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Transition to Sustainability: What did WWOOF volunteers at an organic farm learn?

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I hereby declare that this Graduate thesis of the title "Transition to Sustainability: What did WWOOF volunteers at an organic farm learn?" contains an original literature survey and research, and I have fully cited and referenced all the literature and sources used. The thesis is a re-submission of the thesis submitted in May, 2013, under the title "The process of pro-environmental attitude change and effects of informal education at the permaculture organic farm of Plukrijp".

In Brno, 19th December 2013

Martin Malec

Unborn,
yet continuing without interruption,
neither coming nor going, omnipresent,
Supreme Dharma,
unchangeable space, without definition,
spontaneously self-liberating—
perfectly unobstructed state—
manifest from the very beginning,
self-created, without location,
with nothing negative to reject,
and nothing positive to accept,
infinite expanse, penetrating everywhere,
immense, and without limits, without ties,
with nothing even to dissolve
or to be liberated from,
manifest beyond space and time,
existing from the beginning,
immense ying, inner space,
radiant through clarity
like the sun and the moon,
self-perfected,
indestructible like a Vajra,
stable as a mountain,
pure as a lotus,
strong as a lion,
incomparable pleasure beyond all limits,
illumination, equanimity,
peak of the Dharma,
light of the universe,
perfect from the beginning.

— The Song of Vajra (tib. *rdo rje'i glu zhig*)[*]

Homage to the masters of all times.

Thanks to the developers of all the great open source software that I exclusively used for preparing this thesis, particularly: TeX, LaTeX and LyX for the DTP, JabRef for the bibliography management, and Inkscape for tracing bitmaps to outlines.

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[*]From the Union of the Sun and Moon tantra (tib. *nyi zla kha sbyor*), as cited in Namhkai Norbu (2000)

Abstract

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) is a system where organic farmers accept volunteers in exchange for food and accommodation they provide to them. Such farms serve also as hubs of non-formal education in sustainable agricultural practices. According to existing models of relation of environmental values, attitudes and behaviours (*theory of planned behaviour* of I. Ajzen or the *value-belief-norm theory of support for social social movements* of Stern et al.) there are several factors that predict the occurrence of pro-environmental behaviour.

A participant observation and semi-structured interviews were done at the *Plukrijp community* in Belgium in March–April 2013 to obtain stories of 11 participants who were volunteering on the farm. Accounts of their stories were recorded. These narrations include the life antecedents, expectations of the participants from their stay on the farm, experience during their stay and the outcomes after they leave the place, with a special interest on the samples of non-activist and activist pro-environmental behaviours. A thematic analysis was done to find out responses to the research theme and questions, what is the process of change of attitudes (with the focus on pro-environmental ones), behaviour and values in people staying at Plukrijp, do participants experience instances of 'transformative learning' defined by J. Mezirow (Mezirow, 1997) during their stay at Plukrijp and how it is, and what activities do people initiate and perform after leaving Plukrijp, motivated/inspired by their stay.

Detailed narratives and themes were obtained from the interviews and an in-depth, followed by a trans-disciplinary interpretation linking the accounts with the environmental and psychological theories of pro-environmental attitude-behaviour relation that were presented in the introduction. Finally the limitations of the research are mentioned. A follow-up study is planned in 2015.

Keywords: pro-environmental behaviour change, WWOOF, volunteering, nonformal education, sustainability, permaculture, transformative learning, theory of planned behaviour, value-belief-norm theory

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Preface to the revised version

I did my best but nevertheless this work is far from perfect, as most of things humans perform are. Writing anything only after having acquired the "perfect wisdom" is like the waiting for Godot. There is always some uncertainty in our decisions, even if we do not admit it any more, and it is our fate to acknowledge it, live in this imperfection, and do our best. My sincere attempt to contribute[1] in a meaningful way to the global problem of ecological crisis[2], using primarily the knowledge I acquired during my studies of psychology, is presented in this revised version of the thesis.

Summary of revisions from the May 2013 submission: The *Method* and *Results* sections experienced only slight changes, while the *Introduction* (in the first version called the "theoretical part") and the *Discussion* were changed radically. A number of pages regarding environmental concepts were moved to endnotes where they take the role of a glossary, so for an educated reader they don't clutter the introductory part any more.

Figure 1: A collage of own photos from Plukrijp –
the organic farm where the research was done

1   Introduction

The following research is a multiple case study of 11 individuals who decided to make a prolonged visit to an organic farm in Belgium, to volunteer there for different periods of time, to learn about organic agriculture, sustainability[3], community life, proper using of commons[4] or other things, and perhaps to enjoy some time in the rural environment. Their process of learning during their (sometimes repeated) stay may have caused changes in their value systems , pro-environmental attitudes, and ultimately also their behaviour after they returned back home.

I spent several months on the farm myself, first having a direct personal experience with this process (continuously in August 2011; repeatedly from January till June 2012), and later (April – May 2013), I performed the research as a participant observer, conducting in-depth interviews with people visiting and staying on the farm, asked them to tell me their personal history, their experience and what were the effects the stay on the farm had on their next life with the emphasis on the change of values, environmental attitudes and specific behaviours and actions in the area of environmental protection, resource conservation, social-ecological enterprise, and so on.

I expect the reader to come from the sphere of psychology and not necessarily environmental studies, so when I refer to important environmental concepts, I try to place a reference to extended, numbered endnotes that function as a kind of glossary. Some shorter explanations are also left in regular footnotes which are referred to by using per-page related symbols. The significant concepts are finally referred to from the Index (excluding only the Results section).

1.1   Predictors of pro-environmental behaviour

According to the meta-analysis of Bamberg and Möser (2007), a number of variables can predict the pro-environmental behaviour: these are the *pro-environmental behavioural intention*, *behavioural control*, *personal moral norm*; and a number of indirect determinants such as *problem awareness* and *feelings of guilt*. If oversimplified, we can speak of an attitude-behaviour relation, but as it will become clear soon, both terms represent a wide cluster of elements, and various theories clarify which are the determinants on both sides of the link between these two that is often believed to be causal.

A detailed review is already presented for instance in Jackson (2005) so it will not be reiterated. Two theories are selected below that are considered plausible enough (Kaiser et al., 2005), that build on top of existing theories, that are suitable as frames of reference to be discussed with the results of the following study.

1.1.1   Environmental attitudes

Gifford and Sussman define an environmental attitude as "a *concern* for the environment or caring about environmental issues" (Gifford & Sussman, 2012). Several variables influence this concern, like *age*, *gender*, *socioeconomic status*, *urban/rural*, *religion*, *politics*, *personality*, *direct experience with nature*, *education*, *environmental knowledge* etc.

This concern should not be perceived as an *unidimensional construct*. A significant research has been done on this topic in the last four decades (Gifford & Sussman, 2012). During that time several independent classifications and measures have been developed and used. When studies about this topic began to emerge in the 1970s, most of the studies developed new, untested measures instead of using those that were already verified (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010; Gifford & Sussman, 2012)[*].

Fortunately, Milfont and Duckitt (2010) combined *8 different attitude measures* to identify *10 attitude components* by multiple factor analyses. later enhanced to *12 subfactors* identified in responses to 120 questions. All these components could be reduced to just two factors: *preservation* and *utilization* dimensions (Milfont and Duckitt, as cited in Gifford and Sussmann, 2012, p.67).

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[*]Jackson (2005) also criticized the label "environmental attitudes" for being too vague – the state of knowledge in this area has already transcended its pre-scientific, naïve state, so if possible, the researcher should be more specific about the content of the term he or she is using.

Based on this analysis, the *Environmental Attitudes Inventory* was created in 2010 and now it is one of the most comprehensive inventories for measuring environmental attitudes. The 12 subfactors are (1) Enjoyment of nature; (2) Support for interventionist conservation policies; (3) Environmental movement activism; (4) Conservation motivated by anthropocentric concern; (5) Confidence in science and technology; (6) Environmental fragility; (7) Altering nature; (8) Personal conservation behaviour; (9) Human dominance over nature; (10) Human utilization of nature; (11) Ecocentric concern; and (12) Support for population growth policies (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010).

1.1.2 Pro-environmental behaviours

The plural *behaviours* is used in the heading and on several other occasions in the following text intentionally. It refers to an analogous situation to the one in the preceding chapter: there is no single, ultimate *pro-environmental behaviour*, instead there is a fuzzy set of diverse behaviours of individuals and social groups that could be considered as *pro-environmental*[*], compared to another fuzzy set of behaviours, that definitely could not be considered to be so, mostly because they are either completely indifferent to the idea of sustainability or environmental protection, or their results are opposite *to it* and also the intentions were not pro-environmental.

The pro-environmental behaviours can be mutually compared by their actual impact on the environment:

> "[C]hanging purchasing behaviour generally has greater environmental benefit than reusing or recycling available products (…) also, lowering thermostat settings or reducing car use would reduce environmental impact far more than refusing plastic bags in stores (…) Second, it is necessary to consider the feasibility of various behaviour changes and the acceptability of its consequences" (Steg & Vlek, 2009, p.309–10).

A review similar to the one just presented for "attitudes" will be presented as part of the introduction to the value-belief-norm theory below.

Geller et al. (as cited in Steg & Vlek, 2009, p.313) made a distinction between *antecedent* and *consequence* strategies for changing behaviours. The following two models mostly fit the former type but they acknowledge also the effect of variables of the latter type (feedback, rewards or penalties).

1.1.3 Theories predicting pro-environmental behaviours

Two models are presented here. The first one is known as the *theory of planned behaviour* (TPB) of Ajzen (1991). This theory is based on the *theory of reasoned action* of Ajzen and Fishbein enhancing it with another predictor called *perceived behavioural control* (similar to the concept concept of *self-efficacy* of Bandura, 1977).

TPB is explained through the lens of the *rational self-interest* (*egoistic motivation* according to Bamberg & Möser, 2007)

The second one is the *value-belief-norm theory* of support for social movements of Stern et al. (1999). This theory is inspired by the *moral-norm-activation theory* of Schwartz from the end of 1970s (as cited in Stern et al., 1999; Steg & de Groot, 2012) and expanded far beyond its original scope, but still emphasizing the *altruistic motivation*[5] as a stronger predictor of the environmental behaviour (Bamberg & Möser, 2007).

1.1.3.1 The Theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen   Icek Ajzen's Theory of planned behaviour (TPB) has its origin in an older *Theory of reasoned action* (TRA) of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Both TRA and TPB expect that *attitudes* and *subjective norms (perceived social norms)* predict the *behavioural intention* that leads to the behaviour. TPB extends TRA by focusing also on the **perceived** *behavioural control*

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[*]whether it means reducing the footprint on the environment, persuading other people to do so, enforcing policies to do so, or whatever else)

that is more psychological than the actual control (determined a lot by the physical circumstances of the individual, the financial situation etc.) A comparison of TRA with TPB (Madden et al., 1992) confirmed on a sample of 10 different behaviours that

> "inclusion of perceived behavioural control enhances the prediction of behavioural intention and behaviour. Consistent with the theory of planned behaviour, the effects of perceived behavioural control on a target behaviour are most vivid when the behaviour presents some problem with respect to control."
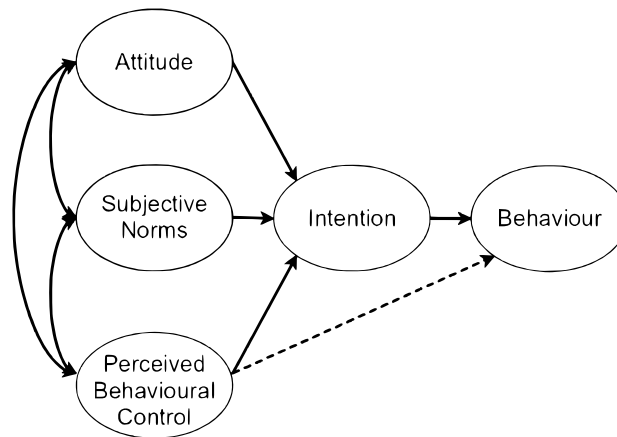

Figure 2: Model of the Theory of planned behaviour as published in Ajzen (1991, p.182)

According to the model, a combination of an *attitude towards behaviour*, a *perceived social norm*, and a *perceived behavioural control* leads to specific behavioural intentions, and this intention could then be made manifest into the behaviour itself (Ajzen, 1991).

Different behaviours are correlated in different degrees with the three predictors. For example, in an "intention to use transportation other than car", the *perceived control* scored r = 0.49, being the most significant predictor, while *attitude* scored r = 0.24 and *subjective norm* r = 0.18 (Harland, Staats and Wilke, as cited in Ajzen, 2010). For a different behavioural intention ("intention to engage in environmental activism"), the *perceived control* became—in contrast to the former example—the least significant predictor, scoring r = 0.16, while the *subjective* norm scored r = 0.28 and *attitude* scored r = 0.34 (Fielding, McDonald and Louis, as cited in Ajzen, 2010).

When Icek Ajzen opened a Prague 2010 seminar on Theory of Planned Behaviour with a keynote called *Environmental Protection and the Theory of Planned Behavior* (Ajzen, 2010) he showed a series of claims on energy-saving behaviours with correlations between the general pro-environmental attitudes of participants of their research, and the specific behaviour. The specific energy-saving behaviours included questions like "I use rechargeable batteries", "I make sure to recycle regularly", or "I am a member of an environmental organization". For eight of such assertions, the correlations fluctuated between r = 0.12 for "I use rechargeable batteries" to r = 0.31 for "I wait until I have a full load before doing my laundry" which was the only correlation having p < 0.05 (Ajzen, 2010) The conclusion is clear: *General* attitudes are clearly not enough to predict a *particular* behaviour, but a particular behavioural intention is much closer to the manifest behaviour (see the following part).

A 2001 meta-analysis of Armitage and Conner (2001) measured mean correlations between the three predictors in Ajzen's model on a sample of N = 185 studies. The three predictors combined together correlate with r = 0.63 (therefore explaining 39 % of the variance) to the *intention*; if measured separately the r = 0.49 for the *attitude toward the behaviour*, r = 0.34 for *subjective norm* and r = 0.43 for *perceived behavioural control*. The mean correlation between *behavioural intention* (BI) and *behaviour* was r = 0.47

and r = 0.37 between *perceived behavioural control* (PBC) and *behaviour* directly. Correlation *BI* together with *PBC* to the *behaviour*, r = 0.52 (R² = 0.27). All these correlations had p < 0.001 in χ^2 goodness-of-fit test.

The model of Ajzen does not include the influence of personal *moral* norms and social norms that the recent meta-analysis of Bamberg & Möser (2007) add to Ajzen's model. Here is the improved version of the model together with the correlations between elements. It should be noted particularly that the social norm is only an indirect predictor to the behavioural intention.
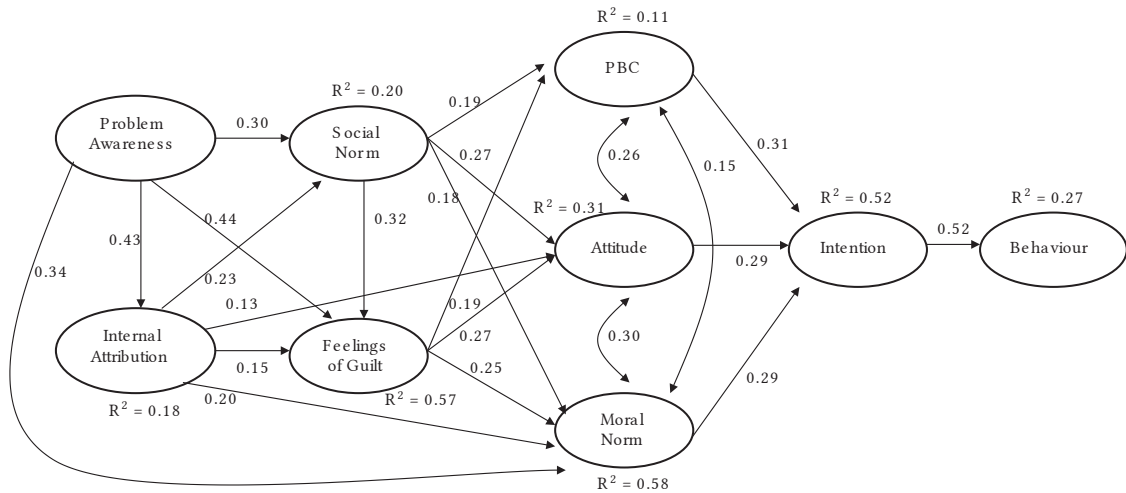
Results of the MASEM based on pooled random-effects correlations, PBC ¼ perceived behavioural control, single-headed arrows ¼ standardised path-coefficients; double-headed arrows ¼ correlations, R² ¼ explained variance.

Figure 3: The improved TPB model as published in Bamberg and Möser (2007, p.16)

This meta-analysis used 46 studies based on Ajzen's theory, it actually replicated and extended the meta-analysis of Hines et al. (as cited in Bamberg and Möser, 2007). In case of environmentally friendly behaviour the lack of actual control is often *the* problem: people would like to do something right, but perhaps they lack an idea of what to actually do in order to accomplish the vision. The *actual control* links the *perceived behavioural control* and the *behaviour*. Corral-Verdugo (2002) uses the term *pro-environmental competency* to describe this knowledge or skill *in response to a requirement* (Ribes, as cited in Corral-Verdugo, 2002, p.533).

Pro-environmental competency model of Corral-Verdugo Pro-environmental competency is not a mere skill, but rather the *skill* and a motivational component (*requirement*). Corral-Verdugo (2002) discovered that the external circumstances have heavy influence on the level of pro-environmental competency: living in a city where water is scarce is pushing its citizens to have strong motivations *and* actual conservation-oriented behaviours. It is, at the same time, negatively correlated with the anthropocentric beliefs embodied in the *Human Exemptionalism Worldview Paradigm* which is explained in the following paragraphs.
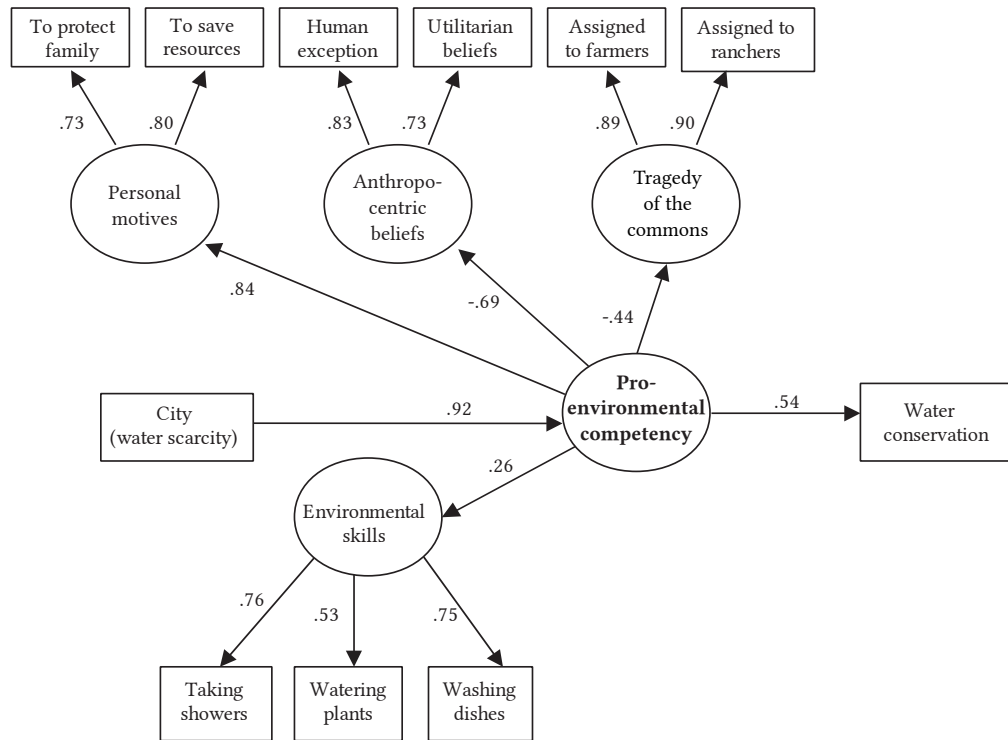
NOTE: Personal motives, cultural beliefs, and environmental perceptions (tragedy of the commons) covariate with effective environmental responses (skills) under the influence of PEC, which also affects proenvironmental behavior (water conservation). In turn, PEC is affected by water scarcity, predominant in one city. All factor loadings and structural coefficients are significant ($p < .05$). N = 200; method = maximum likelihood; dependent variable's R = .30; goodness of fit: χ = 43.0 (34 df) , p = .47, Normed Fit Index = 0.95, Non-Normed Fit Index = 1.00, Comparative Fit Index = 1.0.

Figure 4: The pro-environmental competency (PEC) model as published in Corral-Verdugo (2002, p.545).

1.1.3.2   The Value-Belief-Norm model of Stern et al.   The *value-belief-norm theory* of support for social movements is having its origins mainly in the *moral-norm-activation* theory of Schwartz.

This model expects that the pro-environmental values are the cause for pro-environmental beliefs and attitudes, these shape the personal norms which ultimately lead to pro-environmental behaviour (Stern et al., 1999; Milfont & Duckitt, 2010). The models classifies the behaviours into 3 different *supportive, non-activist* kinds of behaviours (*environmental citizenship, policy support* and *private-sphere behaviours* that include also recycling etc.). This model expects that the behaviour is triggered in the first place by preference of *self-transcendence* (here referred as "altruistic values") over *self-enhancement* (here referred as "egoistic values").

Such person would probably also score high on the *New Ecological Paradigm Scale* of Dunlap et al. (2000), originally developed in 1978 as *New Environmental Paradigm Scale*" and revised in 1990s. Scoring high on NEP scale signalizes generalized awareness of "adverse consequences" of our actions on the environment. This—if it triggers a kind of *personal responsibility* to mitigate these adverse consequences to restore the threatened *values*—leads to a formation of a pro-environmental personal norm that is the single most important predictor of both activist behaviour and three distinct types of non-activist, "supportive" behaviours.
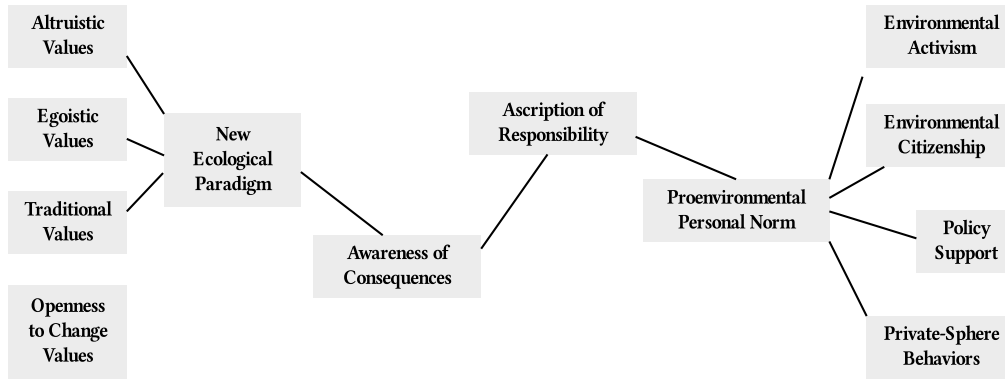
Figure 5: The causal chain of elements as proposed by the value-belief-norm model (Stern et al., 1999).
Note: *Egoistic* and *traditional values* have negative correlations to the NEP.

The authors claim that the VBN theory "... compared with other prevalent theories, offers the best available account of support for the environmental movement" (Stern et al., 1999). However, if we narrow the focus to a single perspective (e.g. on conservation behaviours only) other theories like the Ajzen's TPB may show better results. The added value of this theory is that it was one of the first attempts to seriously link several constructs, models and measures on social psychology of pro-environmental behaviour, namely:

1. the *self-transcendence* vs. *self-enhancement* of Schwartz (as cited in Stern et al., 1999);

2. *personal values* (from 3 value orientations of Kalof, as cited in Stern et al., 1999 – *self-interest*, *altruism towards other humans, altruism towards other species and the biosphere*[*]);

3. *New Ecological Paradigm* (a view that "human actions have substantial adverse effect on a fragile biosphere", posited and presented in a NEP scale by Dunlap et al., 2000);

4. *deep-rooted dispositions* (*egalitarianism, hierarchy, individualism, fatalism* – Dake, as cited in Stern et al., 1999) derived from *cultural theory*;

5. the theory of *post-materialist values* (Inglehart, as cited in Stern et al., 1999);

6. perception of *sacredness of nature* from a theistic or non-theistic point of view (ibid.)

VBN theory uses all of these theories to build a stronger, systematic theory. "[T]here has been no effort until now to compare all of them in any systematic way" (Stern et al., 1999, p. 86). The authors actually didn't *compare* them, but found instead that these already existing concepts could be linked to make a causal chain (see Fig. 5).

1.1.4   Contrasting the TPB and VBN model

Kaiser et al. (2005) compared the TPB and VBN to find out which model performs better in explaining the pathway towards *conservation behaviour* (including the reduction of over-consumption[6]). Both models showed strong explanatory power for the conservation behaviour (95 % for TPB's "behavioural intention", and 64 % for VBN's "pro-environmental personal norms" – Kaiser et al., 2005). The excellent fit of Ajzen's model to explain conservation behaviour and not-so-perfect fit for the VBN model can be explained by the fact that while Ajzen's model is going directly from *behavioural intention [to conserve resources]* to *[conservation] behaviour*, the Stern's model is suitable to explain a wider range of non-activist environmental support (including, but limited to, *conservation behaviour*) *at the same time*.

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[*]The research of Stern et al. did not find differences between the latter two, they merged into a single group.

Regarding the original Schwartz's dichotomy, more recent research shows that "concern for the environment correlates positively with both self-enhancement (egoistic) and self-transcendent (altruistic) value orientations. Concern for over-consumption, by contrast, correlated positively with the self-transcendent value orientation, but negatively with the self-enhancement value orientation" (Zavestocki, as cited in Jackson, 2005, p. 53). Again it confirms that general pro-environmental statements may differ from actual behaviours, where the will to sacrifice some personal gain (to consume less) is strongly determined by the underlying value orientation rather than the self-reported concern.

While TPB may be better suited to particular behaviours, VBN offers a wider perspective that acknowledges topics prevalent in the deep ecology movement. These include the shift towards the biocentric *New Ecological Paradigm – NEP*[*] – compared to the "old" *Human Exemptionalism Worldview Paradigm – HEP* – that is closely linked to the moral considerations that the original TPB lacks. VBN could also explain better the gradual change in personal identity, personal norms and various kinds of pro-environmental supportive (non-activist), or direct (activist) behaviours. What neither theory explains adequately is the shift from non-activist types of pro-environmental behaviour to the activist one.

The change of perspective from the hegemonic HEP to the alternative NEP could be traced on individual, group-wise, societal, national and global level, and these changes, whether perceived, or actual, are in some circles (within the deep-ecological, feminist and new-age movement) impatiently anticipated since 1960s, and in other circles (of conservative value orientation) perceived as a threat to the social order, *status quo* in the distribution of wealth among nations and regions etc. (This explains why the correlation of conservative value orientation to NEP in the VBN theory is negative.)

The VBN model does not particularly focus on the dynamics of the personal change of paradigm (whether there is none, gradual in the long term, or abrupt). For the latter a *theory of transformative learning* was developed, and such a process could be considered as one instance of this paradigm change that can more probably happen if some particular circumstances are present. assume that the settings at the organic farm where I did the research are offering such circumstances, which support also some of the accounts of the participants of the research who experienced such a transformation during their stay on the organic farm.

1.2 The process of change of values and attitudes

1.2.1 Change towards pro-environmental behaviour

The aim of formal environmental educationation at schools, informal education done by environmental NGOs, environmental activism in general, or setting up environmental policies is the change of behaviours of individuals, communities, businesses, government and society as a whole. Today,

1. the culture is completely built and dependent upon the wealth of nature and its life (Lovelock, 2006; Šmajs, 2008),

2. yet it does not fully take this fact into consideration and that it cannot be ever changed,

3. thus, the culture uses the natural resources in ways that severely harm the "web of life", decrease the carrying capacity[†] of the environment, and deepen the dependence of this culture on certain non-renewable resources that are vital for maintaining it (WWF, 2012).

The intended change should reverse this tendency[‡].

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[*]A further enhancement of the HEP-NEP dichotomy was proposed by Corral-Verdugo et al. (2008) where they developed and empirically tested a measure called *New Human Interdependence Paradigm Scale.* For their specific study of predicting water conservation behaviour their model showed a little bit better results, but that should not be generalized yet.

[†]See the explanation in the endnote on p. 65.

[‡]The harm is usually felt stronger by those who have not caused most of the damage – this issue became the reason for the *environmental justice*[7] movement, that according to Bullard & Johnson, 2000, now equates to the generic social justice and civil rights movement).

Two complementary approaches exist to do this job – the top-down and the bottom-up direction. The former involves setting up proper environmental policies, ecological taxes etc. The latter comprises of national environmental NGOs and the local communities which are the grass-roots movement in the narrow sense.

The results of certain policies on the changes in pro-environmental behaviour are somewhat easier to assess. Rise of a deep ecology / new age / feminist movement spread the meme that we should indeed take the (co)-responsibility for the environment[8], that the change in the society must come from the change of an individual, etc. It is not clear what spreading of this meme actually changed or not, because if was part of the change in society that involved many other things too.

The individuals, either as independent citizens, or organized in grass-roots initiatives or NGOs, have some power to influence the policy-making process (c.f. Cable & Benson, 1993; Bullard & Johnson, 2000). At the same time proper policies are effective interventions in various non-efficient behaviours (Steg & Vlek, 2009) and their acceptance in the population tend to rise *after* a policy is implemented (if it the acceptance was lower before its implementation – ibid.).

1.2.2 Transformative learning

The models presented above did not tell much about the dynamics of the change over time. Change in personal values or attitudes happens by a certain process of learning from the external cues but according to the cognitive and social psychological knowledge, our tendency to process new information is significantly formed by previous information and the way how it our identity and sense of self is built on them. These processes are well known for decades as *cognitive heuristics* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973 and others), the *cognitive bias* that is (in)famous for its ubiquitous character (Nickerson, 1998) or *belief perseverance* (Guenther & Alicke, 2008) that allows us to hold certain beliefs despite receiving contradictory evidence. What happens if such pieces of evidence cannot be considered as some anomalies any more? The belief system—the *frame of reference*—needs to be more or less radically transformed to allow such evidence be compatible with it, to regain the lost congruency. The dynamics and the act of such abrupt change is described by a theory of *transformative learning* of Jack Mezirow. Transformative learning could be considered as *one type of the change of attitudes and behaviours* as presented by the TPB or VBN models outlined in the previous chapter. The reason why this model is presented below is that it is a part of a hypothesis regarding the research at the organic farm, as will be disclosed later on.

What are the specifics of learning called to be transformative? A definition of Jack Mezirow, who used this term, will be used in this section, but sometimes other authors use the same term but with a different meaning (e.g. Wals & Corcoran, 2005)

Mezirow defines transformative learning as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1997). By a *frame of reference* Mezirow considers the life-world of an individual consisting of "associations, concepts, values, feelings, [and] conditioned responses" (ibid.), generally speaking containing cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects. They can be either *habits of mind* which are more stable components, similar to "values," or "attitudes", or *points of view* which are the short-term states and feelings (ibid.). Mezirow considers *four processes of learning:*

1. elaborating/supporting existing point of view

2. establishing a new point of view

3. gradually transforming a current point of view (thanks to "non-fitting" experience that is critically reflected and then the point of view is changed)

4. generalized transformation of a current point of view (by becoming critically reflective of our generalized bias in a particular area; not a common way if previous options are feasible) (Mezirow, 1997, p.7)

For Mezirow, an important aim in the adult education is achieving the *autonomy of an individual* in the sense of "understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's

own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experiences of others who share universal values" (ibid.). This autonomous level cannot be achieved simply by a passive learning of some information prepared in a textbook or presented during some lectures – it requires critical thinking in the process. Achieving this level could be compared to the *post-conventional level* in the *stages of moral development* of Kohlberg & Kramer (1969, p.101) where Kohlberg defines it as a "… clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the group or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups." A major difference between Kohlberg and Mezirow is in the fact that Kohlberg considered the post-conventional stage as a kind of extravagance that not many people are able to reach within their lifetime. Mezirow (1997), on the other hand, claims that "… transformative learning is not an add-on. It is the essence of adult education (…) *[and its goal is]* to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others." Here we already see a striking similarity to the Jung's concept of *individuation* (Dirkx, 2000), indeed there is a whole current in the transformative learning approach that emphasises not just the conceptual rebuilding during the process, but the "mytho-poetic" perspective that perceives the process of transformative learning as leading "not back to the life of the mind, as we might find with reflection and analysis, but to soul" (ibid.)

Not everyone shares Mezirow's optimism, the distribution of intellectual faculties in the population may prevent significant part of the population to ever reach the autonomous stage presented either by Kohlberg or by Mezirow. "Transformative learning is not for everyone, and neither is it applicable to all fields of study", says Moore (2005) who otherwise is a huge proponent of the transformative learning, imagining possible reformation of the higher education in the academia[9]. A radical change of the frame of reference (for example from the HEP to NEP paradigm) in a larger scale is often considered — particularly in the new age, eco-activist and deep ecology movement — as an imperative for the humanity, because the current situation is perceived by these groups as very grave (Capriles, 2006a; Meadows et al., 2004). Personally, I share this concern to a large extent[10].

1.2.3 How to Become a Part of the Solution?

Where should a person go if he or she wants to learn how to "become a part of the solution" (Whitefield, 2011), supposing neither the family, nor the official education at school did it properly? One option could be visiting a place that claims to already work in a "sustainable" way. This place can be an eco-village, an organic farm, or a transition initiative in a town or a city. All of them should offer direct contact with the soil that is managed in a responsible way, showing a way of living with a significantly reduced ecological footprint etc.

A system allowing to spend some time on an organic farm, learning things that are already performed on the place, is called WWOOF (*world-wide opportunities on organic farms*). Basically it is a volunteering on such a place, working usually five to six hours a day in exchange for a place to live, food and often other services, but not receiving any wage for doing the job.

A detailed description of this system, including its history and analysis is already done in various papers (Alvarez, 2012; Kotůlek, 2012; McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2008). Organic farms offering voluntary work are generally commercial farms selling their production in some way (community-supported agriculture, consumer's cooperative etc.).

Plukrijp, the place where I did the following research, is different. Frank Ruymen has founded the place 6 years ago with the intention to help people transcend their limited perceptions of the world and themselves, by using partially similar therapeutic approach as the proponents of the British anti-psychiatry movement, represented by D. Cooper or R. D. Laing, proposed in the 1960s and 1970s (Crossley, 1998). I lack any mention of WWOOF and anti-psychiatry in the literature.

1.3 Plukrijp

Plukrijp means "ripe and ready" in Dutch language. It is also a name of an unconventional organic farm and a non-profit organization in Belgium.

Formally, *Plukrijp* is a non-profit organization according to the Flemish law (v. z. w.[*]) established in 2008. The activity of this v.z.w. takes place on the land of several houses and garden-style fields in Schriek, 35 km south-east from Antwerp.

Frank Ruymen (in the following text often called just "Frank"), founder of the place, defines Plukrijp on the website www.plukrijp.be as follows:

> "We work the land with volunteers, a mix of beginners and experts in the subject of growing vegetables. The work we do is in cooperation with nature, so we try to do things in a logical way. This is not always easy cause—mostly with human beings—everyone has its own opinion or view on the situation. That's why a big part of Plukrijp is learning to be ourselves together with others in a constructive and communicative atmosphere" (Plukrijp, 2013a)

1.3.1 Physical Appearance

On the site there is a house where the Ruymen family lives, a few other buildings containing a workshop, a sauna, a storage house, a communal kitchen, a dining room, a library, compost toilets and other facilities. Around these buildings about 2 ha of gardens are present on two fields, the former one being the direct backyard of the buildings, the latter being about 500 m far from the buildings and connected by a public road.

The fields are rented by the Ruymen family to the members of the v.z.w. People who are interested may become members by giving a symbolic yearly fee.

The land was originally used as a part of the cooperative vegetable organic farm producing baskets of fruits and vegetables to customers in Antwerp and also doing a wholesale business in organic fruit and vegetables. In 2003 the business was terminated.

The land was not actively cultivated from 2004 to 2007. Starting the v.z.w. in 2008, the land started to be cultivated again, but not for the purpose of producing organic fruits and vegetables commercially any more, but for the purpose of promoting the *permaculture*[11] which is the official *raison d'être* of the v.z.w. In the early days a kind of a small *Rainbow Gathering*[†] took place on the land.

Because of the former business, a lot of tools remain there available, including wooden pallets, lots of plastic boxes, and heaps of other material that meanwhile accumulated independently from the business operations: second-hand clothes, old bikes, many tools in the workshop, thousands of smaller boxes, glass jars, plastic bottles and other "waste" materials kept to be reused, if possible, in the future. The topic of (absence of) certain aesthetics was one of the optional questions asked to participants, because before the formal interviews started, I heard some complaints about the (visual) unpleasantness of this storage. There are at least two reasons why boxes and heaps of miscellaneous stuff are kept on-site: First, most of the things could serve a meaningful purpose in the future either on the farm or to somebody who comes and takes some of them away, if not stored there it would be thrown away, and this would be against the *reduce–reuse–recycle* mantra practised for reducing the ecological footprint. Second, a certain psychological tension that these sceneries may evoke is said to be intentional (Ruymen, 2013a) in order to allow people realize how much waste our style of living is produced every day, how much of this waste could be easily reused, or how much of certain types of waste (particularly the electronic waste, or "e-waste") ends in illegal dump sites in Africa and elsewhere (Robinson, 2009)[12]. Together with other intentional elements present on the site, this one is assumed to serve as a demonstrative object for

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[*]vereniging zonder winstoogmerk

[†]*Rainbow gathering* is usually "a month-long gathering which has its roots in the remnants of the American counter-culture of the early 1970s", it "brings together members of different New Age and Neopagan groups to temporarily form a community" (Tavory & Goodman, 2009, p.263)

the education in the closed-loop life cycles in nature and the incompatibility of many cultural artefacts to even resemble this closed system.

1.3.2 Mode of Operation

The mode of operation resembles partially the *community-supported agriculture (CSA)* model of reducing the distinctions and length of the distribution chain between the producer and the consumer (of agricultural products). Wilkinson (2001) classifies CSA programs into four types, (1) farmer-managed, (2) shareholder/subscriber, (3) farmer cooperative, and (4) farmer-shareholder cooperative ("local residents and nearby farmers jointly own the CSA program's resources and together manage all aspects of the program" – Wilkinson, 2001). The fourth type is closest to the mode of operation of Plukrijp, but still is significantly different from it. Plukrijp is formally not a cooperative. It is an informal group of people interested and working on the land as they formally become members of the v.z.w. that has the land rented when they donate at least 1 €.

Plukrijp adopted certain principles that are declared and more or less present at the Rainbow Family of Living Light *Rainbow Gatherings* (Andy, ndb,n; Niman, 2003; Savoye, nd; Tavory & Goodman, 2009), namely the "magic hat" for receiving voluntary financial contributions from anyone coming to the place and/or staying there, a *default* policy of accepting people of all races, colours, beliefs etc., common meals, not abusing alcohol and other drugs, etc. However, the significant difference lies in the fact that while Rainbow Gatherings are always "temporary communities, dependent upon Babylon[*] for material sustenance" (Niman, 2003, p.33), Plukrijp is one place with a land cultivated for years, used for a partial food self-sufficiency, developing long term relationships with nearby businesses and the social neighbourhood, not rejecting the technology and society *per se.* Also, while at Rainbow Gatherings the no-drug policy is usually impossible to enforce (so in practice, many people tend to smoke cannabis – Andy, nda), at Plukrijp this requirement is demanded more strictly.

1.3.3 The Plukrijp Blueprint

Frank Ruymen prepared for me—before I arrived there in March 2013—a kind of a blueprint of Plukrijp (Ruymen, 2013b) where basic principles and aspects of Plukrijp are mentioned. It served as a major source of inspiration for the research questions that I asked during the interviews while I was staying there. Have a look at the *Addendum B* for that blueprint with my explanation.

1.3.4 Plukrijp as an Nonformal Education Site

From some points of the "blueprint" it is clear that Plukrijp could be considered as a site where education takes place. What kind of education is it? It does not belong to the official education system and it is mostly concerned with adult education. According to Coombs and Ahmed (as cited in La Belle, 1982), who made a distinction between an *informal* (implicit/accidental) and a *nonformal* (explicit, organized, but outside the official framework) education, Plukrijp serves both of them. All the time the *informal* education takes place (during everyday work, social interaction, evening meetings), and on particular moments, *nonformal* organized education blocks are organized (a permaculture design course, a beekeeping workshop etc.).

Generally, no distinction between "nonformal" and "informal" is considered. Straka (2004) doubts whether we could even clearly define "informal" education as such—rather, he classifies education into *explicit, implicit* and *incidental.* The last one equals "informal" in the former classification, while *explicit* and *implicit* could happen both in the official education system and outside of it.

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[*] A term in the "Rainbow lingo" referring to the surrounding (capitalist) society from which the temporary community tends to distance. The term is often bearing pejorative connotations in this context.

1.3.5 Plukrijp as a Community

Community can mean various things, often the population of a city part is called a "community", and various religious groups also form a kind of a "community". The definition of Scott Peck however narrows the term significantly[13], and I believe that Plukrijp and its social dynamics could tentatively (Peck, 1990) fit into this kind of an "elitist" definition.

1.3.6 Group Newcomers: Socializing the Newcomer and Newcomer Influence

The specifics at Plukrijp is that people always come and go, so there is actually no fixed group of people that could gradually go through stages as Peck presents them. Both processes of socialization of the newcomer and influencing the group by the newcomer (Cini, 2001) happen simultaneously.

Some members stay at Plukrijp for months and some come repeatedly for years, being at the place frequently—every weekend, every second week etc. These people maintain and transmit to newcomers most of the unwritten rules and principles of the community. The stability of the community is ensured by these long-term staying members but the actual form is significantly moderated by the visitors, newcomers and people staying for shorter period. It is expected that newcomers will have certain respect to the actually respected principles and rules, willing to learn them and follow them. However, an option to offer one's own contribution that actually changes these principles and rules is always there. By knowing more in detail about how things work (which happens usually after a more prolonged stay) one has naturally a stronger position to propose changes to the functioning. But because no hierarchical structure of "ranks" exists, this is not a formal obligation but a form of a tradition of seniorate. If a newcomer is able to have insights good enough after one day long stay, and he is persuasive enough to the other members, he can already participate in the democratic forum.

1.3.7 Research Theme, Questions and Expected Results

Main Theme / Question

1. **"What is the process of change of attitudes (with the focus on pro-environmental ones), behaviour and values in people staying at Plukrijp?"**

Secondary Questions

1. "Do participants experience instances of 'transformative learning' defined by Mezirow during their stay at Plukrijp and how it is?"

2. "What activities do people initiate and perform after leaving Plukrijp, motivated/inspired by their stay?"

Hypotheses / Expected Results   Living in a community where mostly locally grown organic food is eaten, discussions about sustainable living and organic agriculture take place every day and most of the daytime is spend with other people of the community may trigger "transformative learning" (Kerton & Sinclair, 2010). All three conditions important for fostering transformative learning are met at Plukrijp: (1) *emphasis on critical reflection*, (2) *problem-posing education* (Freire, 1970) and (3) *learning through dialogue* (Kerton & Sinclair, 2010). The constructivist tradition drawing from the pragmatic approach of Dewey et al. emphasizes also the "learning by doing" based on the truism that "in action a person cannot but learn" (Kivinen & Ristelä, 2002).

Even if the outcomes could not be considered as an instance of transformative learning, the changes of attitudes, behaviours and values are important parts of the stories of individuals. Although there may exist a conflict for example between a therapist having his ideal of "mental sanity" of an individual and an ecologist having his ideal of "living below the carrying capacity of the ecosystem", in many cases these ideals are compatible. The changes of attitudes, behaviours etc. can therefore be judged based on

these criteria. In any case, here I *expect* that generally the experience of stay at the organic farm has either the effect of triggering the transformative learning, or changing attitudes and behaviours towards those that are closer to he ideal of "environmental sustainability", and changing values where the natural environment gets its intrinsic value and is not neglected any more.

Raison d'être This study could target readers from basically 4 different environments:

1. **People of Plukrijp**

   – *For "insiders" in the community this may be the first time a systematic written report is done about people who were more or less influenced by the place, and based on that, made sometimes very significant changes in their life, realized various projects in the society etc. It could be inspiring for others to read stories of those that may not be present in the moment these people arrive. For Frank and people who constitute the "core" of the community today (ensuring its long-term stability stronger than the short-term visitors)" I hope that some of the stories will serve as a motivation to continue doing their best to ensure the positive results continue to happen.*

2. **Psychologists and Therapists**

   – *Plukrijp may have a profound effect on the psychological state of an individual, it resembles in many aspects a formal therapeutic community. Although the text itself may not be enough to get inspired of what techniques, strategies etc. apply elsewhere to get certain benefit, it may encourage some to visit such a place or a similar one to observe and experience it directly first-hand. From the point of sustainability, related to finding a meaning in life, several cases presented below show a similar pattern of finding something the individual considers so important that even leaving a well-paid job is worth it just to follow that. Perhaps various "illnesses" including depressions, chronic fatigue syndrome etc. are not caused by some biological cause but by the lack of meaning in the life of an individual.*

3. **Teachers and Theorists of Education**

   – *The process of learning involved in all the cases presented below is intrinsically entangled with looking for a meaning, which in turn is a source of an intrinsic motivation. Because the problem of motivation is an everlasting problem in education, particularly in systems where pupils/students are obliged to attend (primary and secondary schools) some ideas may be drawn from the "practical" education where the motivation may arise as a result of finding an intrinsic meaning.*

4. **Ecologists and Sustainability Theorists**

   – *The cases presented show a wide range of behaviours that the individuals themselves generally perceive as "ecological" or "sustainable". It is up to the professionals to assess the impacts of such behaviour, to analyse the activating events leading to it, and together with professionals in other disciplines like psychologists, work on developing policies that foster behaviours that are considered as most wholesome and efficient in heading towards a really sustainable future.*

2   Method

2.1   Sample

The main sample consisted of 11 volunteers (9 male, 2 female[*]) living in the community or briefly visiting the place. These volunteers were interviewed during my stay on the place (8th March to 5th April 2013). I generally did not ask for other personal information but the age (average 35,8; sd 9,2; median 32 years)

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[*]this imbalance roughly corresponds with the higher percentage of males staying of prolonged period there

because for the purpose of this exploration I did not consider it as necessary; certain other information was retrieved during the interviews but only if it emerged as an important factor to better understand certain actions.

The participants that stayed for prolonged periods and those that already developed significant projects out of Plukrijp, being inspired by their former stay there, were preferred for the interview. Except for a few people interviewed when they came for one day only and asked themselves to share their story, or being recommended to me by Frank (who knew them beforehand), all of the participants were having several informal conversations with me before the formal interview was done. The criterion for being chosen for the interview was therefore "having an interesting story that could serve as a prototypic example". The former informal conversations allowed me to do this subjective selection. The reason to be so selective is that there already exists a handful studies of "regular" WWOOF volunteers (e.g. Alvarez, 2012; Melin, 2012) that give quite exhaustive accounts of this particular group of people. Here the emphasis is on people that have some power to influence others. Among those in the sample are people who, inspired by their stay at Plukrijp, initiated a Transition movement in their neighbourhood, started a community garden, a bee-keeping course, a reform of social services in a big city, etc. Stake (1995) admits the basic limitation in qualitative inquiry that "there is always too little time" (p.51), "our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited (p.4), thus we should "maximize what we can learn" and "we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry" (ibid.). Because cases are not good for sampling research, even in case of doing an inter-case analysis, the results could not be generalized to some "population".

In addition to these formal interviews, other data were obtained by engaged observation, informal everyday and not recorded interviews, and group discussions, where some handwritten notes exist. These complementary sources of data are not analysed here; at this moment they were helpful only to refine the Discussion. Some are planned to be presented later in a form of an article.

Ethical Considerations, Informed Consent   Readers except those who stayed on the farm while I was doing the research there should not be able to trace the cases presented here to the real people behind them. Names of the participants were changed.

All participants were however asked at the very beginning for the informed consent, particularly that the interview will be recorded in audio, and handwritten notes will be taken during the interview, both outputs will be used for the purpose of the thesis followed by a journal article, and all these results will be publicly available. The participants were free to not reply if they would not like to, and at the end of each interview, I again asked if they are satisfied with the responses they have given me, with the offer to declare any information they consider now as confidential to be particularly omitted from the published papers.

Except for one participant where this desire was expressed for one particular topic opened during the interview, where omitting this information does not hurt the validity of the account in general yet it significantly helps protecting confidential information. As the APA 6th ed. manual recommends when writing case studies, "authors carefully consider the balance between providing important illustrative material and using confidential case material responsibly" (American Psychological Association, 2010), I believe this responsibility lies in allowing disclosure of "success stories" and anonymizing everything that (a) the participant himself chooses to keep confidential and (b) that could possibly cause any harm to the participant.

All the informed consents are part of the audio recordings which I keep archived. Neither the audio recordings nor full transcriptions are ever going to be published in verbatim form except for brief quotations which the participants agreed upon.

2.2   Methods of Data Collection

The *data corpus* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is composed of responses of participants from semi-structured in-depth interviews, of informal conversations done during the participant observation, of the field

notes taken during the participant observation, of notes taken during explicit education moments (permaculture design course, critical analysis of a documentary seen) and of the theoretical foundation describing the issues studied. The primary *data set* is made from the semi-structured interviews, while the other elements of the *corpus* are secondary to that and are not presented nor analysed separately in this research. Some could be, however, used in the future to make a new analysis – for example, the questionnaire used (p.83) could be a promising source of data if a more rigorous methodology of data analysis is set beforehand and a big enough sample is obtained.

Semi-Structured Interviews This method was the principal one in this research. The set of questions was partially prepared and written down before arriving at the place. Some areas were added by a proposal and demand of Frank who is running the community farm. The questions were adjusted after each interview and some of them were omitted in cases it was not considered as meaningful.

Many questions were formulated on a case to case basis *(ad hoc)* based on replies on previous questions. A great degree of freedom was given to the participants to let them speak about things they considered as personally relevant. This way I was often enriched by what I have heard and this openness allowed to open neighbouring topics that shed a new light onto the account, reducing the bias that would have occurred if the interviews were conducted in a more structured, previously prepared style. "Unless one has engaged deeply with the participant and their concerns, unless one has listened attentively and probed in order to learn more about their lifeworld, then the data will be too thin for analysis", state Smith et al. (2009, p.58) in their remarks to doing a phenomenological analysis.

"Not all cases will work out well", says Stake (1995, p.7) in the *Art of Case Study Research,* and acknowledges that an important part of researcher's job is to be able to drop those that don't enrich our understanding much and to focus on those that do. For this reason, the way how the cases are presented here is not to present each and every case in grand detail, but rather to present all the cases in the first run in a very brief way, and then in the second run present only the well saturated themes that emerged, illustrating these themes with the verbatim extracts from the interviews, grounding these more abstract categories back to the data. As would be clear to the one who would make a frequency statistics of how often was one or the other participant quoted in this part, some of the participants tend to saturate the themes much more than others. In a possible follow-up or a shorter article prepared for publication, an inequality even stronger would be created, as the less salient concepts would be dropped completely to allow focusing on those that allow to move beyond the superficial.

Participant (Engaged) Observation I was living for almost one month on the farm, being in 24h contact, 7 days a week with all the people living there, preparing common meals, working together on the garden, doing leisure activities, discussing. Yet people knew about my research activity. In the four-fold classification of stances of the observer by Raymond Gold, as presented by Kawulich (2005), I was staying on the "participant as observer" stance, being the second level out of four (on the continuum from "complete participant" concealing even the research interest, to "complete observer" being even hidden from the actors). "The researcher is a participant in the group who is observing others and who is interested more in observing than in participating…" (Kawulich, 2005). The author proposes the third level, "observer as participant", as "the most ethical approach to observation" (ibid.), however at this level, "the researcher is an observer who is not a member of the group" (ibid.) which didn't occur, first because with this stance the research would not be possible on the place, and second, that I was already a "member of the group" before I even started thinking about the possibility of conducting there a research some time later. (My first visit to Plukrijp happened in August 2011, took 3 weeks, and a series of further visits followed from January to June 2012, where I spend several weekends, alternating this way my study at Université de Liège I was engaged at that time. During this series of visits I was already contemplating the option to return to do a research, however not yet revealing this possible intention to anyone except Frank, the founder.)

The participant observation was crucial to get a deep knowledge of the place and the social dynamics, to be able to ask relevant questions, and most important, to get the necessary level of trust of the participants in the interviews so they could open up enough.

Questionnaire   In the second week of my stay at Plukrijp I prepared an online questionnaire (Google form) that was published on Plukrijp's website offering roughly the same questions that I used in the interviews. (The full set of questions used in the interview is in the *Addendum A.*)

To get a consent of using the results in the research, an obligatory part of the questionnaire was to check a box entitled "I acknowledge and I agree" below a text saying:

> *"Disclaimer: Replies from this questionnaire will be used for the purpose of writing a case study about Plukrijp and its people that will be published as a Graduate (Master) thesis at Masaryk University, Brno, The Czech Republic. It will be publicly accessible in English language through the University website and other websites."*

The aim was to attract some people having already an experience from Plukrijp but not being present when I was at Plukrijp. to receive valuable information, and perhaps, to invite them to come to Plukrijp in person.

Only a number of 7 responses were recorded (4 male, 3 female; average age 35,3; sd 9,6; median 37 years). 3 responses come from people I later interviewed in person, two of these interviews were done thanks to this preliminary questionnaire, serving therefore as a kind of a "teaser". One more reply came from a person that I had an informal conversation in Antwerp.

The replies were generally well structured and detailed (average length = 3325, sd = 1448 characters). They helped me to adjust complementary questions to those that became later participants in the face to face interview. A separate analysis of the contents of these questionnaire responses is not a part of this study, however.

2.3   Method of Data Analysis and Interpretation

The individual interviews are considered as multiple case studies that are partial processed independently, at the end a plain list of themes is presented but the cross-case analysis is left to the Discussion.

Thematic analysis   A method of *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006), considered as a "foundational method for qualitative analysis" (ibid.) is used to do elementary data processing, picking relevant concepts and later actively making *themes* from them. In the three-fold classification of most common qualitative perspectives Holloway & Todres (2003) name (1) phenomenology, (2) grounded theory, and (3) ethnography. The ethnographic approach describes best the way how this research was conducted. According to these authors, the goal of ethnography is to "describe, interpret and understand the characteristics of a particular social setting…" (p.348) and the data gathering involves "intensive fieldwork – participant observation and interviews" (ibid.)

Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (ibid., p.79). Contrary to some other approaches where authors declare the *themes* in such a way that it seems they are already present there even without the analysis, Braun and Clarke remind us that an active approach is needed to arrive at some list of themes. Certainly, there is never a predefined number of themes "out there" in the data, the themes "found" (or as I prefer, "created") are unique to every researcher, his research questions, focus, previous experience, biases etc. By doing the analysis by multiple researchers it is certainly possible to find and prefer the themes developed by several researchers simultaneously. This was not the case, for the process of data analysis and interpretation was done by one person only, therefore the results are rather subjective.

Comparison to Methods of Grounded Theory (GT) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)   The ethnographic process described by Holloway & Todres (2003) that could be fit into the

"thematic analysis" framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is similar to the first level of analysis done in various flavours of the method of grounded theory (GT), called in some as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), defined as "the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (ibid., p.101); or to the way how *interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)* described by Smith et al. (2009) is done, where a process of iterative abstraction from the data and verification in the data (grounding) is done.

While the method of GT is suitable for producing a *consistent theory*, keeping it *grounded* in the observed data (so there is a tight structural fit between the theory and the reality; and the analysis is done to "inspire a creative and plausible theory (…), plausible models" – Holloway & Todres, 2003, p.348), IPA is suitable to get a deeper *understanding* of the *lifeworld* (German: Lebenswelt, see e.g. Husserl, 1970) and the human lived experience (Smith et al., 2009, p.32) of the subjects (cases) studied, their representation of the phenomena, their environment etc.

The research done at Plukrijp is more an ethnographic one (in the widened sense of the term as but still being very close also to the phenomenological approach, also because of the author's previous experience with the phenomenological method (IPA). The commonality with the phenomenological approach is in the attitude of giving maximum respect to the lifeworld of the participants, using curiosity as a key element in the process of conducting the interviews, to be able to grasp genuine ways how the participants perceive certain phenomena being studied. This way the formal interviews allowed to detach myself from certain personal judgements about some phenomena, asking for details even if I already had some personal preconceptions "what does he or she think" or "how it is in reality". This process was called as *phenomenological epochē (ἐποχή)* by Husserl (1970) and commonly is known also as "bracketing" (ibid., p.78). I personally cannot imagine a perfect *ἐποχή* nor I remember an experience of being able to realize it fully, so I am quite about the possibility of doing so easily, but in any case, I recognize that by achieving certain distance from the phenomena one can more easily notice conditioning by some mental patterns and not allow these to completely distort the perception.

The approach used does not fully adhere to the strict IPA methodology of Smith:

1. First, Smith proposes *in-depth* interviews of duration one hour or more (Smith et al., 2009, p.63), but the interviews I done ranged from only 20 minutes to about an hour – sometimes because the time was limited, but mostly because the replies to the main set of questions were already replied in a quite exhaustive manner, referring again to things already experienced before by the participant observation, and the interview drifted to other nearby topics which were often also interesting, but not particularly relevant to the research questions.

2. The second deviation from Smith's method is that most of the interviews were not transcribed word-by-word (Smith et al., 2009, p.73) but rather a detailed notes taken during the interview were used for doing the analysis, and the recordings were used only during writing the report to confirm the notes, to pick illustrative verbatim extracts etc. (Writing side notes to the handwritten notes after the interview, adjusting the next interviews based on the former ones, were however still performed.)

3. The third relaxation from Smith's IPA is that it goes beyond mere description of the lifeworld and naming the emerging themes. The three levels of interpretation proposed in IPA (Smith et al., 2009, p.104) stay mostly with the data being said by the participants, going deeper and deeper in the microanalysis of the text itself, but not questioning much the "validity" of the claims of the participant against some external source (authority, theory etc.) For example, an "interpretation" of the report of a participant by using concepts brought from psychoanalysis, one injects things that are not directly present in the data, and this "fourth" level of interpretation is considered by Smith as lying already on the border, or even beyond the border, of IPA (ibid., p.105).

Levels of Analysis   In this study the **first level of analysis** is *similar* to IPA in the sense that first a "narrative" is given where already significant elements of the story are chosen. Then a list of (generally

four or five) themes is created from this narrative. Finally, an attempt to make one superordinate ("key") theme is done. This is done for *each case individually*.

The **second level of analysis** then goes *across the cases* and uses categories set up in the research questions. Some themes repeatedly emerged in multiple cases in the first level so these are displayed as well.

Sensitizing Concepts   During the data collection on place, I got inspired by some concepts I later used as "sensitizing" in the following interviews. Generally I tended to ask complementary questions regarding one or more of these concepts. These ideas developed *during* data collection and those I am consciously aware of (that I written as field notes) were:

– A typology of students: (1) open to whatever comes, undecided yet what to do then, (2) clearly decided to learn something and to use it for something *[since 21th March]*

– "Bardo" as a metaphor of a place (from Tibetan *bar do thos grol* – Tibetan book of the Dead) *[since 21th March]*

– Plukrijp according to the Holmgren's "permaculture flower" *[since 23rd March after a course in permaculture design]*

2.4   Making the Researcher's Position, Intentions, Attitudes and Personal Values Explicit

It is considered a good practice in qualitative research to make one's own "epistemological and other assumptions explicit" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78-9) in order to make the process and results trustworthy.

– I visited Plukrijp first in August 2011 because of my interest in learning about organic gardening that I wanted to practice on a small garden plot around the house that would not be otherwise maintained after the death of my grand-father who was managing it before that.

– I experienced there a radically different approach to money, private property and I received a lot of comparative information about organic agriculture and the current mainstream one.

– Now I am a proponent of the idea of "décroissance heureuse" – a joyful degrowth (Pallante, 2011). I saw the immense difficulty to deploy virtually any potentially helpful environmental policy in the real world. I felt psychology may help somehow but I don't know yet how and I must admit that I have not learned much during my 6-year-long study of psychology at the university that would help resolve this issue.

– Selling life insurance, mortgages and investments in the stock market in the past, I gradually realized this may not be the proper solution to solve the problems I started learning about; quite the opposite: often it seemed that a fuzzy cluster of things including global capitalism, deposit money, free trade, celebration of individual freedom, human avidity etc. is somehow co-responsible for maintaining and perpetuating the unsustainable functioning of the society as whole. I quit doing this type of business and started engaging in various experimental projects promoting local real economy (local exchange trade system, gift economy).

– Since 2008 I started following the teaching of Atiyana-Dzogchen as transmitted by a Tibetan master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche that I have great faith in. On some places of the text I occasionally refer to the "wisdom traditions" meaning mostly the Dzogchen teaching and other teachings that speak about the same essence.

– Being aware of the *confirmation bias* trap we inevitably tend to fall into I try to keep reading to some extent sources with a radically different point of view (eco-skeptics etc.) and consciously "bracket off" the immediate tendency to judging it in the stereotypic way. Anyway, I belief that

within the lifetime we have that is always limited, some form of engagement and activism is a more meaningful way of spending this time than doing nothing, just to stay neutral.

3   Results

3.1   General Overview

Although all cases are presented below and given a significant space, some can give more insights when time is limited: these are marked bold in this table and the names are preceded by an asterisk.

Date	Name	Sex	Age	Profession/status	Key theme (brief)
12.3.	Simon	M	29	documentary film-maker	Integrating Babylon
17.3.	Wotan	M	29	WWOOFer	Living without money
17.3.	* Bernard	M	32	carpenter	Silence between mess
20.3.	* Lars	M	46	beekeper	Learning – Diligence – Abundance
21.3.	* Karl	M	28	philosopher	Secure place to belong
23.3.	Newman	M	27	WWOOFer	Knowing of not knowing
27.3.	* Emile	M	49	social worker	Courage to do early intervention
28.3.	* Gabrielle	F	43	transition activist	Everything is possible
31.3.	Barbara	F	45	eco-activist	—
3.4.	Sorel	M	42	engineer	Reorganizing priorities
3.4.	Kohelet	M	30	spiritual devotee	Hidden spirituality of Plukrijp

The structure of results is as follows:

1. *Individual cases*

    (a) Compact versions of the interviews are presented first with a limited amount of comments and interpretations (other than those that implicitly happened during the very interviews where they shaped the character of next questions, which in turn influenced the development of the interview). Explanations of some concepts presented by participants is generally done briefly in footnotes to not disturb the natural flow of the narration.

    (b) A set of individual *themes* considered as representative for this participant is presented, explained and documented by again referencing to verbatim extracts of the interview. Some very illustrative extracts may get repeated.

    (c) One *key theme* is chosen to give the participant a certain *label*. The criteria for selecting a theme to be the *key* one follow the research questions, particularly the main one, "*What is the process of change of attitudes, behaviour and values in people staying at Plukrijp?*" The *"what is the process"* is actually a question asking for the qualitative answer in the form of a *thick description (Geertz, 1973; Ponterotto, 2006),* originally developed to replace a "search of law" by a "search of meaning" (ibid.). *"Thick" description* of Gilbert Ryle, the author of the concept, means "understanding and absorbing the context of the situation or behaviour" (Ponterotto, 2006, p.539).

2. *Analysis of common themes* that is very briefly performed in the end of the Results section but that is mostly done in the Discussion that follows.

Explanatory notes:

1. The quotation marks ("") are used when direct quotation from the transcription is used, otherwise it is a paraphrase done by me to give it a more compact and logical structure.

2. Words in [square brackets] mark my addition to the verbatim transcript to make grammatically more correct phrases and to explain elements which may not be clear if the context is not present in the extract.

3. Some key word are **in bold typeface** to allow a quick scanning over the text; they do not represent any kind of emphasis done by the participant.

3.2 Simon: Integrating "Babylonic life" with the Actual Reality

Narrative

Simon's **mother** used to be a **hippie** in the 1970s, being interested in "**poetry, art, and spirituality**" and influenced Simon's early interest in **organic food**. His **father** is however "completely the **opposite** of it", used to work for the **military** in the colonial Congo, busy in foreign affairs. The parents divorced early so his mother had then much stronger influence on his next development.

His **first experience** with Plukrijp happened in spring 2009, when a "working week" was organized on the farm. He got the information about Plukrijp from a **recommendation** of his **hippie friends** that have already been there (*Karl* and other friends during summer 2008 in the very beginning of the community). He heard some **rumours** and "positive talks about it" until he eventually decided to give it a try, "to **come and see for myself**".

It was his first experience with farm work in his life. He spent there 3 days. At that time he was "**hanging out in the hippies circles**" where there was the interest in ecological things in general. After this brief first visit, he went to the farm a few times more. Later he met a girl and together they spent the summer on the farm. I inquired Simon to tell me more about his **environmental attitudes** at that time whether he felt they were different from those of mainstream society. He replied that he was interested in **alternative lifestyle, community life, spirituality and psychedelics**, he used to eat biological food (influenced by her mother) but he **lacked** the "**real pragmatic consciousness** about ecological living", lacking "knowledge about ecologically, sustainably living, **how to** run an ecological farm, how to cultivate biological vegetables".

His **first impressions** in the summer 2009 were focused mainly on the "pragmatic side of cultivating biological food" as it was something new, "having no idea how to do it". He was **amazed** that for example "plastic foils were used to suffocate bad herbs", for thought "biological" means completely without plastic and other artificial materials and tools. This already "opened his eyes the finesses of the ecological farming".

Later he visited also other farms like one CSA [community-supported agriculture] site where he went in contact with other aspects of the everyday reality: the farmer admitted that when there is a **pest outbreak** has two options, either to spray it [with a pesticide] even if it is far from ideal but thus save the crop, or to "lose it all". I offered to Simon a term "**getting back to Earth**" if it could be used to describe this process, and he happily embraced it with words "exactly, that's a nice expression". It allowed him to continue: "Also another aspect of getting back to Earth is literally **getting grounded** because those days I was much more **in my mind** and in my spirit, **flying high all the time**". He was cultivating a small garden plot already that year but this, together with a more intense contact with the soil on the farm, let him to get grounded more, and "the organic realities let the spirituality grow fonder". The effects of combined meditation practice with farm work was "**a real revelation**" for Simon, for it "really **worked out very well**".

Since these experience in 2009 he had not visit Plukrijp until March 2013. He started **studying a film school** and now he came back to shoot a **documentary** about the place. While he was looking at the pictures of Plukrijp and having the ideas to come back, memories and **feelings** emerged of "**missing that farm**". As he started studying and living in Brussels, he "**got back into society**", but he had "not completely lost track of this lifestyle" because going in the summer to the **Rainbow Gatherings**, where the Rainbow-people call the [mainstream lifestyle] a "**Babylonic life**". Simon claims he is **not judging it** because "I even **like this kind of life as well**, but there was **some part missing** all the time". Now he feels he has an unique **opportunity to integrate** these two seemingly contradicting kinds of lifestyle.

Then I asked Simon to explain me more about the term "**Babylonic life**" how does he personally understand it[*] ("What does it mean *to you?*"). He explained me the historical knowledge about the city

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[*]I actually already had my own understanding of the term (also from my own friends visiting *Rainbow Gatherings*), but I wanted to hear the *personal representation* of this term, so this way I followed the phenomenological ἐποχή, the not-knowing approach (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992)— if I would not be doing a formal interview I would perhaps just say "Sure, I know what you speak about", because, I indeed *know* what is generally the sense of this expression among people of the "Rainbow family".

of Babylon, where

> "the **features** of Babylon were using **monoculture** for agriculture, making and use of **alcohol**, use of **money**; [existence of] poverty and things like... ambition, richness and stuff like this... and building a huge organized structure in an urban environment. (...) At *Rainbow [Gathering]* people refer to (...) that kind of world / living because it is a **kind of consciousness** as well. The *Rastafari* use it as well to that kind of world. They use it as a kind of [something] pejorative* but I don't see it any more that dualistic, so I cannot say 'this is *the* way and *Babylon* is wrong'..."

Simon appreciates some things, like technical evolution or Internet, making lots of **impossible things possible**. He claims he is **not "anti-technological**, anti-plastic, anti-industry *per se*", even not anti-money; he thinks money is a useful tool **if intentions are good**, and that "huge improvements could be made" with it. It could be used in a positive or negative way.

He thinks that we are generally to some extent conditioned by our environment,

> "whichever system is it is, you get influenced by the system. Or you could resist the influence very heavily, but I have the tendency to **immerse in the system**, the environment I live in, and allowing it to influence me [in order] to just **experience what it is**".

He reminds **Frank's "pragmatic lessons"**—for example to work efficiently in the field—that are applicable more generally, not just to the one particular example they were given in.

When comparing the impressions from Plukrijp now in 2013, Simon notices the major difference that always when he was there before it was during spring or summer when there was sunshine, while now it is winter, cold and snow. He also notices that the structures (buildings, etc.) evolved since then, he is **surprised how many people stay** at the place during that time for a longer period. Another observed change is that activities are **more communal**, where there is "less separation between the people of Plukrijp and Frank's family" felt.

I asked also about his **current intentions** regarding the planned documentary. He repeated again he realizes how he "missed this style of living" and he wants to also forget temporarily about the particular aim of filming something, to be able to just "**observe and perceive**", that would also help him to find proper ways of how to make the documentary itself (which things to focus on, from what angles to look at things) so it "really speaks to people".

> "It's not the reportage I want to make, (...) not something 'objective', it's **more like a human and personal story** I would like to tell using my newly acquired knowledge of film language" (...) I want to take the audience to a kind of **experience trip**, appetize them with certain emotions, and **make them ask some questions themselves**, rather than presenting all the information just like that..."

Yet, he considers his filming as a "very **Babylonic skill**, Babylonic knowledge" while on the farm one is much more in contact with the "actual reality". Although before he claimed he is beyond the "dualistic" consideration of one being something better or worse than its anti-thesis, now he adds that Babylon-*qua*-state-of-mind is kind of a "**virtual reality**, living in images or representations".

List of themes

– **Learning the pragmatic side of ecological living**

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*Oxford Dictionary defines "Babylon" as follows: "(chiefly among Rastafarians) a contemptuous or dismissive term for aspects of a society seen as degenerate or oppressive, especially the police" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). Murrell (1998, p.3) asserts, "Rastafari is more than a religion. It is a cultural movement, 'a system of beliefs and a state of consciousness,' that advances a view of economic survival and political organization and structure that challenges the dominant cultural political organization and 'narrative' (ideology) in the 'politics of Babylon.'"

○ The hippies culture introduced to Simon by his mother spoke about ecological living and related ideas, but it didn't involve necessarily a real practice of such. Therefore it was a kind of armchair speculation not embodied in the physical reality. Learning the pragmatic side happened here by having a direct experience of the origin of the products otherwise only consumed when just living in the city (buying food labelled as organic, etc.). An expansion of understanding happens in the process of learning by observing and learning by doing. The learning happened by being confronted with practices not consistent with the previous ideas about how things are done. Examples named by the participant were the surprise when observing that "plastic foils were used to suffocate bad herbs" in a place declaring being an "organic farm", or the insight that even a farmer in a CSA system sometimes has the dilemma to use some pesticides to "save the crop or to lose it all".

– **Getting back to Earth, Getting grounded**

○ Simon experienced an advance in his spiritual path when after starting working with the soil, "the organic realities let the spirituality grow fonder", the spontaneous effects were "a real revelation" because together it "really worked out very well", stabilizing the mental state without any special effort. The theme is closely related to the first one.

– **Going beyond dualistic perception of Babylon-*qua*-degenerative-culture**

○ Simon was formerly influenced from the hippies circles, the Rainbow family lingo and the Rastafari ideology with a ready-made interpretation key for the mainstream society that was called "Babylon" in a pejorative sense of the term, referring to the degenerate state of the culture, the problematic aspects of the civilization including those of private property, distribution of power, detachment from the "actual reality" etc. The anti-thesis of Babylon is not clearly defined, though, in the common perception; its definition is mostly drawn from simply denouncing the thesis of the imperative of progress, development etc. Simon asserted he was able—thanks to the actual experience from the reality of those practising the "ecological life"—to overcome the dualism (dialectics) of Babylon/Anti-Babylon, going beyond it and finding the new quality emerging from the synthesis of this dialectics (Hegel & Baillie, 1931).[*]

– **Influencing other people indirectly through a documentary**

○ The first encounter with the "pragmatic side of ecological living" in 2009 and then returning back to the normal society, having some contact with the environmental movement mostly only in the summer while visiting the Rainbow Gatherings (where this pragmatic aspect was again lacking), could be considered as a triggering cause to the decision to spread some specific information to other people by using the film imagery learned at school depicting the Plukrijp and the "pragmatic" problems that working with soil actually brings, "take the audience to a kind of experience trip, appetize them with certain emotions, and make them ask some questions themselves".

Key theme

– **Integrating "Babylonic life" (virtual reality) with the *actual* reality**

○ This could be considered as a common element in most of the themes that are actually interdependent. The surprises in the early period when encountering the real practice in

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[*] A synthesis of the "Non-Babylon" "primordial state with mindfully using the "good" from the technology is intellectually well described by (Capriles, 2011, 2010, 2006a) but it cannot be said that Simon's realization as he claimed in the interview is consistent with the realization presented by Capriles that actually refers to the realization of the *Atiyana-Dzogchen* spiritual teaching and other genuine historical wisdom traditions.

"sustainable"/"organic" farming (regularly using plastic foils, on some other place even using pesticides in the extreme case) could be perceived as some kind of **initiation** needed to start working on merging the "Babylon" and its idealistic *Rainbow/Rastafari* anti-thesis into the new quality to move beyond that duality. These surprises/amazements could be perceived in the context of Mezirow's transformative learning theory as the anomalies that led to changing the perspective. It is not clear whether in this case it could be called "transformative learning" because the "ecological awareness" in some (limited) form was already present there before because of the influence of his mother. More probably only "elaborating existing frames of reference" and "a critical assessment of assumptions" (Mezirow, 1997) takes place, where former (incorrect) assumptions in some aspects are altered according to experience, but the new model is more an evolution of the former, not a brand new one.

3.3 Wotan: Experience of Living Without Money

Narrative

Wotan could be now considered as a "**professional WWOOFer**", doing voluntary work for food and accommodation at various organic farms in Belgium, New Zealand and Australia for more than **18 months**, approaching already 2 years. He used the online network **HelpX** similar to the original WWOOF database to find the hosts*. Wotan says that most experience were good so far.

He got to Plukrijp thanks to the **recommendation of the former farmer** who knew Frank's farm. At the time of the interview Wotan was **staying already for 3 months at Plukrijp** and he planned to stay for another two months there.

"When you see description of this place on the website it's just like any other farm, but once you are here **it's a different place**". He said that generally there are often descriptions (on the WWOOF website) like "this farm is a community" but when you come to Plukrijp you see that "indeed **this *is* community, unlike the other places**". He feels the "**social fibre** of this place is much stronger" than at other places. Elsewhere people work for 5 to 6 hours, then they have some hangout and "that's it". At Plukrijp, however, it's easier for Wotan to get in a closer contact with others. He explains this difference by three factors: (1) there is **bigger freedom** at Plukrijp to be involved in multiple ways (more work to choose from), (2) the person of Frank Ruymen is making the difference, for he has "more life experience" both with business and social work, now focusing mainly on the social aspect (shaping the community in this way), (3) the place is here "**not for [making] money**" but to have the social work as the main objective.

According to Wotan, Plukrijp attracts people with **similar "state of mind"**: those that agree with the philosophy of the place tend to stay longer time as well. When comparing this experience with the ones obtained in New Zealand, one host there used the WWOOFers as a kind of "cheap labour", where there was "no interaction" between people and the host, just offering the basic services as required by the WWOOF agreement.

When asked about **what did he learn** during his stay at Plukrijp, Wotan mentioned several things:

> "On a personal level, I learned how to get most of a week (…), **how to live a lifestyle without external expenses**, how to use a **net of all the other people** and **how to work together to obtain food, services and shelter**."

A repeated theme was having an experience of **living away from consumer culture**. Two years before, he "**didn't think** that not having money in the pocket, **not buying things** in the supermarket **would be possible**". It was "hard to imagine" for him because as he feels it now he was "**brainwashed**" **by the ideology** than one has to have a "**regular work to pay checks, rent, food, clothing or petrol**". By going to Plukrijp where he didn't need anything like that he was gradually able to "**see the marketing behind**

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*The difference is only that HelpX network allows to list also other hosts not only those having organic farm (including people in the city who need to repair house for example).

all of it", like " 'you need to... buy clothes, have a real estate paying for it 25 to 40 % of your income' , etc." This insight "built up while staying at Plukrijp, especially the **food stuff**". He realized that **"food is a big business"** nowadays. Although he already had "back in mind" before that about 50 % of fruits and vegetables go out and is thrown away for various reasons, because "for big businesses there is no network to recycle" these things to still make money from it, he didn't see it first-hand. (At Plukrijp, pallets full of seemingly perfect goods including organic fruit and vegetables arrive at regular intervals that are still used and processed by the community but otherwise they would be thrown away.)

Influenced by these insights and first-hand experience of the amount of food and other goods being wasted every day, he started fantasizing ideas about **making "hubs" or "collection points"** where these things could be moved to be still given away. He knows there already exist 'food banks' that basically do this, but currently their scope is limited because these programs serve only to homeless people but theoretically this could be expanded to a much wider group of people. Wotan could imagine these products that are going to expire soon or have already expired could be even sold for some small price in the niche markets (he was positively surprised when he heard from me that actually this became quite a common business in the Czech Republic where lots of food with approaching "best before" date originating from Western Europe including Belgium is being sold in a special kind of shops.)

Wotan didn't forget to mention the possible reason why this is not present in the place he lives: he personally learned at Plukrijp about his habit of feeling **"shame of using expired products"**. This feeling is enforced "through **peer pressure**" where in the past he would **"feel embarrassed of wearing second hand clothes, living without car"** etc. It was the stay at Plukrijp (where these things were normal) that allowed him to see the relativity and **"futility of it"**. During the stay at such place where the social norms are different from those of the mainstream society, these **"feelings disappear"** gradually.

I asked him also whether he thinks they will not come back when he finishes his stay at Plukrijp and returns to his former social environment. He admitted **"it could reappear**... some things [may] come back". It could be also because of when "living a **hectic life**... **there's less time for more ecological solutions"**.

List of themes

- **First experience of a real community**

  ○ Wotan is an experienced volunteer who travels around the world for almost two years, working long term on organic farms offering volunteer opportunities. He is therefore able to compare how various places advertise themselves. He claims that often the hosts advertise their farm as a "community". Plukrijp does not differ from this, but for Wotan, he actually experienced what this word could mean for the first time at Plukrijp: "community" in other places was more superficial, if present at all. Plukrijp "*is* community, unlike the other places".

- **Experience that living without money is possible**

  ○ Living at Plukrijp can be achieved even without money. It is good to make contributions to the magic hat, but theoretically not necessary. You get accommodation, food, internet, you can use the washing machine. Food that cannot be obtained by other means is bought in large quantities from the wholesaler because it is much cheaper. People generally don't even go to the city while they are staying at Plukrijp. For most adult people this is a very new experience. To Wotan, it allowed him see that one can live even in a country like Belgium in a radically different way than people live generally now in the Western society. By being no more subjected to the "peer pressure" and the ideology learned before, and being in contact with many other people sharing these alternative values, Wotan was able to notice some learned concepts that were totally naturalized before (the shame of expired food and actual source of this feeling etc.) Based on this breakthrough experience, he started planning changing a

particular thing he started to be concerned (how much food is wasted when it is still OK, when elsewhere millions are suffering from hunger).

– **Discovering the marketing behind our consumer behaviour**

○ Plukrijp allows people to directly experience that no mortgage is necessary, earning thousands of euro per month is not necessary, having new clothes every month is not necessary etc. This way Wotan discovered that many so-called "needs" of a modern man are in fact driven by marketing – created artificially to increase profits of certain entities. Even without the new fancy things Wotan was able to live happily at Plukrijp.

– **Vision of a project to reduce wasting food**

○ By seeing how much food was coming regularly to Plukrijp that was then used for preparing delicious food, while officially all this food would be considered as "waste" to be thrown away, Wotan decided to make a plan to change this, to make a system that would reduce such waste, not giving it only to homeless people as it is being done now, but also to others. He didn't have a concrete idea how to achieve this—yet.

– **Recognition of the influence our environment has upon us and our reactions to events**

○ When asked what happens when he comes back from Plukrijp, he admitted the environment will again push him to the old behavioural patterns, feelings (of shame), and to less ecological actions—caused by peer pressure and the lack of time, "being in hurry".

Key theme

– **Experience of living without money**

○ This theme can be considered as the central one, because it is a point of departure to recognize also the other, otherwise naturalized, patterns we are taught in the society.

3.4   Bernard: Seeing the Silence Through the Mess

Narrative

Bernard is an independent **carpenter** who lives in Antwerp. He is recycling a lot of wood from pallets, leftovers from building structures to make a furniture from it.

He learned about Plukrijp from another parent at school where his son was going to. That friend was working on Frank's land when he was 16 (at that time Frank was doing a commercial business), he accidentally found Frank's website 3 to 5 years ago, surprised the place still exists, he visited it and **recommended it to Bernard** as well. At that time Bernard was having **financial problems**, often moving from place to place and when he visited Plukrijp for the first place he **immediately "fell in love" with the place**. There was a suitable place for his workshop where he could move his tools and start working with wood from there with lower costs and with benefit also to the emerging Plukrijp community. He had several **talks with Frank** which gave him "**something to think about**". So he starred a self-inquiry: "**How am I doing business?**" Frank proposed him to do things from Plukrijp, which could save costs and be beneficial to the place as well.

For the first year he was coming there with his female partner and children and for weekends only, sleeping in a caravan. Two months ago he renovated two gipsy vans to live there on a more permanent basis, but due to personal conflicts between his partner and Frank they eventually split up.

Based on his long term experience with the place he considers it a "**transition place**". Plukrijp as transition place means for Bernard that "**you spend some time and then you move on**". The period of how long this is may be different for everyone, but generally the place is not offering the stability

needed for a long term / permanent living. This is partly Frank's intention, as Bernard pointed out. "When someone asked, 'Can I live here?', the [Frank's] answer always is, **'If you are here today, you are here today; tomorrow, it's another day, we'll see'** " which does not seem to support a long term living.

For this reason Bernard thinks about leaving the place altogether, because sometimes he is "**not feeling good, he cannot breath**". But he attributes this as a "process in self, not a problem with the place". But at the end of the interview he expressed a "wish to give it more sustainable aspects". He was actually quite ambiguous about that, because immediately what followed was a feeling that "**this place needs to be in movements**, people need to move boxes from left to right and vice versa (...) [in order] t start the inner conflict".

Bernard's remarks about Plukrijp are special, compared to most other members of Plukrijp. This is because he was at the place repeatedly almost since the beginning, spending there hundreds of weekends, moved there the carpenter workshop, etc. For him, "**Frank is the main big player**" shaping the place. He hopes Frank will continue like that. His perception of the place in general is that "**the door is always open for anybody**". He makes an example: "Imagine you are on the road, you knock on the door, and **you feel so welcome. It's amazing these places exist**". He appreciates the unique characteristics of Plukrijp which are that there are officially **no limits** regarding the number of people that can stay simultaneously nor a maximum period of stay.

Regarding the "permaculture" and "organic farming" as Plukrijp is often presented, Bernard points out that often people have a certain associations related to this term and certain expectations that are challenged once they arrive:

> "[Ideas that] it's all colourful, peaceful, everything is decorated really... with flowers and arts. But if you see this place, **it's like a mess sometimes**.
>
> It *is* a mess. But that's the tricky part—to see the *silence* between all the mess. That's what they're trying to teach you.
>
> So all the people who arrive here and want to change everything, because... they feel messy inside and they can't see the silence through the mess, then... yeah, they will be confronted with all the aspects of this place."

Later in the interview, Bernard returned to this topic again, referring to a specific example he remembers, when a girl was complaining about nylon cover of the beds, saying that "without it it would look way more natural". Bernard said to her **"Why to take it out if we already have it?"** He emphasizes that we **"have to see through it"**. The current situation is the result of "trying to do things with what we have"[*].

Because of Bernard's long term visiting the place and the fact I already knew that sometimes people were **asked to leave for not being "compatible" with the community**, I opened this topic to get Bernard's perception. He named the core of the problem behind it as **ignoring the commons**. His terminology is very similar to the one outlined already by Frank in the *Blueprint.*

> "There's two kinds [of these people]: One that we say that they have to leave, or they decide themselves.
>
> "[Some] leave with really bad and angry feeling. People who are thrown out are people... people who take a profit of this place. They see all the benefits of it, they try to use it as much as possible, and... **they don't care about the commons... their behaviour is that they just want their profit**".
>
> "Some go with the first warning and some... we really need to keep them outside (...) they keep returning."

I personally encountered two these cases while I was spending my time at Plukrijp in late summer 2011 and spring 2012. I was curious about **how many people were already asked to leave** for the whole

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[*]Before the community started, Frank was producing vegetables for the market where certain efficiency of production is an imperative to stay competitive, and things like using plastic foil to mulch the soil around plants is one of these methods of achieving certain goal, like reducing water vapour and weeds, without much manual labour.

duration of Plukrijp, because I expected Bernard would know all of them (having been there during almost its entire existence).

> "I am not sure, but I think it's around 10 guys, between **10 and 15** (...) maybe more. (...) It's more men than women, that's for sure. I think anyway there's more men visiting this place."

When I asked Bernard to also describe his personal development during his life at Plukrijp (not just his perceptions about things outside him), he emphasized he learned to be **"honest to himself"** thanks to the open and non-judging approach at Plukrijp: "You can put things on the table without being judged". This way he was able to drop undesired behavioural habits like drinking a lot of beer.

Asking finally also his personal vision of sustainability and his contribution to it, he repeated the way how he is doing the carpenter job, obtaining most wood to produce the furniture from waste, reducing the need for new wood[*]. He was also **experimenting with a local exchange**, trying to swap things (coming from Plukrijp and elsewhere) in Antwerp, not using money. "It takes a lot of effort, time, persuading people, petrol for the car", so eventually he stopped doing it, being tired and not persuaded this was really a meaningful activity.

List of themes

- **Plukrijp as a "transition place"**

  - Bernard perceives the place as "a transition place: You spend some time, and you go away (...) Each person has a different approach of time (...) It seems like that [a place not suitable for permanent living]. When someone asked, 'Can I live here?', the [Frank's] answer always is, 'If you are here today, you are here today; tomorrow, it's another day, we'll see' ". This is also the reason why he didn't manage to establish a permanent living at Plukrijp with his partner and children, and his explanation why for other people, it didn't work as well.

- **Seeing the silence through the mess**

  - "So all the people who arrive here and want to change everything, because... they feel messy inside and they can't see the silence through the mess, then... yeah, they will be confronted with all the aspects of this place". Bernard is looking at it from the pragmatic side that it is important to work with circumstances.

  - Together with the "transition place" theme that refers to the ever-changing character of Plukrijp, he thinks that it is actually a therapeutic tool: "this place needs to be in movements, people need to move boxes from left to right and vice versa (...) [in order] to start the inner conflict".

- **How to become a "renegade": Ignore the commons**

  - Bernard has an experience of 10 to 15 people who were asked or forced to leave Plukrijp mostly for ignoring the commons: "they don't care about the commons... their behaviour is that they just want their profit". He also pointed out that generally it is Frank who is the first person asking the person to leave, because he is able to discover quite early that someone is systematically abusing the hospitality of the place for his private interests. But often people stay there for long months before also other members are confident enough that a further presence of such a person is not desired and is not making any benefit to the person himself nor to the community as a whole. Bernard believes that nobody wants to hurt these people but if they are not ready to accept some responsibility for the commons and there is no progress for months, then there is always a limited patience.

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[*]Antwerp, being a big port where many ships arrive with all kinds of goods including tropical wood, seems to have also a lot of waste from this material that was somehow damaged during the transport.

– **Becoming honest to himself**

○ Before going to Plukrijp, Bernard was used to drink a lot of beer and having other bad habits. Thanks to the openness of the community where "you can put things on the table without being judged" he could allow opening his personal issues, asking himself "Am I honest to myself?" and other questions, and gradually, he "started to love himself more". He feels "he is not over yet with my lessons".

Key theme

– **Seeing the silence through the mess**

○ This theme symbolizes Bernard's capacity to see through the directly visible to the underlying structure, the "inner aesthetics". By this perception he explains why other people who fail to see this have certain problems and behaviours at Plukrijp. Based on the fact that he "immediately fell in love" since his first visit it seems this recognition was instantaneous. The process of learning is for Bernard rather the opening up to the people and working on bad habits (see the theme "Becoming honest to himself").

3.5 Lars: Learning, Diligence and Abundance

Narrative

Lars met Frank 15 years ago while he was doing the wholesale business in Antwerp, because already at that time, Lars was **interested in how to reduce the ecological footprint**. Later they "lost contact". Few years ago Frank contacted Lars asking for help with establishing Plukrijp. He moved to a house 15 km away. Since then he was regularly coming for a day almost every week.

He was already trying to develop a more sustainable living for himself before he started the engagement at Plukrijp. Years ago, he bought a small piece of forest, started **repairing a wooden cabin** that was there and desired to develop off-grid means of obtaining energy (electricity, heat, water). The cabin was "not in a good shape" when he bought it, so he lived some time in a "big tent" and tried to obtain money to **repair the wooden house**.

This forced him take a **job of a truck driver** (around 2008-2009) transporting frozen food. However, he was not happy with that job where he spent 12 to 16 hours a day, having even not the time to visit Plukrijp once in a month. When he quit the job after 2 years he had time again to visit Plukrijp more often.

Then, inspired a **course in beekeeping** that the local beekeeping organization gave in the village he was living nearby, he become interested in beekeeping. While he followed the course, he learned that "**it's not so natural**" doing it as it was advertised in the course. He asked himself a question, "**How bees can be kept in a more natural way?**". He recognized various problems threatening bees – modern agricultural methods using monoculture, pesticides etc., and way how beekeepers nowadays handle bees, both leading to the fact that "bees are kept far away from their natural habitat". His project for two last years is therefore "**developing more vital/healthy bee colonies**". When normally bees are selected for "qualities fitting only the human purpose" they can be out of balance, more prone to various problems diseases that recently became a real threat for the survival of bees as such (bee colony collapses, varroatosis).

Thanks to Lars's visits to Plukrijp and sharing of ideas with Frank, he got **contacts to other people** trying to develop alternative ways of doing beekeeping, designing unconventional types of beehives, discovering that he is not alone in his effort. Thanks to this **speeding up of his education in beekeeping while staying at Plukrijp**, and also by seeing other people developing this way, he formulated a kind of definition of Plukrijp:

"**Plukrijp is giving opportunities for people to develop quickly to sustainable ways of living**."

Lars claims that thanks to Plukrijp and the example of achieving big results thanks to a diligent long-term work and "putting attention" on it, he got himself **"more motivated to really do something"** and to be diligent in that. Before that he "had ideas (...) small or bigger projects, later released them and starting other interests (...) **got easily distracted** by my actions". The farm showed him that

> **"if you start something then you need to finish it**. **Because then you can enjoy the results**...
> much more."

This led him to focusing mainly on bees, personal education in this subject and organizing various alternative beekeeping courses in Belgium. He is still interested in other aspects of organic farming but he leaves the job on the garden to others.

Another big lesson for Lars while staying at Plukrijp was the (corrective)

> **"experience that there is abundance everywhere**. There is always so much food, it's horri-
> ble *(laugh)* (...) For example, if there is the harvest of pumpkins, **we just fill wheelbarrows,
> and we put pumpkins in front of the houses on the streets**, we give them away!"

Before that he was always **"living in debt"**, **"feeling there was a shortage"**. He put an image onto himself

> **"that I had to be poor**. I should not have the means to realize my ideals, because I am more
> interested in spiritual development or things like that."

Regarding the genuine position of Frank at Plukrijp, Lars notices that

> **"If Frank is left for one or two days, less work is done"**.

He sees clearly how Frank tries that people themselves develop a responsibility (happening mostly with people staying for a longer period). Nevertheless, "people expect from Frank to 'play the boss' ". Lars has an impression that people that come with an open schedule not knowing yet when they leave tend to develop the responsibility and independence sooner than those who now beforehand when exactly they leave.

List of themes

- **Speeding-up the learning process**

  - While staying at Plukrijp, Lars said he speed up the learning about beekeeping, benefit-ing from the frequent talks with Frank, receiving recommendations to other information resources, contacts to other people doing a similar thing etc. "Plukrijp is giving opportunities for people to develop quickly to sustainable ways of living."

  - Plukrijp has a big library of books and even a bigger electronic library of e-books and doc-umentary films. Frank has developed over the years contacts to hundreds of other people that work on developing sustainable alternatives to conventional agriculture and he can recommend these to anybody interested. This way Plukrijp works like a university where students have access to vast amount of information in the library and also having the ability to discuss various issues with colleagues (students, and professors). During an informal talk (Ruymen, 2012), Frank actually presented me his vision of Plukrijp and similar places serving as a hub of nonformal places for education of the 21st century being totally inclusive and available to all—unlike the conventional education system that tends to exclude those that cannot afford it.

- **Realizing the importance of diligence and focusing on one thing**

  - the example of Plukrijp where now many exciting things happen but that required years of systematic work to make it happen as it is now led Lars to realize that his former way of doing

projects is lacking visible results because of the distraction and lack of focus on something properly. Since then he made a decision to dedicate his time to develop new beehives and beekeeping methods that will be more natural and bees becoming resistant to the today's challenges including the varroa destructor parasitic mite.

– **Corrective experience of abundance**

  ○ The harvest of vegetables and fruits at Plukrijp and abundance of food coming also from other sources showed to Lars a very different image of the reality that was previously shaped by a pervading impression that there "is not enough". His former rationalization why he has to "be poor" was also limiting him from making a real change in the society (because not having a way to travel etc.), even a positive one. The corrective experience at Plukrijp allowed Lars to totally change his perception, he claims he does not fear money any more and he uses them to do wholesome activities like travelling around Belgium, doing courses in beekeeping to effectively allow spreading his acquired knowledge and wisdom to other starting or existing beekeepers.

All three themes outlined are equally important and supporting each other, therefore I chose not to pick a single "key theme" as I did for other participants.

3.6   Karl: Finding a Secure "Place to Belong"

Narrative

Karl was a **student of philosophy**. He visited Plukrijp for the first time in the very beginning in 2008 when friends told him there is a **Rainbow Gathering**. At that point he was in a **"bad part of his life"**, "felt like shit". He stayed there for 3 months ("on and off, but for the most time I was here") which he didn't planned beforehand; he kept it open with the intention **"let's see what [way] it goes"**, he thinks that we all (unintentionally) learn constantly from everybody and this way some "progress" can happen. At that time he was "pretty happy" because he found there a "place he belonged, or could belong".

He does not agree on a perception of a "life as a progress" in the sense of some linear direction from some beginning to an end, but rather a **"movement"** that is **"not static, but ex-tatic"**.

Later he went through even more difficult period of life, passing though addictions where eventually he got to a perception of the world where

> "I've been in a bad crowd for a long, long time. (...) **For years, the only thing I knew was mistrust, and just people trying to stab you into your back constantly. And after a while, that's what the world becomes: It becomes a dark, cold, hard place.** Yeah... and I needed a place again where I could realize that it isn't all that. That there are people (...) that you can experience almost as a family the way we eat, cook, go to bed, all these things..."

While he was experimenting with drugs he first held the "arrogant" idea that "with all that knowledge you keep control", which retrospectively, he considers as partially valid with the exception of opiates: "You will fall in the same hole (...) no matter of what class, or religion you are".

He wanted to work on cultivating "social skills, to do social experiments". Although he does not consider himself being "socially awkward", he feels that working consciously for example with the body posture helps a lot to be popular no matter "whether you have dreadlocks or not".

Karl considers Plukrijp as a **"polyvalent place"**. According to him it is **neither** a place where one can learn how to farm, how to learn social skills etc., and at the same time it is **"all of that"**. He explains this paradox by saying "it is whatever you want to be" and thinks this is how Frank wants the place to work. For Karl personally, the single most important aspect of Plukrijp relevant for him is he **"social scheme of living together"** that he needs to experience as a kind of corrective experience to compensate the years when he stayed in a bad company. When explicitly asked about some change that happened with him in

the environmental aspects while staying at Plukrijp, he denied it that "**no change for me**, **nothing much new for me**" was there, for he lived for his whole life in a village, parents always used to recycle waste so much that virtually nothing was in the "rest", and he spent a lot of time in the nearby natural reserve and a forest that used to be a park that was abandoned decades ago.

Regarding the social skills, he said that he had certain "knowledge how to be a social, human being", and he rejected the view of many philosophers who decided to be just observers. "**Why not use it, instead of just being observer, gathering knowledge. Knowledge needs to be used, otherwise it's a waste**—why to gather it if you don't use it".

Before he managed to get to Plukrijp again in 2012, he tried to forgive himself for becoming an addict. He was thinking about coming to Plukrijp earlier, but he had **feelings of shame and guilt when thinking he would tell Frank about his addiction** he fell into. He described it as "Hard to face Frank because (…) he is a kind of a father (…) grandfather figure" he has respect of to whom it is "not easy to tell that kind of story"—even if he knew he would not judge him. A friend of him finally told him in late 2012 about Plukrijp and he managed to get there two days after that.

Since that he went there 2 or 3 times. This new phase of his life he describes as "**something changed in me**… **last puzzle piece**", **making now the whole picture**. He feels more connected to people and is trying to "be a better person… day after day". Gradually he reduces the consumption of cannabis and he stopped drinking alcohol. He is appreciating also the day rhythm where **common meals are being served at fixed hours** and usually he is able to go to sleep long before midnight and stay awake during daytime without coffee. That is "a thing I came for" because at home he is living in the night, "forgetting time", forgetting to prepare himself some healthy food etc.

When I asked about his perception of Frank not allowing smoking cannabis or drinking alcohol at Plukrijp, he says he understands him, because he does not want to create a "**group of joint smokers**" **inside of Plukrijp** that would divide the community into those who smoke and those who don't. He remembers some issues that were present at Plukrijp during the Rainbow gathering in 2008 related to that. Finally he concludes: "It's not that easy to live together. If there's just chaos – nothing happens any more.". He thinks **there is always a "need for a *padre familia*"**, where currently at Plukrijp this is Frank, and in case of his absence, someone else of the "core members" that knows all the things of the place and could be a manager for the other people.

List of themes

– **corrective experience of a secure "place to belong"**

"For years, the only think I know was mistrust, and just people trying to stab you into your back constantly. And after a while, that's what the world becomes: It becomes a dark, cold, hard place (…) I needed a place again where I could realize that it isn't all that. That there are people (…) you can experience almost a family."

– **learning and practising a social scheme to live together**

○ Plukrijp offers to Karl a place to train these skills, Otherwise at home when he is alone he tends to get the day/night cycle almost inverted (study at night, sleep in daytime), he does not care that much about his social relationships, etc.

– **learning a regular day rhythm**

○ Thanks to the regular schedule at Plukrijp where common meals are cooked at fixed intervals, work is done at roughly fixed times and enough social contact is ensured during the day it is easier to terminate a bad habit that developed elsewhere.

Key theme

–   **Finding a secure "place to belong"**

○ For Karl, Plukrijp is—rather than some permaculture project—a possibility to have the corrective experience of being accepted, having a place to belong, feel like in a family – after years of lacking it and spending in a psychologically destructive environment.

3.7   Newman: Knowing of Not Knowing

Narrative

Newman was a student of computer engineering. He decided to drop from school after first year of his Master studies to start looking for some more practical education that would help him do some community project in sustainability in the future.

A major life theme for Newman, repeatedly emphasized was an "**evolution** of consciousness" or better "**of mindfulness**" (he used the French term *"prise de conscience"* in the beginning which means more "mindfulness" than "conscience" he used later.) Newman considers Plukrijp to be an ideal place for cultivating mindfulness because there are always many mindful people there and it allows anybody to develop as well.

Before he visited Plukrijp he was **interested in various conspiracy theories**, alternative money systems, alternative energy solutions etc., and the non-dual spirituality of Eckhart Tolle. He spent a lot of time reading and watching documentaries about these topics, but for a long time had no practical experience of it. He was enjoying the position of being somebody "extraordinary" for being interested in these things and talking about them, but when he eventually went to Plukrijp he discovered there are many others like him and the things he was dreaming about are mostly already realized on the place for example living mostly without the need for money and being mostly energy self-sufficient. But it were these conspiracy theories and documentaries about "leaving the system" becoming self-sufficient that led Newman to look for a permaculture community in Belgium resulting in the Plukrijp website found through Google.

Practical things he learned at Plukrijp regarding agriculture and the human/social aspect showed him that there is still a lot to learn. He said, "I learned I need to learn; **I am not at the top but at the beginning of something… It's a lesson in humility for me**". He asserted that nothing surprised him much when he came to Plukrijp, as he was theoretically prepared from the documentaries saw beforehand. He just noticed that Plukrijp is a "physical application" of many of these theoretical concepts.

He has an intention to learn more about community living and communication with other people. When he mentioned the mindfulness cultivation he explained briefly a vision that thanks to this on a society-wise level **many other Plukrijp-like places could emerge**.

He has not yet decided when to leave Plukrijp, at the time of the interview he was already spending at Plukrijp 3 weeks and he **plans to leave when he learns what he can learn there**, he just "needs more time". He mentioned he would like to find some place where somebody would have the skills necessary to teach him playing guitar, in order to be capable of expressing his feelings through music: unfortunately he doesn't know anyone skilled like that at Plukrijp.

List of themes

–   **Realizing that "I need to learn more"**

○ When he came to Plukrijp he had a lot of ideas about self-sufficiency, permaculture and sustainable living (from the books and documentaries) but at the place he discovered that from the practical point of view he has a lot to learn. Not only on the information level but mostly the social level because one needs to be able communicate with other people and do

projects together. "I am not at the top but at the beginning of something... It's a lesson in humility for me."

- **Evolution of mindfulness**

  ○ Mindfulness is a mental quality that Newman believes one needs to develop to realize meaningful things. He thinks that today people are getting more conscious about the environment and our future and therefore it is possible that many other places similar to Plukrijp will emerge soon. Once he acquires the needed knowledge, skills and experience he would like to help establishing one such place as well.

Key theme

- **I need to learn more, a lesson in humility**

  ○ While before going to Plukrijp Newman was already having a lot of theoretical information, he was also having a egocentric attitude that his knowledge is something special. First, when arriving at Plukrijp, he recognized he is not the only one to save the world, he even discovered there are other people who are already far ahead and there is a lot of things to still learn. This could be considered as an important life experience to become really adult.

3.8   Emile: Getting Courage To Do Early Intervention

Narrative

Emile was working for over 10 years in the corporate world for Unilever and General Motors and about 10 years doing a business on his own. He ended all this about 7 years ago in order to dedicate his time, knowledge and skills to help promoting things he considered more important to him – social work and sustainable projects.

Emile knew about Plukrijp since it was established because he was invited at that time to come help. He didn't come at that time but in 2011 he rented a piece of land with a forest where he built a yurt where he started living, which was a fulfilment of his 15-year old dream to leave the city.. When a friend (whose wife was a colleague in work with the wife of Frank) visited him he reminded him of Plukrijp that was actually only about 5 minutes by car from his yurt. 1,5 year ago he was allowed to move his yurt to the garden of Plukrijp.

His first impressions with visiting Plukrijp (2 years ago) was a **"very warm welcome"**. He started coming there repeatedly, exchanging points of view with Frank, planning about future projects to cooperatively organize. People from Plukrijp also helped him to set up the yurt.

Since he moved the yurt to Plukrijp's garden he was spending there almost 70 % of his time, spending the rest with his girlfriend in Antwerp. Emile's experience with gardening goes to the very early age of 8 years when he lived on a farm where he received about 2m2 plot of garden for growing herbs. He remembers his child experiments of putting all the seeds he found—in the apples etc.—into that ground, waiting if they germinate (they didn't). When the family moved from the farm to the city he lost contact with the nature somehow, he returned to it 7 years ago after he finished his corporate business. Emile describes his current approach to gardening as "intuitive", where he is "asking the garden to teach me". **"I want to learn"** is the attitude he has now. He prefers "to ask somebody who has the knowledge" and as he **recognizes Frank to be that person**, **having 40 years of knowledge with organic farming, he respects him as the authority**, so he "asks Frank a lot", and Frank "teaches me a lot of things". Yet, he feels the teacher–student relationship is mutual, Frank also learns thanks to him and others. He remembers when Frank was some time ago discouraging people to bake bread, explaining that "we are not baking bread because it is not worth it", but even though, those who wanted to bake it tried it, it was successful, people liked that bread and now other people would like to learn also how to bake own bread, participating in the process of doing it.

Apart from gardening, ways how to reuse and recycle various materials and adopting this way of living, the biggest outcome of Plukrijp and Frank's influence on Emile is that he is now able **"to stand up (...) to share the knowledge with others, to take the responsibility"**.

> "The biggest thing I learned here is that ... also thanks to Frank... is to stand up and to share also your knowledge with others... to take responsibility." *[Q: And how did you do these things before that?]* "I did it also, but always after a long time, you know. You know that you can help people but you don't want to say immediately what you want to say. So sometimes it takes weeks, or months, or even years." *[Q: Could it be described as having more courage in that?]* "For example, if you see the behaviour of other inhabitants, and you see it's not correct, I [was] waiting till someone else will take the responsibility..."

I was wondering what are Emile's motives to stay at Plukrijp, what particularly he wants to learn and to achieve now (having experience with this type of planning from the corporate world). Surprisingly to me, he said he has it **"very open"** which (to a even bigger surprise to me) he has "generally in life". His approach could be described as "we'll see what happens" and "following the flow". When I inquired about where did he obtained this approach, he mentioned various spiritual traditions he was in contact, and as an example he pointed out Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* (Tolle, 2004). Emile extends this non-judging approach also to issues he would himself do differently that how they are done at Plukrijp (if it was completely his project), like the way how plastic boxes and other material is stored. He says that he accepts it as-it-is, because he has different priorities and motives to stay at Plukrijp:

> "If somebody's coming and has the interest to learn permaculture, then his reason why is he here is *for permaculture.* So, if he's leaving and he doesn't want to learn about permaculture because of aesthetics, then... OK, maybe it was not the most important thing to come here to learn about permaculture because he's flying away. So if somebody is coming for the aesthetics, then **come, but be clear that 'I am coming for the aesthetics'**. And if someone says, 'Oh, it's not aesthetic here, I go away', then I am thankful because **it will make place free for another one which is really interested** in permaculture (...) Other people are here for other reasons. But it's their responsibility to express why they are here."

Thanks to the inspiration at Plukrijp, Emile started to **help homeless people in Antwerp** 4 months ago, collaborating with CAW   *(centrum algemeen welzijn – centre for general well-being)* within OCMW Antwerpen   *(openbare centra voor maatschappelijk welzijn – public social welfare centre)* to extend the help to homeless people from emergency shelters over the winter to bringing there organic food from Plukrijp, teaching homeless people how to eat healthier, inviting them to Plukrijp and also planning how to transform the system of direct payments that now serve mostly to pay individual apartment or studio to a more **communal housing**:

> "A project like community house with five to ten inhabitants with a garden is much more... it's more the future rather than helping the people by giving them money. Let's say, studio costs 500 Euro. But if they rent a house for 2000 Euro and 10 people will live there than it's just 200 Euros... and then you have enough money to buy food."

At the end of the interview, Emile concluded that as he is **capable of** "**connecting people**" thanks to his previous corporate experience he now wants to use this knowledge to "spread the word" that alternatives are possible and do practical social projects like the one just started in Antwerp to help particular people and to spread the ideas that work elsewhere, for example he pointed out that a network of Polish **social cooperatives** is growing thanks to an organisation called Barka (Barka, 2013), and he is planning together with OCMW to establish a similar initiative in Belgium as well. He explains that for some people there is today a "need to create a different time for them" if we want to ensure them some dignity: otherwise they would not be able to succeed in the current world that is far from being inclusive. A social cooperative is one way how to achieve this.

List of themes

– **Asking those who have the knowledge**

○ Emile's way of living consists of respecting those that know more then him, trying to actively learn from them, "prefer to ask somebody". He considers Frank to be his teacher for things related to organic farming and group dynamics, but considers him sometimes to be in the position of a student – the learning is therefore mutual.

– **Getting courage to do early intervention**

○ This is the most important skill Emile considers to have learned himself at Plukrijp: inspired by Frank's direct communication, he also started "to stand up and to share also your knowledge with others... to take responsibility", not to wait months keeping it for himself, rather to share his observations and critical comments immediately. He considers it as a part of accepting the responsibility to not wait for somebody else to say something that needs to be said. Particularly at Plukrijp, Emile feels that sometimes nobody seems to understand Frank's long-term vision, and therefore Frank is "lonely in taking responsibility" for it. Since he thinks he started to understand that vision as well he "found that responsibility to go with him in this direction".

– **Respect for Frank's courage to face emerging conflicts**

○ Emile mentions Frank's direct reactions to various emerging problems that nobody else notices in that early stage. Frank has the approach to put these observations on the table telling his impressions and feeling to the people during a common meal or during a "love-unity" meeting, creating temporarily some tension or pushing the emerging conflict to manifest when it is still rather small: "At least the fire is out." Emile appreciates that Frank is able to make considerations when it is OK to "just give a hug" and when it would be more appropriate to speak about some problem in the community. This attitude allowed Emile to develop a similar skill as well *(see the previous theme)*.

– **Accepting everything as it is**

○ This attitude does not seem to originate from Plukrijp, rather it a long term trait acquired by various experience and/or interest in spiritual practice including the Eckhart Tolle's approach: "You don't have to lose energy just because something is bothering you". When I asked him about his aesthetic preferences and how does he perceive the storage of various things at Plukrijp like plastic boxes that some people consider as visually ugly: "I accept it as it is, elsewhere I would do it differently... I have other priorities". By other priorities he means that he is not at Plukrijp because of aesthetics, and just because these things are different than he would do himself does not mean he needs to intervene in the direction to change everything according to his preferences.

– **Role of network expert – connecting people**

○ Emile has 20 years of experience with the corporate world and is able to connect various people together, creating synergistic effects by that. He uses this skill to introduce Plukrijp to the administration of OCMW Antwerpen to use resources Plukrijp offers for the homeless in Antwerp, to allow the officials visit Plukrijp, get inspiration what things could be made to improve the situation of homeless without asking for a higher budget. He plans also to help destabilising a platform for promoting creation of social cooperatives as they are already operating in Poland thanks to the Barka organization.

Key theme

- **Getting courage to do early intervention**

    ○ Learning to not wait months before doing an action is a skill specifically acquired at Plukrijp, inspired by Frank's behaviour. It can be also used while working with homeless people and in any other settings, not just for managing the group dynamics at Plukrijp.

3.9 Gabrielle: Everything is Possible

Narrative

Gabrielle visited Plukrijp for the first time in summer 2012 when she got the place recommended by a friend from the local Transitie (Transition initiative in Flanders). She spent there only one day or a weekend, she does not remember precisely.

It was a first experience of this kind for her. After that she decided to obtain more experience on another organic farm. She was however interested in ecology and natural spirituality since her childhood and when she got acquainted with the ideas of the **Transition movement** (articulated by Rob Hopkins in 2006, Transition Network, 2012) she immediately thought, "**This is it**".

The local Transition initiative where she lived already existed before she went to Plukrijp for the first time, but at that time it was "dead" – a website was made but except for some meetings no real activity was happening.

After she had the experience from Plukrijp she got **excited about the possibilities** that are waiting to be realized. She **established a tiny (mere 100m²!) community garden** that was shared for anyone interested. Surprisingly, **it was a success** and even new people started joining the Transition initiative, participating on the small plot. Then some **workshops began to be organized once per month**, including **visits to other Transition initiatives** in other villages and towns in Belgium.

While she was discussing potential projects with Frank at Plukrijp, an idea to start a systematic education in permaculture appeared. Since then regular weekend permaculture courses began to be organized by Frank at Plukrijp for the people of the Transition initiative that Gabrielle had revived.

Gabrielle thinks that Plukrijp could be considered as a special kind of a Transition initiative. She would like to get inspired from it to do similar things (sharing of materials, living etc.) but in the city. She continues:

> "Plukrijp also has quite a **radical view on permaculture** and on the deep ecological shift that is necessary, and... I think that's why it's quite inspiring for a lot of people. Because there are a lot of ecological projects of course, but **this one is going quite profound**. And of course Frank as a person is quite...*present* ... he has a view on the things which is sometimes hard, or critical, but... that also makes it in some way attractive. You may agree or not agree. He has a vision."

When I asked her to somehow summarize what is the role/importance of Plukrijp in the Transition movement she returned to life. She thinks the Transition initiative would be there also without Plukrijp, but "a lot of ideas are influenced by Plukrijp". Among the decisions they made in their local community are the **system of free gifts into the magic hat, not asking money for the workshops that are being organized, and making a local economy but also to share without any complementary currency** as it is performed in most LETS (local exchange trade systems) including "time banks".

Each street in her town where some Transition members are has one person responsible to speak to others on the street when some events are planned, etc. (in case not everybody is regularly online). These people also ask the others what things they would like to share with others, these offers are put into a database and distributed to all over the internet. **This exchange works purely on the basis of mutual trust, and the courage to attempt in in such a radical form was also triggered by discussions with Frank who was saying "it's possible"**. So they tried it and it still works. When there were

preliminary discussions about starting the local money (LETS), Gabrielle was able to persuade the others to completely drop the idea of a currency:

> "There we first were really thinking in the way of LETS or alternative money. And it was **also because of my experience with Plukrijp that I really believe that the absolute sharing is possible. And I pushed it through in he project to make it like that**... and to talk with people that everyone can share something. Also poor people, also people that don't have a lot of skills. Minimum is your time or attention, whatever. **If everyone shares, it will also come back to you. You don't have to count that.**

> Also we started to share a kitchen: shared cooking – we use now mostly ingredients from Plukrijp, and of course we have now a larger shared garden, it is one hectare. *[Q: Wow, how did you get to this land?]* **I am still like the leader of the Transition group, and I told 'I need more land', and there is not so much land there, not at all, but I had a crush on some open land, and I asked to the owners, and now we can use it**. It's a land used [officially] for buildings, but it will not be used for the next years. So we can use it as our shared garden. And once we have our own vegetables we can use it for our shared kitchen..."

When the movement started to live they had about 50 active members and the agenda was shared via a paper board. Now they have build a website dedicated to the movement.

Gabrielle was capable to realize all these things within one single year:

> "Yes, it was for me... **I was already with all that ideas, but with my conversations with Frank, it encouraged me like 'yes this is the right way'**. We made also a lot of philosophical discussions about... whatever."

Gabrielle wishes to start a similar project to Plukrijp, and she is excited about the speed how similar projects are appearing: "It's so strange, I started it last year (...) **at that time it was new for me And now... I meet every day people who are starting similar projects. It's enormous!"**

I was fascinated by the results Gabrielle was able to achieve within just one year, so much drawing inspiration from her experience at Plukrijp. I could not believe when she said at the end of the interview:

> "**Officially I am an invalided... because of chronic fatigue syndrome. In reality I am not sick at all when I do things I like, it gives me a lot of energy** (laugh)"

List of themes

– **Resurrecting the Transition initiative**

  ○ After Gabrielle visited Plukrijp, she got inspired to transform the Transition initiative in her area from an almost dead platform to a thriving platform for a gift-based local economy, free of money or a local currency, realizing an utopian vision of which glimpse she saw at Plukrijp. Contrary to common assumptions how difficult is to realize something related to the land especially in Flanders where the population density is so big that no free land is generally available, she was able to get one hectare of land for free use as a community garden. Gabrielle was able to use maximally the synergy arising from inviting people from the Transition group to Plukrijp to learn some principles of permaculture, organize courses locally, organize visits to other places etc.

– **Skill to persuade others to go radical**

  ○ Gabrielle was extraordinarily successful to push her plans and visions to others so they agreed to do it as she proposed. Particularly she persuaded others to not make a local currency but rather work on a gift-based, trust-based local exchange without any money or counting

hours, believing that the effort given to the community will come back multiplied. Succeeding in this one single thing goes against the basic assumptions of neoclassical economists, Darwinians and Hardin's theory of the "tragedy of the commons".

– **Physical manifestation of utopia (eutopia)**

○ *Both two previous themes as well as the narration as a whole is a prototypical example of a transformative learning leading to extraordinary results in the social neighbourhood manifested in an unusually short period of time.*

Key theme

– **Follow your dreams – Everything is possible**

○ *I used this poetical name for the results presented in this case because hearing this story was beyond anything I could imagine that could happen and I did not expect to obtain such an account during my participant observation and interview taking process.*

3.10 Barbara: Everything Changing and Open

Narrative

Barbara **knows Frank for many years** already since he was doing cooperative organic business (selling baskets of vegetables in Antwerp). She met Frank through her friends. Since Plukrijp exists she "kept a connection" visiting the place briefly once per month. I did a brief interview during one of her one-day visits.

She said she is coming to Plukrijp by **"following intuition"** when she feels it. She does not have any particular goal what to do or achieve at Plukrijp.

She appreciates the social interaction at the place and a "development on a psychological and spiritual level". She considers all aspects of Plukrijp to be important and her contribution is mostly by bringing certain "spiritual qualities".

I tried to push Barbara a bit to tell me more specifically what did she learn at Plukrijp. She could not reply me this way, she only mentioned she learns some things thanks to "unique combination of people here and life approach people have".

This fuzzy way of replying continued. An answer to whether she uses what she had learned at Plukrijp whatever it is she replied that "it's hard to say, I never stop learning. I'm taking with me an experience of awareness, learning process".

She has been active in LETS some time ago but she is not any more because she moved outside Antwerp where the system was working.

Her perception of Plukrijp-as-place is that it is "so changing", there is "some kind of freedom, still developing, finding its way". She feels there is a **space to do various things**, the place has **"loose ends"** meaning that its content is not strictly defined but develops according to the personalities of people that are just present. This openness is "the challenge, but it's interesting". Other communities she knew like some communes or eco-villages in France or Spain are "quite fixed" in their agenda and activities. Her explanation for this difference is that Plukrijp officially still belongs to the Ruymen family that keeps it going. Other projects are usually cooperatives where the property belongs to the members. When at the end I asked her what she thinks about the future of Plukrijp:

> "That's the interesting thing. You project your dreams in the future (...) but that's not the most important thing. **It's what you meet along the way and the people that (...) gives you the reflection for your own development**".

I was not able to retrieve "themes" and do a proper analysis of this interview because Barbara did not tell me much of specific information neither about Plukrijp nor about what did Plukrijp influenced her life.

Her replies were very general, indirect, and I failed to get more concrete examples to ground the general statements about "changing space", "loose ends" and "learning whole life". Perhaps it was caused by the fact that she was a returning one-day visitor only not even having any explicit aim, or it was just too late for her and she was mentally already on her way home. The interview took about 20 minutes and was done in the late evening just before she was leaving back to Antwerp.

3.11 Sorel: Reorganizing Priorities

Narrative

Four years ago (2009) a friend of Sorel discovered somewhere "permaculture" and its principles, he was enthusiastic about that, spoke about it and somehow he discovered that not far from exists a permaculture farm Plukrijp. One weekend they decided to have a look.

At that time he was still working so he came only during weekends for one day (Saturday). Lot of things attracted him at Plukrijp: first, the permaculture way of farming which he was discovering at that time. He liked how Frank was willing to explain everything about farming (It was "an eye-opener" for him).

> "What also struck us that **the door was just always open**. You could just... you don't have to call to make an appointment. You just come... and Frank and Martine [Frank's wife] they would always be waiting with arms wide open."

This was unusual for Sorel mostly because it is not typical for Belgium, **this approach "is quite unique for Belgium"**. He is used to a **"hospitality within boundaries"** in that region, although in other places where he had travelled he found the unlimited hospitality as more common.

When I asked Sorel what happened with him after having the experience with Plukrijp. He was not happy at that time with his job although he earned a lot of money. By coming to Plukrijp he discovered there may be an alternative. **About a year after his first visit to Plukrijp he decided to quit the job**, this decision he considers as inspired by Plukrijp from a big part. Then he went to a temple to "find himself". When he returned to Plukrijp (2 years ago) he spent there two months. During this prolonged stay, he "found out I really like to be outside, in the garden (...) I really enjoyed it".

> "Next to that I think... a place like this, if you take it seriously, then... **there's a lot to learn about yourself, and how you dance around with all these people and how you play in that *intentional community*.**" [Q: What does it mean?] "People decide to live together in a way less ordinary..."

Sorel admits that at that time he was very focused on himself, his personal growth, forgetting other people. Frank was however able to recognize it somehow at that time and confronted Sorel with it which eventually "opened his eyes" — but from the rear mirror after some time, when this was happening Sorel didn't accept it fully:

> **"Even if your goal is personal growth, you have to do it with other people. Don't forget about the place, about the energy of other people, try to see the whole."**

He was also gradually learning to calm down, before that he was a very nervous person. (During the interview Sorel seemed to me very relaxed.)

Permaculture means to Sorel much more than just agriculture.

> "Agriculture is just a way to buy some freedom. I think it was Henry Ford who said, 'If you have your food, you have your freedom'. (...) **Permaculture is also how to live with people also on a permanent base, which means that somehow you need to find a rhythm or harmony to keep people together.**"

Since two years (after he quit the job) Sorel was travelling mostly around Europe, being a volunteer (WWOOFer) in Spain, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. Thanks to his former job and a sobriety where his daily expenses were less than 9 Euro per day, he was able to do it like that and he says he could continue like that for at last ten more years.

However, while staying in Greece he found there a land where he wants to join an existing project, **build there own house and start living there more permanently** in the spirit of a sustainable living.

List of themes

– **Experience of "door always open" at Plukrijp**

  ◦ This experience of being able to arrive any time without an appointment is something that Sorel considers as very unusual especially in Belgium. Before he started travelling elsewhere where he experienced something similar more often, this was something that fascinated him

– **Plukrijp as a catalyst to leave unsatisfactory job**

  ◦ Although doing a well-paid job, he was not satisfied with it, but until he visited Plukrijp and saw a potential positive alternative he could not imagine leaving the job.

– **Permaculture on the social-relational level**

  ◦ Sorel's consideration of "permaculture" widened to not just include a style of gardening or performing agriculture, but a philosophy to manage social relationships in general that should also be shifted to a more "permanent", harmonious way. "Permaculture is also how to live with people also on a permanent base, which means that somehow you need to find a rhythm or harmony to keep people together."

– **Decision to move permanently to an eco-village in Greece**

  ◦ His two year long travelling around Europe originally triggered by the first interest about permaculture at Plukrijp led him to a eco-community in Greece that he desires to join. He is now decided to build there a house and start living there, using all the knowledge he acquired during his stay at Plukrijp and during his travelling as a volunteer on various organic farms.

Key theme

– **Plukrijp as a catalyst to leave unsatisfactory job**

  ◦ The experience of Plukrijp led Sorel to radically change his life by quitting a well-paid job and directing his following life on completely different activities (travelling, volunteering, learning about organic farming and community life). The other themes would probably not emerge if this decision was not made in the first place.

3.12 Kohelet: Hidden Spirituality of Plukrijp

Narrative

Kohelet came to Plukrijp 3 days before the interview took place. He discovered Plukrijp by looking at the "WWOOF independent" database of hosts.

> "**The coolest thing that I found was… that Plukrijp… they don't sell the products**, but they get donations… and Frank actually replied the same evening, it was late in the evening (…) 'You are welcome, just bring you sleeping bag and smile' "

He had 3 previous WWOOF experiences, 6 weeks in Spain in 2007 and then 2 months at 2 hosts in Malaysia in 2012.

His current impressions from Plukrijp are that it seems to be "an amazing place with a lot of potential". When I asked about the reasons, he emphasized "the relaxed atmosphere", and **"people being spiritual, yet not putting it on foreground**, but everybody doing some practices towards self-realization". Frank and many other people know some of the spiritual masters he respects (Mooji and others).

He believes sustainability is an important goal to go for. First he heard about "permaculture" in 2007 while he was WWOOFing in Spain, he considered is as interesting. Not only its aesthetic value but also the potential to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. In Malaysia he felt that the way how permaculture was performed there was not (yet) really productive.

Kohelet was also involved in a **Transition initiative** in the home town, where he visited a few meetings but generally lived in distance.

When I asked Kohelet to give me **his representation of "sustainable lifestyle"**, what does it mean to him, he emphasized that "it starts with food, our basic needs". Important are also clothes (fair wear, organic) and generally the process of gradually moving towards a 100% sustainable lifestyle.

Kohelet's future vision is to establish an ashram dedicated to his main spiritual *guru* he met in India and he is in contact with over the internet. The ashram could be in Netherlands he is from and its aim would be to promote the Vedic culture which is "basically a sustainable culture" but nowadays it "almost died out".

Due to the fact that it was only 3 days since he arrived to Plukrijp, it was quite early to ask what changes he made in his life thanks to Plukrijp. I asked **if some important change worth mentioning happened sometime in the past**. He again pointed to the WWOOF experiences in 2007 and 2012. While in 2007 he just saw some DVD that he considered "boring but OK; didn't get much at that time", **in 2012 he was already interested**, **he was actively learning the techniques and acquiring the knowledge present at the farms he visited**.

Finally I asked him a provocative question how does he perceive his flights to India, Malaysia and his plans to go to Australia in the light of the discussions about sustainable lifestyle, post-fossil civilization etc. He admitted "it is not ideal, but I'm aware of it." He has a "vision of reducing the ecological footprint *in the future*" also in order to get in order *karma* before he dies.

List of themes

– **Discovery of "spiritual people not putting it into foreground"**

  ○ Kohelet has a lot of experience with spiritual communities where the devotion is symbolized by the number of ornaments the devotee is surrounded by; on the other hand at Plukrijp he discovered that almost everybody had a rich spiritual life, often practising some form of meditation, but nobody was emphasizing it anyhow, wearing *mala* or other symbols. Kohelet also noticed that many people including Frank knew many of the masters he followed.

– **Reducing the ecological footprint in the future**

  ○ It surprised me that Kohelet was speaking about the importance of a sustainable lifestyle, yet not having any visible concerns travelling repeatedly by plane to India, Indonesia or Australia either to have a WWOOF experience there or to visit his spiritual masters. When asked about that he replied he is aware of it and he plans to work on it in the future. (I must admit I had quite ambivalent feelings when I heard that.)

Due to the short period of time Kohelet was staying at Plukrijp I didn't obtain a story rich enough to get persuaded that picking a "key theme" would have any added value.

3.13 Brief summary

This section contains only repeated themes from all participants, for the second level of analysis and a thorough interpretation with a commentary and reference to the literature see the part of Discussion.

3.13.1 List of Themes of All Participants

Simon:

1. Learning the pragmatic side of ecological living
2. Getting back to Earth, Getting grounded
3. Going beyond dualistic perception of Babylon-*qua*-degenerative-culture
4. Influencing other people indirectly through a documentary

– Key theme: **Integrating "Babylonic life" (virtual reality) with the *actual* reality**

Wotan:

1. First experience of a real community
2. Experience that living without money is possible
3. Discovering the marketing behind our consumer behaviour
4. Vision of a project to reduce wasting food
5. Recognition of the influence our environment has upon us and our reactions to events

– Key theme: **Experience of living without money**

Bernard:

1. Plukrijp as a "transition place"
2. Seeing the silence through the mess
3. How to become a "renegade": Ignore the commons
4. Becoming honest to oneself

– Key theme: **Seeing the silence through the mess**

Lars:

1. **Speeding-up the learning process**
2. **Realizing the importance of diligence and focusing on one thing**
3. **Corrective experience of abundance**

(all three themes equally important)

Karl:

1. corrective experience of a secure "place to belong"
2. learning and practising a social scheme to live together
3. learning a regular day rhythm

– Key theme: **Finding a secure "place to belong"**

Newman:

1. Realizing that "I need to learn more"

2. Evolution of mindfulness

   – Key theme: **I need to learn more, a lesson in humility**

Emile:

1. Asking those who have the knowledge

2. Getting courage to do early intervention

3. Respect for Frank's courage to face emerging conflicts

4. Accepting everything as it is

5. Role of network expert – connecting people

   – Key theme: **Getting courage to do early intervention**

Gabrielle:

1. Resurrecting the Transition initiative

2. Skill to persuade others to go radical

3. Physical manifestation of utopia (eutopia)

   – Key theme: **Follow your dreams – Everything is possible**

Barbara:

   (skipped)

Sorel:

1. Experience of "door always open" at Plukrijp

2. Plukrijp as a catalyst to leave unsatisfactory job

3. Permaculture on the social-relational level

4. Decision to move permanently to an eco-village in Greece

   – Key theme: **Plukrijp as a catalyst to leave unsatisfactory job**

Kohelet:

1. Discovery of "spiritual people not putting it into foreground"

2. Reducing the ecological footprint in the future

3.13.2   Change of Attitudes and Behaviour Thanks to Plukrijp and Actions in the World

Simon: loss of naïve idealism, understanding the physical limits and need to work with circumstances (organic farming)

Wotan: de-conditioning from shame, embarrassment and influence of peer pressure (expired products, second hand clothes, no car)

Bernard: becoming honest to himself, reducing consumption of alcohol

Lars: becoming diligent in the chosen path to achieve the results; loss of fear of having money

Karl: normalizing a day/night rhythm (regularity, healthy meals)

Newman: surpassing egocentric "knowledge trip"

Emile: learning to take the responsibility and react immediately

Gabrielle: fulfilling in reality what was only in the dreams before

Sorel: quitting job, becoming a WWOOFer

3.13.3   People's representations of Plukrijp

Mostly the individual's stories were already presented in depth so here I present only a mosaic of the terms how different people "define" Plukrijp. Not all people are given space here and some are here multiple times because they offered multiple "representations". I ordered the definitions arbitrarily so similar or related are near to each other.

Wotan: *"A real community—unlike other places"*

   much stronger "social fibre", doing common activities all day long, no separation between the host (Frank) and volunteers

Karl: *"Almost a family"*

   Getting a much-needed corrective experience of being welcome, dissolving the perception of a world bring a "dark, cold, hard place"

Emile: *"A conscious healing place"*

   "permaculture... living in a community... optimal circumstances where you can heal and help people"

Bernard: *"A transition place"*

   "you spend some time and then you move on", Frank said, 'If you are here today, you are here today; tomorrow, it's another day, we'll see'

Emile: *"A place to come and go"*

   Frank said, 'You are the missionaries of Plukrijp'.

4   Discussion

4.1   Summary of results

In the preceding section I presented detailed stories of 11 people who volunteered at the organic farm of Plukrijp while I was staying there as a participant observer. First, a personal history of each individual was presented, because it is crucial for a proper understanding of his or her story, and of the influence that Plukrijp had on that individual.

   Generally people coming to such kind of place already have certain affinity towards protecting the environment, the feeling of urge to do something with our unsustainable lifestyle, etc. Actually it would be strange if this attitude was not present at all, it was one of the reasons why the individuals chose to visit that place! Why would they otherwise wish to visit and work on an organic farm?

   The essential part of each story as I presented it is to find and understand the effects of the stay at Plukrijp on the attitudes, behaviours and values of the individuals.

   There was not even the question *if* people learn something while staying on such a place, for it was considered as obvious: First we are constantly shaped by our environment, and cannot eliminate this from happening. The mere exposure of the personality to a constant stream of experience that is related to sustainable agriculture and ideology cannot leave without any trace. The question was therefore *how* concretely this occurs in multiple individuals, each of them unique in their previous experience and

circumstanced. For this reason the multiple case study was the approach chosen for this study It allows the reader to obtain insights almost as if he or she was spending time with these people in person.

First, I did a thematic analysis of each case. The result is composed of

1. a narrative with emphasised sequences,

2. a list of themes that refer to significant elements of the narrative,

3. (and optionally) a superordinate theme called the "key theme".

The degree of abstraction in the themes is roughly equivalent to the result of the first level of analysis according to the interpretative phenomenological analysis or the open coding according to the method of grounded theory. A total number of 35 themes and 8 (or 11[*]) key themes were created from the interviews. Finally a brief summary of all cases was presented: Four participants seemed to experience the change of their frame of reference in some aspect of their worldview[†] (the instance of *transformative learning* according to Mezirow, 1997), most of the others declared that they learned new things although they were not so profound[‡]. Regarding the pro-environmental behaviours, the participants were already employing certain range of such behaviours before they arrived to Plukrijp, however, after their stay, new behaviours that in several cases were much *bolder* and with a stronger social impact, emerged.

The following part looks at the results mostly from the perspectives outlined in the introductory part:

1. what were the most interesting and surprising results that were not anticipated very much at the beginning;

2. how the results fit the intentions of Frank Ruymen, the founder of the community of Plukrijp, whether the participants I chose seem to accomplish the visions of Frank Ruymen(Ruymen, 2013b)*; also how could it be explained by the the *theory of planned behaviour* and the *value-belief-norm theory.*

3. what social and environmental impact could the newly performed pro-environmental behaviours and activities have, compared to the ones that were present before coming to Plukrijp.

4.2   The surprise

First, the somewhat surprising part: Although I devoted the effort to focus the interviews on the *environmental* subject and expected the environmental knowledge arising as the main result of staying on the farm, most of the participants told me a story where the environmental aspect was so closely entangled with a kind of a psychological transformation (in the sense of Jungian *individuation* or Mezirow's *transformative learning*) that it is rather inappropriate to speak merely about the *environmental education* in the sense of plain accumulation of some environmental knowledge in the biological sense.

To remind some of the themes of the participants that show the psychological process behind the façade of explicit environmental knowledge: "**I need to learn more, a lesson in humility**" (Newman), "**Corrective experience of abundance**" (Lars), "**Seeing the silence through the mess**" (Bernard), "**Getting back to Earth, Getting grounded**" (Simon), "**Becoming honest to oneself**" (Bernard) or "**Permaculture on the social-relational level**" (Sorel). The last theme reminds us the wide definition of permaculture that was already outlined in the presentation of Plukrijp (p. 17 and the explanatory endnote on p. 71) where we are speaking about the vision of a permanent **culture** and not just "agriculture", which requires

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[*]Depends whether the three themes of Lars are also considered as key themes or these are ignored

[†]These instances could be called "**reframing the illness**", "**living without money**", "**secure place to belong**" and "**abundance**". In all these cases a significant shift towards the wholeness of the personality happened. On the intellectual level, there was indeed a radical shift, but as Mezirow (1997)and others (Dirkx, 2000) emphasize, the transformative learning is also a process towards wholeness in the sense of Jung's *individuation.*

[‡]Here I mean the conceptual change, but if we perceive the process of transformative learning also in the mytho-poetic sense (Dirkx, 2000), then the majority of the accounts would fit there.

a change of the perception of an individual and his delusory separate self (Capriles, 2001), and re-thinking of the now all-pervading idea of private property (Eisenstein, 2011)[*].

By acknowledging the inherent interdependence of all life as an indivisible part of the whole, as the [mystical] wisdom traditions (Capriles, 2011) or the deep ecology movement (Conesa-Servilla, 2006) were always saying[†], and the fact that precisely this knowledge was one of the aims of Frank Ruymen to transmit to the people arriving at Plukrijp (Plukrijp, 2013a), using a wide set of methods including sophisticated design of the place (bearing sometimes striking similarities to the early utopia of B. Skinner, *Walden Two* – Skinner, 2005, and in some cases to the destabilizing methods seemingly inspired by the Laing's anti-psychiatry), or the daily routine of common meals and the activities (also seemingly inspired by Skinner and resembling closely the regime in therapeutic communities for drug addicts yet leaving much more flexibility and freedom to an individual), the "surprise" is not a big surprise any more.

The theories of planned behaviour and value-belief-norm are not suitable for explaining this process, while the idea of achieving the personal *autonomy* in the Mezirow's concept of transformative learning (or the Jung's *individuation!*) seem to be much more relevant for that.

4.3   The accomplishment of Frank's visions and the second level of analysis

As Frank Ruymen declares on the website (Plukrijp, 2013a), "a big part of Plukrijp is learning to be ourselves together with others in a constructive and communicative atmosphere": so this is the **therapeutic aim**. It is closely related to the official purpose of the non-profit organization (v.z.w.), to *promote the idea and imperative of permaculture.* Such definition is very vague, for as it was shown, the definitions of *permaculture* could vary a lot (see the endnote on p. 71). However, if using the wide sense of the term, then the therapeutic aim is indispensable for achieving also the permaculture aim. Undergoing the transition towards the ideal state of sustainable living in the long term, the particular aims are *reducing the ecological footprint* of each individual and the farm as a whole by applying the instructions **1. reduce, 2. reuse, 3. recycle** — *in this very order,* recognizing what is really important and what is not (Steg & Vlek, 2009 as I quoted them already on p.9) — because often the first and the second statement promoting the pro-ecological behaviour are ignored or neglected, and an inappropriate attention is given to the third statement[‡]. Barr et al. (2001, p.78, emph. added) remind us in their study comparing these three statements as three distinct conservation behaviours, that

> "[r]ecycling, reuse and reduction behaviour are fundamentally different behaviours. In terms of description, *reduction is undertaken least often*, with fewer people 'always' undertaking waste reduction actions. *Reuse* is similar, but *is undertaken on a more regular basis.* However, *recycling is fundamentally different.* The majority of people either 'always' or 'never' recycle."

Frank's method of teaching people and encouraging them of the proper priorities in conservation behaviour and simultaneously to healthy interpersonal relationships in the community is to "confront people immediately with issues that emerge" — rather than seeing undesired behaviour, increasing one's own tension, yet not telling it to the person who is doing such a behaviour (Ruymen, 2013b, as I quote him in the *Addendum B,* question 8).

An example: My personal experience with this issue was during my participant observer stay in the community in 2013 when I noticed that the trash bin for general (residual) waste is within a day overfilled

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[*]"What would be the result in heaven itself if those who get there first instituted private property in the surface of heaven, and parcelled it out in absolute ownership among themselves, as we parcel out the surface of the earth?" (George, as cited in Eisenstein, 2011)

[†]"Only when we recognize that everything in nature is created by its meaning, and that all Umwelts are but voices that take part in a universal score, will the way be open to lead us out of the narrow confines of our own Umwelt." (Von Uexküll, as cited in Conesa-Servilla, 2006, p.27)

[‡]It is perhaps for the reason that it allows the consumerist way of life to not be altered very much – it even creates business opportunities for new companies that "ecologically" recycle all the heaps of waste produced by consumers and companies. One can then experience good feelings, because one is not guilty any more, for one is now consuming "ecologically"! (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011, p.21) (What else should one do than to separate plastic, paper or glass, or to even enjoy the comfort of letting this job being done by some professionals in the waste management company or by a smart machine.)

with *stuff* that could—and should—be placed instead into the bins for paper, plastic, PET bottles, metal cans, glass etc.

These bins for separating the waste were just a meter away from the general waste bin, all the people knew very well that they are on a place where there is a strong social norm and expectations mostly from Frank regarding very precise waste separation and waste management, at the same time, that the aim of the place is to minimize the ecological impact and also the maintenance costs (15 people could live there for about 1 000 € per month). The payment to the municipality (in the Flemish part of Belgium) is based on the absolute amount of waste that stays in the general waste bin, which is one of the ways how an environmental policy can be applied.

After the common dinner I announced this finding to remind the others to be more mindful in this aspect, showing them at the same time examples I found in the bin that could and should be separated. Immediately after that the situation improved, but what was even more important in this case was that I didn't have to complain silently how mindless other people in the community are, which prevented my own tensions to grow—that would eventually harm the quality of my relationships with these people more than by expressing openly my dissatisfaction.

However, because the people that become already mindful eventually leave, while meanwhile new-comers arrive, such a situation may happen any time in the future again. The behavioural change is often the result of such reminder that is *repeated* over time. On the ecological farm and a group of people that is small enough there is a strong *informal social control* and feedback mechanisms that allow to stop unwholesome behaviour of almost any member of such a group in the very beginning, preventing most of the possible damage including the damage to relationships. I believe that the encouragement of people to speak openly about these things ("above-the-table management" according to Ruymen, 2013b) is the major reason why Wotan, one of the participants, expressed in the beginning of our interview that "any farmer can put a description on their website a statement 'this farm is a community', but this place actually *is* a community—unlike the other places (...) [in the sense that] the social fibre of this place is much stronger than on the other places" (interview with Wotan, see p.30).

Far more complicated, however, this becomes in the anonymous, highly mobile environment of urban areas (Warner & Rountree, 1997) where the lack of this informal social control is responsible for higher crime rates and several socio-pathological phenomena, as also the classical author and founder of the term permaculture, Bill Mollison, reflected in his *Designer's Manual* (Mollison, 1988, p.531), briefly summarizing the sociological research dating back to the 19th century's Georg Simmel's studies of group sizes and group dynamics.

The permaculture way of thinking, however, starts with the small communities and tight local relationships, mostly for the reasons of

1. limiting the ecological inefficiency of reliance upon products coming from a bigger distance;

2. keeping short feedback loops where the actors of most actions should themselves experience their effects including the externalities as soon as possible (compared to the environmental injustice in the contemporary global economy), getting the opportunity to learn lessons from it and adjust their actions appropriately to avoid creating more harm;

3. supporting the local producers and the circulation of money in the local economy, keeping the "local multiplier" (Sacks, 2002) high, not allowing the local wealth to irreversibly flow away to some unknown foreign destination;

4. and eliminating most of the socio-pathological phenomena as described above, by acknowledging the natural self-regulating mechanisms occurring in smaller groups.

Strengthening the relationships among neighbours and building local communities even in a big city is a challenging, but meaningful task, and some people after having a corrective or even a "break-through" experience from Plukrijp decided to do their best to learn more about and perhaps even build new such social environments – just some examples of the cases:

- Bernard had almost tears in his face, when he shared me his impressions from Plukrijp: "Imagine you are on the road, you knock on the door, and you feel *so* welcome. It's amazing these places exist" (see p.33). Unfortunately, his attempts to improve the local bonds by doing a local exchange in Antwerp failed, as he experienced a kind of a burn-out, for it took "a lot of effort, time, persuading people, petrol…" (see p.34).

- Karl vividly described an extreme, paranoid version of the feelings of separation and alienation that he experienced during his former "drug career", before arriving to Plukrijp: "the only thing I know was mistrust, and just people trying to stab you into your back constantly (…) I needed a place again where I could realize it isn't all that" (see p.37) – so he found that very place at Plukrijp, learning what is the "social scheme of living together", feeling more connected to people around.

- For Newman, who came to Plukrijp thanks to his interest in conspiracy theories, he realized he found a place from where he could learn the "social level of permaculture and sustainability", having a desire that once he acquires the knowledge etc. he wants to help creating another instance of Plukrijp (see p.40), apparently realizing the importance of consciously building such social environments that promote wholesome behaviour on the individual, societal and also ecological level.

- Emile learned to have the courage and insight to do "early intervention" (giving other people, whose behaviour he recognizes as inappropriate, a proper verbal feedback in the right moment), not being reluctant or indifferent to the situation, implicitly expecting some "natural resolution" of the issue that actually does not occur very often in the proper time frame: "For example, if you see the behaviour of other inhabitants, and you see it's not correct, I [was] waiting till someone else will take the responsibility" (see p.41). In addition to that, the lessons from Plukrijp motivated Emile to promote communal housing and do a meaningful help for homeless people in Antwerp, all of these being social activities that promote the inclusive approach that is present in smaller communities, building a more appropriate city environments (communal housing) to learn and let grow the wholesome social interactions, or offering people who have more severe difficulties, "a different time" (see p.41) on a retreat place (= Plukrijp), not disturbed by the unwholesome, alienated city environment. This way he considered Plukrijp to offer the benefits present in formal therapeutic communities, closed psychiatry hospitals or monasteries – all being quasi-isolated places where ordinary problems of the world are "magically" wiped off from the mind and physical surroundings of the patient or the spiritual practitioner, so he or she can have psychological space to reintegrate, reunite the fragmented self, and traverse through *La noche oscura del alma* (*the dark night of the soul*, as Saint John of the Cross described the psychological/spiritual process in his 16th century poem – Saint John of the Cross, 1994 – and that re-emerged in the psychotherapeutic community particularly with the advent of Jungian analytical psychology that seem to originate in Jung's personal experience of this kind, that he described in the *Liber Novus* in great detail – Jung & Shamdasani, 2009) to a healthier, *holotropic*[*] Self, and ultimately to the realization of Jungian *individuation*, or the *Supreme Sanity* (tib. *rig pa)* free from all delusions with which the nature of mind is obscured since the "timeless beginning" — as the wisdom traditions (here expressed through the terms used in the atiyana-dzogchen teachings) transmit (Capriles, 2006b, 2011; Norbu, 2000).

One of the visions of Frank Ruymen (Ruymen, 2013a) is also to teach people that are enthusiastic enough such skills and know-how so that they are eventually (perhaps after having an experience as a worker on another farms and "transition places") ready (mature, or "ripe" enough) to establish a kind of *franchise* of Plukrijp somewhere else. For this reason the more formal-style courses of permaculture that are given at Plukrijp not just to the volunteers, but also anyone else who comes specifically for such a course, contain a lot of *design planning* where the participants of such courses present their circumstances (whether they

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[*] from the greek *holos* (whole) and *trepein* (tend to) = tending to wholeness (Grof, as cited in Capriles, 2009, p.24)

own or use some land, or planning to purchase some, the location of such land, whether there already exists some kind of *transition movement* (Transition Network, 2012), and brainstorming in the group what kind of permaculture project could be done with these circumstances. I participated on such a weekend design planning course while I was doing the research on the farm in April 2013.

However, the question remains, are the people leaving Plukrijp "ripe" enough to start successfully a project similar to Plukrijp itself? I remember few times when Frank told me in a non-formal private interview that regarding this issue he is not particularly happy: he feels that when it comes to a strict measure of the "conversion ratio" of the amount of people passing through Plukrijp, and amount of people starting a permaculture project of such a significant scale and impact as Plukrijp is, he has a feeling that the "transition" towards a sustainable future is *too slow* when compared to the

- ever-increasing resource consumption, the risk of not being able to satisfy it ("peak oil" scenarios) while being utterly dependent on such commodities (Transition Network, 2012; Tomkin, 2012; Šmajs, 2008);

- the anthropogenic climate change and the challenges it poses to human survival (Meadows, 1972; Meadows et al., 2004; Turner, 2008; Bardi, 2011);

- and the combined effect of all the other facets of the environmental destruction (mass extinction of species, soil fertility decline etc.) occurring simultaneously;

therefore the effort of doing his best to reverse the approaching catastrophic collapse as it seems almost unavoidable today (Meadows et al., 2004; Turner, 2008; Bardi, 2011) is not bearing its fruit *enough.* Because it is so difficult to literally "save the world" (in the anthropocentric sense) by the effort of one individual or any community built by such an individual, it may also become difficult to see the real positive effects of such an effort and to keep a motivation despite all of itl ("saying yes in spite of everything", as Frankl wrote and as I comment on this psychological challenge in the endnote on p.69), I chose to focus a little bit more on those participants whose stories (that I partially knew before conducting the interviews from the informal talks during my participant observer stay) I considered to be more inspirational in the sense of finding positive deviations in the sea of vanity, to get some knowledge of what are the good practices that work in some particular settings, that could perhaps be replicated to other settings and work there (with some minor changes) too (Heath & Heath, 2010).

So for the participants that I generally chose according to the key just mentioned, we can see several success stories, that—if they had represented the majority of people going through Plukrijp—would mean an astonishing success:

- people leaving unsatisfactory jobs that had zero or negative impacts on achieving the sustainable future even if they offered good income, and instead starting doing work that was aligned with the desires of their hearts and the needs of the society and nature:

  ○ **Emile** leaving a big corporation starting to work with homeless people;

  ○ **Sorel** leaving a job he was not happy, with the saving he made during that time to join a permaculture community in Greece to start a new life there;

- starting bold ecological-transformative projects:

  ○ **Lars**, becoming an organic beekeeper and an independent researcher experimenting with and promoting sustainable bee management practices by organizing courses, lectures and seminars for beekeepers in Belgium, publishing in the beekeepers' magazines;

  ○ **Emile** doing a fieldwork with homeless people in Antwerp, coordinating a collaboration between the public social welfare centre and Plukrijp, and promoting a radical change of the policy for re-socializing the homeless people;

- **Gabrielle** becoming a full-time activist by "resurrecting" a stall transition initiative even with a diagnosis of chronic fatigue (thanks to her strong enthusiasm after her experience at Plukrijp), before that being incapable of doing a normal job and receiving a disability pension; persuading other people to try a more radical version of the local economy not based on a local currency (LETS – local exchange trading system, Pacione, 1997; Sacks, 2002) but rather purely on the gift economy without relying on any medium of exchange (Eisenstein, 2011; Hearth.net, 2013);

- **Simon** filming a documentary about Plukrijp to allow the viewers receive similar "memes" (Weng et al., 2012) that transformed his perceptions, even if they do not visit the place in person, not to tell them a definitive version of the truth but to allow the viewers form their own opinion;

– achieving a significant personal transformation in the psychotherapeutic sense:

- **Wotan**: gradual de-conditioning from the consumer culture ideology;

- **Bernard**: achieving a state of inner peace, recognizing a deeper level of *quality* (Pirsig, 1974) behind the surface of "mess", realizing that he perception of a place being messy/untidy and the feeling of non-satisfaction may be the psychological projection of "inner mess" outwards;

- **Lars**: learning how to achieve real results by focusing diligently on one topic and dedicating it the time it really deserves (beekeeping and the activism related to it), instead of maintaining a diffuse interest in several overlapping subjects but being incapable of doing any single thing good enough;

- **Karl**: getting a vital corrective experience of being in a warm, welcoming, trusting and non-judging place, compared to the paranoid perception of a dark, dangerous, alien world while he was wasting his life when he was addicted to drugs.

4.4 The results and the theoretical models

Let's try to look for a moment at all this information through the lens of the theoretical models that I presented in the introduction.

The theory of planned behaviour. The first important model presented was the *theory of planned behaviour* of Ajzen (1991). This model is a general one and is not focused particularly on the environmental behaviour. According to the model there are attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, that predict the behavioural intention, that leads to the behaviour. The perceived behavioural control is the addition to this model compared to the older Theory of reasoned action, and for the purpose of discussing our results this is also the most interesting predictor, because mostly the pro-behavioural attitudes were already present to some degree in the volunteers that decided to visit and work on an organic farm. The actual behavioural control to achieve the particular behaviour certainly differed among participants, because it is heavily dependent on the unique circumstances we all have (time, money, work, friends and so on). By voluntarily coming to the farm to learn there something it could be supposed that the participants have a stronger *internal* locus of control according to Rotter, but as Ajzen emphasized, his *perceived behavioural control* differs significantly from the Rotter's *locus of control:* "Perceived behavioural control refers to people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest, whereas locus of control is a generalized expectancy that remains stable across situations and forms of action…" (Ajzen, 1991, p.183). The PBC of certain behaviours seem to have existed already when the participants arrived. They were already interested in organic agriculture, sustainability, conservation behaviour etc., and they also didn't consider as something complicated (doing the decision whether to buy organic food in the store, to recycle the waste, or to vote rather a political party that promises sustainable energy sources and phasing out conventional ones including the nuclear plants).

According to the second model I presented (the *value-belief-norm theory*), such types of behaviours that the participants already have certain behavioural control of, behavioural intention, and that they already perform, belong mostly to the three "non-activist" forms of pro-environmental behaviour: *environmental citizenship* (e.g. Transition initiative)*, policy support* (e.g. voting the green party), and *private sphere behaviours* (e.g. the conservation behaviours that include the reduce–reuse–recycle triad, the preference of organic food etc.)

What the stay at Plukrijp changed was the *expansion of the domain of behaviours that are "doable"*. Simon learned practical skills to grow organic vegetables that he mostly bought in the shops before that, similarly for Newman who knew a lot theoretically from documentaries about permaculture but finally started seeing it live and learning it personally. Wotan learned how to live without money or how to spend much less on things that he "required" mostly due to peer pressure or marketing. Lars learned to focus on one environmental thing and do it properly. And personally the most shocking case was Gabrielle who with the experience from Plukrijp understood what to do to revive the local Transition initiative while having mere 100 square meters of garden plot that she had courage to transform to a tiny community garden, build a group of enthusiastic people, invite them to Plukrijp to the practical workshops on permaculture design, and actively acquiring other skills to eventually establish a "clone" of Plukrijp. Both the skills and the motivations for using them pro-environmentally clearly improved – so we can say that the *environmental competency* as defined by Corral-Verdugo (2002) clearly improved during the stay of these people on the farm.

Regarding the predictor of *subjective norms* that the Ajzen's model posits, it seem to me that the approach more suitable for the discussion of the results is the enhanced and environmentally applied model of Bamberg and Möser (2007). Here the subjective norm is perceived more as a *moral* norm that is shaped by the combination of *problem awareness*, *internal attributions*, *social norm* and *feelings of guilt*. Except for increasing the feeling of guilt that practically no participant emphasized in any kind, all three other indirect predictors play quite an important role at Plukrijp:

- For *problem awareness*, people are confronted daily with talks from Frank and informal discussions with others, reading relevant books, watching documentaries in the evening with the following discussion – people are actually bombarded by messages reminding people what is the situation so often that I would even suppose that for those who tend to have an opposing belief before such an intensity may be perceived as a sectarian brainwashing where no other opinion is tolerated. This is however only a speculation because nobody of the participants complained in any way that he or she would feel it in such a way. I suppose that if someone would arrive with a different point of view, not open to consider an alternative, he or she could become one of those who leave the place prematurely (see the interviews with Bernard or Emile). However, for those that already come with a smaller sense of problem awareness, this intensive reminding of the problems should act as a strong lens that multiplies the initial intensity several times.

- For *internal attribution*, I already proposed it as a possible default for the people in the part about the Rotter's internal locus of control.

- *Social norm* is extremely strong at Plukrijp, so the social influence of the community on the individual is heavy. Some behaviours are de facto obligatory, as the *Blueprint* tells us (Ruymen, 2013b), like the participation at common meals and doing some work for the community during the day, and several other behaviours are strongly expected by many members of the community (proper waste management, saving the hot water while washing the dishes or while taking a shower, etc., no tolerance to frequent smoking breaks, to drinking alcohol or even preparation of custom private meals in the times between the common meals (when there is no specific health reason to do so) etc.) Social pressure/expectations are somewhat strong also on the level of ideas but this is also my speculation or projection based on the knowledge of the studies on group conformity: that especially newcomers wishing to get accepted by the people that are already present there may tend to filter out (auto-censor) certain ideas in their heads, and presenting

themselves as more ecologically conscient that they actually are. In any case, this bullet point may seem as a description of some strict religious sect/cult: the major difference is that Plukrijp actually does not have one *guru,* the principles of direct democracy work there much better than at most other places, and the respect and tolerance of most members of the community to "deviations" of any newcomer is particularly high—again, compared to more common groups where a much higher degree of uniformity is required to become accepted as a member of the in-group. As a proof of this statement we can easily look at the interviews, where multiple people emphasize how they were warmly welcome at Plukrijp since they first arrived, with nobody judging them based on some superficial signs (the primacy effect being less significant): "Frank (…) replied the same evening (…) 'you are welcome, just bring your sleeping bag'" (Kohelet); "what also struck us that the door was just always open (…) you just come and Frank and Martine, they would always be waiting with arms wide open" (Sorel); "there are people you can experience almost as a family" (Lars), and so on.

Mostly from the strong *social norm* a strong *moral (subjective) norm* could emerge. Together with proper attitudes and perceived behavioural control the link to a strong behavioural intention and environmental behaviour is the same as in the original Ajzen's model.

The permaculture design courses and the ability to discuss own circumstances with Frank Ruymen any time, actually also the actual behavioural control could change – by planning a detailed ways of what to do with this or that piece of land, which people to tell about that, how to solve it financially etc., all is an important step to transform many complicated situations into the state of clarity, therefore giving an ultimate *perceived* behavioural control, therefore making the best conditions for the successful conversion to the actual behaviours.

Surprisingly to me, the least clear part of the Ajzen/Bamberg and Möser's (2007) equations is the "attitudes" variable. Although I began this research with the keyword "attitude" as the central one, the results seem to me they explain much better all the other predictors and factors, leaving the attitudes as if it was some phantom, hidden, implicit constant. In fact, according to the Bamberg and Möser's extension of Ajzen, also the attitudes are co-formed by the predictors just mentioned. The reason why I feel here the least degree of certainty is perhaps that—as I declared in the beginning—the people who visit an organic farm already have a certain set of pro-environmental attitudes (first halves of most of the stories confirm that), so it is difficult to notice a subtle difference before and after, particularly when no detailed textual analysis of the interviews was done in this research.

The value-belief-norm theory. While Ajzen's theory was generally psychological, and the narrowing to the environmentalism was present explicitly only in the Bamberg and Möser's extension, the *value-belief-norm theory* of support of support for social movements (Stern et al., 1999) is since the very beginning a model focused exclusively on the environmentalist behaviours.

On the **values** part where the model operates with a four-fold classification (*altruistic, egoistic, traditional/conservative, openness-to-change*) the last one is said to be indifferent to the model, while the first three should have an effect on the next link in the causal chain of the VBN model – the preference of the *New Ecological Paradigm* (NEP). While the *egoistic* and *traditional/conservative* values have a negative correlation to the NEP, only the altruistic orientation has a positive correlation to the NEP. The causal chain then continues from NEP to *awareness of consequences,* to *ascription of responsibility,* to *pro-environmental personal norm,* and finally this diverges into the *environmental activism* and three types of *non-activist behaviours*: *environmental citizenship*, *policy support* and *private-sphere behaviours* that fit the reduce–reuse–recycle triad.

The middle links of the chain are somewhat similar to the discussion regarding some of the predictors in the Bamberg and Möser (2007) model so it won't be reiterated any more. Two aspects are however yet worth mentioning when looking at the cases of the participants:

1. the unusually high tendency to move to environmental activism, while the authors of the model focused mostly on the much more common, supportive, non-activist behaviours;

2. the questions arising from the perceived single pathway towards the causal chain, that is via the altruistic values in the initial step.

Regarding the first point: The authors built the model in order to give an explanatory framework to the process of how people become engaged *at least somehow* in the environmental area. Much less demanding for an individual is to perform one or more kinds of the supportive behaviour than to become an activist. Of course an activist usually continues to perform the non-activist behaviours simultaneously, in parallel to his or her activist "performances".

The participants in this research were experiencing mostly the process of shifting from the supportive phase to the most engaged, activist phase. It means they were already inoculated by some relevant values in the past and let them growing to the state when they decided to visit Plukrijp.

Most of the people I interviewed told me quite explicitly how they did become interested in environmental issues, so the model is quite redundant in this case. However, what could be done, is to have a look at some specific case that seem to not be easily explainable by the model, therefore to challenge the model by inputting into it a supposed black swan (Taleb, 2010).

Let's try to use the case of **Simon**. He grew in a family where his mother used to be a hippie in the 1970s (therefore expecting her to have a leftist/anarchist political orientation, and preference of altruistic and openness-to-change values over egoistic and traditional ones), while his father was the opposite of his mother, working for the military in the colonial Congo, and busy with foreign affairs (therefore expecting him to have a rightist/conservative political orientation, that would fit to the conservative, and perhaps egoistic values). Before Simon went to Plukrijp, he was "hanging out in the hippies circles" as well, clearly following the pathway set up by his mother, not his father. But the following part of the interview seemed to me as if Simon used the rhetoric and symbolism of the hippies (freedom, organic food, psychedelics, eclectic spirituality, communal living) while in fact, a little indicated a genuine altruistic motivation and orientation in his activities: most of the activities could be considered as *self-enhancing* (myself feeling good, ascending spiritually, experiencing altered states of consciousness while "tripping" etc.) which should be considered as a *part of egoistic*, not altruistic values and motivation, even if it would be only implicit and Simon would not be consciously aware of that.

I keep this issue open as a question mark that would require some triangulation that is missing here (either some other types of test of Simon, or a follow-up interview clarifying these speculative assumptions validating or rejecting them by him personally).

When I tried to map other cases to this model I realized that due to my methodological stance of not pushing these theoretical assumptions to the participants in the form of a more strictly structured interview, I generally miss one or more of important pieces of the causal chain presented by the VBN theory, and the interviews as they were performed don't seem as perfectly suitable for a comparison of the results with this model, because my focus in the interviews was more on what the person learned at Plukrijp and what were the actions or plans afterwards – that fits mostly to the last part of the model, the behaviours, and here most importantly, the activist behaviour, not so much the other three types.

The instances of transformative learning

According to the distinction of Mezirow (1997), the ordinary learning process that does not require building a new frame of reference falls into the broad category of *formative learning*. It is clear that during our lives we mostly experience this gradual change of our understanding the reality. It is also expected that most of the things people learn about the nature and sustainability, should fall into this category. On the other side, the *transformative learning* occurs when the current frame of reference cannot be adjusted step-by-step and needs a significant shift.

When looking at the different cases in this research it is clear that the things people learned at Plukrijp could fall into (at least) two broad categories: First is the knowledge related to sustainability, organic agriculture and similar environmental things, while the second one should be called a therapeutic psychological process (thus resembling the Jungian *individuation,* or the *soul-seeking* according to Dirkx,

2000): several people were reporting that the main thing they feel they learned at the farm was not anything related to permaculture or sustainability, but to their own psyche and some aspects of social life and social dynamics. In fact, most of the cases where the "transformative" could be safely ascribed to the learning process, occurred at this psychological, not purely environmental level.

It should not be so surprising, considering the arguments from the activist and spiritual circles that the ecological crisis is just the tip of an iceberg representing a severe psychological imbalance reflecting a severe societal and global state of delusion. A reminder of those cases where I decided to call their process of learning "transformative", because all the things were already reiterated here several times I keep it quite brief:

Gabrielle: Starting up the Transition initiative, finding a hectare of land for a community garden, pushing upstream a Plukrijp-based model of gift-based economy without currency... all this by a women having officially a chronic fatigue syndrome. The transformative learning in the sense of change of frame of reference didn't happen just by realizing the dreams but rather by **re-framing the "illness"**. The activities done and the energy put into them are either a signal that the diagnosis of chronic fatigue was incorrect, or that this "syndrome" is largely situational. In any case none from what Gabrielle did in the year following her visits at Plukrijp would happen without the Plukrijp inspiration and discussions with Frank that gave the confidence to Gabrielle that it is possible to achieve, where this confidence perhaps served as a key to have the charisma and persuasive effect on the others.

Wotan: Experience of **living without money**, without visiting supermarket and without shame of eating expired food allowed Wotan to recognize some elements of the hidden fabric of our society that are normally invisible, because being completely naturalized.

Karl: Plukrijp as a **secure place to belong** was a strong corrective experience for Karl, who, due to his past, lived in a world that was perceived by him as a "dark, cold, hard place", repeatedly confirmed by the behaviour of the society that was around him at that time. Experiencing the world in a radically different way allowed him to reduce the "absoluteness" of the former view, regain some kind of "basic trust in the world" and also to learn how impermanent and conditioned our perceptions of the world may be.

Lars: realizing there is **abundance**, not lack (of food, etc.) This insight was triggered by seeing directly the amount of vegetables and fruits growing almost spontaneously on the garden, and also the amount of food that came to Plukrijp having the best-before date approaching or being already beyond it.

4.5   Conclusion

This study complements those studies that focused on volunteering or WWOOFing (Alvarez, 2012; Kotůlek, 2012; McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2008; Melin, 2012) more in general, whereas this was focused on a genuine atypical WWOOF host that differs in many aspects from most of the WWOOF hosts (no commercial production, no limit on the number of volunteers, strong social fibre among volunteers, the host and his family etc.), and on the unique stories of individuals visiting this particular place, achieving various changes (attitudes, behaviour, frame of reference).

Some other data sets (questionnaires, informal interviews, field notes from permaculture design courses, field notes from daily observation *on situ*) were not yet used in this study directly but shaped the way how the data analysis was done and allowed the discussion to offer some insights that would not be otherwise possible.

There are some limitations of this study the reader should be aware:

– the interpretations and links to the literature in the Discussion were **not validated** by the participants;

- the results are difficult to be replicated elsewhere, for the setting at the organic farm of Plukrijp, was very unique. I suppose that other places offering or planning to offer voluntary work on the WWOOF principle, or some permaculture designers, could get most inspiration from these multiple cases;

- although some theoretical models (theory of planned behaviour, value-belief-norm theory, theory of transformative learning) were presented in the introduction and partially used in the Discussion when looking at the results through the lens of these theories, the results allow neither confirmation nor revision of these theories – the research was actually not designed for this purpose. The theories that already are quite well established in the scientific community anchor the qualitative work in some scientific frame but the results are discussed with these theories in a rather flexible, non-orthodox way;

- whole research and mostly the introductory part and the Discussion is biased by not having any serious doubts about the premise that the environmental condition of the natural systems on the Earth is deteriorating, that the human culture generally tends to continue exploiting the natural resources, and so on. I, as the author, do not believe in the Human Exemptionalism Paradigm and I consider it as a dangerous example of severely distorted perception of reality. Not that I think that the New Ecological Paradigm or any other conceptual system distorts the reality *less,* but that such paradigms are at least more wholesome when it comes to the relation of the man and the nature surrounding him: by perceiving nature of having an *intrinsic value* regardless of its direct or indirect utility for the man, I don't need any particular proofs of such utility in order to preserve this piece of nature: therefore, all nature is *by default* "sacred" and destroying it just to achieve some particular human desire is always some kind of trespassing some sacred law that is completely beyond the human inherently limited consideration. Such a perception constitutes a useful part of the Superego that I feel the modern man unfortunately discarded as a part of some "obsolete primitive animistic beliefs"...

What is the planned continuation of this research? Re-visiting the place, finding the people whom I interviewed, doing follow-up interviews and asking for validation of the data in this study. In addition to that, an improved version of the questionnaire that was experimentally used during work on this research is planned to be sent to hundreds of former members of Plukrijp to perform a more quantitative-oriented survey of the effects of Plukrijp on peoples' lives in the longer term.

Who is this research most useful to? It was already anticipated in the *raison d'être* paragraph in the Method (see p.20) and most of these anticipations are also valid here so they will not be repeated. In brief:

- First of all, the research should be useful to the whole community of Plukrijp, because it is perhaps the most detailed analysis of the place done so far that allows focusing on replicating the "bright spots" and continual improving the perceived imperfections;

- Next, anyone who cannot visit the place personally but wants to quickly get vivid image of how such a unique community works;

- And of course, the professionals in the field of non-formal (environmental) education, and counselling and psychotherapy—particularly those who have a tighter relation to the ideas of deep ecology.

The research also opens the more fundamental questions. For example, we can ask if the genuine qualities of the place are not caused a lot by abandoning to a large extent the principles of monetary economy and replacing them by the model of gift economy (Eisenstein, 2011), and how could we still transmit something useful into other settings where abandoning the monetary economy seems impossible at the moment.

But this way we are stepping into the field of philosophy, political science, sociology or economy. It shows us how much all the seemingly separate *sciences* are interconnected, because they all make different maps of the same territory (Korzybski, 1995). To combine them well enough to replace the fragmented domains of knowledge into a holotropic image that would give us a clearer understanding of what is good to do, seems to me more a **piece of art** than just a science: an art to use such heuristics that distort the final image the least, yet that does not delude the recipient so that he would think the piece of art is the reality itself...

Notes

[1]An ethical issue is whether psychologists **should push their clients to environmental awareness**. Today, psychology and psychotherapy professionals interact with people in order to help them cope with life situations that they cannot manage by themselves or with the help of their direct social neighbourhood.

However, helping the other necessarily involves some degree of control over the others' lives. People put trust onto the professional that he or she will act in their interest, and the professional has therefore a certain responsibility for not misusing it. Defining what is and what is not such a misuse can be quite difficult. Schouborg (2001) in a reaction to several eco-psychological articles from the special issue of *American Psychologist* in 2000—particularly the one of Oskamp (2000)—lists several dangers involved in the psychological intervention in the name of an ideology. One of them is the risk of losing the autonomy of the client. He asserts that by "allowing even wise and knowledgeable others to do us good is at best a Pyrrhic victory" Schouborg (2001, p.458). Moreover, it is even not clear whether the psychologists have the expertise to "critically assess the ecological literature referenced" (ibid.).

Under the surface of the dilemma whether the psychologist is authorized to confront the "autonomy of the client" is the ethical consideration whether the will of an individual is *the sacred thing* that cannot be touched, even if it is directly or indirectly causing harm to the (common) environment. Most people including psychologists would perhaps agree that a murder or a rape *of another human being* is a transgression that cannot be tolerated. In some countries including the Czech Republic there is even a legal obligation to report such testimonies to the authorities.

What about the rape of the "Mother Earth"? Should the ecologically aware psychologist be silent? Who is the responsible for the damage done to let's say the Amazon rainforest: the worker for a multinational company that illegally cuts the trees, the managers of the store that sells the toilet paper or the consumer who willingly buys it? The line here is somewhat fuzzy. Both selling and buying the final product is very probably legal because the source of the material cannot be traced any more, but from the ecologically-moral standpoint still very questionable. It is ultimately the money in the wallets of customers that is the actual election ballot of what kind of business should thrive in the future. The customers are therefore co-responsible for what is going on, particularly in the situation when they *could* choose among different brands of toilet paper, one without any label (therefore made from wood of a questionable origin) and one with the FSC label that certifies the material comes from forests that are managed sustainably. Anyway, no customer is directly feeling the consequences of buying the non-ecological toilet paper, and it is easy to believe that "my personal contribution to the global problem is infinitesimally small". If this attitude is shared by most of the people, the combined effect of this collective *in-sanity* may be catastrophic. This issue is described by the concept of *social dilemmas* (Dawes & Messick, 2000; Van Vugt, 2009) within the framework of game theory or the *tragedy of the commons* (Hardin, 1968) and is further mentioned in one of the following notes. If most of the people decide by ignoring the common interest, are they *sane* or *normal* just because "almost anyone else does it as well"? Or is the mass sharing a *collective pathology*? Erich Fromm asserted the latter, calling it a socially patterned defect:

> "Just as there is a folie à deux there is a folie à millions. The fact that millions of people share the same vices does not make these vices virtues, the fact that they share so many errors does not make the errors to be truths, and the fact that millions of people share the same form of mental pathology does not make these people sane." (Fromm, 1955, as cited in Capriles, 2011, p.383)

Due to the *environmental injustice* (Bullard & Johnson, 2000) where is the poor people that suffer the most from the environmental degradation that is caused mostly by the rich, I personally consider as a legitimate approach of an experienced therapist to intervene in certain cases to shake the value system of a person that does not realize the possible side-effects of his or her everyday actions.

This "shaking" can however happen in a variety of ways, some leading ultimately to a positive outcome but some perhaps creating the opposite. Mezirow's *transformative learning* (Mezirow, 1997) requires some shift of perspective to happen, but a certain skill and one's personal experience with this transformative experience are crucial to effectively help someone in accelerating his or her process. Perhaps we could doubt altogether if some externally induced "acceleration" of the transformation is possible at all: "my own experience makes me an expert in my own transformative learning, but it does not make me an expert in creating transformative experiences for other people" (Moore, 2005, p.77).

[2]**The Limits to Growth (LTG)** (Meadows, 1972), a report written for the Club of Rome, presented multiple scenarios of the continually increasing consumption in a world of finite supplies of resources:

1. *business as usual* scenario or *standard run*, using the historical data and their extrapolations according to the programmed dynamics of the model;

2. a *comprehensive technology* scenario, solving sustainability issues with purely technological solutions; and

3. a *stabilized world* scenario, by combining technological solutions *and* implementing strong social policies (Turner, 2008).

The standard run and the comprehensive technology models yielded rather unpleasant results beginning the 21st century, with the harsh effects manifesting in the mid-21st century. The original LTG report was quite optimistic in 1972, telling us there is still a lot of time to change the shift of the civilization to prevent an overshoot followed by a collapse.

> "Even in the most pessimistic LTG scenario the material standard of living kept increasing all the way to 2015. Thus LTG placed the end of growth almost 50 years after the publication of the book. That seemed to be time enough for deliberation, choice, and corrective action—even at the global level" (Meadows et al., 2004, p.xi).

The "30 year update" (Meadows et al., 2004) tells us that we already exceeded the carrying capacity. In 2001 it was about 20 % above it and "it will take a long time to obtain political support for the changes in individual values and public policy that could reverse current trends and bring the ecological footprint back below the long-term carrying capacity of the planet" (ibid., p.xiv). They concluded,

"we are much more pessimistic about the global future than we were in 1972. It is a sad fact that humanity has largely squandered the past 30 years in futile debates and well-intentioned, but half-hearted, responses to the global ecological challenge. We do not have another 30 years to dither. Much will have to change if the ongoing overshoot is not to be followed by collapse during the twenty-first century" (ibid., p.xvi).

Bardi (2011) depicts even stronger predicament: actually every single report following the original 1972 one was consistently warning more and more urgently that less and less time is available to reverse the unsustainable trend. We are still just increasing the aggregate consumption but not increasing enough the long-term carrying capacity of the underlying ecosystem.

The recent book of McKibben (2010) piles evidence from numerous studies, showing that the real data since 1972 are mostly consistent with the *standard run*, not the two alternative LTG scenarios. Thus, since 1980 until now (Wackernagel et al., 2002) we stay in the "overshoot" zone, by 2013 over 30 % above the global biocapacity (Rees, 2010). Wackernagel & Rees (as cited in Raven, 2001, p.456) asserted already in 1996 that

"(...) it would require five back-up planets engaged in nothing but agriculture for the present population of our planet to live as Americans do" (Raven, 2001).

The **psychological problem** is that to get a strong motivation to change our behaviour, some awareness of the true state of affairs seem to be important (Schwartz, as cited in Steg & de Groot, 2012). But too much shocking information can allow to manifest apathy and resignation, depression, despair, or a diverse portfolio of **defence mechanisms** like *denial (rejection), rationalization, dissociation* and *cynicism*, instead of activating some **wholesome coping mechanisms** that would allow to unleash the full creative potential of people that I believe is the only hope we have.

Defence mechanisms

Should we then lie and tell the people it is still all right when in fact it is not, just to keep the hopes of those that will believe us? This seems to be a similar dilemma as the one whether the doctor should say to a patient that he is seriously ill, giving him statistics how many people having the same health problem die within a week, a month, a year or so. As the patient has (even a legal) right to be told information about his health on demand, should anyone be told the current information about the health of the planet and the environment?

[3]**Sustainability** should not be considered as "yet another specialized discipline with its own fragmented body of knowledge", but rather as an agenda that should get embedded in all the disciplines. *"The Talloires Declaration*[*] states that universities must 'create programs to develop the capability of university faculty to teach environmental literacy to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students' " (Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1990, as cited in Wright, 2002, p.117). This work tries to (a) respond to the not yet often realized fourth demand of this over 20-years-old Declaration, that is, to *"Foster Environmental Literacy For All"*, and (b) attempts to use the systems thinking approach, considered by many (e.g. Boardman & Sauser, 2008) as crucial for the challenges in the advent of 21st century. "There is a need for people with an interdisciplinary problem-solving capability, rather than a traditional and often overly-specialised scientific competence", reminds Martin et al. (2005, p.164).

Sustainability

Several other terms are crucial for understanding the concept of sustainability: the single most important one is the *carrying capacity* of an ecosystem:

Any natural ecosystem is a one with finite resources. The **carrying capacity** (or *biocapacity)* is a limit of an ecosystem to sustainably provide resources (for the entities demanding them) and absorb their waste products (Theis & Tomkin, 2012). *An example* to illustrate this concept is when a horse grazes the grass on a pasture. When there is too little area for the horse, the horse will eventually graze too much grass, including the young seedlings that have just germinated, that—if left intact—would have produced much more biomass than when they are grazed prematurely. They would have also produced new seeds for the new season. But this way, the overgrazed pasture is eventually free of most vegetation. The horse dies of starvation, and the land is subjected to an erosion because the grass that had served as the soil cover is no longer present. The lower quality of the soil will actually even *reduce* the carrying capacity of such an ecosystem for several years to come. This is a result of going over the carrying capacity. An amelioration of the quality of the soil would do the opposite: increase the carrying capacity that would allow a higher life standard in the same area. The impact on environment could be split by using an "IPAT equation":

Carrying capacity

According to the **IPAT equation**, the *environmental impact* (marked by I) equals the linear combination of the **population** (P), the resource consumption per capita (A for "**affluence**") and **technology** (T) level (influencing the impact per unit of consumption). As we'll see in the following paragraphs, coping with all the elements of this equation, trying to develop a solution to reducing the overall impact, is *a tricky business.*

IPAT equation

A) Controlling the Population: *Population* consists of individual people where each person needs some energy just to keep the physical body alive—*maintenance calories*—and an extra energy to do anything in the world—*work calories* (Hardin, 1968, p.1243). More people on the same area means generally less available energy for each person.

A population control can be enforced by laws (e.g. China, see Attané, 2002) or achieved by creating conditions where the birth rate decreases naturally in the "demographic transition" (Theis & Tomkin, 2012) that already occurred in the developed world, now happens in some countries and efforts are done to let it happen also in the countries not yet in this transition like those in the Sub-Saharan Africa (Theis & Tomkin, 2012). The causes for the demographic transition are not perfectly clear. There exist various factors that are strongly correlated (education, affluence, etc.) but correlation does not explain the causality; a synergistic effect with some positive feedback loops is expected.

Other ways of population control exist as well (that kept the human population in certain limits for the centuries and millennia before the industrial revolution): wars, famines, diseases, bad or non-existing healthcare, etc. Discussing all these options and their

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[*]"The Talloires Declaration [1990] was the first statement made by university administrators of a commitment to sustainability in higher education. It stated that 'university heads must provide leadership and support to mobilize internal and external resources so that their institutions respond to this urgent challenge'..." (Wright, 2002, p.107)

mutual relations is far beyond the scope of this note, and also beyond control of most individuals (with a few exceptions, including dictators like Hitler, Stalin or Pol Pot that held control over millions of peoples' lives...) Deliberately deploying a population control of such kind in the contemporary, "democratic" and "humanistic" society is also considered rather immoral and generally is considered to not be occurring – at least in the official political agenda.

B) Controlling the Affluence: *Consumption per capita* is tightly associated with the wealth of an individual and the society as whole. A more affluent society may consume more resources than a poor one. The important fact is that the distribution of wealth is very uneven in the world. A kind of a Pareto "80 : 20" rule exists but with even more skewed distribution, where the top 10 % of the world population had (in 2000) over 85 % of the world wealth shares and the 90 % of the rest of population has the remaining 15 %; top 20 % has almost 94 % of the wealth (Davies et al., 2008) . If all the countries of the world should start enjoying the wealth of the Western nations, we would need 5 planets to satisfy the needs.

So either the efficiency per unit of consumption increases (which is promised by a more advanced technology, and if not having any rebound effects, could do the job – see the following part), or the consumption in the over-consuming (developed) countries decreases (a difficult job to make most people do this voluntarily—except for the few adopting the "voluntary simplicity"—and a difficult job to attempt doing it by force), or the consumption of not yet developed countries is not allowed to increase by whatever means, or a combination of all three of them. The third way is a scenario morally difficult to justify, yet it happens anyway due to the uneven entry conditions to the globalized markets, the exploitation of the people, the natural resources etc. to provide goods mostly for the wealthy nations, continuing in the transfer of wealth as it was done since the beginnings of colonialism when the great accumulation of capital allowed the colonialists to sustain their dominance over the exploited.

Improving the Technology Efficiency: The technology is said to potentially *reduce* the overall impact: more advanced technology could be more energy saving, theoretically the fluorescent saving bulb consumes less energy than the traditional incandescent Edison's bulb, and the solid state lighting (LED) is even more efficient (Theis & Tomkin, 2012, p.8; p.558). The authors count that—based on the average population growth expected by the mid-century (2050)—in order to "just maintain current environmental quality in the face of growing population and levels of affluence our technological decoupling will need to reduce impacts by about a factor of five" (ibid., p.9). A recently published book of the title *Factor Five: Transforming the global economy through 80% improvements in resource productivity* refers to the same conclusion (Smith et al., 2012).

The Rebound Effects: Even if the resource productivity improvements just mentioned had happened, the issue would not have been resolved automatically, because of the market dynamics and the *rebound effects* that occur when the efficiency improves: the consumption increases as well, often even more that the savings per unit are, so the consumption/efficiency ratio is often more than one (Dahmus & Gutowski, 2011). This observation was first called the *Jevons' Paradox* (1865), more recently the *Khazzoom–Brookes postulate*. This can also be called the *direct rebound effect,* which, together with a cluster of other, *indirect rebound effects* (comprising of various sub-categories[*]), constitute the *overall (economy-wide) rebound effect* that—if being above 100 %–causes a *backfire*, predicted by Jevons.

The Jevons' paradox was since its first publication subjected to critique. Recently some analyses were done to find out more specifically in which circumstances the backfire effect could be observed (therefore, when the efficiency increase was finally counter-productive from the point of reducing the aggregate resource consumption), and when there were "periods in which improvements in efficiency did outpace increases in the quantity of goods and services provided, resulting in periods of decreasing resource consumption" (Dahmus & Gutowski, 2011). The authors of the 2011 study had difficulties in finding some positive counter-examples that could serve as positive anomalies to replicate – otherwise the *general trend* followed the Jevons' model. They conclude:

> "Historically, past efficiency improvements have generally not proven to be successful in reducing mankind's
> overall consumption of resources. Of the over 75 decades examined across ten activities, only a handful of decades
> had rates of efficiency improvement that exceeded or matched rates of quantity increase..." (Dahmus & Gutowski,
> 2011)

Staying below the carrying capacity: If the human civilization wishes to exist in the coming decades (to be *sustained*), then it is an imperative to stay in the long run **below** the carrying capacity of the Earth's ecosystem, and to do activities that help the natural processes to increase the carrying capacity to satisfy our needs (and needs of all other forms of life we depend on), for example by replacing agrochemicals that damage the soil with alternatives that enhance the microbial life and other properties of the soil (Sinha et al., 2010).

However, no single instrumental strategy could solve this kind of problem; the elements of the whole system are interdependent and are having countless feedback loops, where changing any part of this system causes its other parts to re-assemble, yielding a very different result than the one expected. Hardin claims that these "synergistic effects, non-linear variation, and difficulties in discounting the future make the intellectual problem difficult, but not (in principle) insoluble" (Hardin, 1968, p.1244), Hardin's perception is even more optimistic than the Korzybski's view that "the map is not the territory but, when correct, it has a structure similar to that of the territory that allows it to be useful in dealing with the latter" (as cited in Capriles, 2011, pp.379–80). However, Capriles rejects the idea altogether that a mind could solve this problem, for "the perception at the root of our maps is lineal, and has a fragmentary character that makes it unable to grasp the interconnectedness of the territory" (ibid.)

[4] Hardin (1968) coined the term **tragedy of the commons** to describe the problems arising from common property :

> "As a **rational being**, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously,
> he asks, 'What is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd?' This utility has one negative and one
> positive component.

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[*]Sorrell (2009) lists them as *embodied energy effects, re-spending effects, output effects, energy market effects,* and *composition effects;* a brief description of these effects can be found in the Sorrell's article.

Rebound
Effects

Jevons'
Paradox

Tragedy
of the
commons

1. The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly $+1$.

2. The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1.

Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another; and another... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best inter est in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons." (Hardin, 1968, p.1244)

Since 1980, the concept has been reused as one aspect of the **social dilemmas**, e.g. Dawes & Messick, 2000, where the rational self-interest is not considered as the only force driving people. Social dilemmas are part of the game theory where the individual gain means a small collective loss, and if we would be indeed acting purely in our limited self-interest, we would do that, causing a huge collective loss and loss for each individual. The research, however, shows that in various social situations we act differently, sometimes more according to our self-interest, but sometimes more in the interest of the whole.

Social Dilemmas

However, if we return back to Hardin, a recent study that reassesses Hardin's concept is rather sceptical to the technological solution of the problems we are facing. The author asserts, reviewing the evidence obtained so far, that

"both the neoliberal economic view of business that directly seeks growth and the new sustainable development view that indirectly supports growth are leading our global economy in the wrong direction and away from prosperity and sustainability" (Garrity, 2012)

The article continues with an elaborate explanation of the Hardin's theory by means of systems thinking. By using a similar example to the one presented in the beginning of this note (the overgrazed pasture) and the system of feedback loops, the authors clearly explain the mechanism of making the "tragically" overgrazed pasture in the same way as the game theory would do; in fact these two (game theory and the systems thinking causal loops model) are in this case the same thing, just using different forms to manipulate the very same concepts. If not applying one of two solutions proposed by Hardin (either privatization = internalizing the externalities, or a socialist allocation and management of right to entry and use the public property) or some newer solutions proposed by the 2012 paper, the result is – as the *n-person repeated prisoner's dilemma* suggests – the *lose-lose* situation of an "economic ruin for all as growth activity in the commons exceeds the carrying capacity" (Garrity, 2012, p.2448).

Anderson (2001) offers other concepts that could help explain in a more psychological way some underlying mechanisms of the tragedy of the commons that may not have been taken into account by Hardin. These mechanisms could also explain the difficulties in environmental education that often fails to positively change peoples' destructive attitudes and behaviours.

– *denial* or *positive illusions:* "there are lots more fish out there, we just aren't finding them" (Anderson, 2001, p.457). for example when "the Canadian government refused to deal with the decline of the Canadian Atlantic cod fishery until the fishery was exhausted, leaving tens of thousands of people ruined" (ibid.);

– *defensiveness:* "People naturally get highly defensive when their existing practices are threatened" (ibid.);

– *solidarity vs divisiveness:* "The psychology of group hatred has not received nearly enough attention. Particularly neglected is the way that hatred plays against more rational or responsible behaviour" (Anderson, 2001)

A significant work on this topic was published already by Wilhelm Reich (Reich et al., 1970) in the early years of the fascist dictatorship in Germany, prophesying the possible development that eventually indeed manifested six years later, in the second world war. Mary Higgins finished her *Foreword* to the 1970 English edition of Reich with following words:

"The human character structure that created organized fascist movements still exists, dominating our present social conflicts. If the chaos and agony of our time are ever to be eliminated, we must turn our attention to the character structure that creates them; we must understand the mass psychology of fascism." (Higgins, in Reich et al., 1970)

Garrity (2012) describes various kinds of *policy resistance*, caused by "mismatch between our simple mental models of the world and the complexity of our highly interconnected systems" (ibid., p.2469), giving an example of "increases in better technologies [that] have led to cleaner cars but not to less pollution generated (...) because consumers have acquired more vehicles, larger vehicles (...), and have driven more miles per vehicle" (ibid., p.2470).

Policy Resistance

Elías Capriles (Capriles, 2011, p.382) uses the Watts' (1959) concept of "law of inverted effect", where, the "essential human delusion, [that could be understood basically as a] distorted perception of reality, (...) gives rise to an inverted dynamics that often causes us to achieve with our actions the very opposite of what we set out to accomplish" (Capriles, 2011, p.382). The empirical experience so far with many "technology-based" solutions to various issues seems not to be capable of reliably predict in advance the net effects of these advancements. "In trying to control our environment with the avowed aim of creating an artificial Eden and kill death and pain, the sciences and the technology based on them, rather than achieving their avowed effect, have produced a hellish chaos and taken us to the brink of our extinction—and, moreover, at no moment did they foresee this result" (Capriles, 2011, p.380). Gintis (2000) does not dismiss the potentially positive contribution of the economic theory but "... its contributions will be considerably more valuable when *homo economicus* is replaced by a more accurate model of individual choice and strategic interaction" (p.320).

Poets, mystics as well as deep ecologists and some psychologists often repeat the mantra of balancing the "rational" and the "emotional/irrational" in us, the secondary and primary Freudian process, in order to achieve a more holistic point of view, being

able to discover the fallacies just described. The failures are the results of our hyper-sized rationality that forgot the common-sense wisdom that children are (hopefully) still taught at kindergartens. Fulghum summarized it as follows:

> "Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat (...) Live a balanced life. Learn and think, draw and paint, sing and dance, play and work a little everyday. Take a nap every afternoon (...) Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up, and nobody really knows why, but we are all like that. (...) Think of what a better world it would be if all of us, the whole world, had cookies and milk at about three o'clock every afternoon, and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation, and other nations, always to put things back where we found them, and cleaned up our own messes..." (Fulghum, as cited in Wals & Corcoran, 2005)

Wals and Corcoran are clear in stating that we "must rediscover and teach indigenous and ancient truths, generate new concepts and ways of thinking, and must inspire students with a hopeful vision" (Wals & Corcoran, 2005, p.106) on all levels of education including the so-called "higher" education at colleges and universities. Finally these authors return back to what John Dewey said a century ago, "education should realize a sense of self, a sense of other, and a sense of community" (ibid., p.107).

[5] The social psychology and various other social sciences claim for decades that there is not only the asocial, selfish "rationality" of the Darwinism and neoclassical economy, nor the *homo homini lupus* (in the sense misinterpreted and mistakenly attributed to Hobbes). Yet the core of Hardin's article (the story of herdsman, see the endnote) begins with a premise that "as a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain" (Hardin, 1968, p.1244). The very notion of a "rational being" (deriving from Latin *ratio* – the reason) is questionable, for ignoring the wider consequences of our individual actions is rather a sign of a serious lack of understanding the infinitely interconnected, interdependent social reality (Capriles, 2011, p.380). "Psychologists are aware that humans are moved by emotion and mood, as well as by reason, and are also aware that humans distort information in predictable ways." (Anderson, 2001, p.457) The behavioural (experiential) economy has already moved beyond *homo economicus*, because this model showed to be inaccurate in many situations.

In fact, there exists also a counter-tendency of the selfish-type behaviour. This tendency is considered to be the building block of any society, and is taught and enforced by cultural, religious and educational systems: the "altruistic", *prosocial behaviour* (Nowak & Highfield, 2010, as cited in Garrity, 2012; Quinn, 1992).

The people's preference of either the self-centred or other-centred decision is influenced by the personal history and all the cues present in the environment, that can be called the *context* (Gintis, 2000, p.320).

Let people wear symbols of power and domination, get them rid of a personal responsibility, and see the evil unveiling in otherwise "normal" people (The *Stanford Prison Experiment* – Zimbardo & Cross, 1971; Zimbardo, 1973). "The same human mind that creates the most beautiful works of art and extraordinary marvels of technology is equally responsible for the perversion of its own perfection (...) How can the unimaginable become so readily imagined?" (Zimbardo, 2005, p.15)

Recently, the same Zimbardo who turned young students to the oppressors in the fabricated prison, started looking for solutions to do the opposite, to pro-actively "juice" the goodness. One of his prototypic "heroes" he loves to quote is the former first Czech post-communist president Václav Havel. In the 2011 article, Zimbardo writes:

> "Václav Havel identified the psychological reason for the effective control of the masses as *self-imposed passive resignation*. Havel said in letters sent from his jail cell [in the 1970s], *'We had all become used to the totalitarian system and accepted it as an unchangeable fact, and thus helped perpetuate it. In other words, we are all... responsible for the operation of totalitarian machinery. None of us is just a victim. We are also its co-creators.'* (...) Through imaginative involvement and political activism **individuals can make heavens of hell**. By their collective, selfless actions people can even transform dictatorships into democracies – one enduring lesson of Czechoslovakia's *'Velvet Revolution'*" (Zimbardo, 2011, p.403).

Peter Kropotkin, as early as in 1902, wrote in his critique of the Darwinian ideology:

> "Love, sympathy and self-sacrifice certainly play an immense part in the progressive development of our moral feelings. But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in mankind. It is the conscience— be it only at the stage of an instinct—of human solidarity. It is the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own. Upon this broad and necessary foundation the still higher moral feelings are developed" (Kropotkin, 2003).

Based on these over a century old Kropotkin's remarks, the organic farm of Plukrijp where my research was done, tries to operate, continuously showing a positive deviation to the "inevitability" of the Hardin's "tragedy of the commons". .

[6] A phenomenon called **Planned obsolescence** (or *built-in obsolescence*) is sometimes blamed for causing the unnecessary consumption: it is a limited lifespan by design of many consumer goods like clothes, electronics, lighting sources etc. is also one of the reasons why the scientific and technological advance seem to do the very opposite of the supposed decrease of the demand for resources. Here the economic interests of particular entities to increase their sales, to enforce regular purchases etc. clearly get into a conflict with the interest on the long-term durability and sustainability.

The first known example of this business strategy was used perhaps in the 1920s when establishing the Phœbus cartel agreement among the light bulb producers to artificially decrease the life-span of the incandescent bulbs to the 1 000 hours

Common sense

Beyond homo economicus

Planned obsoles- cence

(Dannoritzer, 2010; Reich, 1992). The title of this documentary of Dannoritzer (that recently helped to bring this issue into public awareness) is referring to this event by calling it "the light bulb conspiracy"[*].

In the 1930s an idea was proposed to end the economic depression by enforcing obsolescence (life-span) of certain products by law (London, 1932). This practice was not realized at that time at the official level. A "style obsolescence" instead of the various kinds of the functional/technical obsolescence was introduced in the 1950s by Brooks Stevens. Since then, using all kinds of planned obsolescence became a common practice in the industrial design, fashion and advertisement. A critique to this practice emerged in the early 1960 (Packard, 1960) and continues to these days, intensifying in the last decade as the topics of resource depletion came more into media awareness, becomes a public concern (Latouche, 2012; Dannoritzer, 2010) and a topic of the ecological organizations like the Friends of the Earth (Amis de la Terre, nd).

Some liberal-oriented economists have attempted to limit the term only to a "case where no cost saving is gained by making an inferior product" (Block, 1989), agreeing this practice would be wasteful, but dismissing it mostly because it would "not take place in a private enterprise market economy because it is not survival oriented, (...) [the consumers will] patronize other firms which sell standard quality merchandise at the same standard prices" (ibid.). The author however recognizes the potential trap if a cartel would exist, where all manufacturers would make products with built-in obsolescence (ibid.), but immediately, dismisses this possibility by claiming that "every manufacturer would be powerfully tempted to raise the quality of the goods (...) to cheat on the agreement" (ibid., p.2). This follows the very same logic that is present in the Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" that the empirical evidence shows as mistaken in many cases and that was significantly improved by later research on *social dilemmas*. It seems Block was even not aware of the already well naturalized—and successful—cartel of the light bulb industry already 60 years old when this critique was written. The pamphlet continues by piling up similar assumptions that could be dismissed in a similar way, showing how they ignore the reality.

[7] "From energy consumption to the production and export of tobacco, pesticides, and other chemicals, more and more of the world's peoples are sharing the health and environmental burden of America's wasteful throwaway culture. Hazardous wastes and 'dirty' industries have followed the path of least resistance. Poor people and poor nations are given a false choice of 'no jobs and no development' versus 'risky, low-paying jobs and pollution.'" (Bullard & Johnson, 2000, p.574)

[8] The amount of problems, their scope, complexity and threatening nature are phenomena that pose a difficulty for a human psyche to cope with it in a proper way. What is the proper way in this case?

When looking at problem in its entirety, it can easily get overwhelming, driving our mind into the anxious feeling of desperation and hopelessness, effectively disabling a possibility in us to choose a psychologically more sane **coping mechanism**. A proposal meaningful to take into account when working in various ecology-oriented NGOs, presenting issues to public, may be to not just teach how everything goes wrong in the world, but also to show practical actions that can be taken immediately after going home that would "make a difference" (Krajhanzl, 2012)

Arriving at the attitude "say yes to life in spite of everything" as Viktor E. Frankl said after his first-hand experience from the second world war concentration camp (Frankl, 1984) could be also useful in this case. A similar attitude had some passengers in the hijacked plane that even eventually crashed on 9/11/2001 in Pennsylvania, where one passenger, Tom Burnett, called his wife, saying "I know we're going to die. But some of us are going to do something about it" (Leider, 2012).

In the shade of the recent reports about the state of the environment today, the rate of extinction of species, the rate of using the fossil fuels, the deteriorating quality of soils etc., and perhaps the fact we are globally already in the overshoot zone, above the carrying capacity of Earth's ecosystems, facing probably a kind of a collapse in the near future, I believe we need to develop a similar attitude (of "doing something about it") in order to do our best in mitigating the adverse consequences of our actions, in ensuring the humanity's long-term survival, and at the same time, to keep a decent quality of life and life satisfaction (the subjective well-being) – in brief, to remain *human.*

Attaining this attitude means we are able to accept the "inconvenient truth" as Al Gore called the climate change in his lectures but still we keep our positive emotions and sane coping mechanisms, avoiding extremes of dejection-type negative emotional loops (e.g. depressions or learned hopelessness –Nagel, 2005), or of agitation-type emotional loops (e.g. anxieties – Doherty & Clayton, 2011). A general recommendation to anyone should be to *"work with circumstances and do your best"* (Norbu, 2009).

Certain knowledge from social psychology gives hope. L. Festinger has described the phenomenon of *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957) and later T. Higgins elaborated on various kinds of *self-discrepancy* (Higgins, 1987). The knowledge of the finite planet where we are members of a society that flagrantly ignored this fact for decades and centuries may trigger various types of self-discrepancies as posited by Higgins, particularly the "actual/own vs. ought/own" type. Higgins describes this one as "the current state of his or her attributes, from the person's own standpoint, does not match the state that the person believes it is his or her duty or obligation to attain. (...) More specifically, the person is predicted to be vulnerable to *guilt, self-contempt,* and *uneasiness*, because these feeling occur when people believe they have transgressed a personally accepted (i.e., legitimate) moral standard" (Higgins, 1987, p.323). Also the first type of self-discrepancy (actual/own vs. ideal/own) and third type of self-discrepancy (actual/own vs. ought/other) may occur.

Proper Coping Strategies: The Must-Have Personal Equipment for the 21st Century: Here we are at a "bifurcation point" and the next development depends on the quality of coping strategies the individuals already mastered. Coping styles have been already extensively studied for decades (Lazarus, 1993) and various classifications have been developed since then: *problem-focused* vs. *emotion-focused*, a three-fold classification comprised of *problem-solving, social* support-seeking, and *avoidance strategies* (Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007); yet another could be coping as a *personality trait* vs. coping as a *process* significantly changing during lifetime, etc. (Lazarus, 1993).

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[*]An elaborate analysis of the motives of such collusion was done by Sasaki & Strausz (2006), explaining previously unclear motives by the observation that a "reduced durability raises the frequency of interactions between the firms and thereby raises the speed at which cartel members can retaliate against deviators" (ibid., p.3).

Let's stay with a simple "ethical" dimension with an axis where on one end of the continuum lies "*wholesome*" coping strategy and on the other an *unwholesome* one. Wholesome action helps the individual satisfy his or her needs (without harming the others) by having a good structural fit between "reality and our conception of reality" (Capriles, 2011; Tyson & Pongruengphant, 2007), unwholesome do the opposite, causing pain, suffering and experiences of stress either to the perceived Self of an individual or to his environment.

A "strong" personality equipped with the more problem-focused coping strategies starts looking for solutions to the problem perceived, and even if it seems huge and complex, does not give up. Various relevant information sources disseminating ecological knowledge on the net recognize these people as their target group, for example an Australian permaculture-focused website starts with an intro saying: "Concerned with peak oil and climate change? Facing the problem of how to live more sustainably? Permaculture may be part of your solution" (Permaculture Solutions, 2013).

On the contrary, avoidance strategies are the "road to hell", for they are the manifestations of a desperation not being able to "chew" what is happening around, creating such a tension that a desire to forget that "nightmare" is stronger than the courage to face it, eyes open. These inefficient coping "strategies", or, defence mechanisms, lead to postponing the problem-solving, and ultimately to even more suffering. Psychologists and therapists—for they are the ones who already created an elaborate map of these mind-traps (Freud, 1968; Vaillant, 1992) and should have developed various therapeutic strategies to overcome or replace them with more wholesome ones—have now the (co)responsibility to teach people good coping strategies, that are the real empowerment for them to deal with the contemporary common reality.

As Patrick Whitefield, author of *The Earth Care Manual* (Whitefield, 2011) contemplates:

> "Is it all worth it? If we do our best to heal the Earth and make our place in her a sustainable one, is there a good chance that we will succeed?... To my mind that's the wrong question. Even if we could answer it – and we can never know anything about the future for certain, it would beg the question How do I want to live my life? So my answer to the question... is that *I want to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem*."

[9]A proper system of education and personal experience could facilitate achieving this state (Mezirow, 1997), but the contemporary higher education system is strongly criticized by some for failing achieving that, some even claiming the official education drives people farther from that (Moore, 2005; Wals & Corcoran, 2005).

[10]The contemporary situation of the global ecological crisis composed of a huge cluster of interdependent problems (including climate change, oil peak and other resource depletion, soil erosion, poisoning the environment or mass extinction of species) is a problem of no easy solution. Many partial solutions help in some partial area, some other have no measurable effect (Steg & Vlek, 2009), and some even do the opposite of the desired effect, i.e. they actually make the situation even worse than if nothing had been done[*]. Some authors explicitly warn against any kind of panaceas to this type of issues (Ostrom et al., 2007), providing sound reasoning and plenty examples of failures of these universalistic statements, including the Hardin's theory already discussed in this work as well. Among the mistaken assumptions of proponents of various universalistic "recipes" are the *illusion of similarity* (homogeneity bias) and a variation on *ethnocentrism* (ibid., p.15176).

The reflective learning and critical thinking is considered as *the* (meta[†])solution in education in this difficult situation where a one-solution-for-all does not exist and few wholesome rules could be deployed universally/globally (except for the "kindergarten" ones discovered by Fulghum).

The modernist, fragmentary, technooptimistic vision of the world is still the dominant point of view in the developed world, because the continued functioning of the current culture depends on that. Myths of technology, progress, domination of intellect, superiority of the white Caucasian race over the more "primitive" people, consumerism and other aspects are the building fabric of the contemporary Western culture (Baudrillard, 1998; Capriles, 2006a; Quinn, 1999; Sipos et al., 2008)). By blindly replacing the "modernist" approach with a "postmodern" one may be far from achieving the proper *autonomy* and critical reflexivity. But if this replacement is done by the process of transformative learning, developing the critical awareness by being confronted with the facts like "unlimited growth is not possible on a finite planet" and with the inherent inconsistency of the predominant Western myths like the one about the infinite economic growth, then the prevailing myths could be de-constructed, de-valued and a seeking for their replacements can begin.

Things are changing rapidly so already there exist several academic institutions that are fundamentally grounded in the holistic sustainability paradigm (Gaia University, 2013; Schumacher College, 2013) and reforms of traditional institutions take place, thousands of articles with appeals from academics of various fields to "make an urgent change" appear in all kinds of journals. However, education does not take place only at universities or other formal sites. Education in various subjects happen also in informal settings: at work, in the family, in the nature, in the religious communities, on the internet etc.

One specific subgroup of the "at work" group are organic farms that make vegetable and/or animal production. Often farms offer work experience not in the standard scheme of paid workers but in the system of volunteering, receiving at least food and accommodation, often other services. These farms are experiential places where the "sustainability" is no longer merely an

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[*]A current example perhaps fitting into the third category is the "biofuels" tragedy (Holt-Giménez, 2007; Michel, 2012) where the expected independence on fossil fuels, higher efficiency and "renewability" was finally the very opposite; in addition to that, erosion of soil happened due to that, higher prices of food commodities caused hunger strikes in the developing world and several other adverse effects were observed (ibid.). Yet, the European Union legislation has not yet recognized that failure and forces all refineries to add a fixed percentage of of biofuels into the petrol and diesel on the market.

[†]If it would be a specific technique or recommendation, it would immediately fall into the fallacy just described, for it is claimed as some ultimate, therefore "universal" solution. Rather, it should be perceived as a generic strategy to generate infinite amount of situation-specific solutions based on unique circumstances in each and every instance. To prevent confusion, perhaps avoiding generalizations in the language may help.

academic subject to discuss, but a living reality to work on, to develop functional strategies, to continually improve them, to drop ways that don't work in the particular circumstances and to be in contact with the outside world.

Volunteers learn certain things while they are staying there. Perhaps conditions there are suitable even for allowing the "transformative learning" to occur. Kerton & Sinclair (2010) show an example of how can this happen by quoting a woman that passed this transformation:

> "I suddenly realized how important food was and then I realized that I could actually change who I am by what I eat, and then through changing who I am by what I eat I realized that I could change the people around me, and the society around me, through both what I choose to serve people and through the way I choose to buy food. And so I realized that there was a significant ripple effect both through individual choice, and then I started doing restaurants to try to ripple that out further." (as cited in Kerton & Sinclair, 2010)

[11] The term **permaculture** originates in the book "Permaculture One" (Mollison & Holmgren, 1978) and since then a number of modifications and varieties of "permaculture" emerged all around the world. In a narrow sense, the term merges words "permanent" and "agriculture", in an even narrower (reductionist) sense (yet commonly practised today) it involves a certain design and appearance of a private garden plot, but in the broad sense as it is perceived at Plukrijp it should mean the goal of "permanent" "culture", therefore it could be considered equivalent to the concept of sustainability of the mankind and the nature which man is part of. Permaculture in this sense however equals more to the holistic views of deep ecology and eco-psychology. Part of learning "sustainability" is also the making of sustainable human relationships, questioning the concept of nuclear family, exclusive intimate partner (Quinn, 1992; Ryan & Jethá, 2010), private property that already Rousseau (2002, p.37) discovered to be the source of deepening social inequality with the famous assertion "You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one", etc.

<div style="text-align: right">Permaculture</div>

[12] The article states:

> "Although illegal under the Basel Convention, rich countries export an unknown quantity of E-waste to poor countries, where recycling techniques include burning and dissolution in strong acids with few measures to protect human health and the environment." (Robinson, 2009)

The Basel Convention banning exportation of this type of waste is being circumvented by declaring the goods as "second-hand" without confirmatory testing for functionality, in fact being mostly dead-on-arrival (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007).

[13] **Principles of a Community According to S. Peck** are:

<div style="text-align: right">Community according to S.Peck</div>

1. *Inclusiveness*, where the uniqueness of each individual is respected and embraced,

2. *Commitment*, both to the people involved and to the synergistic "gestalt" manifesting from the whole,

3. *Consensus*, where decision is made not by a common majority (voting system), but by working on resolving the problem in such a way where all agree on the decision.

Stages of Community: Before a "true community" containing all the three mentioned principles can be established, usually three other stages are preceded (similarly to stages in organization theory), namely:

1. *Pseudo-community*, based on role-playing and conflict avoidance,

2. *Chaos*, where a disintegration of the façade caused by opening up to expressing underlying negative feelings happens,

3. *Emptiness*, meaning the need to discard limited and ignorant personal views, to un-learn rigid patterns in order to go beyond to the essence, which finally leads to

4. *True community*.

For example. a spiritual "community" of believers meeting every week in the church at the regular liturgy, or during other religious activities or even outside the religious context, seemingly share the same religious point of view (although its internal interpretations and representations will vary among everybody keeping the same extrinsic form of the rituals, symbols and language, however understanding it differently), but the real mutual trust and openness may not be present, because of unconscious fears of revealing a "misunderstanding" of the religious teaching and because of the identification of the self with the image of "perfect believer", fear of losing the perception of "perfection" is a projection of a fear of losing part of self.

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Note: The bibliography includes references used in the endnotes.

Addenda

Addendum A: The set of questions used in the "questionnaire about your stay at Plukrijp", published on Plukrijp's website from 13th March 2013

1. What is your name?

2. How old are you?

Pre-Plukrijp stage

1. What were your environmental attitudes and values before you came for the first time to Plukrijp? What interested you most and why? How did you became interested in these issues?

2. What were you really *doing* at that time? (Your lifestyle, everyday behaviour). Did you feel it was congruent (compatible) with the values, perceptions, desires?

3. When did you go to Plukrijp for the first time and how did you discover the existence of such place?

4. Why have you decided to go there and how long have you stayed there for the first time? How did you decide when to leave?

5. Have you returned to Plukrijp since then?

The Plukrijp stage

1. What did you expect to experience at Plukrijp? How it was in reality when you finally arrived?

2. **What have you actually learnt at Plukrijp?** *(Feel free to ask this question in a more broad way, this is one of the most important things for the study)*

3. Was this "learning process" similar to learning things at home, and at school/university? (What was similar and what was different?)

4. How did it influence your environmental values and attitudes? Have you decided to change your everyday behaviour in some way?

5. Do you know about other similar places? Have you visited some before/after Plukrijp? What are your observations?

6. How do you perceive the role of Frank at Plukrijp? Could such a place exist without a person like him? If not, what are the qualities making him so "special"?

The Post-Plukrijp stage

1. What changed in your life when you returned back from Plukrijp?

2. Are you ever going to return back to Plukrijp? Why?

Addendum B: The Plukrijp blueprint (Ruymen, 2013b, adapted)

This blueprint consists of 13 parts and is a result of 5-year daily observations of the founder on the very place has founded. The document is not a result of an exact qualitative methodology yet it shows to be fairly exhaustive and it gives an understanding of way how the founder structures his "child".

Because the original is a bullet-list containing several abbreviations, the sense of it may not be clear to the reader that is not accustomed to the relevant context. Therefore, I decided to transform this important document into a continuous text. **The authorship goes mostly to Frank Ruymen**, I am responsible for giving it this particular form with some commentary based on my understanding and a personal experience with the place.

1. **What kinds of people get to Plukrijp?** These can be volunteers (WWOOFers) from abroad, from Belgium and Netherlands, people from nearby towns, from Transition movements (Transition Network, 2012), family members or locals from the village or directly surrounding areas.

2. **Why do people want to go to Plukrijp?** Some want to do WWOOFing, some are curious, some have more clear ecological and political motives, they want to learn permaculture including various skills. Some need a kind of psychotherapy, to overcome difficult moments in their life. Some want to live cheaply. Some want to learn living as social beings, not isolated by four walls of an apartment or studio.

3. **How do people decide when to leave?** Many have already purchased a return ticket in advance or other planned obligations (work, studies). Some don't have a fixed schedule beforehand, they leave when they feel they want to make a "next step" in their lives, or they feel they have grown "beyond" Plukrijp, they feel they are ready to start spreading the skills acquired at Plukrijp or to start their own Plukrijp-like project, an eco-village, a transition initiative etc. Some leave for they start being irritated by other people, triggering one's own limitations or neuroses. Some have a conscious or unconscious desire to "divert group energy towards one's private interests" and get frustrated of failing to do so, due/thanks to interventions of Frank and other people not allowing that. Some get irritated by an authority figure (mostly Frank's), not respecting it.

4. **What are the resources needed to "autorun" Plukrijp?** The own vegetable, fruit and herb production on the gardens for the whole year is certainly important (thanks to huge poly-tunnels also during winter) that generates more than is needed for the community, so the surplus is often given away for a barter exchange or for free to people that come by. A lot of production is preserved in large freezers, some is processed in jars and some is dried. A lot of food comes from the organic wholesalers and commercial producers when they have a surplus they cannot sell in the market or that is going to expire. Very few commodities like cereals, oil and sugar are bought at wholesalers. A significant portion of electricity particularly over summer is generated from photovoltaic panels on the roof. Water comes from the well and rain for almost whole year except for cold periods of winter where the mains supply is used instead. Petrol is needed for the car bringing the food from wholesalers or to go to bus. Wood is used for stoves but most of it is obtained for free thanks to the port in Antwerp and thanks to generosity of some people supporting the place. Black coal is bought for stoves in the main building that are used for heating, for cooking and for baking. Various materials are used for building and repairing the houses and making smaller constructions, most are obtained for free. Some essential services also need to be paid (internet).

5. **Meetings of "love-unity" and their function at Plukrijp:** Quite regular and in case of necessity extra meetings of—if possible—all members currently present, usually in the evening, to open certain topic proposed by anyone and to share some thoughts, emotions, inner conflicts etc. in the group setting. Its aim is to get mindful of "where do we stand

now", to reflect upon potential irritations towards other present members, expressing it and releasing possible tension that would quietly grow if left unnoticed. One aspect is also to allow members experience moments of "deep unity feeling" during massages, in the sauna, drum circles or meditation sessions, to create meaningful moments that are also healthy (contrasted to various altered states of consciousness induced by substances of all kinds, coffee, tobacco, alcohol and marijuana included that generally have side effects detrimental to physical health or mental sanity). Previously planned meetings with a special programme are organized on several key moments in the year like solstices.

6. What are the agreements (spoken and assumed) to stay at Plukrijp? The person should not abuse alcohol or cannabis, or seriously start acknowledging that as a bad habit and ask for help to switch to more wholesome ways of filling a "leisure time". "Hard drugs" are not allowed and even legal drugs including everyday rituals like "morning coffee" should be worked on to reduce these habitual patterns. No violence is accepted. Sexual intercourse should be performed only between consenting partners, having the responsibility to use proper protection against unplanned pregnancy, against contagious illnesses etc. People should be present at common meals (breakfast – lunch – dinner) if they are not excused by an illness, travel or other reason. Some form of participation either on preparing the meals or cleaning the kitchen and dishes is expected. The sleeping places that are not purely personal should be kept reasonably clean, respecting the others. Tools and books should be put in place after using them.

7. What are the social techniques employed to inhibit "solitary planet" behaviour? Presence at meal times, no TV or radio on the farm are a good start. People should be open to each other, sharing errors they have done and unpleasant emotions against others not. People should not be accepting lies and cheating. Management of common resources, money investments, emotions and other issues is important to be solved "above-the-table" = transparently and without any hidden agenda.

8. What are the techniques employed to inhibit "free rider" attitudes? People should be confronted immediately with issues that emerge, instead of keeping some important thoughts for oneself and not speaking openly when a problem is detected in the early stage. The educational aspect is to show the pleasure and advantages of sharing and voluntary simplicity (sobriety). People are helped to grow into the position of a "situational authority", gaining the autonomy in certain area where the person can already make wise decisions, spreading the knowledge and wisdom to the others who should in return be able to respect it and not depend only on the words of some single "guru". Results of individual actions (and reluctance to actions, doing nothing) should be evaluated and subjected to group scrutiny, in order to learn the responsibility for all our actions (and responsibility also when failed to do right actions when they were necessary to do).

9. How a person can get unpopular and get out of Plukrijp prematurely? Repeated lying, testified by multiple persons; non-presence at common meals and other activities without explaining reason; obsessive usage of drugs; and obsessive imposing of one's "trip" on others are considered to be actions not compatible with Plukrijp and the social/community life. When repeatedly being reminded of trespassing the basic rules to live socially and no sign of improvement is present, the person is asked to leave the place, for such a behaviour damages the general "quality" of the place and the community, and if it would be kept going, it would ultimately destroy the community and the aims that go beyond particular desires of an individual.

10. What are the social and therapeutic tools to encourage personal growth while staying at Plukrijp? Humour in daily encounters protects against over-valuation of thoughts and strengthens the social fibre within the community: Humour involves not taking things

"personally" and works as a refusal to participate in emotional obsessive dramatic visions of daily life. A shift of perspective allows to open exclusive communication of two people to the others who can benefit by listening to it or by more actively participating in it.

Sharing of moods and feelings, spontaneous hugs or offers of massages are allowed and legitimate. Is is encouraged to translate noticed signs of body language to words if noticed, to allow processing the contents more consciously. Many things about one's personality can be observed by keeping track of individual's actions, these patterns may not be wholesome and there is an opportunity to name it and work with it.

Individual or group coaching, or with planning a future project—if needed—has a priority in the daily schedule. Frank and others are willing to accompany people in need of information, supply them with all the resources. Thousands of volumes in the library as well as in the digital archive are freely available to study to anybody. Regularly, video documentaries are played in the evening for the group, followed by a critical discussion, sharing of thoughts that appeared during watching it, etc.

11. What are the formalities and legal obligations? People become members of the v.z.w. if they contribute at least the symbolic 1 € per year into the magic hat (Plukrijp, 2013b) . The land is officially rented to members of the v.z.w. to work on it and realize the aims of the organization. Otherwise, yearly administrative obligations associated with running a v.z.w. (a legal person) are kept to minimum in order to have as much time left for more meaningful things. In order to prevent from possibly very painful bureaucracy and problems, people are never allowed to put their address at Plukrijp. Another reason is to keep Plukrijp a "state of transition" where people come, learn and go back to the world to spread the vision and work with the circumstances; not stay stuck in the place where it is perhaps comfortable, but should not serve as a long-term "mama-hotel".

The long-term strategy is to maximize non-monetary exchanges in the domain of gift economy fulfilling as many needs as possible through this system; while minimizing the need for money, using the magic hat free donations. There is not any particular limit on the number of people that could come at one moment, nor a limit of how long should one stay: "free in and out". Whoever wishes to leave at any moment has full right to do so, for nobody was forced to come to Plukrijp in the first place and always it was a free decision of an individual to come. (Plukrijp is perhaps a kind of a community, but not a sect: people are always free.) During the stay at Plukrijp, food and all services needed to live happily there are free, nobody needs to have money and to worry about financial constraints, even if one's situation is (temporarily) low on money or income. If possible, contributions to magic hat are however always welcome.

(Ruymen, 2013b, adapted)