contributes to a better understanding of a SECGC's decision making values and philosophies, and in ideal circumstances, a high degree of sharedness and ownership.

7.1.2 Facilitation

The purpose of both internal and external facilitation of SECGC decision making processes is to empower a SECGC membership towards critically reflective and *autogestionat* decision making. Facilitation still has a role in autonomous decision making bodies (Heron, 1999), in that their presence can have a facilitative effect upon collective decision making (Thomas, 2008). However, as seen in the findings of this research study, autonomy and *autogestió* are a result of learning, and thus, facilitation in the cooperative mode is still not only helpful but necessary in

order to promote such learning. Skills such as critical thinking and *autogestió*, can emerge from the application of popular education methodologies, including games and storytelling. Games engage participants in experiential learning by activating multiple senses (Cajete, 1999). Games are also effective in collective learning processes because they are capable of involving most or all SECGC members in the discussion and reflection processes (Cascón, 2007). The emotional experience of play can also contribute to lasting and incarnate learning (Marks-Tarlow, 2010). Storytelling and storysharing contribute to learning by recognizing patterns between the stories and people's past, and future, experiences. The purposeful use of storytelling can help a SECGC adapt and innovate in contexts of change (Snowden, 2010), given the ability of stories to capture and convey complexity in a readily understandable way.

7.1.3 Treatment of Conflict

The nonviolent communication approach and the process work approach both have strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of conflict. The nonviolent communication approach is driven by the purpose to resolve the conflict, while the process work approach is driven by the purpose to understand the conflict. In the former, the process is sometimes speeded up or is not as valued as it should be, in the effort to strike a consensus. This sometimes results in dissatisfaction with the process, and/or a false consensus, as well as a poorer understanding of the roots, mechanisms and implications of the conflict in question. Process work can sometimes be so focused on understanding a conflict at an emotional and intellectual level that the conflict is never fully addressed, nor resolved. In the worst case scenario, this can lead to the rupture or extinction of a collective initiative.

The balance of these two approaches can contribute to both the understanding and the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. Given that decision making spaces are the settings of nonviolent communication and process work approaches, SECGC decision making processes can build the practices and philosophies of both approaches into their values, facilitation and *autogestió*.

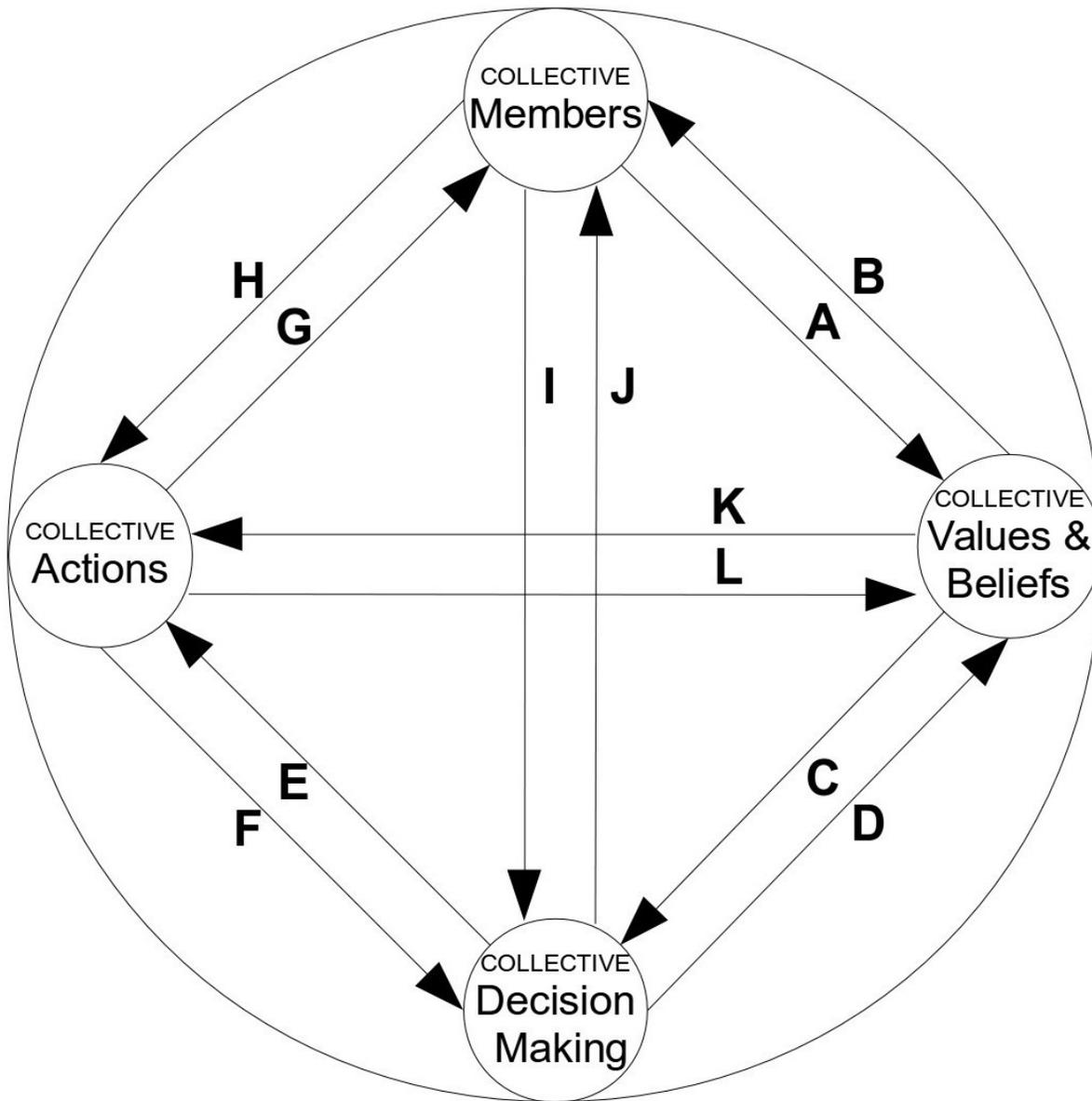
7.2 The Fractal Organization Model for SECGCs: A Proposal

As is apparent from the findings and discussion chapter, a stable and/or self-balancing fractal pattern in a SECGC can be an indication of and can contribute towards its organizational integrity as well as its effectiveness as an agent of change. This section proposes that there are four elements of a SECGC that directly relate to its ability to establish and maintain stable fractal patterns internally and with other SECGCs. The relationships between these elements, or nodes, have distinct characteristics, depending upon their directionality and the strength of the nodes. Given the decision making structure and overall purpose of SECGCs in general, four capacities could be potentialized by applying a fractal organization model to SECGCs. Lastly, specific aspects of the context in which a fractal SECGC exists can determine where its edge of chaos lies, and how it works to effect lasting social and ecological change.

In applying this fractal organization model to SECGCs, the size of the nodes can be modified in order to visually represent the respective and comparative strength, or potential strength, of the nodes in contributing to greater stable fractality within the SECGC. The width of the lines representing the relationships between the nodes can also be modified in order to represent the strengths or weaknesses in these relationships. The existing context of SECGCs is not captured by this model, but could be researched and included in narrative format. Likewise, the potential

capacities of SECGCs are not directly present in the model. Nonetheless, their potential existence and manifestations can be inferred from the model, upon final analysis, and included in narrative format.

Figure 30: A Fractal Organization Model for an Individual SECGC



7.2.1 The Nodes

The nodes of a fractal SECGC are its members, its values and beliefs, its decision making processes and its actions. These are described below in the context of an individual SECGC, however, they could also be interpreted at the individual member level or at the SECGC sectoral level, or beyond. In terms of assessing the fractality of a SECGC, it is necessary to determine the potential strength of the nodes of a the fractal organization model.

1. Collective Members

As is apparent from the findings chapter, SECGC members represent a cross-section of society, and this diversity must be taken into account in terms of its strengths as well as its weaknesses. When developing an understanding of a particular SECGC membership, and thereby determining its potential strength, it is helpful to look at both quantifiable and qualitative measures. The number of members in a SECGC is relevant to the strength of this node, but only when taking into consideration whether the SECGC has adopted the *nucli dur* model of decision making, or whether all members are equally active. Also, cultural affinity and past activist experience can affect the potential strength of this node. The level of commitment and participation to decision making and decision implementation, and the level of sharedness and ownership of the SECGC values and philosophies are important measures, but are best assessed in terms of strength of interconnectivity, or internodal relationships (see section 7.2.2).

2. Collective Values & Beliefs

The potential strength of the collective values and beliefs could be assessed by how consistent the values are between each other, as well as how clear and succinct the values and philosophy statements are of the SECGC. The extent to which values and beliefs are shared, and put in practice, are best measured in terms of internodal relationships.

3. Collective Decision Making

Three aspects of decision making impact the potential strength of this node. The facilitation approach, whether it be largely autonomous, or a balance between autonomous and cooperative, or whether it apply the practice of hierarchical facilitation, affects the strength of this node. The latter weakens the strength of this node is it is in conflict with the general values and beliefs of SECGCs, whereas autonomous and cooperative facilitation may strengthen this node, if they are effectively practiced. The commitment to consensus can be a measure of the potential strength, while the limited use of voting can be considered as either a weakness or a strength, depending on the context. Lastly, the SECGC's treatment of conflict is important to consider when evaluating the strength of this node. Satisfaction with the process as well as with the final resolution can indicate a high level of integrity in decision making, and dissatisfaction with one or the other, or both, would weaken the potential strength of this node. Membership participation in decision-making, the application of a SECGCs values and beliefs in the decision making process as well as the degree of concurrence between the consensus and the resultant collective action are best measured in terms of internodal relationships.

4. Collective Actions

The measure of strength of this node is both quantitative and qualitative. The number of activities that a SECGC realizes is of import, as is the quality of these activities in terms of their purpose and their impact. Internodal relationships are better measures of how much and in what way members carry out SECGC activities, as well as how reflective the actions are of SECGC values and beliefs, and the consensuses that led to the actions.

7.2.2 The Relationships

The strengths of the internodal relationships are arguably more important than the strengths of the nodes themselves, because they are more indicative of the diversity and complexity of fractal patterns within a SECGC. The following table details the relationships between the nodes and distinguished them in terms of their directionality. For example, the first row of the table represents the node “Members” and under the column “Values and Beliefs” the relationship described is how SECGC members relate to the SECGC values and beliefs. Figure 20 indicates the twelve different types of internodal relationships, and the letters in the figure correspond to the letters in Table 10 below.

Figure 31: Internodal Relationships in a Self-Balancing Fractal Organization

SECGC	Members	Values and Beliefs	Decision Making	Actions
Members		A: Members fully share group values and beliefs.	I: Members equitably participate in facilitation and consensus processes.	H: Members equitably participate in decision implementation.
Values and Beliefs	B: Values and beliefs contribute to critical self- and collective-awareness.		C: Values and beliefs inform a principled decision making processes.	K: Values and beliefs inform the implementation of decisions.

SECGC	Members	Values and Beliefs	Decision Making	Actions
Decision Making	J: Decision making is characterized by horizontal power relationships and participatory dialogue.	D: Decision making is reflective of values and beliefs.		E: Decision implementation is concurrent with the consensus.
Actions	G: Actions contribute to personal and collective learning and skill building.	L: Actions contribute to a reaffirmation or re-evaluation of values and beliefs.	F: The process of decision implementation is reflective of the process of decision making.	

There are two factors to take into consideration when evaluating internodal relationships. As indicated in the above table, a fractal SECGC is an autopoietic, or self-balancing, one. A non-fractal SECGC, conversely, may not behave like the antithesis of a fractal SECGC. Instead, it may simply have internodal relationships that are weak, or non-existent. Lastly, and most significantly, the quality of the relationships, not the quantity, is of import. According to Gilchrist (2000), numerous but diverse connections could lead to instability and disorder in a SECGC. In this sense, it is important to identify where the edge of chaos is for internodal relationships in a well-connected SECGC.

7.2.3 The Capacities

While the qualities of the nodes and internodal relationships are variable and context-based (see section 7.2.4), there are certain capacities of fractal organizations that we may be able to generalize. In an article on fractal organization theory, Janna Raye identifies four associated capacities; “fractal organisation theory recognises an emergent human operating system that mimics nature in its capacity for creativity, adaptation, vitality, and innovation” (Raye, 2014, p50). The findings of this research study concur that the capacities to adapt and to innovate are

indeed enhanced when a SECGC demonstrates stable fractal behaviour. However, the researcher considers that creativity is a capacity already captured within that of innovation, and that vitality is less relevant than resiliency in the socio-political contexts within which SECGCs realize their work (de Florio, *et al*, 2012). *Autogestió* is another capacity that is enhanced by fractal organization, and the researcher postulates that it is not context-specific to Garrotxa, but rather can be applied to SECGCs generally given the high degree of transformative change that the planet is experiencing. These four capacities are more concretely described below.

1. Resiliency

Resiliency is the capacity to not only survive, but to emerge unscathed from times of crisis and change. Closely associated to this capacity is the organizational ability to engage in triple-loop learning (Jenson, 2005), from which a SECGC may appear unchanged in terms of basic structure, but may experience significant changes in terms of their collective ontology and epistemology.

2. Adaptability

Adaptability is the capacity of a system to find a new balance, or way of being, in a new context. Closely associated to this capacity is the ability to realize autopoiesis (Maturana, 1999), the self-balancing characteristic of systems and organizations that is also closely associated to *autogestió*.

3. Innovation

Extending beyond creativity is the capacity to innovate. This involves the ability to find

new solutions to problems and challenges as well as the ability to establish new ways of thinking about problems, with the end result of changing processes, actions or the system as a whole (Nonaka, *et al*, 2014).

4. *Autogestió*

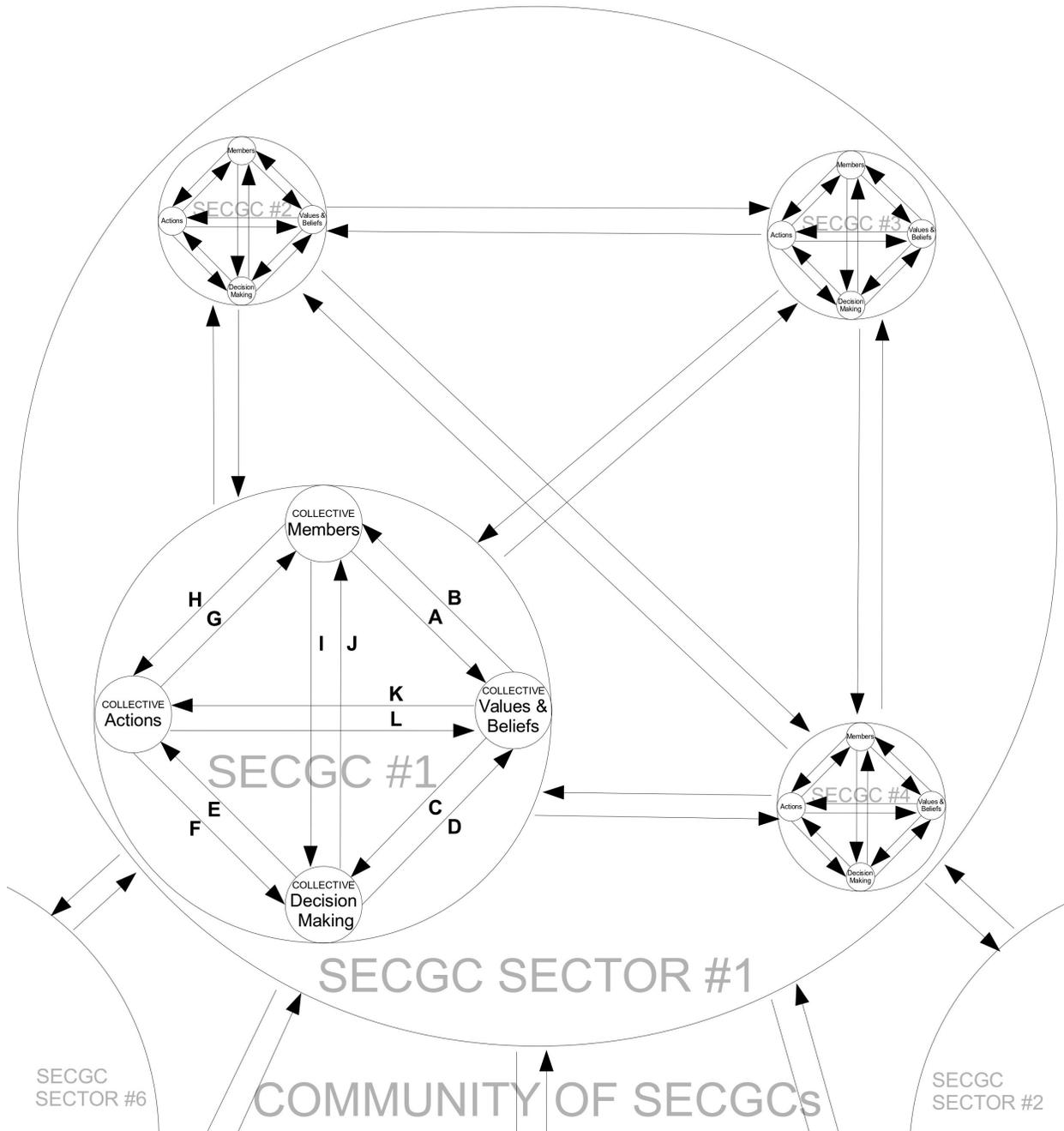
Autogestió is the capacity to self-organize and self-manage in order to achieve self-sufficiency. This capacity is not only about the way a SECGC works internally, but is an example of social and ecological change in action (Aguilera, *et al*, 2013).

These aforementioned capacities explain how fractal SECGCs emerge from contexts of crisis, complexity and change. They are strengthened by dynamic nodes and vibrant internodal relationships. These capacities are also exemplified in how a SECGC engages in and facilitates dialogue, learning, reflection and action, especially in their critical forms.

7.2.4 In Context

The contexts in which SECGCs engage in social and ecological change are very diverse, dependent upon culture, politics, geography, and many other factors. When applying a fractal organization model to a SECGC in order to assess its degree of fractality, it is important to take into consideration the diversity and influences of a SECGC's context upon its members, values and beliefs, decision making processes and actions (see Figure 21).

Figure 32: The Fractality of SECGCs in Sectoral and Community Contexts



In the example of SECGCs in Garrotxa, there are nearly 50 SECGCs operating in six different sectors of social and ecological change work, in a context characterized by economic crisis, political upheaval and social outrage and hope. By taking into consideration this context as well

as the strengths (existent and potential) of the nodes and internodal relationships of an individual SECGC, a more accurate assessment of the fractality of the SECGC can be achieved. This assessment can also contribute to a greater understanding of how the SECGC's respective sector is able to effect social and ecological change, and consequently how a community of SECGCs can do so.

7.3 *Future Areas of Study*

There are several future areas of study that could help test, counter, extend and/or strengthen the results and recommendations of this research study. A more comprehensive and informed network analysis of both formal and informal relationships between SECGCs in Garrotxa would better ground the research results presented in this thesis. A more studied methodological approach would also improve the efficiency and validity of such a network analysis. Exploring decision making in SECGCs in other social movement contexts, in other continents, cultures and languages, would also contribute to the further identification and understanding of the role of decision making as a space for social and ecological change. In terms of the use of narrative in SECGC decision making processes, further research could be conducted on the presence and implication of storytelling and storysharing, that would add to the existing body of literature on facilitation and storytelling. Finally, further research and a rigorous testing of the proposed fractal organization model of SECGCs would help assess its validity, and identify alternatives or confirm the applicability of the four nodes and twelve internodal relationships presented in the model. The incorporation of additional components, such as emerging capacities and contextual factors, could also be considered after further research and experimentation.

8 Final Thoughts

Decision making spaces are the lungs of SECGCs. They are the arenas in which collective values and beliefs are explored and negotiated, in which collective actions are debated and decided, and in which conflicts are explored, and sometimes resolved. Decision making spaces are where dreams of social and ecological change are first collectively declared. And where they are first enacted. Processes of dialogue and facilitation that are principled, critically reflective, *autogestionat*, and relational are what distinguish SECGCs from other organizations and are what make them able to contribute to community cohesion as well as overall social and ecological change.

Nonetheless, not all SECGCs are able to be effective agents of change. Those who demonstrate weak internal and external relationships are less capable of dialogue and facilitation processes that are responsive to SECGC needs and objectives. SECGCs that do not have a high degree of sharedness in and ownership of their collective values and beliefs are more likely to experience conflict related to their basic principles, such as a lack of transparency in process. Facilitation that is not empowerment-focused and that does not encourage critical thinking or autonomy could contribute towards a SECGC that is dependent upon external aid and support in order to engage in learning, realize collective actions and resolve conflict. Lastly, a lack of formal and informal relationships within and between SECGCs decrease the level of solidarity and collaboration within and between these organizations, which in turn can increase competitiveness, conflict and ineffective efforts to contribute to social and ecological change.

The use of a fractal organization model could help determine or enhance the ability of a SECGC to establish self-balancing fractal organization patterns and thus become more resilient, adaptive, innovative, and *autogestionat*. The foundations of a fractal analysis of SECGCs could be laid by first exploring and assessing the context-based composition of a SECGC membership, its value and belief system, its decision making processes and its actions. However, the degree of vibrancy and connectedness of the relationships between these four SECGC elements are the most telling of how fractal a SECGC is. Thus, by paying conscious and critical attention to the elements and relationships of a SECGC, fractal responses to change may be generated at the SECGC level, at the individual member level, at the community level, and perhaps even beyond. This fractal response to transformative contexts of change is one that is emergent. It is the slow revealing of change, metamorphosing conflict to solidarity, and oppression to empowerment.

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Appendix 1: Consent Form for this Research Study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research: The Slow Revealing of Change: Decision making processes in grassroots collectives as stories and fractals of adult learning and personal, social and ecological change.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Erika Zárte, from the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph. Erika is a student in the Capacity Development and Extension Program. The results of this research will contribute to her Masters of Science thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Dr. Allan Lauzon, the faculty supervisor of this thesis. He can be reached by email at allauzon@uoguelph.ca, or by phone at 519-824-4120 x53379. If you prefer not to communicate in English, please phone Erika at (34) 972-29-00-73 or email her at ezarate@uoguelph.ca. If she is unable to address your questions or concerns, she will contact Dr. Lauzon and will translate his response to you in your native language.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the social and ecological work of Catalan community groups and organizations. The way that this research hopes to meet this purpose is by:

1. Finding out how Catalan community groups and organizations decide to work together.
2. Finding out how Catalan community groups and organizations make decisions and resolve internal conflicts.
3. Finding out why they choose these methods to make decisions and resolve internal conflicts.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. Interview

You will be asked to participate in an interview. During this interview, Erika will ask questions that are directly related to the following topics:

- How groups and organizations decide to work together.
- How groups and organizations make decisions.
- How groups and organizations resolve conflicts.
- Why groups and organization choose specific methods to make decisions.
- Why groups and organization choose specific methods to resolve conflicts.

Location: at your place of work or another public location that is convenient to you
Duration: 2 hours
Number of interviews: one
Approximate date: June 2013

2. Group Meeting

You will be invited to participate in a group meeting. At this group meeting, Erika will share her ideas about the answers to the interviews topics (see the list above). You will be asked to comment on these ideas. For example, you will be asked if you agree or disagree with these ideas, and why.

Location: Onyar Civic Centre, Carrer del Camp de l'Oliver, 13
Girona, SPAIN
Duration: 3 hours
Number of times: once
Approximate date: sometime in early September 2013

3. Follow-Up

Erika will contact interviewees and group meeting participants by phone and by email to let them know when the research has been completed. Every research participant will receive an electronic copy of the research findings.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You will be asked about how your organization resolves conflict. This may bring up events that are emotional for you. Please let Erika know if you do not wish to answer certain questions. This is your right. Also, please let Erika know if you require extra time in order to answer certain questions. If you wish to remove some of the answers from the transcript, you have the right to do so. The transcript is the interview written out in full, and is what Erika will use when analyzing the research results.

There are no other foreseeable risks, discomforts or inconveniences that have been detected in this research process.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research hopes to help the general community understand how local community groups and organizations make decisions and how they resolve conflicts. The results of this research will be published as both a thesis and a practical guide, so that more people can read it. As a member of a community group/organization, the results of this research may also contribute to your understanding of decision making and conflict resolution within your group/organization.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

Erika may take notes on paper during the interview and group meeting. These paper notes will be scanned, after which the paper copy will be destroyed. There will be a digital audio recording of the interview and group meeting, as well as an electronic transcript of these recordings. The scanned notes, audio recordings and transcripts will all be encrypted and saved on Erika's computer and back-up drive.

For additional security, Erika's computer and back-up drive are Linux-based, and therefore free from viruses and hackers. Erika's computer is also protected with a password, as another measure of security.

The length of time between the interview and the final publication of the research will be approximately six months. After the publication of the final research findings, all audio recordings, transcripts and scanned notes of the interview and group meeting will be permanently deleted. If you would like a copy of your personal interview recording and/or transcript, please let Erika know during the interview itself, and she will provide you with a copy of the recording and/or transcript.

The results of this thesis will be published as a "Masters Thesis" at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study "The Inside Story: The internal organizational capacities of Catalonia's burgeoning grassroots collectives" as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

Name of Witness (please print)

Signature of Witness

Date

