

NEW TRENDS IN THE CREATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES CASE STUDIES

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Values of the Social and Solidarity Economy: Biciclot Cooperative Case Study

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1. OBJECTIVES

General Objective

The general objective of the Biciclot cooperative case study is to understand the values and organisational culture associated with the area of the social and solidarity economy and, therefore, cooperativism.

Specific Objectives

To achieve the aforementioned general aim, we propose achieving the following specific objectives:

1. Familiarise yourself with the differences between the social and solidarity economy and the conventional or capitalist economy.
2. Understand what cooperatives are and what they represent as social companies.
3. Gain an understanding of the importance of values and the organisational culture.
4. Learn the six principles of cooperativism: equality, work, environmental sustainability, cooperation, non-profit and commitment to the local context.
5. Reflect on the values associated with the social and solidarity economy, comparing them with those of the conventional or capitalist economy.
6. Identify the six principles of cooperativism in the specific case of Biciclot.
7. Analyse the impact that these six principles have on the Biciclot cooperative and on its environment.
8. Compare these six principles with those of the companies that form the competition of Biciclot, identifying those that are not linked with a social enterprise.

Biciclot is an entity belonging to the social and solidarity economy that promotes the use of bicycles. The cooperative provides service to persons that like biking, and to public and private organisations that have the desire to create a better world through the use of the bicycle. It is an experience of self-employment that started with an association and, afterwards, it became a cooperative, keeping their non-for-profit condition.

In the following sections we will explain the history, which are their current activities as well as their business model, their organizational structure, who are their allies and their competitors and what lies in the future ahead.

History

The Biciclot Work Group arose in 1987 from a group of urban and touring cyclists, who wanted to promote the use of bicycles as a means of transport. With the intention of being more than just a movement for change, the group began to consider ideas for promoting bike use in Barcelona, while some of its members received training in mechanics and soldering and others gained experience in organising bicycle touring trips.

The early activities took place in a small workshop which combined repairs and custom bike assembly. The group also organised bike camps for young people and school activities, such as *“Collserola by Bike”*, together with the Barcelona Town Council and Generalitat de Catalunya.

In 1987 it won the *“Be a mayor”* competition with the project *“Bicycles in the street”*, and began its promotion of bicycle use in schools with the programme *“From year 5 to 8, step by step”*, which was published in the same year in the *Perspectiva Escolar* magazine. In 1997 the programme was adapted to the educational reforms and the proposal *“Let’s take the bike to school”* arose as an interdisciplinary initiative for bicycle activities.

Since then, it has taken part in organising different actions around the city, such as “*The bike party*” and “*Games on wheels*” (1990–2005), “*The school bike ride*” (1993–2005), the “*1st bike gymkhana around Barcelona*” (1998) and similar promotional acts in Barcelona’s neighbouring towns, like “*The bike ride round Baix Llobregat*” (2004–2005). It is also an active member in the different working groups of the Civic Bicycle Committee of Barcelona, and of the Intergroup in Support of Bicycle Usage in the Parliament of Catalonia and in the District of Sant Martí.

The small workshop was also transformed into a shop. In 2002 the premises were moved to the factory where the offices of *Biciactivitats* are located. This enabled the display space to be expanded and different work areas to be located in the same building. Over the years, this old lead factory in Sant Martí has been modified to meet different needs.

This journey has not been made alone. *Amics de la Bici*, *Món Verd*, *Tau Traductors*, *Trèvol Missatgers*, *Casal Autogestionari*, *Bicicletes Solidàries* and *BACC* are entities and cooperatives with whom they have not only shared the factory, but also joined forces to implement common projects. These are some of the groups that form part of the history of Biciclot.

This evolution over the years is also reflected in the collective’s changing work focus: from the creation of the association “Biciclot Work Group” dedicated to the development of proposals and projects and with a high level of voluntary participation, to the constitution of the Biciclot SCCL Associated Work Cooperative, in 1994. Since then, professional work and self-management has formed the backbone for the collective’s organisation.

In 2002, the entity joined the Federation of Worker Cooperatives of Catalonia. In 2005, Biciclot closed its bike shop and repair service in carrer Sant Joan de Malta and focused exclusively on offering activities and services to promote bicycle use in the areas of education, tourism and leisure. The bike rental and guided tour services, small repairs and sale of accessories were moved to the Biciclot Marítim shop, located in the neighbourhood of the Barceloneta.

In 2009 the “*Rebiciclem*” project started. The aim of this project was to reuse parts salvaged from abandoned bicycles, while at the same time offering socio-professional integration for teenagers and young people. Abandoned bicycles were collected and repaired, reusing second-hand materials and separating the waste for recycling.

In 2012, the collective began safe and respectful bike riding courses in schools in Terrassa, which continue today in other cities (Sant Cugat, Barcelona, Vitoria). In 2013, Biciclot created the project “*Vésenbici*”, an adult bike school, after many years of working in this area.

The group promotes the idea that organisations’ sustainable mobility and bicycles are often the most simple, economic and efficient option for companies, entities and public administration.

Biciclot Today

Biciclot is constituted as a work cooperative with a democratic model of a service-based and people-focused social economy and a social and environmental commitment. It promotes bicycles as an environmentally-friendly, cheap and healthy means of transport.

Biciclot works in collaboration with the local area, with social entities, schools, institutes, educational centres, public administrations and private individuals, offering courses in bike mechanics, cycling lessons and bicycle safety, as well as a physical space for users to repair their own bike.

For example, the company works with children by educating and raising awareness about bike safety with school activities and educational campaigns. It has a focus on the socio-professional integration of young people and adults offering professional training and work placements.

Biciclot collects used bikes, repairs them and gets them back into circulation through the second-hand market and social donations. Also, the cooperative organises tours and group bike rides to discover Barcelona in a different way. It believes in quality tourism

in which the bicycle is the ideal tool for discovering the city. The organised itineraries enable people to enjoy the city in a way that is flexible, fun, safe and respectful of the environment.

Activities Undertaken

Biciclot offers three different types of services for bike enthusiasts:



Rebiciclem space: bike mechanics and repair workshop. This is a space for learning to care for the bike, equipped with the tools needed to put this into practice. Abandoned bikes are also given a second life through the second-hand market and social donations.



Vésenbici: bike school for adults and organised bike rides. Adult courses to learn to ride a bike and circulate in an urban environment.



Vésenbici: family bike rentals on the beachfront, comfortable bikes, children's bikes, child seats, tricycles, tandems...

In general, Biciclot works for public and private entities that have a commitment to create a better world:



Bringing bike riding to schools and colleges, with bike safety workshops and courses for discovering the environment by bike.



Professional training and work opportunities. Programmes that support the socio-professional integration of young people and adults with training in bike mechanics and work placements.



Bringing the public space to life through bicycles. Through awareness raising actions, workshops and public space initiatives.



Providing services and training for organisations to promote sustainable mobility among their workers, as well as customised bike fleets and in-company training.

Economic Sustainability

With regard to investments, Biciclot has almost never been indebted. The only exception was in 2007 when they needed a loan from the Cooperative Coop57 to pay for a second lorry.

As we have just seen, Biciclot offers three different types of services and, therefore, has three main income sources:

- *Vésenbici* (tourism service)
- *Vésenbici* (training)
- *Rebiciclem* (recycling and reuse)

Until 2016, 50% of the turnover came from the tourism branch of *Vésenbici*, while the other 50% came from a combination of *Rebiciclem* and the training branch of *Vésenbici*. However, over the last year this proportion has been voluntarily reinvested in order to rely less on tourism. Now, tourism accounts for 40% of turnover, while the remaining 60% comes from other kinds of activity. It is worth noting that change has been achieved thanks to the growth of the other activities and not from a decrease in its tourism-related activities.

In parallel to these activities, Biciclot has also been subsidised for specific public projects. In 2016, these subsidies accounted for 15% of Biciclot's total income, this percentage reaching its peak to date in 2013 at 20%.

The cooperative works for a wide range of different clients:

- The Town Council, through project subsidies.
- Different entities.
- Educational centres.
- Individuals.

Organisational Structure

Biciclot has 12 workers, 8 full time and 4 part time. They are all registered in the general social security plan. Biciclot also has temporary workers. During the high season for schools and tourism, the number of people working at Biciclot can reach 25 persons.

At Bicilot's General Assembly all the workers participate, whether they are full-members or temporary workers, however only the permanent workers have the right to vote.

The Governing Board is formed by four of the twelve member workers, two of whom also belong to the cooperative's management team.

Although one of the member workers is responsible for administration and accounting, Biciclot makes use of an external accountant for certain tasks.

Two of the contracted staff members come from a process of professional integration.

The proportion of women among the worker members is relatively low. However, if we include contracted workers then there is gender parity.

Alliances

Biciclot is a member of the Federation of Cooperatives and is part of the XES Solidarity Economy Network of Catalonia, Coop57 and *MésOpcions*. It has also created other alliances in its local district and has helped set up a new association of businesses specialised in training cyclists at a national level. The idea is to promote the training methodology in schools and the creation new cooperatives in towns where there could be a demand for this activity.

In Catalonia, Biciclot is part of a second-degree cooperative which works with bicycle logistics and environmental courier services. Biciclot offers experience in the modes of transport used (supply

and training). Other cooperatives that belong to this are related with professional integration and courier services.

Biciclot has also established citizen participation alliances: the Taula Eix Pere IV to promote the street, participation body of the town council (the civic mobility and bicycle committee)...

Biciclot participates in an international cooperation project with the NGO Bicycles Without Borders. They receive donations of different materials from across Spain in exchange for the repairment of some of the materials, which are subsequently sent to other countries. The rest of the material received is for Biciclot, which is used as the raw material for its training and bike repair workshops.

Competition

The main competitor is the public administration itself, as it promotes many other different projects (for example, the "Better than New" project for the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona) which fosters self-sufficiency in different areas of urban life and, in particular, bicycle repairs. The courses they offer are completely free, thereby making them direct competition to the services that Biciclot offers. The same thing happens in community centres, most of which offer free DIY bike repair workshops.

There is also the private school EMEB (the Barcelona School of Mechanics), which offers courses on recycling all kinds of mechanical objects, including bicycles. However, as well as being competition for Biciclot, they are also allies. This is because they have no work placement agreements with companies as their training is not regulated. As a result their students are referred to Biciclot to get practical work experience.

Lastly, and as a result of the crisis and rise in technological platforms, there has been a growth in companies that sell second-hand bikes as well as social networks for buying and selling between private individuals.

However, the distinction of Biciclot from its competition are its social aims and non-profit status, as all its actions have some kind of positive impact on society and the environment, a goal which has little presence among competing entities.

The Future: BiciHub

As was explained in issue 410 of the magazine “*Catalan Cooperation*” from the Roca Galès Foundation, and in order to use Biciclot’s experience and strengthen it as a social and urban project, in 2015 the idea of the BiciHub arose and a 30-year property transfer was signed with the local council for Can Picó.

Biciclot left its current premises and opened in 2017 in Can Picó. This change has led to the cooperative incurring a 155,000-euro loan from Coop57 for renovating the new space, for which it has also used 75,000 euros of its own funds.

BiciHub is a response to Biciclot’s development as an entity and to the need for an urban mobility project. It enables the cooperative to share its highly useful knowledge in this area.

BiciHub aims to have a special impact on the *Rebiclem* project, turning it into a vocational school in bike repair that incorporates professional reintegration.

The BiciHub has also set up an alliance with the Barabara women’s cooperative which supports young people, other women and people over 45 in their (re)entry into the job market. This cooperative is located on the top floor of Can Picó, Biciclot offering professional experience for Barabara users who require it.

4. QUESTIONS ON THE CASE STUDY

Social and Solidarity Economy vs. the Conventional or Capitalist Economy

From the following list of 19 concepts, identify and justify the five that you consider most closely related to the social and solidarity economy, and the five you consider most closely related to the conventional or capitalist economy. Once you have chosen the concepts, go to the final annex of this document and look for the position that each of these occupies in the diagram, grouped by social and solidarity economy and conventional or capitalist economy. Are they on completely opposite sides to each other? Or are they all grouped together? Develop your reflections.

1. Universalism in the following terms- Equality, justice and social protection.
2. Power over resources - Control of material and social resources.
3. Hedonism - Satisfaction and pleasure.
4. Benevolence such as care - Devotion to the wellbeing of others.
5. Stimulation - Innovation and change.
6. Achievement - Personal success.
7. Security in terms of individuals - Safety in the immediate environment.
8. Self-determination in terms of thought - Freedom of ideas.
9. Universalism in terms of nature - Preservation of the natural environment.
10. Tradition - Cultural and ideological acceptance.
11. Conformity in terms of rules - Abiding by regulations and laws.
12. Humility - Humility and unimportance.
13. Power of domination - Power over people.
14. Charitable in terms of trust - Being trustworthy and trusting of others.
15. Universalism in terms of tolerance - Acceptance and understanding of differences.

16. Conformity in terms of interpersonal relations – Respect for others.
17. Security in terms of society – Social stability.
18. Self-determination in terms of actions – Freedom of actions.
19. Image or appearance – Appearance and public image.

Cooperatives

- What kind of cooperative is Biciclot?
- What does it mean that it is a non-profit organisation?
- What is its organisational structure?
- What is its business model?
- How does it relate with its local context?

The Principles of Cooperativism

- Analyse how each of the six principles of cooperativism are present in Biciclot.
- Analyse the impact of each of these six principles in Biciclot, both on an internal and external level.
- Analyse the impact of each of these six principles in Biciclot, both for individuals and members and as a collective or cooperative.
- Analyse whether or not these principles of cooperativism are present in the companies that form Biciclot's competition and which do not form part of the social and solidarity economy: EMEB and buying and selling social networks.

5. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Social Outcome

Social auditing is the process undertaken by a company or organisation in order to assess the outcomes of their social action and the company or organisation's ethical behaviour, in relation to its goals and those of directly or indirectly involved third parties

(individuals or legal entities). Today in Spain there are three main tools for Social Outcomes or Auditing linked to the social and solidarity economy, which are in operation in different regions: Madrid, the Basque Country and Navarra and Catalonia. They are all based on questionnaires given to organisations, although as a consequence of the autonomous nature of each region, methodologies developed do not ask for exactly the same information and, therefore, do not give the same kind of results.

Analyse these three tools and observe the differences between them:

- Social outcome XES (Catalonia): <http://www.ensenyaelcor.org>
- Social auditing REAS (Basque Country and Navarra): <http://www.auditoriasocial.net>
- Auditing system of the social market (Madrid):
- <http://konsumoresponsable.coop/herramientas>

Analyse the case of Biciclot and its measurement of its social outcomes:

- <http://www.biciclot.coop/biciclot-ensenyem-cor-balanc-social/>
- <http://www.biciclot.coop/balanc-social-leconomia-solidaria-enseny-el-cor/>

The Social and Solidarity Economy in Our Day-to-Day Lives

Now reflect on your level of participation in initiatives linked with the social and solidarity economy:

- Would you consider that you follow the principles of cooperativism? Do you think you apply them to your daily life or do you see them as a kind of utopia?
- Do you belong to an entity of the social and solidarity economy? And, more precisely, of a cooperative? If so, what impact did it have on you?

- If you wanted to start a business, would you take the social and solidarity economy and its principles into consideration? Or the legal structure of cooperatives? Or would you focus more on your business' economic profit?
- Is the empowerment of people connected with the social and solidarity economy? Or are there other alternatives in this regard?

6. REFERENCES OF INTEREST

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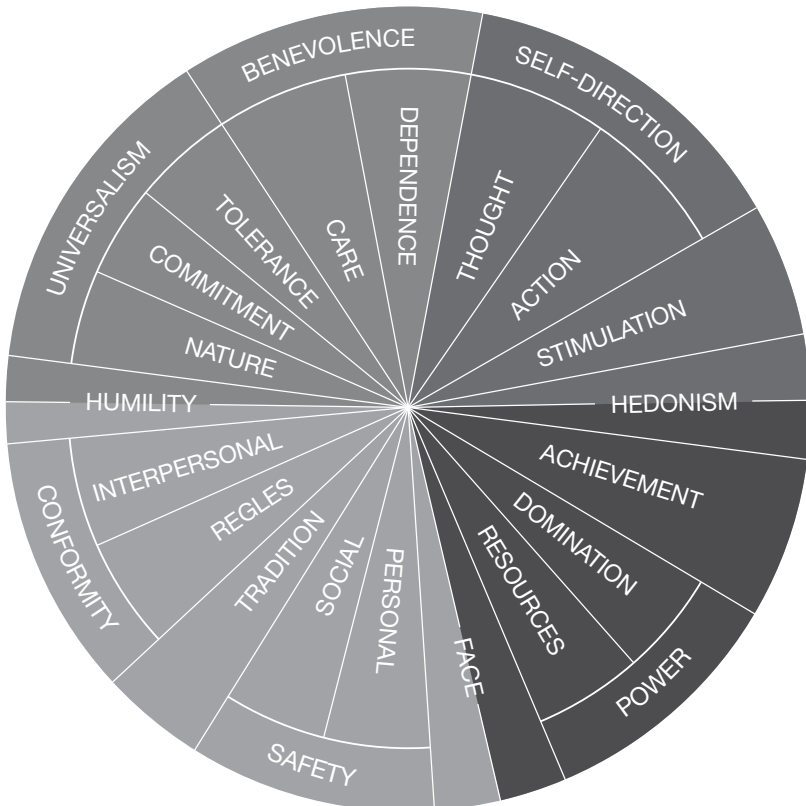
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- “Taller virtual de creació i posada en marxa d’una cooperativa”, from the Aracoop programme of the Labour, Social Affairs and Families Ministry of the Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Law 5/2011 on Social Economy. Spanish government. Ministry of Labour and Immigration.
- Issue 410 of the magazine “Cooperació Catalana” from the Roca Galès Foundation.

Links

- Federation of Work Cooperatives of Catalonia:
- <http://www.cooperativestreball.coop/>
- Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia:
- <http://www.cooperativescatalunya.coop/index.php/ca/>
- REAS solidarity economy website (networks of alternative and solidarity economy): <http://www.economiasolidaria.org>
- Charter of Principles of the Solidarity Economy, promoted by the REAS solidarity economy website (networks of alternative and solidarity economy):

- http://www.economiasolidaria.org/files/CARTA_ECONOMIA_SOLIDARIA_REAS.pdf
- Cooperació Catalana magazine:
- <http://www.rocagales.cat/publicacions/cooperacio-catalana/>
- Solidarity Economy Network of Catalonia XES:
- <http://xes.cat>
- Social outcome XES:
- <http://www.ensenyaelcor.org>
- Social auditing REAS:
- <http://www.auditoriasocial.net>
- Spanish Business Confederation of Social Economy:
- <http://www.cepes.es>
- Spanish Confederation of Associated Work Cooperatives:
- <http://www.coceta.coop>

7. ANNEX





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Entitats col·laboradores

