

Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

The Eudemon initiative in the deployment of renewable energies in the Alt Penedès

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E U D E M O N

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Concern about the renewables-territory relationship is becoming more and more widespread and is the focus of more and more forums, conversations and news. Apparently, we know that one of the energy solutions to the climate crisis is renewable electricity production (especially solar photovoltaic and wind). But, in practice, the reality is not so clear. And we can say, without a shadow of a doubt, that this is a conflictive issue.

We find ourselves in a context of change, which we are just beginning to understand yet which we are farther away from knowing how to take on. Some of the socio-political tools that have been used so far to manage processes of cultural, structural and practical change (such as those proposed by the energy transition) are not appropriate, sufficient or welcome to manage current social conflicts.

This document compiles the experience that the Eudemón project has been developing between November 2021 and July 2023 in the region of the Alt Penedès (Barcelona, Catalonia). This initiative of the Centre per la Sostenibilitat Territorial (CST – Center for Territorial Sustainability) aims to put into practice a specific methodology for conflict resolution and the construction of local governance in a specific conflict context. The history of the project and the materials generated can be consulted on the web (<https://www.centresostenibilitat.cat/eudemon/>).

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In any event, we wanted to facilitate its processing and usefulness by making an effort to systematize and synthesize it. In the following pages, you will find, basically, the description of the procedure that was followed and various conclusions. The procedure has been schematized in such a way that it shows the different steps and actions carried out, as well as which gears are the ones that make it work, that is to say, the questions that have guided it. In addition, we have highlighted some of the mechanisms and/or strategies that could be easily replicated and we have illustrated some of the stages of the initiative by zooming in on the reality of the Penedès region.

All in all, it is meant to be a proposal of how current ecosocial challenges and socio-ecological conflicts could be dealt with through dialogue and consensus, and out of a desire for democratization of decisions and the creation of community. Of course, it is only a grain of salt in a vast field to explore, therefore, this document is also an invitation. An invitation to those who feel this way, to join in this research and practice that we believe is so necessary. We hope we can inspire and guide you in the science and art of creating spaces where common problems are solved from the perspective of collective coexistence and wisdom.

Sigrid and Jaume

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Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

1 ESTABLISHING THE STARTING POINT

Definition of the type of initiative

1 Theoretical-practical approach

1 Justification: What is the purpose of our intervention?

Few people today question the need for an energy transition that puts an end to a development model based on the continuous growth of consumption and use of fossil fuels. On the contrary, a global discourse predominates that calls for an energy system based on renewable sources and that allows the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The technological, economic, social, social, cultural, etc. implications of a change of this magnitude entail a major challenge that we are just beginning to face. It is a polyhedral challenge that demands a transformation on different levels, and yet the rank of importance and attention that the different factors receive is not equal. There is a tendency to prioritize the technical and technological approach, which is focused on effectively implementing renewable energy which matches the expected production data.

However, in a democratic context in which there is a commitment to the values of transparency, participation, fairness, accountability, etc., and in a social moment in which there is a growing willingness to influence the shaping of public policies and to form collective bonds through more cooperative and community-based systems, it is difficult to ignore the psycho-social and governance dimensions of the energy issue.

The high level of social conflict that has been triggered by the deployment of wind and photovoltaic installation projects on land also reminds us of the need to take into account the social and human factor. A great diversity of sectors and agents converge on the energy scene, with their

interests, needs, perceptions, knowledge... all of which must be included to converge into a common energy transition project. Is it really possible to advance in changing the energy model if we do not accompany this process with a socio-political and public management system that is capable of building on this social plurality?

It is being more and more openly acknowledged (by the business sector, public administrations, social entities, etc.) that in order to achieve climate objectives the majority of society must be involved and alliances between the different actors must be created. And in documents and speeches, it is common to include references to the concepts of public participation, citizen empowerment, social license, energy governance, etc. to demonstrate the importance of including the demos in this paradigm shift.

Because, after all, it is our capacity – as a society – to give collective answers to global problems that is being engaged.

To make the human and social factor of the energy transition visible.

To explore what it would be like to define the new energy model starting from a holistic, inclusive vision, building solutions progressively and in a participatory way.

To find specific roadmaps – the How – to face this social and governance challenge..

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1 ESTABLISHING THE STARTING POINT

Definition of the type of initiative

1 Theoretical-practical approach

2 Stance: What position and attitude do we approach the issue from? (I)

With a particular VISION:

Of socio-ecological conflicts:

Socio-ecological or socio-environmental conflicts are social disputes of a public nature, in which there is a central environmental and territorial component, which involve collective actions and have to do with the interventions carried out, promised or allowed by the administrations. (Muñiz, 2012).

The existence of these conflicts is understood as an attribute of plural societies that cannot or should not be eliminated. In fact, the emergence of these conflicts is an indication of a healthy expression of reciprocal limits. The challenge is to ensure that this difference does not lead to confrontation, which is a moment of miscommunication, blockage and denial of what is different.

The conflict is, therefore, an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the existing eco-social problems and to make the most of the mobilization of resources, people and knowledge that are activated in favor of the resolution of the problems.

Of conflict resolution:

Resolving a conflict, unlike solving a problem or making it dissipate, is a process in which the involved parties reach an agreement and set aside the initial dispute. The goal is not to eradicate the underlying cause of the dispute nor to expect it to disappear due to less conscious reasons such as boredom, neglect, resignation, etc. (Muñiz, 2011).

The focus is placed on the individuals involved in the conflict and on creating the conditions that will favor concord. At the same time, it is considered important that in the interaction between actors, the specific characteristics of the conflict are taken into account and that the agreement comes about through collective construction.

Resolution is, therefore, a creative process led by those involved, which brings forth (under favorable conditions) agreements that are not pre-fabricated nor established in advance.

Of governability:

The systems and mechanisms that a society has for making decisions, governing itself, and resolving its problems are diverse and depend on the conceptualization of the society itself. The vision of governance understands the political nature of society as a fluid space of actors, processes, norms, information, and interactions that shape public action.

There are different governance models to manage these currents, which can be more or less different from traditional governance structures (lobby-influence strategies, referendum-type processes, etc.). Approaches that are more aligned with the new democratic culture seek to open spaces for expression, listening, learning, and empowering the population to take responsibility for common problems.

Governance is understood, thus, as a decision-making logic based on dialogue, consensus-building processes, and situated within a broader framework of participatory democracy.

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1 ESTABLISHING THE STARTING POINT

Definition of the type of initiative

1 Theoretical-practical approach

2 Stance: What position and attitude do we approach the issue from? (II)

Setting out with a particular ATTITUDE:

Humility, learning, and creativity:

Although it is common to refer to energy transition as if it were a known, established, and singular path, it is still a reality under construction. The complex nature of eco-social problems and, specifically, the energy challenge, plus the level of uncertainty surrounding it (see Muñiz and Moya, 2023), highlight that there are still open questions, dilemmas, and debates that need to be addressed in order for this transition to be truly effective.

In this context, it is crucial to recognize the need to take into account and share as much knowledge and expertise as possible (first-order social learning). At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that there are information gaps and a certain degree of ignorance that will necessarily need to be addressed.

Therefore, the approach to the conflict and the problems is done with openness; nothing is taken for granted, accepting that no one possesses absolute truth, and a critical reflection on current knowledge (second-order social learning) is carried out.

Neutrality and transparency:

One of the theoretical and practical debates in the field of conflict resolution is about which functions are appropriate for the “facilitator” to perform, as this figure can take on various roles that have unequal effects on the dialogue process. However, in general, there is agreement that the facilitator should not lose their semblance of neutrality.

In this sense, it is important to be aware of who exercises this role. Is it an organization, an individual, a company, or an administration? What degree of connection does it have with the place where the initiative is taking place? Is it a well-known, public, or visible actor? Does it have the trust of the potentially involved individuals? Depending on these characteristics, it may be easier or more challenging to embody an attitude of neutrality.

In any case, it is essential to be open to listening to all voices and to discover the wisdom they contain. Likewise, it is important to be honest when designing the dialogue process so that it does not favor any particular interest and the sole purpose is democratization and the common interest.

Mediation-facilitation:

It is common to associate the task of conflict resolution with the process that occurs when the disputing parties come together formally to reach an agreement. However, in practice, it is a task that unfolds at various levels, and in different settings and moments. Indeed, it becomes relevant during the space of group dialogue, but also when contacting the actors, obtaining information, communicating experiences, etc.

Bridges have to be built constantly between discourses (seeking inclusive debate settings), knowledge bases (translating technical language, balancing levels of education), and different individuals (synchronizing work methods, overcoming distrust) to facilitate inquiry, decision-making, cooperation, etc.

The will to mediate-facilitate is the sum of everything that is done to motivate understanding and collaboration, and permeates all the actions that make up the initiative.

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1 ESTABLISHING THE STARTING POINT

Definition of the type of initiative

2 Types of starting situations

1 Sphere of action: For which types of conflict are interventions foreseen?

There is no consolidated theoretical and practical body of work that defines and classifies socio-ecological conflicts and thereby facilitates the identification of these situations, the systematization of their knowledge, or the exchange of resolution responses.

However, a survey and analysis of socio-ecological conflicts that have proliferated in Catalonia during this 21st century indicate that there are certain aspects that most of them share and that can be used to define which types of situations are more paradigmatic. In this sense, the typical ingredients that these conflicts contain are:

- *Differences in the way of understanding and seeing the world*, resulting in different values and models of development and society among the parties.
- *Competition for territorial resources* that are perceived as scarce and are linked to environmental quality, needs, and the competition of specific interests.
- *Diverse, incomplete, and disputed sources of information, and problems of perception and communication* (different forms of interpretation and expression that create misunderstandings, in addition to the existence of stereotypes and assumptions...).
- *Issues of governance* (how decisions are made), power (capacity for coercion), and equity (distribution of costs and benefits among the parties).

Such a characterization narrows down the type of conflict to be managed, but still encompasses a wide variety of situations. Of course, even when these considerations are met, the resolution strategy can vary greatly depending on certain attributes of the conflict, such as its magnitude (number of actors, scope of the set of problems...), its duration (degree of chronicity/novelty, periods of escalation-stagnation-deescalation...), the level of confrontation, power relations, the complexity of the elements to be considered, the territory (more or less socially organized, with previous conflicts or without...), etc.

Specifically, the focus of intervention is on multipart, multilevel conflicts with an elevated technical component. These are conflicts in which debates revolve around information and governance, ways of understanding and materializing energy transition, around land use and the coexistence of development interests in the territory, and around landscape, natural, social, economic impacts, etc. These conflicts do not involve legal proceedings, and the power imbalances between the actors are not excessively large.

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Definition of the type of initiative

3 Available Resources

1 Viability of the initiative: What resources are available in order to move the intervention forward?

While deliberative initiatives require material and logistical resources to sustain the element of relationship-building and dialog, they are generally not demanding in terms of physical assets. However, they are processes with elevated requirements of time and human resources (facilitator teams, advisors), interpersonal skills (communication, motivation, care, inspiration, leadership), and cognitive content (scientific, relational, strategic, methodological knowledge).

The viability (and quality) of the initiative depends, among many other factors, on whether one has access to these resources or not. This means that, at the very least, funding is needed to compensate qualified personnel for their dedication over a sufficient period of time. The difficulty of justifying certain less visible tasks in these types of processes, the attainment of sometimes intangible or long-term results, the lack of recognition for the value of participatory approaches compared to more technical approaches, etc., often hinder the acquisition of financial resources and strongly influence the performance of the initiative.

Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the minimum cognitive, human, material, and time resources so that the process can be carried out. And in any case, the actions should be scaled according to the availability of said resources.



Photography. Soazig Darnay



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Social conflictiveness surrounding the implementation of renewable energies in Alt Penedès



The Eudemon procedure is developed within a supra-municipal framework with its own administration (the county) and addresses a controversy that is representative of the identified socio-ecological conflicts. It occurs in a rural territory, close to the metropolitan area of Barcelona, where the following coincide: a) a long-standing “stalled” conflict with a higher degree of confrontation in the municipality of Pontons over the implementation of wind energy, b) A latent conflict around the proposal to install photovoltaic facilities in different municipalities of the Penedès plain, and c) A recent and active conflict, which is gaining resonance, surrounding the Extra High Voltage (Molt Alta Tensió – MAT) power line that crosses Catalonia from west to east.

There are actors with entrenched positions wherein a dichotomous approach prevails and seeks to put certain needs before others. But, in general, there is a sufficiently large number of agents who have a more comprehensive view of the situation. That is to say, they understand that it is important to implement renewable energies and maintain the rural environment as well as its way of life

and productive activities, and that the challenge lies in finding ways to integrate them (“Renewables yes, but not like this”).

The Centre for Territorial Sustainability (CST) is the entity that proposes to undertake this conflict through dialogue. It is an organization with accumulated experience in this field and is an example in itself of how the existence of a conflict can activate and consolidate a network of territorial collaboration and become a driving force for cultural change.

However, when the Eudemon project is presented, it encounters some misunderstanding (difficulty in visualizing its materialization, lack of understanding of underlying values...) and/or mistrust (expectation of hidden personal interests...). The fact that the project is not originally from the county allows for a neutral perspective and establishing relationships without a prior history that could condition them. However, it also takes time to become known and gain the trust of those involved.

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2 PROSPECT

Understanding of the situation to be addressed

1 Analysis of the element-conflict

1 Identification of the object in dispute: What has triggered the conflict?

It is important to identify the element that triggers, from the very beginning, the conflict and around which the actors position themselves. It is the element that brings together and gives an outlet to preexisting discontent, desire, and/or difference of opinions. In the set of problems related to energy, this element can be the approval of a specific law, plan, or policy that affects the energy sector and, very specifically, the proposal to install a wind or photovoltaic plant on a given stretch of land.

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1 Analysis of the element-conflict

2 Exhaustive analysis of the conflict: Do we have enough knowledge about the case?

Despite the common denominators shared by many conflicts related to wind and photovoltaic installations, knowing the specific case in depth is fundamental to intervene accurately in their resolution. Indeed, it is this information that will indicate where action is needed. Furthermore, it is in the art of detecting certain details (a specific person, a particular nuance in the usual arguments, a peculiar characteristic of the land and/or the project, etc.) that can ultimately tip the balance towards an effective resolution of the conflict.

Knowledge must be attained about, at least, the following aspects:

— Description of the conflict:

- *The Context of the conflict* (description of the area and sector in which it is developing)
- Chronology of the events and the dynamics of the conflict (phases, changes in intensity, actors and positions, the most significant events or facts).
- *Description of the object in dispute* (technical characteristics of the project/intervention).

— Map of the actors:

- Identification of the individuals, organizations, and sectors that are involved.
- *Objectives, resources, arguments and roles that these actors have in the conflict.*
- Ways that the actors interact with each other (how they are connected, how they know each other, collaboration, antagonism...).
- *Translation into a “sociogram”* whereby the actors are visually represented based on territorial level, sector, typology (association, platform, union, public administration, company...) and if they are connected and how (type of relationship).

— Codes of the conflict and underlying mechanisms:

Not everything that is part of the conflict is on the surface and easily identifiable. Often, there are beliefs, emotions, values, etc. (both at the individual and group/social level) that are not openly expressed but decisively influence the situation. These implicit elements also include prejudices, taken for granted, misunderstandings, etc., which condition the communicative dynamics and, therefore, the resolution process.

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2 PROSPECT

Understanding of the situation to be addressed

2 Analysis of the context-problem

1 Identification of the general set of problems: What practical needs are at stake?

We must differentiate between what triggers the conflict (the element-conflict) and the general context in which its existence is explained. Every particular socio-ecological conflict is embedded in a greater set of socio-ecological issues that cannot be disconnected from the dispute, and usually reflects the practical dilemmas we face as a society. In other words, “*problems related to an ultimate human purpose such as well-being, health, living in a healthy natural environment, access to water, etc.*” (Ravetz, 1971).

In this sense, the context-issue at hand is the challenge of energy transition (which includes the practical problem that society and individuals need energy to live and that the reality of climate change prevents obtaining it with the current system); a challenge that is divided into many others (overproduction, consumption – savings and efficiency, access – energy poverty, mobility, etc.).

2 Analysis of the context-problem

2 State of the issue: Do we have enough knowledge about the problems??

In order to properly interpret the dispute and offer realistic scenarios of resolution, it is necessary to understand the overall framework in which it is situated, which in this case is that of renewable electricity production:

- Legal, administrative, political, and economic framework of the energy sector.
- Knowledge and information about the electricity sector (current developments in the field):
 - *Type of data available and the ease of access to the different sources of information.*
 - *Methodology used to calculate the available information (assumptions, analysis criteria).*
 - *Limits of the knowledge* (Which epistemological aspects are the most controversial and/or reach the least consensus? What challenges are there to obtain the baseline knowledge? Where is more research needed? What are the current technological challenges?).

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2 PROSPECT

Understanding of the situation to be addressed

3 Evaluation of the potential for resolution

1 Analysis of the minimum necessary conditions: Is the starting situation favorable enough to develop the initiative?

In order to be able to carry out an endeavor of intermediation, of reaching consensus and working together, certain minimum starting conditions are required, which need to be tested before defining the strategy for action:

A People willing (and available) to participate voluntarily in the dialogue process.

- *Measure the degree of belligerence of the conflict and its consequences at the operational level.* In very heated conflicts, the actors may exhibit attitudes of reticence or rejection towards proposals that involve meeting with the other parties.
- *Analyze the relationships among the actors.* Depending on the level of affinity/antagonism among the actors; their degree of acquaintance, trust, and collaboration; the configuration of the network that connects or separates them; and how the power to influence is distributed, there will be more or less willingness to participate in a meeting space.
- *Detect the extent and maturity of the debate.* The parties involved will perceive the need to participate (or not) in the resolution of the overall problem based on whether it is a novel or well-known matter among the citizens; the depth and breadth of discussions on the topic; the level of knowledge and education about the issue, etc.

- *Prospect the participative culture and practice in the territory.* Depending on whether there is an active civil society or not; whether it is common/rare to manage county affairs in a participatory manner; whether previous experiences of social dialogue have been satisfactory/frustrating, etc., the proposal will be received more or less favorably.

B Dialogue processes that facilitate understanding, collaboration, and reaching agreements.

- *Identify the knowledge base on hand for sustaining the dialogue process and/or the ease with which the necessary information can be obtained.* In order to assess certain actions, form an opinion, define potential agreements, etc., it is necessary to have a minimum of relevant information on the table. For example, information on the needs and projections of renewable electricity production in the county, on the potential of wind/solar resources, on the specificities of the action, on local socio-economic dynamics, on the evolution of the regulatory framework, etc.

C Mechanisms of governance that support dialogue and/or ensure the impact of agreements on public and/or community decisions.

- *Locate existing collective spaces that can catalyze concord among actors.* Identify those meeting spaces (organizations,



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platforms, public participation processes, etc.) that offer a favorable environment to accommodate consensual processes. Spaces in which people feel secure to be able to express themselves, spaces that are stable over time, with sufficient physical and personal resources and which bring together diverse actors, tend to be favorable.

- Explore possible points of confluence between social processes and administrative and governmental decision-making processes. Given that the current decision-making structure does not include consensual practices, it is necessary to assess to what extent the context allows for ensuring the impact of the results obtained in the resolution of the problem.



Photography. Jaume Moya

Methodologies used for gathering information in the Eudemón-Alt Penedès process

Documentation Techniques (bibliography and web bibliography):

- Review of official documents, and those generated by some of the actors (statistics, legal texts, pamphlets, manifestos, meeting minutes, et al.)
- Review of journalistic sources (compilation of news in digital format).
- Review of specialized literature and technical reports.

Techniques in the Field:

- Direct observation (attendance at public events and conferences, visits and tours of the area...).
- Participant observation (attendance at events organized by the groups involved and in some governmental processes as participants).
- Interviews with the whole range of actors involved both in the case and in the general context (in-depth and semi-structured interviews, mostly individual, but also in groups).
- Focus group (through the figure of the Advisory Council).

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

1 Adaptive Co-creation:

1 Is the initiative compatible with the present local reality?

The nature of social processes is unpredictable and difficult to control or direct through a set of tools, procedures, and instruments applied mechanically. It is easy to be seduced by visions of “social engineering,” but the truth is that social systems are dynamic and relationships are constantly changing. The practice itself generates new situations and needs, which require adapting the procedure to what is happening.

It is desirable to have the techniques used in other cases on hand, to be inspired by the lessons learned from other experiences, and to adopt theoretical and practical principles from the field of conflict resolution and local governance. However, it should be clear that each case requires a unique process, and that it is essential for the success of the initiative to design it based on a permanent monitoring of the circumstances that the problem, the people and the territory shape along the way.

In this way, the procedure co-evolves with the empirical reality and progressively becomes more concrete. Of course, it starts with an initial proposal, one which establishes the starting point of the initiative (its idiosyncrasy, purpose...) and which will be adapted over time. However, this proposal should be understood as a reference point from which to build upon and not as something immutable.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Constant updating of the information obtained during prospection (point 2).
- Defining an initial intervention proposal with certain aspects deliberately left open (not defined) and with several potential lines of work (multiple alternatives).
- Conducting regular meetings of the facilitator-mediator team to assess changes and any need to modify the steps and/or the planned strategy.
- Consulting various agents and experts on how to guide the intervention.
- Incorporating and making the most of spontaneous resolution opportunities that may arise.

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Adaptive Co-creation in the Alt Penedès

Since November 2021, when focus was placed on the reality of the Penedès region, **Eudemon** has been putting its adaptive capacity to the test. The original will to intercede in the conflict over the proposed wind power facility in the town of Pontons was truncated when the project came to a halt, and with it the fervor of the demands against it. There has been no explicit withdrawal of the project, and the area continues to be a candidate to host wind farms, such that the conflict remains in a state of latency. In any case, this “halt” rules out the possibility of conducting a classic mediation process (dialogue and agreement between the directly involved parties) and necessitates approaching it differently.

There are factors that have more or less influence in determining the intervention strategy. In the case of the Penedès region, the process has been mainly conditioned by social dynamics there (availability of participating individuals and entities, pace of joint work, evolution of debates and positions, etc.). Governmental action has also had an impact, albeit more tangentially. For example, the intention of getting the support of the County Council had to wait for a year and a half due to the process of creating the County Offices for Energy Transition promoted by the Generalitat throughout Catalonia.

The figure of the Advisory Council

From the very beginning, **Eudemon** established a consultative body made up of:

- People from different sectors: academia, local governments, law, labor unions, research, activism, and local development.
- People with experience, expertise, and knowledge in social processes and questions of energy.

Its main functions are as follows:

- Ensuring a polyhedric approach to the conflict and making sure that, despite the necessary immersion in the case, the global perspective is not lost.
- Sharing the monitoring and follow-up of the process in order to evaluate the evolution of the initiative and receive proposals for improvement in its development and execution.
- Supporting the project by providing information, contacts, reflections, and developing a network of mutual support...

Three meetings took place at critical moments of the procedure; 1) establishment of the starting point and selection of the case, 2) validation of the prospection that was carried out and definition of the initial action strategy, and 3) evaluation of the deployment of the process, the results and continuation.

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

2 Incorporation of the voice of the conflict:

Does the initiative take into account the challenges posed by social conflictiveness?

The very existence of the conflict shows some of the key aspects of the energy transition process. Some of these aspects become manifest through the arguments of those involved. Others are at the core of the controversy and reveal underlying cultural and philosophical debates (about time, the relationship between science and society, community, links with the earth and the place, etc.). These are realities that speak to those who wish to intervene and which often condition their actions.

The Eudemon experience runs into, at the very least, the following realities:

1 In the energy transition process, different rhythms of change coexist and the urgency-resistance binomial permeates the debate.

In the energy transition process, different rhythms of change coexist. On one hand, there is a sense of urgency for change (concern about the energy crisis, frustration over actions that have not been fully realized, pressure to accelerate the transition, etc.). On the other hand, there is a “resistance” to change (the need to process the current moment, a desire to actively participate in the change rather than being dragged along, questioning the established roadmap, etc.).

A situation that invites us to ask ourselves: what level of intensity of change can we handle? How can we accompany it while respecting the different rhythms it encompasses?

In this sense, the procedure tries to balance these two rhythms. The urgency is recognized, but using it to justify “unpopular” decisions, to circumvent procedures and limit participation or to mask the uncertainty and complexity of the energy challenge is avoided. And, at the same time, the resistance is recognized, but avoiding that it be used to block decision making and dialogue, to evade the challenge we face, or to remain paralyzed.

ACTIONS:

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Instill calm, a long-term vision, and hope in those actively involved in the energy transition.
- Highlight that the process of change has already begun but is still under construction, and allows for (and needs) the inclusion of more voices.
- Respect the social and dialogue tempos (which require time) while ensuring these processes do not dissipate or are prolonged in excess.
- Foster mutual empathy and understanding of different personal and territorial situations.

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Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

2 Incorporation of the voice of the conflict:

2 The energy transition process has a highly technical component and a body of sectorial knowledge that is not always available.

As is characteristic of socioecological conflicts, “energy” conflicts contain a strong technical component, which implies the following:

— A certain degree of information and training is necessary to understand the problem and possible paths to solutions. When these elements are not fully present, people feel insecure and are reluctant to participate, or they use it as an excuse to not define concrete proposals. Misunderstandings may arise, or available sources of information may be used with inadequate rigor.

— The epistemological question is at the root of the controversy; either because it is alleged that there is not enough information, or because scientific-technical knowledge is used to endorse or discredit certain positions.

— The debate and decisions regarding the energy transition tend to be based solely on technical criteria (i.e. related to technological and economic aspects of renewable installations, compliance with current regulations for the sector, energy production and consumption calculations, etc.), while other factors such as the territory’s capacity to accommodate the transition from a psychosocial perspective (emotional aspects, symbolic values, social uses, perception of impact, local knowledge) are not taken into consideration.

An epistemological reality that urges the initiative to seek and disseminate less accessible or known data, to structure, clarify, and verify existing information, and to generate the knowledge that we still do not have.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Undertake an intense task of research (compilation and analysis of official data, scientific studies, reports, etc.).
- Collaborate with an independent group of experts who assist in the work of collecting and interpreting information.
- Treat the Project like a melting pot that collects the knowledge that is currently scattered among the different agents (social agents, companies, the administration, academia...).
- Share the information that is collected and generated with all stakeholders (through dialogue processes, actions of communication and dissemination, etc.).

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Information and knowledge about the implementation of renewable energies in Alt Penedès.

In the analysis of the conflict in Alt Penedès, most of the people interviewed and with whom the issue was discussed emphasize the epistemological element and/or give it a high level of importance. Basically, it is pointed out that for deciding on energy transition, there is a “lack of information” about: 1) basic energy data at the county level, 2) the methodology used to calculate the available information, and 3) how to manage the technical aspects of installations and the legal procedures and formulas for establishing local energy communities.

Consistent with this, it is detected that, indeed, there is a lack of information with regard to:

- Projections for the future (electricity needs, prevision of solar and wind energy installations to meet climate objectives, percentage of renewable production that could be covered with rooftop PV, expected land occupation, etc.) are only available at the official level for the whole of Catalonia, that is, not at the county level.
- The study on the photovoltaic potential on land in the municipalities of Alt Penedès has not yet been made public.

- There is no systematized and publicly available information on the projects presented by different companies for the implementation of renewable energies.

- There are few scientific studies on the environmental impact of renewable installations (especially on photovoltaic solar, in general, and on the mortality of birds as a result of wind energy).

- There are sources of information that provide different data for the same variable (surface area of the land to be occupied by the installations, percentage of the photovoltaic solar potential of the roofs that will be harnessed, etc.).



Photography. Jaume Moya

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

2 Incorporation of the voice of the conflict:

3 **The socio-political and cultural context is not favorable to certain practices oriented towards local governance and consensual processes.**

Firstly, a predominant idea of what the new energy model should be has been detected, which to a large extent, captures the collective imagination that we have about the energy transition. It is an idea that is so strong that it eclipses any contemplation of other perspectives or the possibility that each territory define this transition in an endogenous way.

In addition, the political culture of government continues to prevail: the need for opening participatory processes or facilitating access to key information is not prescribed; decision-making power is not shared by administrations responsible for them; and some entities position themselves to make demands, or use strategies like lobbying and dissemination of a pre-defined energy model, or they wait to be given permission to decide.

The alleged urgencies, the bureaucratic obstacles, merely proclaimed means of participation or a regulatory framework that lacks ambition and commitment, also demonstrate the challenges that are being faced in this field.

All in all, it shows that there is still a long way to go and that it is opportune to carry out a collective analysis and reflection on issues of participation, community, power inequalities, transparency, etc.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Awaken the population's interest in decision-making and educate conflicting parties on the suitability and viability of non-adversarial approaches.
- Introduce the debate on energy governance in conversations, communications, workshops, etc.
- Analyze the case and the problems in terms of participatory democracy in order to identify the springboards and the restraints that this reality imposes on the initiative.

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Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

2 Incorporation of the voice of the conflict:

4 **The process of implementation of renewable energies is linked to the territorial variable.**

The conflict over the location of wind and photovoltaic plants highlights the centrality of the territorial factor, which is expressed in at least two axes. First of all, it is evident that the process of implementing renewable energies is inevitably linked to tensions between needs, interests, and uses that occur in the physical space where they are intended to be installed. Furthermore, the territorial element is also reflected in the interrelations between what is local and what is global which are implicit in the process of transitioning to a new energy model.

Therefore, if we want to address the deployment of renewables, we need to talk about the territories where it occurs and about their different functionalities, dynamics and identities. At the same time, the multilevel nature of the issue - the concurrence of multiple territorial levels in the same conflict - makes it necessary to situate each of the regions in relation to the others.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Take the county as the supramunicipal unit of action and thus be able to incorporate the territorial perspective.
- Participate in initiatives, conferences, debates, etc., related to the expansion of renewables in other counties, as well as at the Catalan and Spanish levels, and thereby identify the intersection points that need synchronization and the inter-territorial disparities that need to be addressed.
- Raise awareness about the interconnected nature of the energy system and the need to take into account decisions made in different territorial areas and the spatial distribution of energy production capacities and consumption levels.
- Advocate for the capacity of local territories to define an energy transition based on their own potentials and resources.

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

3 Fostering the conditions that propitiate conflict resolution

Does the initiative succeed in increasing the likelihood of cooperation and collaboration?

As mentioned in section 2.3.1, in order to promote mediation processes and achieve social consensus that have an impact on the conflict and the problems, it is necessary to have at least the following: a) People and/or collective entities willing to participate. b) Spaces for dialogue and social interconnection. c) A decision-making framework that allows integrating the results into democratic practices. These social, procedural, and governability conditions are not commonly present in the current Catalan and Spanish energy landscape and thus need to be encouraged.

That said, social processes of understanding/conflict, networking/distancing, generating narratives/destroying paradigms are living entities with their own internal driving force for change and are influenced by multiple factors. Therefore, the existence of these elements should not be understood through the concept of predictability, but as a potential (Kaplan, 2015). Instead of establishing behaviourist procedures, the aim is to create the setting that facilitates the emergence of solutions and communities.

1 People who are willing to voluntarily participate in the dialogue process

As already mentioned, in contexts in which the conflict acquires a high degree of belligerence, the number of potential participants is reduced. In any case, there are always people and entities that are predisposed to listen and who are, in fact, receptive to getting involved in this type of initiative.

Then, there is a large sector of the population that has little knowledge about the energy issue or that sees it as a practical personal decision («Should I install solar panels on my roof?») and is not interested in more its strategic aspects and/or collective construction. Also, there is a certain unawareness among some of the agents involved. Or if they are aware of each other's existence, there are no communication channels, bonds of trust or experiences of collaboration between them that could motivate the desire to work together.

They are circumstances that put us up against a series of challenges: 1) the challenge of incorporating the most reactive groups or the most extreme positions; 2) the difficulty of mobilizing people already interested in taking action, as many report a lack of time and have the feeling of not having the necessary knowledge to do so; and 3) the challenge of acting as a gateway between actors who have no previous experience of collaboration.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- For the most entrenched conflicts, create a more relaxed and trusting atmosphere, trying to balance the power inequalities, increase the transparency of the processes and awaken in those involved the will to delve deeper and reflect on the problems.

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- Handle the most polarized conflicts in an indirect way:
 - Seek spaces and/or channels of communication that are not tainted by the conflict and that allow us to come closer to the actors.
 - Incorporate the views of these actors by means of the connections they may have with other agents who do participate in the dialogue, or by conveying their opinions as material for discussion.
 - Create mediation environments that serve as an inspiration, an example or even as a bridge to favor the participation of those who are less accustomed
- Detect which territorial agents are already active and/or interested in the problem and encourage them to participate in the dialogue process, given that they also represent a social capital that could act as a springboard to increase social involvement.
- Search for formulas that arouse interest among those less organized and/or knowledgeable about the topic:
 - Carrying out awareness-raising work (dissemination, practical recommendations, providing information about experiences that are working...) is seen as an important step prior to initiating debate processes aimed at the general public.
 - Engagement of non-sectorial communication channels (for example, neighborhood associations, social services of the municipalities...) to reach different segments of society.
- Encourage the connection between sectors that are currently disconnected from each other and promote relationships at different levels, since the existence of a broad, cohesive and active social network helps to promote collective processes.

3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

3 Fostering the conditions that propitiate conflict resolution

2 Dialogue processes that facilitate understanding, collaboration and reaching agreements.

As Marina (2004, p. 54) reminds us, “vital needs impose an adaptation to reality, communication with other beings, and cooperation with them on a practical plane.” Conversing, communicating, and dialoguing are therefore primary and essential tools in any social exercise and public management endeavor. However, as it is known, this dialogue can take multiple forms that are more or less assertive or constructive, and which can be more or less intensive, informed, and transformative.

In a conflictual and complex scenario as the one described, there must be an empathetic and rigorous dialogue which allows for the expansion of the framework of discussion established by the conflict (which may be filled with limiting beliefs or simplifications, and may exclude certain views or perspectives). Hence, a dialogue based on quality information, where participants are open to being convinced or challenged by others, and which favors reflection and learning. It should also consider the emotional aspect and take care of social interaction.

If, in addition, the situation requires that decisions and/or actions be taken, there must be a dialogue that produces group results. Thus, it is not enough to simply gather and compile individualized opinions; they must be integrated, evolved and agreed upon.

In any case, dialogical praxis needs to take into account the diversity of sectors, sensibilities, knowledge, moments, ways of functioning, etc. that are present in order to determine the most appropriate methods and channels of dialogue.

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From this approach, there arises the need to: 1) multiply meeting spaces (promoting the collective/community dimension) and 2) establish a framework for deliberation that sustains authentic dialogue (avoiding idle chatter and monologues), 3) and facilitates the generation of consensus.

ACTIONS

To incorporate this practical perspective, the following actions are taken:

- Increase the number of spaces in which the energy problem is discussed (increasing the opportunity to express and listen to different views, perspectives and knowledge on the issue).
- Use the formula of “contextualized debates” (i.e., promote dialogue processes adapted to each social-geographical context of conflict).
- Use different participatory mechanisms as appropriate, prioritizing the “workshops” as a preferred tool to develop collective thinking and increase the bonding among the people attending.
- Convert the information and knowledge obtained in the analysis of the case and the problem into work material and nourishment for the dialogue.
- Process the result of the debates by integrating the different contributions and constructing a shared narrative at the group and territorial levels.

The Strategy of the Contextualized Debates

It is a strategy for approaching the conflict which maximizes the probabilities of an empathetic and constructive dialogue between the actors. It is based on the following premises:

- *Building on existing spaces of social self-organization* and in tune with the present needs of the local reality facilitates the implementation of this type of processes and, upon improving the fit, the resolution proposals that emerge will be more convenient and feasible.
- In ecosocial problems, the definition of the problem, how to approach and solve it is often a disputed issue. For this reason, it is necessary *to progressively establish the framework of the debate and always make sure that what is to be agreed upon is clear.*
- *Offering a more customized accompaniment* and in smaller/more homogeneous groups allows for 1) adjusting the dialogue space to the characteristics of the group, 2) limiting the complexity of the topic to different issues and 4) being able to work in a network without losing focus.

It involves defining different areas and topics for debate according to: (a) the needs and dilemmas brought to the table by the conflict surrounding the implementation of renewable energies, (b) the collective spaces already active in the territory, (c) the interests and degree of knowledge that are present in each of these spaces, and (d) the will to explore the issue from different perspectives and approaches.

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Participative Workshops in the Alt Penedès

The strategy of the contextualized debates in the Alt Penedès was translated into the opening of six meeting spaces with different objectives (address the conflict, contribute to the established decisional framework, generate concrete alternatives), carried out in different social contexts, territorial and thematic scales, and through different mechanisms of participation:



Photography: Jaume Moya

Mechanism	Description	Date and place	Date and place
Workshop *	Deliberation about the implementation of renewable energies in the Alt Penedès.	September 21 and 28, 2022 Vilafranca del Penedès	Organized together with the local group Som Energia – Alt Penedès. It was open to the members of Som Energia.
Workshop *	Energy Transition and Installation of renewable energies in the Alt Penedès.	November 2, 2022 Moja, Olèrdola	Organized in collaboration with the Olèrdola City Council. It was open to citizens, especially those of the municipality.
Workshop *	Conference on Energy and Territory in the Penedès: Collective Self-Organization to Change the Energy Model.	November 26, 2022 Vilafranca del Penedès	Organized together with the Centre d'Estudis Penedesencs, CEPVi i SOSPenedès. Open to all citizens, entities, the administration...
Workshop *	Agrovoltaics and the possibilities for the compatibility of agricultural and energy production in the Alt Penedès.	February 7, 2023 Vilafranca del Penedès	Organized together with the Unió de Pagesos – Alt Penedès.
Conference to share information and reflections.	Conference on Energy and Territory in the Penedès: Current Challenges for Changing the Energy Model in the Penedès.	November 25, 2022 Vilafranca del Penedès	Organized together with the Centre d'Estudis Penedesencs, CEPVi i SOSPenedès. Open to all citizens, entities, the administration...
Public Survey	Survey about Energy Transition	September 25, 2022 Olèrdola	Survey conducted in the context of the demonstration titled "No a La Línia de Molt Alta Tensió" (NO to the Extra High Voltage Line), with the go-ahead of Plataforma NO a la MAT of the Penedès.

* In the "workshop" format, each session is carefully prepared to facilitate meaningful and enjoyable participation for everyone, ensuring that collective work is engaging and smooth. Group facilitation techniques which help reflect, integrate, and systematize are used. The materials are developed by the facilitation team in a way that enables more informed, complex, and high-quality discussions through generative questions, multiple formats, and interactive activities.

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

3 Fostering the conditions that propitiate conflict resolution

3 Mechanisms of governability that enable dialogue and/or guarantee the impact of agreements on public and/or community decisions.

An analysis in terms of participatory democracy in Alt Penedès reveals a deficitary context. There is a predisposition of the population to participate in public decision-making that is less than 50%. Negative evaluations of previous participatory experiences persist, such as lack of attendance and non-application of obtained results. Public agencies restrict citizen referendums to basic administrative procedures, and there is currently no established mechanism for energy governance.

The Eudemón procedure helps mitigate this situation slightly. As expressed by most participants, the workshops promote a participatory culture and develop the necessary skills to engage in collective processes. Meanwhile, the array of debates arouses interest among some councilors, mayors, and technicians from various municipalities in the region and presents potential for future participation.

However, despite the value of these initiatives for dialogue, there is a danger that they end up being reduced to occasional participatory processes that do not translate into permanent empowerment or self-sustaining governance spaces with long-term continuity. Likewise, without deliberate action, there is a risk that the resulting consensus and proposals will not have an impact on decision-making and/or a palpable materialization in the energy transition process.

This situation confirms the need to: 1) develop governance formulas that broaden social involvement, 2) find ways to amplify the political impact and to translate the results obtained in the dialogue processes into practice, and 3) have the express will to consolidate the deliberative spaces that have been created.

ACTIONS

- To explicitly promote the debate about the democratization of the energy sector in order to build together the democratic ideal with which we want to take on the county energy issue.
- Seek out institutional and political support that guarantees a certain impact. Different communication channels with the pertinent authorities (both regional and autonomous) are kept open and various meetings are held to find ways to fit together or integrate the processes and results of the Project in the official decision-making process.
- Disseminate the experience via social networks, internet, media, forums, working groups, etc. to give it some resonance and presence in the general public sphere.
- Establish synergies and alliances with similar projects to ensure the continuity of these types of initiatives and continue multiplying their presence.
- Create a new governance space: the County-level Core Group for the energy transition of the Alt Penedès.



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The collective imaginary of governance in the Alt Penedès



The general opinion is that it is necessary to listen to civil society and the different agents in the territory, and that they should be able to intervene in the energy debate. At the same time, maximum consensus must be sought when deciding the location of renewable energy installations (“The process is the most important; those who have not been part of the decision/negotiation process only see the final result, and that is when they will raise objections”).

In this sense, attention is placed on the need to empower these agents and people to take on leadership and action. Currently, there is a feeling that these actors are being dragged along by a process that they are not leading or participating in, and that the economic powers are putting on the brakes and influencing political and technical aspects, and that there is no political commitment to give strength to emerging social initiatives.

There is no consensus on whether the new governance model to promote the energy transition should be fully public, public-private, or community-based. However, as a process of promoting and making decisions about the implementation of Renewable Energies, the most highly rated is the creation of energy communities.

There are two trends as to what the role of local government should be: for some, public supervision is extremely important; for others, it would be better if it weren't present. For the Alt Penedès region, there are formulations in which the citizenry does not simply adopt the role of client nor does it solely participate in financing renewable initiatives, but rather is co-responsible for the management and governance of the energy system.

Some of the challenges that must be addressed include individualism, discouraging beliefs, lack of information and knowledge, limited local political support, etc. There are also doubts and differences in how to materialize this ideal of community involvement in the energy transition.

Of course, there are springboards that can propel this social empowerment, such as the growing sense of cooperativism, education in schools, the experiences of emerging energy communities, outreach actions, awareness of the economic factor of energy, etc.

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3 STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Creation of the procedure for resolution and governance

4 Deliberate, warm and catalytic communication

1 Does the initiative adopt a communicative approach which is coherent with its purpose of mediating-facilitating?

The action of communication when adopting the role of mediator-facilitator in a conflictual scenario is a sensitive issue that requires some reflection. In this regard, questions such as the following are opportune: what communication is appropriate when dealing with controversial issues? What communicative actions help achieve the goals of understanding and collaboration among the disputing parties? What new ways of communication should accompany the new eco-social paradigms?

The function of mediation and facilitation requires a particular form of communication. Some desired characteristics would be:

- Communicate by listening. Communication is an interaction or a co-creative action, not the unilateral projection of a certain opinion or message.
- Prioritize communication of proximity, of direct contact, of one-to-one conversation.
- Have meaningful and pleasant communications, taking care of the communicative space.
- Ensure that the information that is disseminated is clear and accurate, and does not generate confusion or misunderstandings.
- Prioritize the quality (and not the quantity) of communication channels and moments, the generation of value, deceleration, etc. (“Slow Communication”).
- Promote critical reflection on the energy problem in light of our experience and knowledge (sharing doubts, reflections, learnings...).
- Activate the interlocutor, motivating them, mobilizing, raising and shaking up awareness.

The communication style - between the Initiative and the stakeholders, and between the Initiative and society in general - should reflect an theoretical-practical attitude of humility, listening, and clarity in this type of intervention, while also helping to achieve its objectives.

ACTIONS

- Conduct face-to-face meetings to explain the project and the contextualized debates to each of the detected groups. It is explained based on the interpretative and emotional framework of the other, and their doubts, concerns and desires.
- Decide together with the participants in the debates how to disseminate the results obtained. And, if necessary, collaborate in this dissemination.
- Make the initiative known mainly through direct interaction, minimizing the use of publicly available media.
- Prioritize the website as a showcase for the project and as a place to post all the information that is generated.
- Use e-mail as a way to communicate with participants, receive questions, offers, etc.
- Open a Twitter channel to disseminate own activities that are open, and to retweet information and/or similar experiences undertaken by others.
- Publish short written reflections and/or pieces about aspects that have been analyzed so as to contribute to the mobilization of the debate.
- FPrioritize discretion in some of the dialogue processes, concentrating the task of disseminating the Initiative in its final phase, when the main results have already been obtained.

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4 RESULTS

Evaluation and lessons learned from the experience.

1 Mobilization of the debate around energy and activation of the social network

Does the initiative succeed in increasing social dialogue?

Dialogue, understood as a process of comprehension that takes place through the spoken word, is a valuable means in itself, whether it enables agreements to be reached or not, and whether or not it materializes in concrete decisions or actions. Understood in this sense, dialogical practice contributes to:

- **Increase human understanding.** This allows for an emotional exercise of subject-to-subject connection that increases mutual knowledge, empathy, and trust.
- **Augment intellectual understanding,** which makes it easier to be able to apprehend reality altogether, and, therefore, have a more holistic and complete vision of the problem.
- **Introduce the element of reflection and of process in the decision-making imaginary.** This advocates for the importance of the process itself (not as a mere procedure to obtain results) and incorporates a more hermeneutic approach to conflict resolution (and less one of instrumental negotiation).

What RESULTS and lessons have been obtained from the Eudemon experience in Alt Penedès?

Social participation in the county energy debate has increased, but is it enough?

In the course of the contextualized debates there are approximately 70 participants – 30% of whom are women – who represent 55% of the municipalities of the region and most of them are members of an organization.

The workshops specially designed for the public and the participation of some local platforms organized around the opposition to a specific renewable project have not managed to spread throughout the territory. Not all the people who are openly interested in this topic attend the spaces proposed by Eudemon. Such circumstances reduce the plurality of profiles and, in turn, also reduce the diversity of contributions and angles of vision of the problem.

A greater part of these deficiencies can be overcome:

- With more time and personnel.
- **Time and dedication are necessary to prepare dialogue processes.** Tailoring them to the interests, styles, and rhythms of each entity increases the likelihood of adherence to the proposal. However, doing so requires time to ask questions, compare, validate... and also requires adjustment to the internal dynamics of each group. And, in any case, it is necessary to dedicate human resources to carry them out and to take on the opportunities for multiplication that arise as the Project progresses. *ción que surgen a medida que avanza el Proyecto.*

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- **The mediator-facilitator role is not a given but rather constructed and needs to be validated.** Although this role may be considered appropriate, not everyone is suitable and legitimized to perform it. It will be the actors involved in the conflict who consciously grant this function to a specific agent or consent to them assuming it. In this sense, it takes time to make oneself known and build trusting relationships that foster the acceptance and/or assignment of this function to the Initiative.
- With the awareness that promoting initiatives that implicate collectivity is not a simple matter:
 - In a democratic context with little experience in participatory decision-making, **the mediator-facilitator role also involves motivating social involvement and channeling the energizing effect of the conflict itself.** The willingness to make our voice heard (activated in a conflict) does not always translate into concrete actions to achieve it.
 - Although there is social capital at the county level which could get involved in the definition and implementation of the new energy model, there is no socio-political structure to activate it. In general, **the local third sector faces a series of challenges;** lack of acknowledgment, resources and funding, as well as limited connections with citizens and administrations, etc. which **limit its capacity for mobilization.** The excess of volunteerism and a labor and social system which leaves little time for people to dedicate to the community exacerbates these challenges.

The dialogue processes that were carried out have received positive evaluations, *but, which methodological challenges must still be faced?*

The participants in the debates expressed: 1) that the Initiative addresses an issue that is relevant and of interest to the territory and takes on the most significant problems surrounding this issue; 2) that it enables them to listen to other opinions and to learn from each other, to reflect, to include aspects that they had not taken into consideration and to improve their understanding of the energy challenge. 3) They also state that the activities proposed during the sessions help to systematize and channel the debate, and also facilitate contributions from everyone.

Moreover, it is stated that continuous involvement in the sessions allows for greater group cohesion and a deeper understanding of the topic. However, most participants do not consider it feasible in the long term as a permanent and self-sustaining space. **The resources, experience, and effort required to maintain the dynamics of the workshops are too demanding for the local agents to handle on their own.**

In any case, it becomes clear that when designing these spaces it is necessary to consider, at least, the following methodological challenges:

— **The implementation of renewable energies is a debate that contains many debates,** and each of them is complex enough to demand exclusive attention. For example: In which type of territorial development model do we want to include the promotion of renewables? How do we resolve the rural-urban relationship/producer-consumer zone dynamics? How do we maintain agricultural activity and

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food security? What is the best coexistence between society and nature (environmental protection, forest management, landscape integration...)?

— **Balance between the conceptual and the concrete.** The energy debate occurs at two levels: a more general-conceptual level (quite predominant) that discusses models, ideological aspects, underlying positions... and a more specific second level that requires concrete contributions for decision-making and deals with particular facts of active conflicts. How do we address the conceptual aspects and, at the same time, translate them into concrete actions for the territory? How do we talk about people's daily concerns and, at the same time, contextualize these realities within broader strategic frameworks?

— **Information and Uncertainty Equilibrium.** Facilitating informed debates involves seeking information and providing keys for its interpretation. However, at the same time, there is a need to recognize that there is a certain degree of irreducible uncertainty, which means limits to knowledge and a situation of normative indeterminacy inherent in a scenario under construction. The challenge is, therefore, to aspire to have as much information as possible and, at the same time, learn to make decisions without absolute certainties.

— **Technical Complexity.** Some participants express that it is difficult to imagine what certain numerical figures and technical characteristics represent in practice. Therefore, to evaluate certain aspects related to the implementation of renewable energies (such as distances between photovoltaic parks or limits on project concentration), it is necessary to contextualize them in specific situations, which are not always available..

The execution of the initiative helps to increase comprehension of the energy challenge, but to what extent does this permeate the general debate and reach the different agents involved?

For the people who are involved in one way or another in the Eudemon project, the experience helps them (as they themselves report) to delve deeper into the subject and acquire more awareness of the energy issue. Also, the feedback on the information provided by the initiative (on the general regulatory and political context, on the current state of the energy sector, on inspiring experiences from other industries, on the feelings of other actors, etc.) is very positive.

Beyond the agents who are directly involved, the initiative helps to better understand the energy problem in its social and governability facets. Some of the analyses carried out on the current conflict and on the status of participation in energy policies are disseminated through publications and are being included in forums and other work processes. Additionally, there is an explicit effort to raise awareness about the need to integrate the psychosocial factor into decarbonization and renewable energy implementation objectives, even among the energy business sector and at different administrative and governmental levels.

The interest generated by the initiative, at the county, regional (Catalonia) and state (Spain) levels, indicates that there is **increasing receptiveness to considering the social and territorial dimensions of the energy transition and a growing curiosity towards inclusive and consensus-based approaches in renewables implementation.** Of course, in the public debate, there is still no discussion about the most suitable mechanisms and procedures or the methodological details of this new paradigm of governance. We are at the early stages, but it is increasingly present in various fields and sectors.

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4 RESULTS

Evaluation and lessons learned from the experience.

2 Identification of local consensuses:

Does the initiative manage to reach any agreements that resolve the social conflictiveness?

As explained by Xirinacs (2000), “the pact pacifies differences in conflict,” and in this sense, one of the main objectives of conflict resolution is being able to reach said pact. Indeed, as the same author warns, it is important to differentiate between a fiduciary pact and a federative pact, between consensus and contract. Consensus is synthetic and deals with the deeper and more enduring questions of life and is based on fide, that is, faith or trust and confidence. On the other hand, the contract is analytical and deals with the specific details of everyday life.

Both types of pacts are necessary for a society to function and maintain the values of coexistence. However, the Eudemón procedure prioritizes consensus processes: Establishing social consensuses is a way to prevent future confrontations and to weave the energy reality we want together. Furthermore, while it may be necessary to “sign” a contract to resolve a dispute, for example, regarding a specific renewable installation, an agreement without a foundational consensus, that is, without general trust and concordance, may mean closing the “deal” prematurely or without proper support.

In this sense, the Eudemón process of dialogue and consensus contemplates, at least, the following tasks:

— **Identify affinities.** During the dialogue and in the different conversations held on the issue, all the things that unite people (common denominators) are detected.

— **Generate consensuses around those things that do not coincide.**

The proposed work, participatory activities, and mediative approach that characterize the Initiative help to turn divergent aspects into points of confluence.

— **Develop agreements and obtain specific commitments.** In specific situations and starting from a shared general framework, the aim is to design actions, decisions, regulations, contracts, etc. that define the new scenario of reconciliation.

What RESULTS and lessons have been obtained from the Eudemón experience in Alt Penedès?

A document of territorial consensuses has been drawn up, but what purpose does it serve?

Each of the debates (and conversations) that have taken place are recorded in writing, synthesized, and later validated by the participants. Once this initial series of dialogues is completed, all these results are integrated into a single document. This document contains the points of agreement, summaries of the debates held, and the open disagreements/debates. It mainly includes contributions related to: 1) the process of energy transition (visions and how it is experienced), 2) the implementation of wind and photovoltaic installations (criteria and conditions), and 3) the democratization of the energy sector and governance in the deployment of renewables (models and springboards/restraints).



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Having a record of all these issues for the Alt Penedès is useful as a thermometer and for understand how the county is responding to the renewable energy conflict, and to know where it stands in terms of energy transition development. This information did not exist before. Meanwhile, it serves to highlight the territorial consensuses that exist. These consensuses are extracted and synthesized into a separate document to make them easier to identify and communicate.

The existence of this document of local consensuses is indeed a success, but one must not forget that:

- **It is an initial approximation that should be seen as a long-term planning process.** It is important to remember that these consensuses arise from specific dialogue spaces and that there are still many people that need to be involved in the definition of the county energy model. What is more, the document does not include all the relevant factors of the debate. There are aspects that have not been addressed (for example, in relation to the industrial sector) or where there hasn't been enough in-depth exploration to reach an explicit consensus (for example, What role should the energy companies play? Is the possibility of producing for other territories being considered?).

- **The consensuses that have been reached are valuable in themselves,** but, above all, they serve as a platform for continuing to build collectively. Social consensus is a shared narrative that serves to weave complicity, to continue to add points of encounter, to create collective imaginaries that guide the process of energy transition and serve as a foundation for working on more specific agreements.

- Working first on the consensuses to consolidate the collective space and then addressing the disagreements allows progress in achieving agreements without excessively endangering community cohesion. However, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that there are still disputed aspects that may challenge some of these general agreements. In this regard, **it is important to pay attention to how these consensuses have been reached** (observing the evolution of different positions) **and the firmness of the support they receive from different stakeholders.**

THE EUDEMON PROCEDURE

Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

4 RESULTS

Evaluation and lessons learned from the experience.

3 Creation of the County-level Core Group on Energy Transition

Does the Initiative succeed in influencing the public and/or community sphere with regard to the energy issue?

The ways and strategies to influence the planning, decision-making and management of the energy sector are multiple (more or less confrontational, occasional, transparent, licit...). The Eudemon Initiative, true to its approach and role, adopts non-adversarial avenues of political influence. It employs the usual methods such as: dissemination and communication of the experience and its results, which bring to light views that have so far not been heard and advocate paths that provide alternatives to the usual practice; or the search for alliances and support in order to broaden its reach and impact.

But the Initiative also proposes the activation of a local governance mechanism that serves as an example of how the change in the energy model could be defined, led, and decided from within the territory (at the regional level) and in a participatory manner. This mechanism would also anticipate and/or manage conflicts related to renewable installations.

In this regard, the proposed County-level Core Group responds, at the very least, to the following needs:

— **Increase the trajectory of the previously obtained results and compensate the participatory gap in the field of renewable energy deployment.**

- Once the county's social base has been activated and there is a sufficiently complete and constructive common starting point, it is time to bring together all the spaces, actors, and processes that

have been mobilized and make the most of all this work to create an entity with a territorial perspective. The very success of the Eudemon Initiative makes this leap feasible.

- The Group is underpinned by, but in itself also sustains, this “prepared” social capital as well as the document of territorial consensus. In relation to the initial agreements, the Group empowers them, as it seeks ways to integrate them into real processes (conflicts and public decisions) so that they are not sidelined in a global context that is governed by political and economic priorities far removed from local sentiment.

— **Yield the role of promoter of the initiative to the people and agents of the county and respond to the current socio-political moment.**

- Currently, there is a general debate on which new energy model is desired and how to promote it, along with a technical-administrative procedure that is defining the criteria and the zones where Renewable Energies are to be implemented at the Catalan level. Therefore, now is the time to put forth the county criteria and influence in the decision making process.
- At the same time, the arrival of new proposals for photovoltaic installations that could activate social belligerence is also foreseen. In anticipation of this likely scenario, it would be opportune for the Group to become a platform with a mediating function that can act both at the request of any of the stakeholders and/or on its own initiative (e.g. as a consulting body).



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The figure of the County-level Core Group for the Energy Transition

Purpose

To become a driving force for social consensus and collective construction of the transformation of the energy model at the county and/or supramunicipal level.

Philosophical Outlook

Mechanisms of Governability which:

— It operates on the logic of governance and, therefore, is *committed to flexible structures* that are capable of managing networks of interdependence. It has an *independent and non-institutional character*. It is not part of any administrative apparatus or domain, although it tries to establish alliances with local governments and administrative structures.

— It seeks the co-responsibility of the people in the energy issue and that they become an active part in the search for solutions and, therefore, *advocates for formats in which its members are the ones who set the agenda, make decisions and take action*. Together they decide on the objectives and lines of work to be promoted.

— It aims to contribute to the change of democratic model and, therefore, *aspires to replicate itself, move up and gain influence in the current decision-making system*.

Composition

Está formado por personas:

- Who wish to contribute to the transformation of the energy model and have a comprehensive vision of the situation.
- With a conciliating temperament disposed to dialogue.
- Who are connected to group, entity or organization in the county and/or who have the capacity to act as a bridge between the Core Group and a sector or area at the supramunicipal level.
- Who share the territorial consensus that emerged as a result of the Eudemon Initiative.
- That are willing and able to participate in this Group regularly and in the mid-long term.

Potential Functions

In line with the general objective, but which will need to be validated and/or modified based on the preferences and proposals of the members of the Group:

- Promote local involvement mechanisms to expand the primary basis of consensus.
- Consolidate these consensus with pilot tests, work plans or specific actions.
- Offer itself as a space for mediation in the face of renewable energy projects that may appear in the region.
- Become an interlocutor with the administration on issues related to energy.

THE EUDEMÓN PROCEDURE

Resolution of socio-ecological conflicts and local governance building

4

3

What RESULTS and lessons have been obtained from the Eudemón experience in Alt Penedès?

The County-level Core Group has been constituted, but will it have continuity and/or a real impact?

The Alt Penedès Group is composed of around 15 active individuals who participate as individuals (not as representatives) and are connected with: a) a total of 13 different entities (associations, platforms, unions, cooperatives, and municipalities), b) a total of 5 sectors (environmental-landscape, agricultural, social-cultural, administrative, business-cooperative), and c) a total of 10 different municipalities in the region.

The Group was formally constituted on April 14, 2023, and holds monthly meetings. It was presented publicly on June 26 and issued a call for people to join the initiative, be it as members, collaborators (participating in specific actions), sympathizers (offering support publicly), and/or sponsors (providing financial support). The Group aims to: a) carry out communication and citizen participation initiatives, b) promote the creation of energy communities, c) mediate in conflicts related to renewable installations, and d) foster knowledge and awareness about the energy transition.

But, will the Group manage to continue attracting participants and make the plurality converge into a common project for energy transition? Will it be maintained in the long term? Will its activities yield practical results? Will the Project position itself as an example to inspire new initiatives? It is too early to make certain assessments, although certain challenges that need to be addressed can already be identified:

— **Search for funding** to maintain the structure and organic operation of the Group and to obtain support and technical assistance in the tasks of facilitation, logistics, and session monitoring.

— **Need for technical and scientific support** in the generation of solid alternatives. It will be important to obtain a list of experts who can provide occasional technical advice and have the administration share relevant data and information with the Group.

— **Finding the right fit, or alignment, with current decision-making processes.** The contributions of the Group are only taken into account in the definition of energy policies if they are translated into technical terms and formulated for specific/limited administrative procedures, and if they are carried out through a legally constituted entity. Channeling the Group via formats that are closer to the administration (project monitoring committee, participatory figure within the County Offices, etc.) may cause it to lose its independence and autonomy.

— **Commitment and motivation of the members of the Group** if the above conditions are not met. The members commit to being part of the Initiative on a voluntary basis even though they have no guarantee of impact, continuity or tangible results. It is an initial commitment that may not be maintained indefinitely.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

- **There is a need for constant research work that explains, nourishes and gives sturdiness to the process.** Having sufficient knowledge about the issue and the case – and keeping it updated – is fundamental. This information provides keys for interpretation in order to understand the situation; propitiates a rich and rigorous dialogue process (which gives validity to the results); helps to cover epistemological gaps in the conflict; and addresses emerging doubts
- **Making a leap from the conflict-element to the problem-context helps to broaden the focus of the debate and to situate the actors in a position of co-responsibility.** Moving from the question “do we want this renewable installation here?” to the question “how would we transition to renewable energy in the region?” helps shift from a reactive position to one of leadership. It also helps pave the way for agreement on a specific project based on a broader social consensus regarding the desired regional energy model.
- **Approaching the conflict gradually and from various angles prepares the ground for possible dialogue among divergent positions.** Speaking individually with certain actors, carrying out deliberative processes for affinity groups, incorporating the collective results as shared truths, emphasizing the need for concord and the advantages it brings to the territory, etc. create a breeding ground which favors the coming together and understanding among the disputing parties. Additionally, engaging with different sectors and levels simultaneously (e.g., local-global, social-business-administrative) allows us to activate potential avenues of resolution (that is, pressing the keys that could trigger agreement).
- **The county is considered to be the most suitable dimension as a sphere of action; a scale that is appropriate for taking on the energy problem and building alternatives.** Adopting the county as a geographic unit to deal with the conflict surrounding the deployment

of renewables has several benefits. It is a sufficiently extensive territorial area so as not to unduly reduce the reach of the energy component, but at the same time it is local enough for people to be able to grasp it in its entirety and understand it. Meanwhile, being an administrative unit facilitates its identification and, if necessary, the social processes can potentially find compatibility with the existing public structures. Likewise, adopting a more territory-based governance at the local level makes it possible to bring together a fairly large and diverse but, at the same time, manageable – and not excessive – number of agents.

- **Having a solid governance foundation which fosters people assuming leadership and taking action in the process of changing the energy model facilitates the prevention and resolution of conflicts.** Activating networks of relationships and communication among actors, opening safe, neutral and stable meeting spaces, fostering bonds of trust, applying mechanisms for joint work, encouraging collaborative culture and skills, etc. create a context in which differences are less likely to lead to confrontational situations. And if conflicts already exist, it offers a setting in which it is more likely that there is dialogue and consensus, and/or in which it is no longer the winner-loser logic that prevails, but rather the search for solutions to common problems.
- **The field of conflict resolution in matters of energy must be explored further, both to find ways to reach agreement on specific renewable installations and to improve the adequacy of public policies.** It is necessary to verify the Eudemón experience and keep building a body of specific knowledge. To do this, this type of initiative needs to be multiplied throughout Catalonia (and in other areas with similar situations). It is not common to endorse resolution processes which go beyond the usual purpose-oriented and instrumental vision of what an agreement is, or those which contemplate the very processes as tools of socio-political transformation and of a collective construction of the change.

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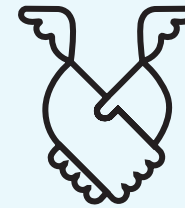
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