Reclaiming Sustainable Space: A Study of Degrowth Activists

Abstract

While degrowth debates typically encompass abstract ecological and economic arguments against growth, our study considers how degrowth-minded activism becomes interwoven with the production and consumption of space and place. Drawing illustrative insights from an ethnographic study in the city of Seville, our findings reveal a configuration of practices (*accessibility*, *self-organisation*, *reproduction* and *conviviality*) through which degrowth-minded activism infuses urban life with non-capitalist processes and logics. Consequently, our work contributes to a paucity of studies theorizing the production/consumption of space in relation to broader processes of capitalist development. In doing so, we also promote a more humane consideration of the spatial dimensions through which more equitable ways of living are constituted.

Key Words: Degrowth; Space; Place; Consumption; Activism

Acknowledgements

Author Biographies:

Javier Lloveras is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at the Manchester Metropolitan University Business School. He is also affiliated to the Institute of Place Management. His research interests lie in diverse areas which seek to make marketing a more socially, politically and environmentally relevant discipline. These encompass notions of degrowth and place, complementary currencies, alternative economic practices, and critical marketing. Address: Faculty of Business and Law, All Saints Campus, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6BH, UK. [email: j.lloveras@mmu.ac.uk]

Lee Quinn is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing in the School of Materials at the University of Manchester, UK. He has a particular interest in qualitative methodology within marketing and consumer research contexts. His work is published in academic journals such as the *European Journal of Marketing*, *Marketing Theory*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, and the *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, among others. Address: School of Materials, Sackville Street Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK. [email: lee.quinn@manchester.ac.uk]

Cathy Parker is Professor of Marketing and Retail Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Chair of the Institute of Place Management. The Institute is the professional

body for practitioners, policy makers and academics who endeavour to make better places. Cathy is also Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Place Management, which is taken by over 2,000 institutions world-wide. Address: Faculty of Business and Law, All Saints Campus, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6BH, UK. [email: c.parker@mmu.ac.uk]

Introduction

Despite scholarly work in marketing and consumer research contributing toward a more sophisticated understanding of how consumer practices, meanings and identities are intertwined with a range of space and place dynamics (e.g. Maclaran and Brown, 2005; Hollebeck et al. 2008; Visconti et al. 2010; Lucarelli and Hallin, 2015), such work does not directly address how the consumption and production of space relates to broader processes of capitalist development and emerging forms of struggle against them (Cova et al. 2013). Equally, those studies concerned with production and consumption practices, within the context of acceptance and/or contestation of broader political and social movements and trends, neglect wider discussion of these issues in relation to space and place. This is not a trivial omission. In fact, we follow Smith's overarching critique of the social sciences (2010: 116) to suggest that the assumption of human practices and processes unfolding in or across space reflects not only 'a habit of thought but one of language too'; an appeal to absolute space which, in the context of our work, prevents a critical understanding of the spatial dimension of capitalism.

Environmental sustainability is one of the main areas in which marketing scholars engage with broader processes of capitalist development and contestation. In particular, a growing number of commentators remain sceptical towards the possibility of reconciling the growth imperative of capitalism with the pursuit of sustainability (Varey, 2010). In this vein, Chatzidakis et al. (2012, p. 511) remind us that '(…) any transformation of consumer behaviour towards notionally green or ethical practices must be viewed in a [broader] macro

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context of unsustainable capital expansion and an unchallenged paradigm of growth'. Against this backdrop, notions of de-growth emerge as a compelling alternative to commodity-driven orientations towards sustainability (Latouche, 2009).

Degrowth scholars deploy a consistent body of criticism against the growth paradigm, highlighting different strategies to subvert the capitalist imperative of endless economic growth (Fournier, 2008). However, as noted above, within all of these arguments and debates the spatial dimension receives scant attention, typically appearing as a passive 'vessel' in which *things* take place. Consequently, the aim of our study seeks to elucidate how degrowth-minded forms of activism become interwoven with the production and consumption of space and place. In doing this, our paper makes three key contributions. First, we provide a theoretical framework to advance understandings of degrowth from a spatial perspective. Second, we provide an empirical analysis of the practices through which locally-grounded forms of degrowth-minded activism seek to contest, produce and consume space in line with their imaginary. Third, we reflect on the opportunities and challenges for marketing studies on degrowth that occur when its spatial dimensions are critically considered.

The Degrowth movement

Notions of degrowth involve a conceptual critique of the capitalist imperative for growth, as well as the multifarious praxis of grassroots movements operating within the realms of social and environmental justice (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010). Latouche (2009: 9) describes degrowth as 'a political slogan with theoretical implications', operating at the crossroads of critical theory and radical praxis. Instead of trying to reconcile the oxymoronic notion of sustainable economic growth, the overarching purpose of degrowth is to initiate 'a socially sustainable and equitable reduction (and eventually stabilisation) of society's throughput'

(Kallis, 2011: 874). From this perspective, embracing degrowth within the most affluent parts of the world is an absolute imperative to allow less affluent economies to converge without exceeding the ecological limits of the planet (Martinez-Alier, 2009). If collectively planned and democratically managed, advocates suggest that degrowth may be the key to unlocking 'a transition to the optimal balanced growth path that is associated with a downscaling of production, a reduction in private consumption, and an on-going increase in leisure and well-being' (Bilancini and D'Alessandro, 2012: 194).

In the marketing literature, however, it is argued that making progress towards the goals of sustainable consumption requires social, political and environmental change to work with the grain of commodity culture, not against it (e.g. Prothero et al. 2010). For example, drawing upon a post-Marxist reading of capitalist development, Prothero and Fitchett (2000: 48) conclude that 'the code of capitalism is destined to define the revolutionary means of change'. Challenging this view, Fournier (2008) pitches degrowth in opposition to sustainability approaches that retain a belief in the compatibility of consumer capitalism and ecological sustainability, which 'not only absolve[s] major corporations … of environmental responsibilities but also casts them as the new heroes of sustainability' (p. 530). The contribution of degrowth to sustainability lies not in 'the idea that desiring fewer goods and services is a valuable commodity' (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000: 50). On the contrary, degrowth offers an opportunity for redefining 'economic relations and identities in political terms', contesting the commodity form and thus paving the way to 'forms of collective engagement that take us away from the self-interested actions of homo economicus' (Fournier, 2008: 538).

While there is substantial discussion about degrowth, it is apparent that this typically takes the form of abstract ecological and economic arguments against growth and green growth. To our knowledge, there are few, if any, situated studies on degrowth activists and collectives and how they attempt to produce different spaces and places. Addressing this problem requires a nuanced theorisation of the ways in which space and place is produced and contested in the course of capitalist development and the struggles against it.

Theoretical framework and Research Questions

Harvey (2000) notes that analyses of capitalist development have long held a tendency to exclude spatiality or treat it as a fixed container in which social actions and processes unfold. Alternatively, a relational view of space 'holds that there is no such a thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them' (Harvey, 2006: 123). Lefebvre (1976) noted that changes in the production/consumption of space were central to explaining capitalist development during the 20th century. Harvey further elaborates upon Lefebvre's contention, maintaining that capitalist development is an ongoing process that requires: 'a produced space of transport and communications, of infrastructures and territorial organizations, that facilitates capital accumulation during one phase of its history [to be cyclically] torn down and reconfigured to make way for further development at a later stage' (Harvey, 2000: 54).

The interplay between capitalist development and the production and consumption of space becomes apparent in the context of environmental sustainability. Rather than facing the impossibility of endless expansion with finite resources, the capitalist world is now immersed in a process of green urbanisation, driven by the centrality of 'decarbonisation' as a guiding principle for urban policy and practice (Joss et al., 2013). The so-called 'green turn' of capitalism (Bina and La Camera, 2011) requires the creative destruction of cities, and the

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'reinvention' of urban infrastructures to encompass a flurry of slick technological developments (e.g. electric vehicles; renewable-power generators; smart-buildings; new building materials; recycling facilities and so on). Increasingly, the hegemony of global technology firms depends on the capacity and disposition of vast city systems to absorb a whole new generation of smart technologies and eco-efficient innovations (Viitanen and Kingston, 2014: 803). Moreover, a majority of green urbanisation processes reassert global inequalities and local concentrations of wealth and power, signalling the construction of green amenities, alongside other green regeneration urban projects, as frequent entry points for gentrification practices (Anguelovski and Martinez-Alier, 2014). For this reason, critics highlight the gated, typically exclusive, nature of flagship eco-city projects, as configuring 'green and sustainable islands in a broader global scenario characterized by environmental degradation and contamination' (Caprotti, 2014: 11).

However, despite urbanisation being crucial to the history of capital accumulation, power, and control, it is also apparent that the conditions created by the capitalist urban process and experience engender a potential to ground anti-capitalist struggles (Harvey, 2000). The capitalist production of space is seldom capable of imposing its will on urban processes and populations without having to overcome substantial amounts of resistance (Harvey, 2012). For example, through their inquiry into the practices of street artists, Visconti et al. (2010) demonstrate that urban space is a contested object whose boundaries are constantly redefined through different forms of civic engagement. Moreover, urban spaces function not only as the sites of capitalist power but also as fertile ground for political action and revolt (Chatzidakis et al., 2012). Therefore, critical marketing inquiries concerning spatial dimensions can no longer approach the urban as a relatively bounded site. They must recognise it as 'the planetary condition in and through which the accumulation of capital, the regulation of

political-economic life, the reproduction of everyday social relations, and the contestation of the earth and humanity's possible futures are simultaneously organized and fought out' (Brenner et al., 2009: 206).

Subsequently, a critical examination of how participants in anti-capitalist struggles might contest, produce, and consume space, emerges as a worthwhile research endeavour. Our work seeks to question whether, beyond the myriad of epithets signifying the production of green capitalist spaces, including 'smart', 'low-carbon' or 'eco-', it may be possible to co-create urban spaces in a manner which realigns sustainability concerns with the emancipatory politics of degrowth. Addressing this issue becomes central to our inquiry and our research therefore poses two questions which underpin the empirical nature of our study:

(1) How does the production/consumption of alternative spaces become infused with non-capitalist logics through degrowth-minded forms of activism?

(2) To what extent do these spatial practices become interwoven with local life and the history of place?

Research Approach: Methods and Analysis

Spatial analyses of capitalism must remain sensitive to the unique and context-specific nature of places (Merrifield, 1993). Failing to appreciate regional variation in the production of space through an engagement with specific places and localities raises concerns about the purported progressiveness of spatial analyses of capitalism (Massey, 1991). Bauman (2013), for example, notes that the adoption of an excessively broad analytical approach to space runs the risk of arbitrarily disconnecting social struggles from their ideographic dimension, which is often locally-grounded and linked to the life-worlds of communities. Moreover, critics question whether a relational view of space inspired by Marxist theory is able to recognize

the emancipatory value of non-hierarchical forms of resistance to capitalist development (Springer, 2014). To overcome this concern, Merrifield (1993) suggests the adoption of a dialectical interpretation of place. This dialectical strategy must 'be conceived by capturing how they (space and place) melt into each other rather than by reifying some spurious fissure' (Merrifield, 1993: 520). Consequently, building upon the empirical work of Chatzidakis et al. (2012: 498), we recognize that 'as space becomes place, it produces webs of meanings and connections between people, thereby bringing a sense of community and identity, which in turn paves the way for collective action.'

Nevertheless, the shift from space to place requires a careful consideration of the fact that place is a slippery and fluid concept, whose boundaries are relative not only to the perspective from which the place is viewed, but also to whom is doing the viewing (Warnaby and Medway, 2013). Given this argument that notions of place are constructed through a mobilisation of different place narratives, which often compete to represent place in different ways, we choose to contextualise our own constitution of place through the context of an ethnographic inquiry, conducted within a community of degrowth-minded activists operating in an area of Seville known as El Pumarejo. Consequently, while our place narrative is inevitably partial, rather than objectively representative, it enables us to focus on fragments of local life that illuminate the processes through which degrowth-minded activists produce and consume space.

El Pumarejo: A Social History of the Place

The research was undertaken in el barrio de El Pumarejo. This is a traditional working class area of Seville, within the old part of the city, in which the rebellious footprint left by communist and anarchist groups during the 1930s remains prominent today. We recognize

that the capacity for revolt in El Pumarejo is beholden of socio-historical elements, constitutive of heterotopias of resistance (Chatzidakis et al., 2012). Under the occupation of fascist armies during the Spanish Civil War, the inhabitants of El Pumarejo were intensely repressed, as too was their radical political culture and practices (Macarro-Vera, 1985). Initially, this repression manifested in the form of prosecutions, executions and incarcerations of dissidents within the area. Over time, authorities opted for more subtle approaches such as the abandonment of any commitment to improving the living conditions of residents. Seen by the authorities as a centre for political dissidence, their chosen strategy was to deliberately turn El Pumarejo into a pocket of crime, marginality and deprivation. For almost forty years, the area was intentionally forsaken and neglected to decay (Diaz-Parra, 2010). Gradually, El Pumarejo succumbed to a proliferation of social problems related to homelessness, prostitution, and drug abuse. Its residents were stigmatized as dangerous and marginal outlaws, a stigma that persists today.

Following the death of Franco in 1975, El Pumarejo began to experience a renaissance as a breeding ground for radical political thought and praxis. By the 2000s, the area became a Sevillian hub of social activism, attracting various social movements including: environmentalists (Ecologistas en Acción), feminists (Mujeres de Negro), and pacifists (La Casa de La Paz). Additionally, a group of young squatters took over an abandoned oil factory and renovated the building to accommodate a variety of political and community needs (e.g. housing for homeless people; a community library; and a conference centre). In parallel to these developments, the city of Seville entered a stage of urban development, characterised by intensified gentrification (Diaz-Parra, 2010), as local authorities announced plans for an urgent and profound regeneration effort in El Pumarejo. Such shifting political priorities were not so much for the benefit of local residents as for urban speculators. At the time, influential

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actors with vested interests in real estate saw the regeneration of El Pumarejo as a potentially profitable financial opportunity. The strategic vision was simple: purchase relatively inexpensive properties from local residents; relocate pockets of marginality to the periphery; and regenerate buildings and infrastructures damaged by decades of abandonment before marketing El Pumarejo as an expensive, bohemian destination for the upper-classes (Diaz-Parra, 2010). This top-down, profit-driven agenda clashed with the interests of local residents who, in turn, articulated a series of community responses aimed at preventing the growth of gentrification practices in the area (Diaz-Parra, 2012). These efforts were channelled through the creation of the 'Platform for the Defense of the Casa del Pumarejo Palace' (http://www.pumarejo.es/en). Today, this grassroots organisation continues to assemble local residents, alongside different activist groups, in the struggle against ongoing processes through which the interests of capital shape the development of the area.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted over a 12-month period, beginning in April 2012. One member of the research team became immersed in the research location, alongside degrowth activists, for a period of 4-months. Degrowth activists were identified based on their long-term participation and involvement in a grassroots group known as Sevilla Decrece (Degrowth Seville).

Degrowth Seville (http://www.sevilladecrece.net/) was established in 2009 as a grassroots organisation with the purpose of facilitating degrowth ideas as projects for the city of Seville, but it was not until 2011 when the group started to focus its activities in the area of El Pumarejo. At this time, Degrowth Seville and the 'Platform for the Defense of the Casa del Pumarejo Palace' joined efforts to materialise a series of initiatives within El Pumarejo,

including: an alternative local currency scheme; a community library; and an urban gardening project. Since then, Degrowth Seville has become fully integrated within the area and the number of participants engaging in local degrowth projects continues to increase. For example, the local currency scheme currently has over 800 users. Gradually, the boundaries between degrowth and other groups (e.g. the anti-eviction movement; squatters; feminists; or pacifists) have become porous and overlapping. In this regard, numerous local residents, shopkeepers, activists in other organisations, or college and university students undertaking research projects, are intermittently involved with Degrowth Seville for specific actions, without necessarily labelling themselves as degrowth activists.

Given this fluid nature of degrowth activism in the area, our data collection efforts primarily focused on the self-named steering group, which encompasses nearly twenty individuals who have been involved with Degrowth Seville since its creation. Empirical materials were collected through participant observation of the group's activities, seven unstructured interviews, one discussion group, as well as archival data and other artefacts collected in the field. Our interpretation is guided by a process of reflexive engagement in ethnographic inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006). The analytical procedure was emergent, allowing us to move back and forth between the literature, data collection and iterative processes of interpretation in order to identify the themes presented (Spiggle, 1994). We adopt this approach in order to thematically illustrate processes through which space is contested, produced and consumed both in the practices of a community of degrowth-minded activists, as well as in collaboration with other broadly-labelled types of activist inhabiting the area. We now turn our attention towards the thematic areas of our analysis which we present as: *accessibility*; *self-organisation*; *reproduction*; and *conviviality*.

Accessibility

It is particularly noticeable that the area of El Pumarejo is characterised by a cornucopia of 'open access' resources, made more freely available through the practices, attitudes and behaviours of residents and local businesses; a feature of urban life that has no parallel in other parts of Seville. Generally, residents, retailers, or artisans in the area endorse practices of sharing and the removal of restrictions on access. For example, through an initiative called Sevilla WIFI, individual households openly share their wireless broadband connections with neighbours as well as with strangers. Additionally, many local retailers and artisans, make areas within their shops, workshops, or cafes, freely available for community members to stage the performance of community-oriented events and activities. Furthermore, neighbouring inhabitants, such as the owners of the Casa Palacio Pumarejo, provide substantial areas of their building to allow working-spaces for activists visiting or residing in the area. However, it is also noticeable that the production and consumption of a common urban space in El Pumarejo involves practices that cannot be subsumed under the category of sharing. In this regard, existing restrictions for the use and access of existing urban resources might be undermined by other practices such as squatting in abandoned public buildings, hacking urban infrastructures to secure the supply of water and electricity for disadvantaged people, engaging in peer-to-peer production of street art, or volunteering for community gardening projects.

While El Pumarejo is depicted by participants as a rich communal culture, it is also seen to be under constant attack by both private and so-called public interests. For example, in emphasising 'open access' as central to the constitution of public space, activists and other local residents directly challenge the overarching power of markets and governments as the main forces shaping the production and consumption of space in the city. In this regard, the

opposition between common space and public space is of particular importance, with activists typically reserving the adjective 'public' for those spaces that are produced, owned and managed by different layers of government. When the public space is framed in opposition to the common space, the former becomes synonymous with the city council of Seville and its attempts at ordering urban space on behalf of the capitalist state. Contrary to the notion of common space, it is argued that access to public space is neither free nor open, but strictly defined by a complex state apparatus that involves legal, political and law enforcement authorities. When the common urban space is labelled as a public space, the terms for using and accessing space are removed from the members of the community and delegated to hierarchical structures of power, authority and decision-making. Thus, the notion of common space becomes incompatible with public space.

Activists draw upon numerous examples to highlight the importance of differentiating between public and common space, contrasting the former with less restrictive forms of access that characterise the latter. This is particularly evident in the following activists' statements:

> *"I am thinking of human beings from other parts of the world that live among us but are labelled by government as illegal immigrants. I have friends who fear to leave their homes because the police might check them out for a visa ... [so] I have a moral obligation to refuse to recognise our city council as part of the common space. Actually, any person with the slightest social sensibility cannot call the streets of Seville a public space without feeling embarrassed." (Female, 29, Member of Degrowth Seville.)*

"How hypocritical is it to claim something is a public building when there is nothing but fences, closed doors and police officers guarding it? Schools, sports centres, etc., who decides what times they are open or closed? What are the appropriate uses for these spaces and who defines them?" (Female, 36, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

However, it is important to highlight that these arguments are not to be conflated with neoliberal calls to privatise public space. Indeed, as the following comment illustrates, degrowth activists are very clear in their view of privatisation as a governing strategy:

"Degrowth is part of a libertarian tradition on the political left. This is why it is hard to stomach it when trade unions or the Communist Party accuse us of acting as henchmen for neoliberalism. These people entertain the strange belief that taking away power from the state paves the way for markets to take control. But if you ask local residents, they will tell you that few have done more than us to resist commoditization and gentrification in El Pumarejo! For many it is still difficult to understand that one can be overtly anti-capitalist without wanting state bureaucrats seizing control of our life and cities." (Male, 55, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Nevertheless, accessibility is not as free and open as it initially appears, and despite pretentions of universality, a number of factors affect dynamics of inclusion/exclusion within the area. For example, accessibility to El Pumarejo's common resources typically depends on compliance with unwritten norms that regulate their use. In this regard, one of the degrowth-minded informants stated:

'Common stuff has to be used with extra care and responsibility so, of course, we need norms! Banning is extremely rare here because most people generally get these points straight away, but we have experienced problems in the past'. (Male, 35, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Moreover, members acknowledge that access to common resources is partly mediated by expectations that the beneficiaries will, at some point, contribute to the wealth of urban commons within the area. These arguments compel us to consider accessibility not through the analogy of sharing (cf. Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012), but through the notion of mutuality (Arnould and Rose, 2015). In this regard, the creation of common space by degrowth-minded activists 'signals a relationship of shared sociality [which] entails a belief in the reciprocal tie that is manifest in future acts of giving by the receiving party' (Arnould and Rose, 2015: 2). Subsequently, activists' involvement in the production of common resources is not to be interpreted as an act of altruism as such, but one that is both 'socially interested' and enveloped in a 'normative overlay' (*ibid.*). Subsequently, *accessibility* in El Pumarejo relies not on individual acts of selflessness, but on chains of solidarity whose creation is animated by a politically infused sense of responsibility towards mutual support.

Self-Organisation

Our second theme, *self-organisation,* emerges to underpin the production and consumption of common space. In this sense, the common space, or the *common(s)* to use the activists' label, is organised by the involvement of users in their production, management and consumption through horizontal decision-making processes.

Assemblies were frequently experienced as central to decision-making processes in El Pumarejo. The 'assembly' can be likened to a political process through which people gather to address issues in a direct democratic manner. Assemblies are justified in the sense that actual and potential users of the urban commons have both a right and a duty to represent themselves in the process by which the commons are managed. This is particularly evident in the following activist's comment:

"Even if access is open and secured for all, I would not dare to call something a 'common' unless everyone feels empowered to participate in the process of creation." (Male, 38, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Therefore, instead of relying on elected representatives or leaderships, any action or initiative can only gain legitimacy if it has been subject to assembly. Given that participation in assemblies is free and open to anyone, assembly organisers have to reach larger numbers of people, with members frequently using email lists, noticeboards, or street posters. If there is one measure of legitimacy for decisions made, this primarily concerns the number of people taking part in the assembly. A combination of informal norms and rules ensure that the assembly is not dominated by the most forceful individuals. Opportunities for all members to speak, ask questions, and give answers, are scrupulously allocated by the one or several moderating volunteers, a task that is evidently not easy to manage:

"Assemblies can be difficult and drain all my energy and time. Sometimes I find myself thinking: it could be so much easier to just say 'everything for the people, nothing by the people'. However, what difference will this actually make? After all, we are here to change things, not to regurgitate old politics that treat people with

contempt, as a bunch of useless, lazy, conformist folks, waiting for the 'great man' that leads and provides. Everything for the people? Yes, no question about it! But everything by the people is just as important." (Female, 29, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Group members are conscious that moderating activity is necessary to avoid the possibility of assemblies becoming sites of interpersonal conflict. Therefore, during assemblies volunteer moderators intervene to temper inappropriate, excessively technical, insulting, or dismissive language. Similarly, voting is acknowledged by participants to be a divisive practice and therefore it is avoided; decisions by consensus are reached when possible. The smoothness by which even the most controversial discussions flow, without interruptions or quarrelling, resembles the performance of a choreography, one in which a complex set of norms and values for constructive interaction have been internalised by individuals, enabling members to debate, deliberate, or even complain, with remarkable collective efficiency.

At times, however, this emphasis on self-organisation can be undermined by a number of issues, including enduring interpersonal conflicts, pressures to get things done, or simply a loss of enthusiasm resulting from the lack of time and energy to take part. In these cases, the group may delegate the most committed individuals. Moreover, when prompted to elaborate on these issues, participants complained that they had explicitly asked to be temporarily removed from certain email-lists due to the sheer volume of assembly calls jamming their inboxes. While these issues are far from being resolved, proposals have been made to address tensions between their ideals of participation and the pragmatic realities of people with limited amounts of time and energy having to maintain a 24/7 exercise of direct democracy. Besides delegation, the size and complexity of the projects organised by the community

become limited by what some informants referred to as the 'human scale'. The idea is explained that although developing local projects in terms of complexity and scale can accrue certain benefits in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, limits need to be voluntarily imposed when users' participation in decision-making becomes compromised. For example, after exceeding 800 members in the alternative currency scheme, a generalized feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of the project grew among participants. Consequently, through assembly, a decision was made to not add new members to the scheme but, instead, to support the creation of a parallel complementary currency scheme.

Reproduction

Our findings reveal that degrowth-minded activism is overtly informed by a gender perspective, directly exposing concerns with reproductive labour. As an important theme in feminist analyses, the sphere of social reproduction typically encompasses a series of activities deemed necessary (e.g. cooking, cleaning, housework, or child-rearing) for nurturing the labourers of productive work (Folbre, 1986; Folbre and Nelson, 2000). Indeed, the centrality of reproductive labour for sustaining the urban commons is exposed by one of the female activists:

"The common space in the Pumarejo Palace is used by many activists. Obviously, one should tidy up a common room after it has been used, particularly if you know that other groups will use the area after you. In the degrowth movement we take this issue very seriously. We know that unless we do it, it will be another person, probably a woman, who will have to do it for us. Actually, the majority of groups do their fair share of housekeeping but, unfortunately, not all. Some people do not even see why

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we make such a fuss about a few misplaced chairs." (Female, 32, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Degrowth-minded activists recount how they gradually became aware of significant gender inequalities pervading the maintenance of common spaces. Members observed that men carried out the majority of so-called productive work in the commons. Male activists generally became involved in jobs such as plumbing, plastering and painting walls, or conducting electrical repairs. Simultaneously, female activists tended to be responsible for most of the housekeeping labour (e.g. general domestic jobs, such as cooking, cleaning, or shopping, as well as caring jobs, such as looking after other activists' children during degrowth assemblies). Hence, despite the common space being shaped by the purpose of enhancing participation and access, activists realised that these emancipatory aspects were not sufficient to tackle gender inequalities embedded in such a division of labour. Therefore, activists began to consider strategies to overcome these concerns. For example, practices for visualising and valuing reproductive work were implemented through the alternative currency scheme used in El Pumarejo (the Puma). Every six months, members identify and value the reproductive tasks that they have performed. Following this, the group rewards these contributions with units of the alternative currency. The valuation of reproductive work in monetary terms is controversial, for it may introduce market exchange logics within the community that are antithetical to degrowth ideals. However, as noted by Seyfang (2001), the kinds of monetary valuation implicit in the use of community currencies defy capitalistic logics to the extent that they reassert the primacy of the social economy over the productive forces of capital by inverting the parasitic, and thereby exploitative, relationship between capital and reproductive labour. Besides this, other strategies include a deliberate effort to encourage female activists to participate in productive maintenance tasks. Conversely, male

counterparts are also encouraged to participate in reproductive tasks within the common space.

In contrast to productive work, reproductive labour is seldom visible, often unpaid or undervalued (Folbre, 1986; Folbre and Nelson, 2000). Therefore, by placing an emphasis on the performance of reproductive work as central to the construction of more equalitarian common spaces, activists argue that they wish to move beyond traditional notions of citizenship towards what they call 'caringzens'. The term caringzen is a translation of the Spanish neologism "cuidadana", which is employed by members of the Puma currency scheme to distinguish themselves from the notions of "ciudadanos" (meaning *citizens* in English). The Spanish neologism cuidadano is a variation of the term ciudadano, with the prefix cuidar (meaning *to care*). Therefore, a Cuidadano is a citizen "that cares" although, as illustrated in the following excerpt, the neologism Cuidadano was created serendipitously:

"We had this bloke putting up a tile mural in the Pumarejo Palace saying 'Ciudadania Activa' (Active Citizenship). However, he made a spelling mistake as he put 'Cuidadania Activa' (Active Caringzenship) instead. When he realised his spelling mistake he felt embarrassed and immediately tried to mend it. Can you imagine his face when we congratulated him and told him that we actually wanted to keep it as it was? What a delightfully unintentional stroke of genius! It captures the spirit of El Pumarejo and it helps us to summarise in one word the outcome of endless debates that we've had here." (Male, 55, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Consequently, we present El Pumarejo's 'caringzenship' as an interesting concept from which to acknowledge the gender blind-spot embedded in more established notions such as

consumer-citizenship (Prothero et al. 2010). We suggest that traditional notions of citizenship relate to forms political involvement that belong to the public domain; a social arena typically dominated by men through their participation in productive labour. Contrary to this, notions of 'caringzenship' envision other, largely invisible, forms of political engagement typically performed within the household.

Subsequently, we cannot ignore the challenge raised by ecofeminist scholars highlighting that critiques of growth-driven capitalism must pay attention to gender issues (Bauhardt, 2014). This remains an area of debate within critically informed research contexts (Maclaran et al., 2009), with important repercussions for environmentally-focused marketing and consumer research (Dobscha and Ozzane, 2001; Stevens et al. 2013; Ourahmoune et al. 2013).

Conviviality

Alongside *accessibility*, *self-organisation* and *reproduction*, a further defining aspect of the common space in El Pumarejo lies in our interpretation of the activists' emphasis on *conviviality*. In developing his critique of industrial society, Illich (1973: 11) frames conviviality as an *'autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment',* an articulation which he *'contrast[s] with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment.'* Although Illich's formulation of conviviality is complex and multifaceted, involving autonomy, participation, decentralization, or responsibly limited tools, the focus of our fourth theme centres on the value of convivial spaces for cultivating a *'plurality of commonweals'* (Illich, 1973: 15). In this regard, it is important not to overlook a purpose of the degrowth movement to initiate a 'convivial reconstruction' of capitalist space by safeguarding the autonomy of communities and individuals to choose their styles of life.

Within the context of El Pumarejo, common spaces integrate conviviality through a deliberate relaxation of social norms and practices that impose standard temporalities. The activists' argument implies that *conviviality* requires more flexible boundaries to enable a less imposing framework of temporality within common space. It is suggested that the inherent diversity of lifeworlds can only be acknowledged if multiple temporalities replace the prevalent view of time in one-dimensional terms, as one member explains:

"Time is different for different people. Even the pace of our own lives is constantly changing, depending on our mood, or whether we are sick, or aging ... and also parenthood changes our [sense of] time. There are so many individual factors modulating the pace of our lives. So, when we severely judge others in terms of them being 'late' or 'early', or when we organise our activities to fit tight time-slots, what we are actually doing is judging others' lives to suit our own." (Female, 48, Member of Degrowth Seville.)

Another illuminating observation becomes apparent through activists' practices of 'waiting' for others. Waiting in this sense is not experienced as a tragedy or a waste of time. Likewise, having to 'improvise' or 'reschedule' is accepted with naturalness rather than with resentment or disappointment. Doors are kept open so that people may enter and leave whenever they desire, and collective expectations of punctuality are relatively minor. Reprimands, in the form of comments or jokes regarding whether someone is 'late' or 'early' for a particular activity are consciously avoided. Time-keeping devices such as clocks, mobile phones and watches, are used consciously, in recognition of the above expectations. For activists, cohabitation does not deserve such a label unless it integrates the tradeoffs of embracing a plurality of chronological time, which they argue is inherent to the convivial practice of

sharing life with others. Activists clearly participate in a collective effort to reduce their dependence on time management practices and processes while organising their lives within the common space.

Commentary and Contributions

Not denying the importance of encouraging changes in the cultural code of capitalism (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000), progress towards a critical post-growth agenda within marketing is hindered by the paucity of studies theorizing notions of space and place in relation to broader processes of capitalist development. Our work makes a substantial contribution in this direction by revealing the spatial dimension of degrowth-minded activism. Drawing upon a dialectical theorization of space/place, our research extends Harvey's (2006) argument that there is no such thing as space outside of the processes which define 'it'. We expose how the possibility of making progress beyond the growth paradigm is tantamount to our capacity to appropriate, reclaim, and intervene upon the production and consumption of urban space. Our findings illustrate how local struggles to make El Pumarejo an accessible, participative, gender-sensitive and convivial place, become central to degrowth's anti-capitalist endeavour. These arguments are consistent with Latouche's calls for reorienting the spatial process towards the assembly of 'a municipality of municipalities, a town of towns, or even a village of villages … an ecopolis, meaning a polycentric or multipolar network [and] a complex set of territorial systems' (Latouche, 2009: 44). Similarly, our insights provide further support to Biehl and Bookchin's libertarian municipalism thesis, as 'an alternative to the centralised nation-state and to an economy based on profit, competition, and mindless growth' (1998: 181).

The spatial agenda of degrowth does not attempt to reinvent the city as a 'decarbonized' or 'smart' place, but to infuse urban life with non-capitalist processes and logics. Arguably, these practices are not limited to degrowth-minded forms of activism, but resonate with broader radical approaches to social and political life. This similarity is consistent with Schatzki's (2002) argument that social practices are always interlinked as 'bundles', which are themselves interwoven, conforming constellations of practices whose boundaries are impossible to establish. We embrace this continuity and highlight the historical trajectory of the practices enacted by degrowth members which are interwoven with, for example, the footprint left by socialists and anarchist groups in the area of El Pumarejo.

The most pressing concern facing the longevity of degrowth-minded forms of urban activism lies in preserving their temporal and spatial continuity. As shown in our study, for example, the transformation of urban life through degrowth practices is limited to small pockets of the city, which are beholden of a radical political culture and a long history of self-organisation. Moreover, the difficulties of scaling-up forms of spatial organisation based on conviviality, caring values, mutuality and horizontal participation, evidently create their own forms of exclusion and hierarchy as they grow in size and complexity. Consequently, opportunities for further research which serves to elucidate strategies to overcome these barriers may be fruitful. In this regard, marketing's potential to implement a meaningful sustainability agenda ultimately depends on our readiness to challenge the paradigm of endless economic growth.

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