

A new approach to the study of “Environmental Intentional Communities”:

Old and new phenomena in response to the economic
crisis

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What are ENICs?

INTENTIONAL
COMMUNITIES

&

ENVIRONMENTAL
MOVEMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Phase	Intentional Community	Time period	Place
1	Sectarian & Christian	Until second century	Roman Empire
2	Monastic communities	From first century onwards	Europe, gradually spreading to the rest of the world
3	Heretical communities	12th and 13th centuries	Europe
4	Protestant communities	16th–18th centuries	Europe, North America
5	Socialist communities	Early 19th century	Europe, North America
6	Anarchistic communities	Late 19th century	Europe, North America
7	(Hippy) communes	1960s and 1970s	Europe, North America and Oceania
8	Cohousing communities & eco-villages	From 1990s onwards	Europe, North America and Oceania

Source: Meijering 2006 based on Zablocki (1980)

Environmental movement

- Social movement born in 1960
- “Save the world” A reaction against pollution and destruction of ecosystems
- 1968 The Club of Rome 1972 *The limits of growth*
- 1992 The Rio Conference. Agenda to protect the planet
- It is a legitimate movement in all countries (Páez, 2010)
 - Climate change leaves the scientific field and passes to the social, cultural, and imaginary representations that allow everyday life
 - Climate speech does not seek to modify the economic dynamics which is the cause of increased CO₂. Like every political issue it has organizational structure, program and budget.

Traditional approach in the study of ENICs

- Most cases focus on Ecovillages. They present them as an alternative lifestyle
 - Ecovillages like Alternative Political Ecologies (Burke and Arjona 2013)
 - Prospect of living in harmony with nature and with each other (Gilman, 1991; Mulder et al., 2005)
 - Social change from the dominant culture (Ergas, 2010; Kirbi, 2003; Meijering et al., 2007)
 - The mitigation of the metabolic rift (Kasper, 2008 Ergas 2015)
- We also find studies on rural communities in general
 - Persistence in Self-Organized Forested Communities (Fleischman et al. 2010)
 - Cultural change (Conover, 1975)
 - Looking for ways to reintroduce community values into their lives (Kozeny, 1995)
 - The emergence of new commons (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2012)

Exploration of the field

- Ecovillages meeting 2013 Catalonia: registration fee 300 €. No other possibility

Ecovillage 1

19 years



Ecovillage 2

14 years



Exploration the field

Ecovillage 3

2 years



Ecovillage 4

5 months



I wonder if this approach is the most appropriate to understand which is the role played by the ENICs in the current social and political context

- Why is access to communities determined by the euro?
- How do they relate to the economic and social context in which they are inserted?
- How do they manage their social reproduction?
- Has the economic crisis some impact in this settlements?
- Why do most of them not survive over time? (Fleischman et al. 2010) And how do those that do survive vary from the first type?
- What about new generations who join these communities? Are they looking for new kind of jobs?

Analysis of social economic context:

– **Harvey (2009)**

- The interpretation of the world and our way of thinking is constrained by neoliberalism
 - Ways to get individual freedom
 - Strong contradictions between the theory of neoliberalism and the current pragmatic neoliberalization
 - The redefinition of class power
- General trends in social organization
 - Privileges of ownership and management of capitalist enterprises: The work does not lead the economic activity
 - Huge concentrations of corporate power in certain markets: pharmacy, energy, transportation
 - Neoliberalization has fertilized an oppositional culture, which is primarily based on contradictions

– Graeber

- **2012** We had a bandage to analyze community behavior
 - mythical communism or epic communism
 - We started thinking about communism as a moral principle rather than as a matter of property
 - Communism goes beyond barter or reciprocity. It proposes to differentiate the term mutualism
- **2013** It seems that the whole system was assembled to maintain the power of financial capital
 - 1% of population controls most of the disposable wealth
 - What we call “the market” reflects what they think is useful or important
 - There can be no objective measure of social value
 - In our society, the most obviously one’s work benefits other people, the less one is likely to be paid

- **Narotzky (2014)**

- It is necessary to analyze the realities of ordinary people in contrast to abstract economic models
- How people negotiate often precarious conditions to make a life for themselves and for future generations
- The current **global economic crisis**
 - Refers to the processes beyond individual control that force change in traditional modes of livelihood
 - Has exposed in particularly dramatic fashion the inadequacies and located the people in conditions of radical uncertainty
 - These inequalities have led people to be involved in waged labor but also structures of provisioning, investments in social relations, relations of trust and care, and a multitude of other forms of social action that mainstream economic models generally consider trivial, marginal, and often counterproductive

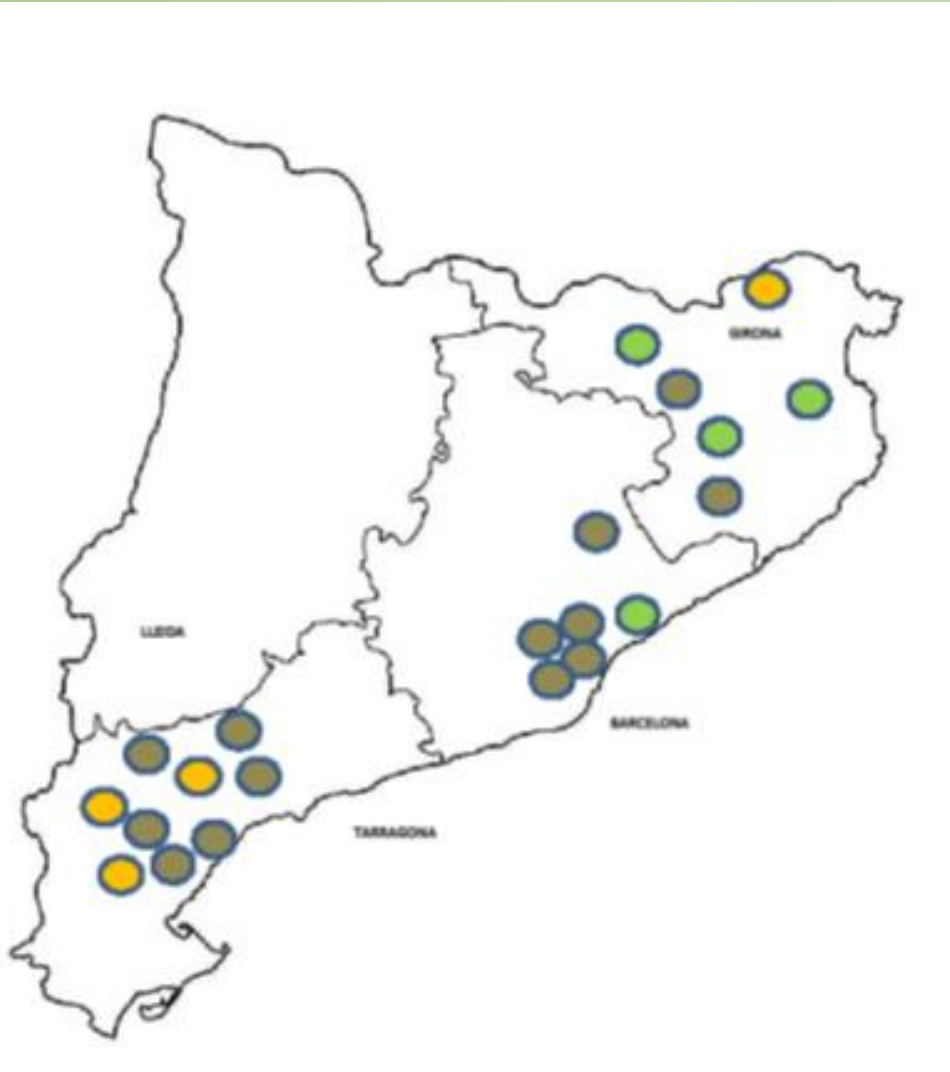
Methodology





- Ethnographic fieldwork:
 - Identifying all kinds of Environmental Intentional Communities in Catalonia and describing their general characteristics
- Semi-structured interviews in order to
 - Locate changes in the strategies of social reproduction during the crisis
 - New additions and motivations that lead people to be part of these settlements
- Mapping the social structure in the communities to identify their forms of organization

What is happening in Catalonia?



Fieldwork: Wide variety of settlements



-  ECOVILLAGE
-  MASÍAS
-  RURAL OR NEORURAL SETTLEMENT IN A VILLAGE
-  RURAL OR NEORURAL SETTLEMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

TYPES IN CATALONIA

MASÍA



ECOVILLAGE



RURAL OR NEORURAL
SETTLEMENT
IN A VILLAGE



RURAL OR
NEORURAL
SETTLEMENT
IN THE
COUNTRYSIDE



COHABITATION



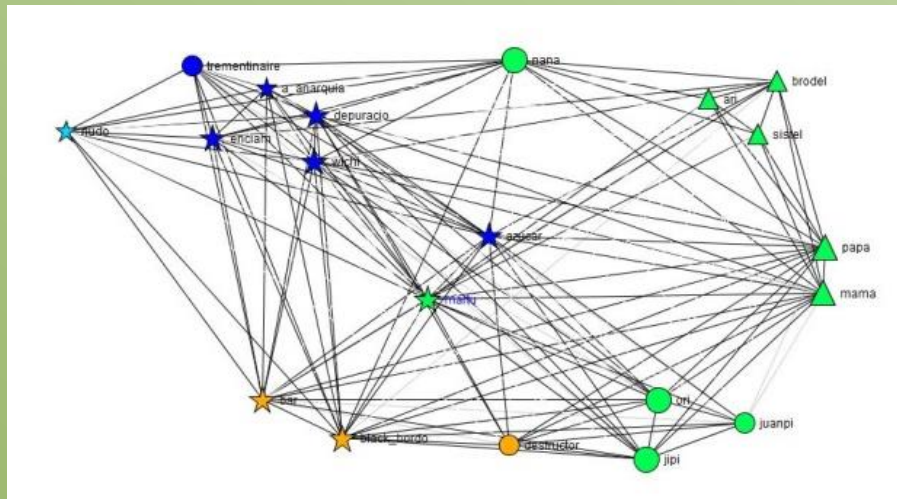
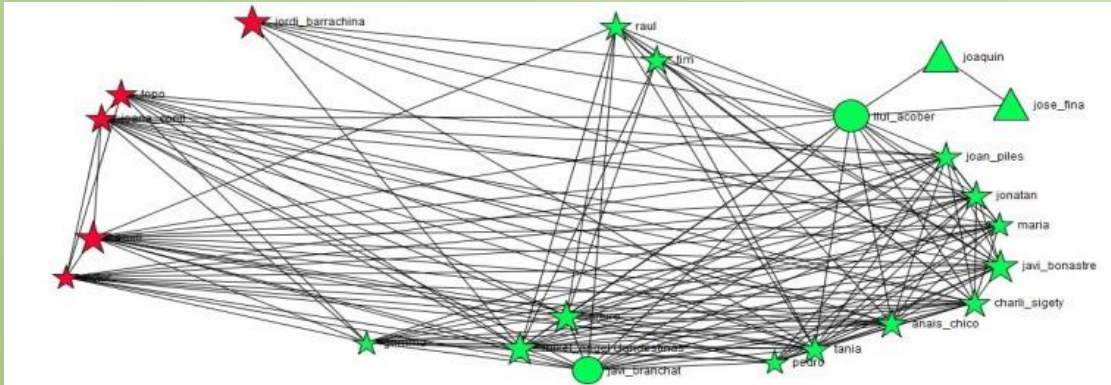
Some preliminary data

Nº ENICs LOCATED	Nº ENICs VISITED	INTERVIEWS AND DATA COLECTION
20 (I know there are at least 20 more... Objetive located 40)	16	5 basic data profiles 5 personal networks 6 qualitative interviews 16 field diaries and photos

STAR- TING PERIOD	TYPES OF SETTLE- MENT IN THE LAND	MIN. AND MAX. N of INHABI- TANTS	MEMBERSHIP	PERFORMED ACTIVITIES	
1996- 2015	SQUATTED COURTESY TENURE RENTED	2-40	WWOOF EU VOLUNTARY GEN/REAS CIC XRX	WORK INSIDE COMMUNITY GARDENING FARMING PROCESSING PRODUCTS ...	WORK OUTSIDE COMMUNITY ALL KINDS

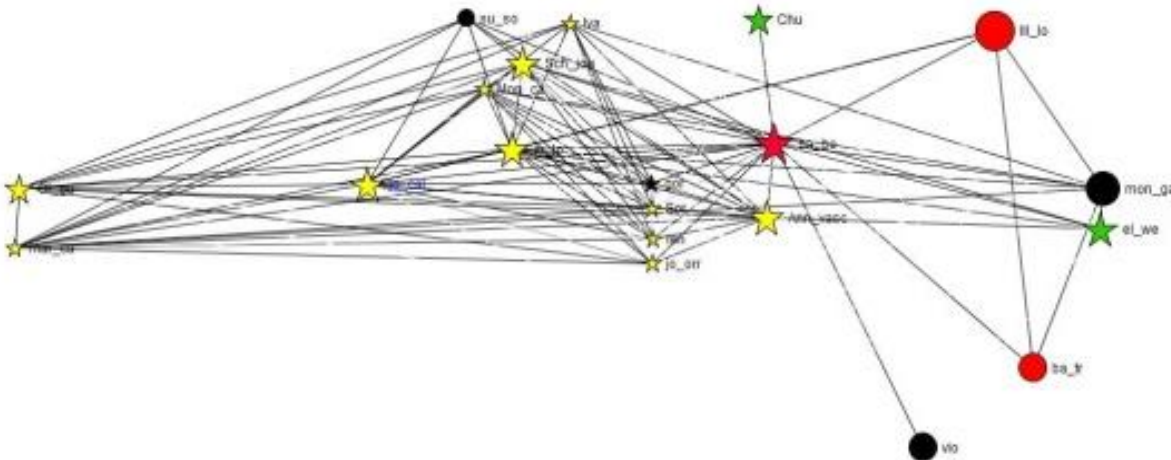
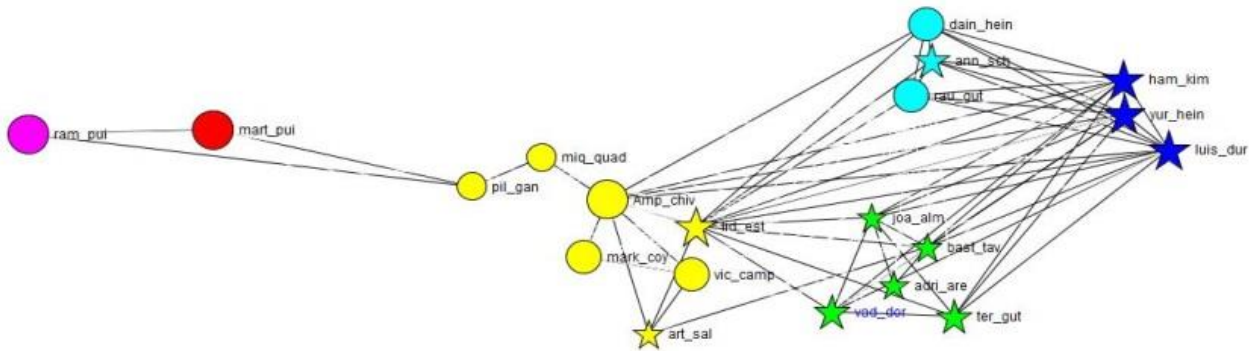
Personal networks

Masía



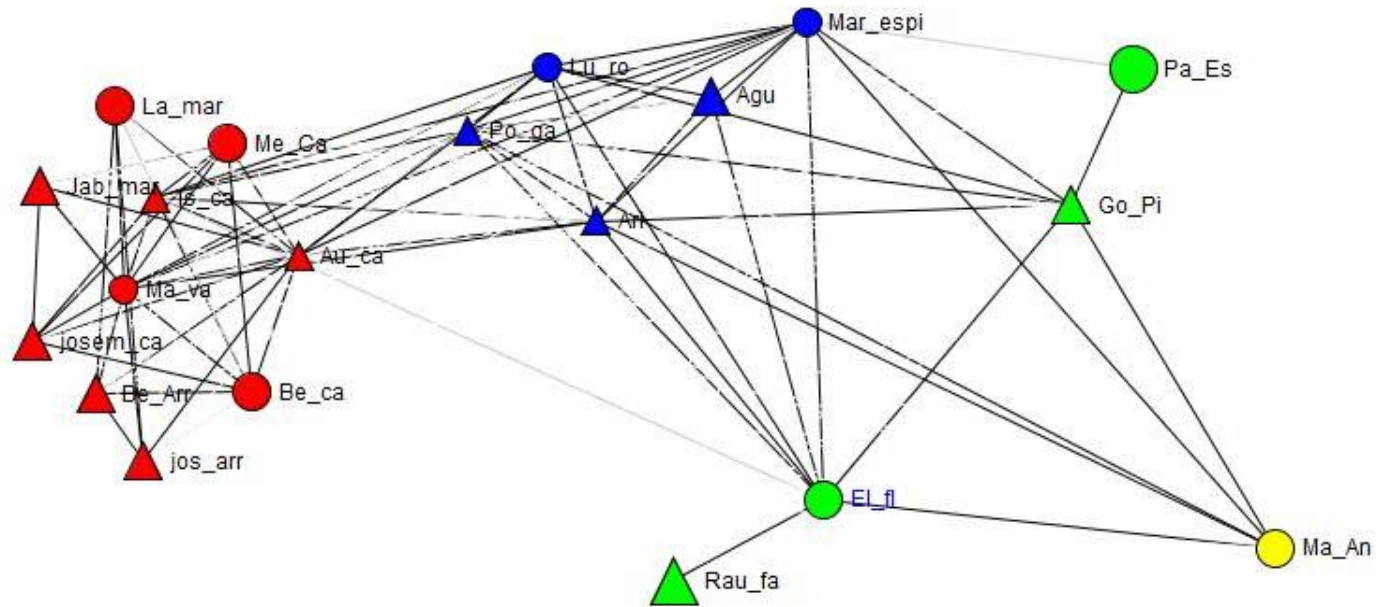
Personal networks

Ecovillage



Personal networks

Industrial colony



Qualitative interviews...

- “In the last few years the profile of the volunteers and visitors has changed Before we had international youth ... mostly from northern Europe ... Now they are from all ages and many of the people of the neighbouring village. They haven’t been interested in our project before....”
- “We have trouble making ends meet. The landowners do not accept products like vegetables in change for the rental and most of us do not have many euros”

Hypotheses to be tested

- The shift of perspective helps to focus on a more measurable dimension
- The ENICs are participants from this cultural tension between practices and ideology
- The crisis from 2008 has resized them to a more local and less utopian phenomenon.
- This will make them more resilient and influential