

Transition towards sustainability in Budapest through the case of a degrowth fueled social cooperative



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AALBORG UNIVERSITY
STUDENT REPORT

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Cargonomia's facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/cargonomia/photos/> and the authors' own photos.

Preface

This project has been developed by two master students from the Environmental Management and Sustainability Science study program at Aalborg University, under the semester theme: *“Professional development”*. The report was written between the 5th of September 2016 and the 16th of January 2017.

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ABSTRACT:

Since the end of the communist era in Hungary, Budapest - just as most of the Central- and Western-European capital cities - has been transforming into an entrepreneurial city, with opening up always new possibilities for investments and businesses, therefore economic growth. While this development is beneficial in some ways, certain social and environmental issues are still secondary behind growth objectives. This research project addresses the problems of Budapest mainly in connection with the field of transportation, infrastructure, health and wellbeing of the society, following the framework what Cargonomia, the case study of this paper provides. Taking into account the introduced issues, and that the degrowth influenced social cooperative Cargonomia can be considered as a community-based transition initiative, the goal of this study is to answer the question: *"How can community-based initiatives regarding transport, food and social spaces contribute to a transition towards sustainability in the context of Budapest?"* Our research design follows the process of participatory action research (PAR), and we served as practitioners during the development of this project. Besides participation, involvement and personal observations, we conducted interviews and used different kinds of second-hand data to help answering our research questions. The analysis and discussion part contains the findings of this study, where the contribution of Cargonomia's activities to a transition towards sustainability is discussed, from an environmental and societal point of view. In this part, the challenges of this social cooperative are also presented, together with a view on future opportunities and goals.



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1. Introduction

From the middle of the 20th century, the prevailing economic model has been growth, based upon the neoclassical idea of prosperity through quantitative growth (Dale 2012). The main indicator for economic growth and human welfare today is still GDP, while it fails to measure health, diet, housing, education, environmental impacts, just to name a few, while social capital is deteriorating (Ayres 1996). Since the '70s, protesting voices looking for an alternative can be found in a wide variety of scientific fields, their numbers growing continuously, deeming the still-mainstream growth paradigm an obsolete institution. Degrowth is one union of such voices, emerging in the past 20 years, gaining more and more popularity.

In Hungary, since the first presentation of Serge Latouche's book *'Farewell to Growth'*, several academic and citizen projects, workshops, open discussions and lectures took place about degrowth. As the degrowth community started sounding their voice and people became more and more aware of the environmental, social and economic problems stemming from growth, multiple local transition alternatives and initiatives were set up in relatively short time (Liegey 2012). Lots of people leading and taking part in these civil society initiatives did not even know that what they were started doing can be considered as degrowth; their main goal was to implement some kind of local transition alternatives for the existing market based systems in different areas, such as transportation, energy, agriculture, food sourcing and finance (Liegey 2014).

In this project we explore the idea of such transition initiatives, focusing on a Budapest-based social cooperation named Cargonomia as our case study. The interest of this project was to find out, if an initiative operating with the ideology of degrowth can exist/survive in a thoroughly urban setting and what are its impacts, measurable, or otherwise.

The project starts with introducing Budapest and explaining key problems; areas where the ideas of degrowth can substantially improve the situation, if properly adapted to practice. After explaining the current situation, we present our research question constructed by our knowledge of these problems together with our understanding of degrowth and transition towards sustainability. **Chapter 4 & 5** explains our logical thinking and approach of the problem, while **chapter 6** contains our answer to the research questions.

2. Problem presentation

In the forthcoming problem presentation chapter, the most relevant problems of Hungary and Budapest in particular will be revealed, together with a general overview of the city. The issues involve inefficient transport planning in the city and the problems stemming from it, health problems and dietary habits, and the worrying trends in connection with wellbeing of citizens. The reason why these specific areas were chosen for introduction is because we are following the framework that our case study, Cargonomia provides, where the three main focus areas are: the use and promotion of sustainable transport solutions, healthy, local food provision and the importance of social spaces. To understand the way how Cargonomia works, it is essential to first give a presentation about their main activities, goals, structure and the way how this social cooperative is organized.

2.1. Presenting the case: Cargonomia

Cargonomia is a degrowth¹ inspired cooperation between organizations and people who know well each other for years and share the same ideologies and values, besides doing activities which are complementary to each other. This social cooperative was formed in Budapest in the middle of 2015, and involves three main entities: the small-scale (under 10 ha) organic farm *Zsámboki Biokert*, the do it yourself bicycle shop and open public space *Cyclonomia*, and the bike messenger company *Kantaa* (Liegey & Lazányi 2016). Cargonomia is the meeting point of the activities of these organizations, and the main functions can be seen on **Figure 1**.

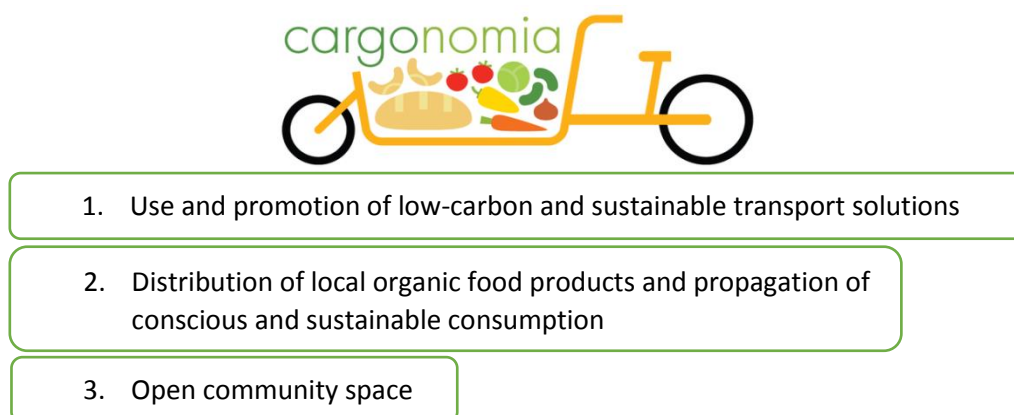


Figure 1: Three main areas of activities in Cargonomia (Own representation 2016)

The organic farm Zsámboki Biokert is situated in a village called Zsámbok 50 kilometers away from Budapest. They grow their vegetables and fruits in a biodynamic way, very similarly to organic farming (free from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, chemicals), but this mode of agriculture adds a

¹ We will give a detailed explanation about the concept and movement of degrowth in the *Theoretical framework (Chapter 5)* of this report.

new layer to farming as the sowing, planting and harvesting processes are in strict line with an agricultural calendar containing information about which planetary, stellar, and lunar influences should be followed (Diver 1999). Zsámboki Biokert's operations are based on the idea of community supported agriculture (CSA), where customers are also members of the community, and there is a direct connection between farmers and consumers. The main keywords here are transparency, mutual trust, direct human interactions, solidarity and respect for the environment and society (Weckenbrock et al. 2016). They work in a box system, where members of the community have the opportunity to order a fixed box of seasonal organic food once every week. As Cargonomia connects Zsámboki Biokert to other partners, here, customers can also include different types of organic bread products made from local wheat varieties in a social cooperative and organic bakery called *Pipacs Pékség*, and biodynamic wine varieties from *Terra Hungarica*. After the boxes (fruits, vegetables, processed food go in here) are prepared in Zsámbok, they are delivered by van to distribution points in Budapest, inter alia to Cargonomia as well. Besides providing food to citizens, it is a core aim for Zsámboki Biokert to spread the information and educate people about the importance and effects of local, organic seasonal products and this way of farming, therefore they also host student groups regularly, teach volunteers and educate.

The bicycle messenger company Kantaa (their name means 'to carry' in Finnish) has its headquarters in the same building as Cargonomia, they also share the same space with each other. Next to their conventional bikes, Kantaa uses cargo bikes built in Cyclonomia from local resources to carry different kinds of packages, furniture and even Christmas trees in the winter around the central ring roads of the city. They are also responsible for the home delivery of Zsámboki Biokert's vegetable boxes to consumers.

As an ongoing project, together with Cyclonomia, Cargonomia set up a cargo bike renting, trading and sharing platform, with the aim of creating a cargo bike community where users can meet each other and participate in different kinds of events (Liegey & Lazányi 2016). Last but not least, Cargonomia also functions as an open community space, presentations, workshops and open discussions around the themes of degrowth, conviviality and sustainability are held here. Their regular workshops are Varronomia, which is a do it yourself knitting and sewing workshop, and Repair Café, where people can bring their broken electronic devices (for e.g. blender, toaster, kettle) and learn about how to fix them individually at home. If the workshop is not directly organized by the Cargonomia team, they usually ask for some kind of donation in exchange for providing space for the event, but this works on the principles of 'gift economy', and the donation does not necessarily involve monetary means (Liegey & Lazányi 2016).

Apart from having income from the vegetable boxes, cargo bike related services and sometimes donations, the everyday operations of this social cooperative are based on volunteering and the exchange of different types of goods and services (*'reciprocity economy'*) between members and partner organizations (Liegey & Lazányi 2016), therefore the benefits for team members goes way beyond earning money, but of course it also carries challenges and difficulties in it.

These will be further explained and examined in the *Analysis and discussion (Chapter 6)* part of this report, where we are going to analyze Cargonomia's initiatives closer in the form of a case study and from the perspective of transition.

2.2. The context of Budapest

The next part provides a geographical, historical, and sociodemographic overview of Budapest. It is important to present these peculiarities of the city, as that gives us a picture of the environment and conditions of our study and helps understanding particular dynamics of the city. Besides a more general overview, the three main relevant problem areas will be also presented in the following chapters.

2.2.1. Geographical settings

Budapest is the capital city of Hungary, situated in the Carpathian Basin. It serves as the political, economic, cultural and administrative centre of the country. With its 1.7 million inhabitants, and 525 km² surface, it is one of the ten biggest cities in the European Union (van den Berg & van der Meer 2014). **Map 1 and 2** shows Budapest's topography and districts respectively.



Map 1: Topographic map of Budapest (Wikimedia Commons 2012)



Map 2: The districts of Budapest (Wikimedia Commons 2008)

Its agglomeration consists of 81 settlements all found in the administrative county of Pest (Horizont Informatika 2012). It extends 25 and 29 km in the north-south, east-west direction respectively. From the west, Budapest is confined by the Buda Mountains, and by the Pilis Mountains from the north, which are both part of the Transdanubian Mountain Range. The Danube, which separates the Buda side from Pest, enters from the north and forms two islands in the heart of the city; Óbuda Island and Margaret Island and has an average width of 400 meters. The river remains an important water-way for the region and Budapest lies at the crossroads of trade routes connecting Western Europe with the Balkans and the Middle East (Hungarian Geographical Society n.d.). The lowest point of the city is the river (the average water level is 96 m), while the highest point is János Hill (529 m) (Balázs 2011). On the right bank (western side) of the Danube are the hills of Buda, which is essentially a residential and recreational area, with economic regions to the north and south. On the eastern side is Pest, lying flat on the Great Plain, serving as the economic, administrative and industrial centre. Budapest is divided into 23 districts, 6 in Buda, 16 in Pest, and one in between, on the northern end of Csepel Island (Energycity 2012). The climate of the region is humid continental, with cold winters and hot summers. Temperature in July can reach 40 °C, while it can go as low as -20 °C in January (however the average is between -5°C - 0°C) (OMSZ 2001).

2.2.2. Short history of Budapest

According to research, the territory of Pest and Buda served as residence to the Árpád Dynasty and became a place of central power early (Molnár 2001); however, it only became the capital of Hungary for the first time in 1256 (Erdei 2012). Over the course of the Middle Ages, Pest and Buda were destroyed several times; by inside struggles after the fall of the Árpád Dynasty, by the Tatars in 1241-1242, by the Ottomans in 1686 after 140 years of occupancy (Balázs 2011). After the revolution of 1848, Pest-Buda once again became the undisputed capital of the country and after the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in 1873; the quickly growing metropolis - finally called Budapest - was born. In around 20 years, the population doubled, bridges, boulevards, one of the first tramways of Europe, railway stations, long standing cultural buildings were all built or founded in this spur of growth. Later, in the 19th Century almost all major events of the country's history happened in the capital (Balázs 2011). The progression of Budapest was hindered by World War I. and by the events of World War II., the city was once again severely damaged. At the beginning of 1950, the socialist industrialization generated another wave of major urbanization; seven small cities and sixteen other settlements were annexed to Budapest, forming its townscape (Sipos 2000). Although the city was going through a quick development in terms of size through these socialist years, the sufficient infrastructural background (transport, housing, etc.) was missing, as urban planners were focusing on

creating cities which are able to accommodate industries as first priority. From the 2000s, urbanization and planning in Budapest has started to go through a transformation by having rehabilitation, and the improvement of social, physical and economic conditions as main focus (Kovács et al. 2007).

2.2.3. Sociodemographic settings

Although in the 18th century, Buda had more residents than Pest, by the second half of the 19th century, Pest had more than three times as many inhabitants as its counterpart. At the time of the unification, around 300 000 people lived in the Budapest area. This number rose to more than a million until World War I (Csapó & Karner 1999), and in the 1980s, the population of the city was more than 2 million (**Figure 2**).

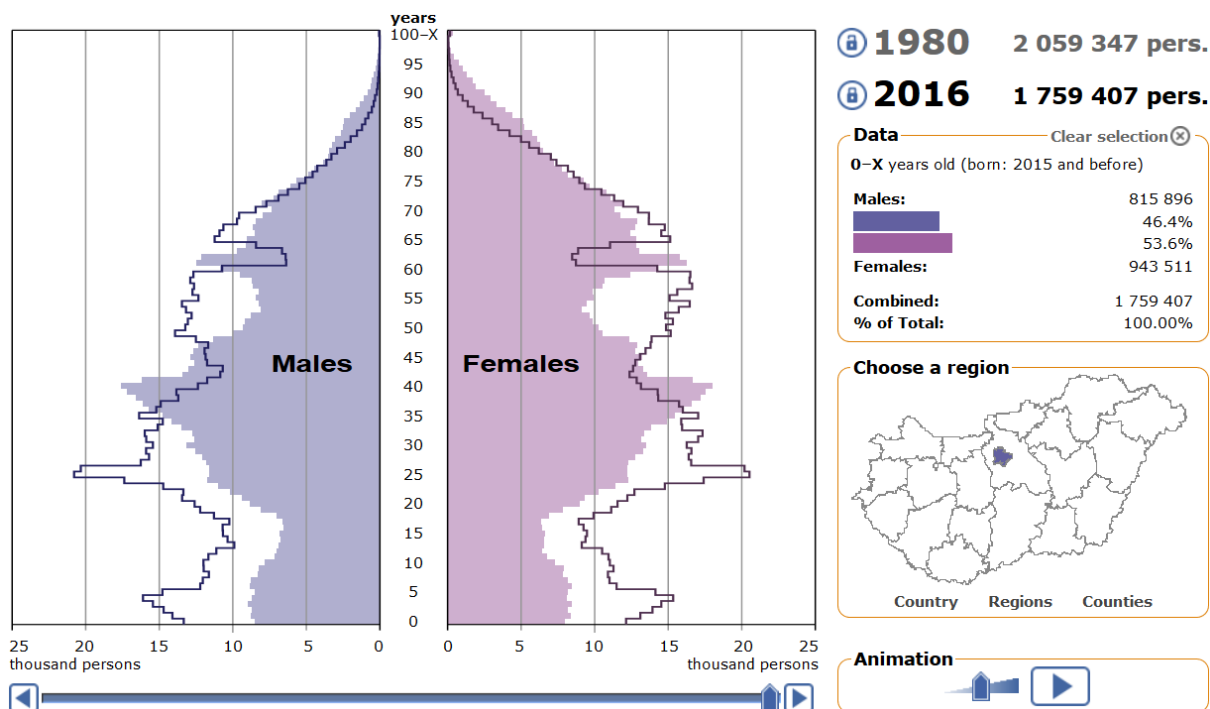
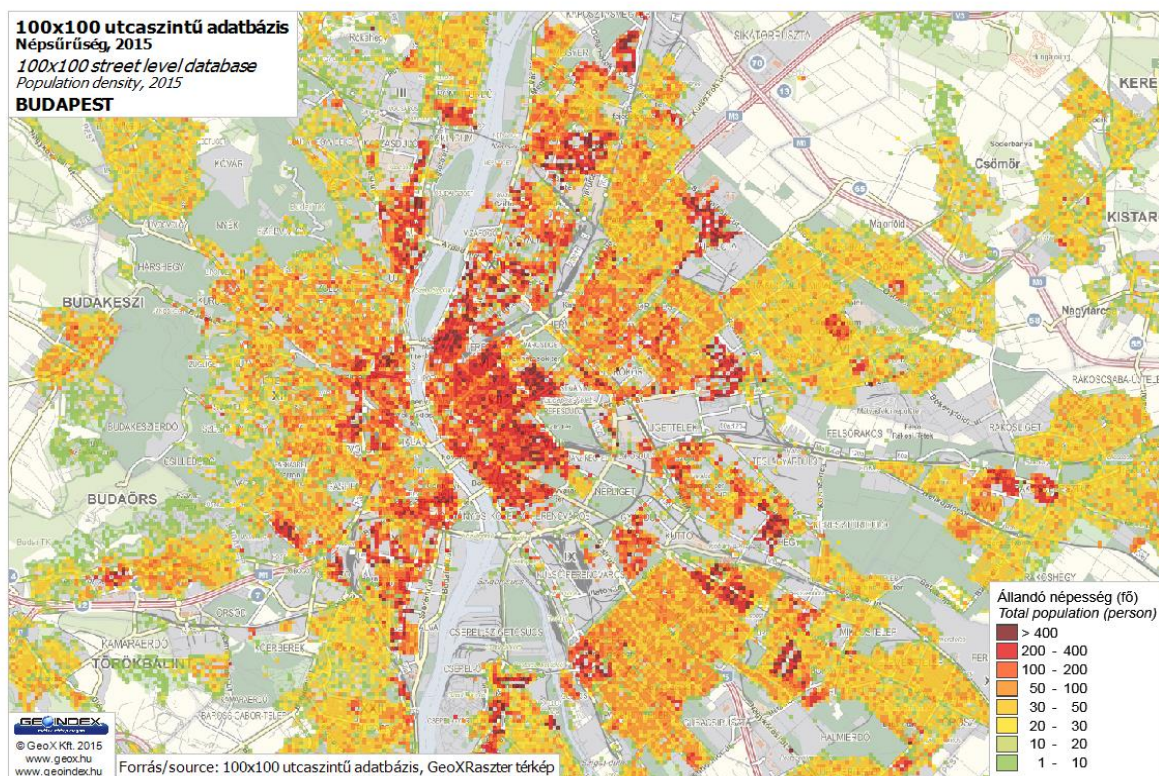


Figure 2: Population of the Budapest region by gender and age (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016b)

Figure 2 shows the age tree of Budapest, where the part marked by the hollow outline refers to the year 1980, and the colored bars refer to 2016. Although there has been bigger difference in the ratio between genders, presently there is only a 0.5% increment in favor of women. The vertical axis shows the age, while the scale of the horizontal axis is a 1000 people. According to the Central Statistics Office, in 2016, the population of Budapest was 1 759 407, which means continuous decline since the '80s (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016b). This decrease of 300 000 people is mostly due to the process of suburbanization, which has started in the '90s and still happening, although it has slowed down. In case of the phenomenon of suburbanization, the migration trends are showing

that citizens from the urban areas are moving to the suburbs, resulting in population loss in Budapest (Kovács et al. 2007). While the difference in total numbers are visible on the graph too, the sparks around age 4 and 25 are also missing and there is a surplus from age 60, which indicates that the population of Budapest is getting slightly older.

Taking into account the above mentioned facts, it is clear that the demographic numbers of Budapest (similar to the whole of Hungary) show worrying trends. Not only the population is slowly aging and declining, women give birth to their first child around the age of 30 (2008), while around '89 this number was less, than 25 (Maczák et al. 2011).



Map 3: The population density of Budapest (GeoIndex 2015)

Map 3 shows the population density of Budapest. Though the middle of the city is the most dense in terms of population, outer districts, such as District III, XI, and XIV possess the highest numbers of inhabitants, due to them being much larger than inner districts, such as District V, VI, or VII. The high population density of the downtown area has a negative effect on health and wellbeing of the citizens living here. Various studies from all around the world show, that high population density increases air pollution, lowers human health, satisfaction and overall happiness, and contributes to lower participation rates in community activities (Recsei 2013).

2.2.4. Urban transport and traffic

In general, urban planning decisions and transport policies impact the wellbeing and health of residents, as well as the natural and built environment. The effects on society can appear in indirect ways, such as higher cancer rates, respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular diseases as an outcome of different types of pollution stemming from fossil fuel driven road traffic, and also in direct ways through commuter stress or traffic accidents for example (Royal Town Planning Institute 2014). Moreover, transport infrastructure influences the everyday habits of people and their decisions about where to work and live, it can contribute positively to the creation of a livable city and vivid communities, and provide access to services, different kinds of activities and employment. The effects of urban transportation on the environment involve various types of pollution (air, water, soil, noise), waste, intense resource use and land take contributing to serious environmental issues such as loss of biodiversity, acid rain, smog, and global warming (Tuzkaya 2009).

Starting from the 1960s, the urban development and planning principles of Budapest followed the ruling modernization approach for three decades, creating a system which was heavily organized and technocratic. The main aim was to shape the infrastructure of the city in a way to give first priority to motorized traffic instead of creating a livable environment and supporting the use of sustainable transportation modes, such as biking (Kerényi et al. 2014). Budapest - just like other cities in Europe - was quickly converted to be suitable for passenger car transport, without considering the drawbacks and prejudicial effects on urban inhabitants and public spaces; tree-lined walkways, abundant parking opportunities and wide sidewalks started to disappear gradually. Tram lines were transformed into additional traffic lanes on Váci út, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út, Rákóczi út and Üllői út, which are all important roads, connecting central nodes of the city. In the main focus of transport planning were technical and operational aspects, not environmental concerns, health or comfort of passengers (Kerényi et al. 2014).

The approach of considering car transport as a first priority transport mode in the city began to change from the turn of the century, even though it happened with a lag compared to Western European cities. From there on, Budapest started to develop into a more livable and sustainable city with the prioritization of public transport, improvements in cycling infrastructure and among many other things, creating more pedestrian zones. The further amelioration of these key points are also included in the transportation plan made for the next years, called the Budapest Transport Development Strategy 2014-2030 (Kerényi et al. 2014).

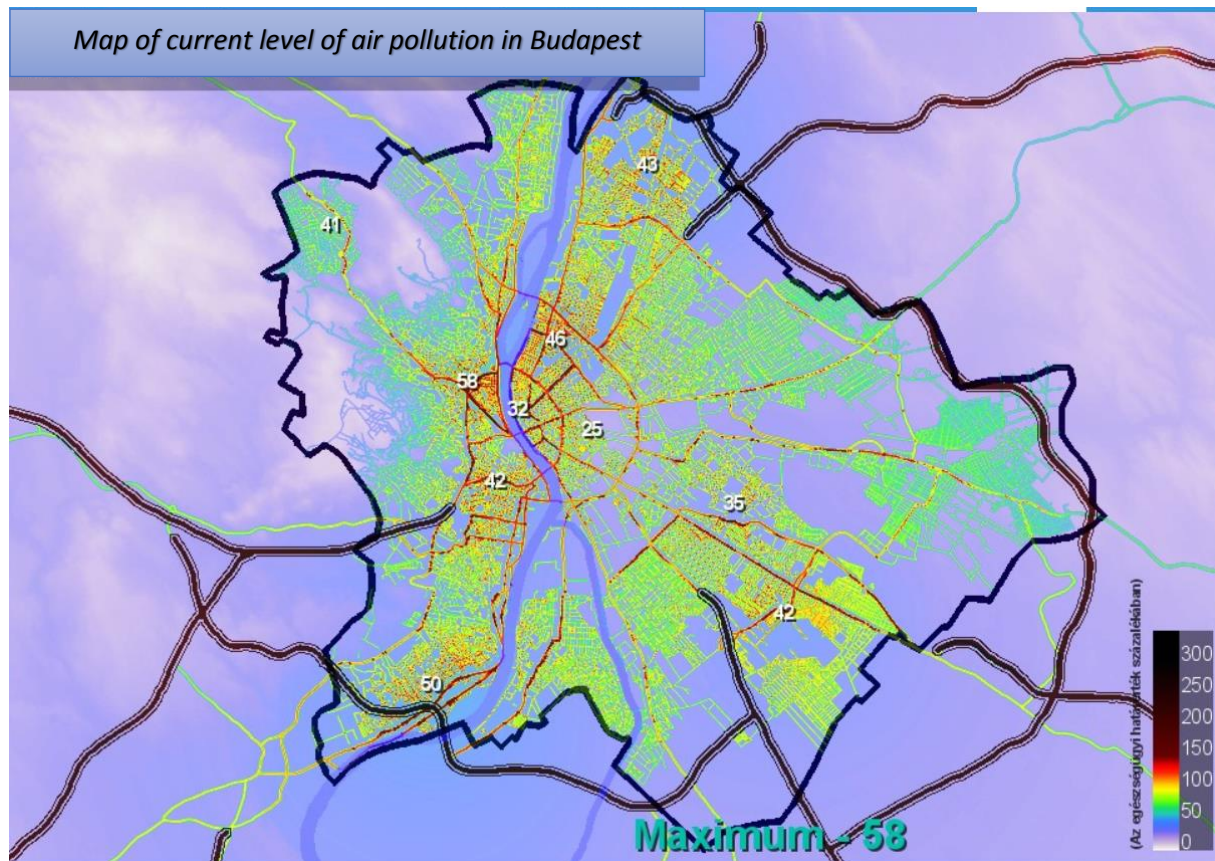
Although we can see some positive signs in the infrastructure and organization of the city and some kind of development in how decision-makers, relevant organizations and companies shape their way

of thinking in connection with the urban transport of Budapest, the above mentioned issues still exist. In preparation for the Budapest Transport Development Strategy 2014-2030, an analysis of the current problems were conducted, and the results show that there are six key problem areas. The most relevant issues and deficiencies for us are the exaggerated focus on motorized transport and modernization, the inadequate reactions to pollution trends and lifestyle of citizens, and lack of cooperation (Kerényi et al. 2014).

Most of the negative effects of transportation are stemming from the above mentioned components, as data about Budapest transportation also display. In 2014, the total mobility numbers of people in Budapest (share of trips) show, that public transport was the most popular mode of transport (45%), followed by passenger car transport (35%), walking (18%) and cycling (2%) (Dalos 2016). In addition, half of the trips made by public transport were made with motorized vehicles, in particular buses (Kerényi et al. 2014). At the same time, the number of passenger cars has been growing steadily all around in Hungary from the '60s (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016c), in Budapest there are 330 passenger cars per 1000 persons (Finta et al. 2013).

Besides passenger car transport, the transportation of goods inside the city with commercial vehicles, lorries and vans are also posing a threat. While in Hungary, road transportation is the most significant mode of transporting goods (68%) (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a), most of the used vehicles are diesel-driven and their number is rising steadily. In general, diesel fuel usage in Budapest has been raised between the years 2009-2013 from 306,8 million liters to 315,5 million liters per year, overtaking the leading role of gasoline. Diesel-driven vehicles are letting out harmful or even deadly particles such as soot or different kinds of aerosols, resulting in heart and lung damage, human cancer or various short-term symptoms (Pogány et al. 2014).

In general, the most important pollutants coming from transport as a result of the combustion of fossil fuels are greenhouse gases (GHGs) (including CO₂, CH₄, O₃, NO_x). Other pollutants are particulate matters, lead, dust and different kinds of hazardous waste (oil, coolant) (Tuzkaya 2009). Although the trends show a pattern of decreasing level of air pollution stemming from transport in Hungary, transportation still accounts for approximately 25% of all economic activity related CO₂ emissions countrywide (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015b), while this number is much more higher (40%) in case of the capital (Finta et al. 2013).



Map 4: Air pollution in Budapest (Levegő Munkacsoport 2016)

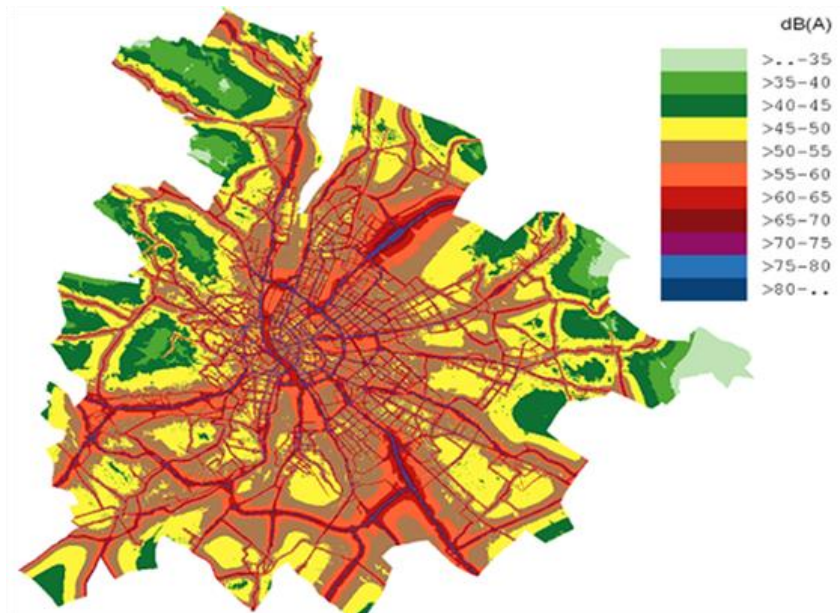
The current state of air pollution can be seen on **Map 4**, representing the level of contamination and comparing air quality data with exposure limits.

The picture about the air quality in Budapest was taken on the 30th of October at 18:20. The values can be different from the ones displayed depending on the season, weather conditions and time of the day. The different colored lines on the map stand for the values of air pollution in respect of exposure limits in percentages, as the legend shows in the bottom right of the image. When lines are red or darker, that means that the 100% limit is reached, and colors also display by how much. In our case, the most contaminated parts of the city are alongside huge roads as well as the downtown area, where also population density is the highest. The air quality in these places is poor; inhabitants are exposed to heavy emissions day-to-day.

The white numbers on the map account for the pollutant, which is present at the highest percentage from all pollutants. CO₂ is not counted in here, therefore we mainly meet with high levels of O₃ and PM₁₀, and since the map is interactive on the web page, we can always see for which substance the values stand for. The health effects of PM₁₀ are allergic and toxic effects, besides raising the risk of cancer and respiratory symptoms. Long-term exposure to O₃ can be responsible for respiratory illnesses such as asthma or bronchitis, but it also increases the risk of heart attacks (Levegő Munkacsoport 2016). It is important to highlight the fact that while PM₁₀ mostly comes from

industrial activities, a large share of O₃ emissions is related to transport (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015a).

Besides air pollution, noise pollution is another major issue that has transport as one of its main source. Noise pollution can seriously harm us humans (children are the most vulnerable), especially if we are continuously and largely exposed to it. Just to mention some of its effects, it can cause loss of



Map 5: Noise map of Budapest showing noise pollution on an average day (Bedő 2011).

hearing, it deteriorates mental health by causing anxiety, stress and psychiatric disorders, furthermore it disturbs our sleep and affects our everyday behavior (Bedő 2011). The status of noise pollution in Budapest on an average day can be seen on **Map 5**, with dB(A) levels included.

Depending on the duration and permanency of the sound, numbers above 85 dB(A) can be considered as harmful. This value is equal to heavy traffic or a noisy restaurant (Liu & Roberts 1999). As it can be clearly seen from the map, the most affected areas of noise pollution in Budapest are among the main roads where commuters travel from and to rural areas, and congested downtown streets. Here, the levels of pollution can continuously go beyond the 80-85 dB(A) limit, negatively affecting the health of citizens living nearby.

Despite the fact that transport in Hungary is dominated by motorized vehicles, a survey - whose results are published in the '2014 Quality of Transport' report requested by the European Commission and made by TNS Opinion & Social - shows, that from the most preferred modes of transport in Hungary, cycling have a 22% share. With this percentage, Hungary is ranked 3rd after the Netherlands and Denmark in the EU, whereas the EU average share of cycling is 8% (European Commission 2014). These numbers could seem impressive, but the fact is that in Budapest cycling accounts just for 2% in the share of trips (Dalos 2016), and a lot of citizens living in rural areas and in the countryside are using their bikes not because they prefer this particular mode of transport, but

because they do not have other choices taking their financial situation and the poor infrastructure into account.

Concentrating too much on giving first priority to motorized modes of transport, the development in bicycle infrastructure was somewhat neglected before the 2000s. Even though the number of bike users was eleven times higher in 2014 than in 1994 (Bencze-Kovács et al. 2015) and the government invested 150 billion HUF (approximately 490 million EUR) into cycling developments between 2007 and 2012 (Kiss 2013), the infrastructure is still insufficient. The main problems include inadequately planned and implemented bicycle paths, no direct connection with bicycle paths between central nodes of the city and the lack of professional planning in general. These facts contribute to the attractiveness of cycling among citizens of Budapest; a further discussion around the topic can be found in the *Analysis and discussion (Chapter 6)* part of this report.

2.2.5. Health and wellbeing of citizens

Continuing the presentation of Budapest related problems following our framework, it is important to investigate in the general health trends, the relationship between health conditions of the population and dietary habits, and wellbeing of citizens.

According to a European Commission session held in 2015, Hungary is among countries with highest prevalence of overweight and obese population, both in the category of children under 5 years and adults over 20 years of age (European Commission 2015). As Hungarian Central Statistical Office data displays, 54% of the country's adult population was overweight or obese, 71% in the case of middle aged men in 2014. The same statistics show how Hungarians underestimate their weight, just as they underrate the seriousness of smoking or drinking (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a).

The high rates of obese and overweight people are in close relation with the fact, that the Hungarian diet is traditionally unhealthy. Nutritional trends show that there is high fat, energy and cholesterol intake, whereas there are insufficiencies in the intake of certain vitamins and micro- and macroelements. Hungarians tend to eat a lot of meat products and salt, although dietary trends are supposedly healthier in Budapest and in bigger cities with less traditional festive occasions held, higher educational status and a greater level of welfare compared to the countryside (Szeitz-Szabó et al. 2012).

In 2015, more than 75% of grocery shopping happened in super-, or hypermarkets, or mixed grocery stores in Hungary (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a). This is an undesirable trend, seeing as these shops often deal with cheap, possibly low-nutritional value, import products and customers often choose depending on price, not quality. There is certainly a connection between unfavorable

nutritional outcomes, health issues and the places where people tend to buy their food or beverages as well (Ranganathan et al. 2016).

Hungary trailed the EU27 average of life expectancy by 5.1 years in 2009, having the highest rate of avoidable mortality and one of the worst health statuses in Europe. The difference is bigger in the case of men and according to literature, this is mainly due to smoking, alcoholism and the unhealthy traditional Hungarian diet, but other factors also play a role (Gaál et al. 2011). It is not only the bad social, or economic state in itself, but experiencing subjectively the lagging behind other European countries causes increased stress and depression, which can also lead to an unnecessarily early death (even by suicide); a problem effecting men more than women (Cornia & Paniccià 2000; Kopp & Skrabski 2007; Marmot 2004). Suicidal rates in Hungary in particular are exceptionally high, the second highest from all 34 OECD member countries, which can be related to different kinds of social issues and psychiatric disorders (OECD 2015).

A health plan study for Budapest was made in 2012 which accumulated data on the demographic, health, socio-economic state, illnesses, morbidity rates and environment of the capital's population. According to this study, average life expectancy and mortality ratio between districts show severe inequalities, and the number of deaths caused by malignant tumors in the case of women is high compared to international levels, partly caused by the chosen way of life (lungs, oral cavity). The study makes a separate point on the potential to decrease several chronic diseases by less smoking, drinking alcohol, more physical activity and changing the diet (Dr. Ádány 2012). One other recent report by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office showed, that around 131 000 people died in 2015 in Hungary, making the country the 5th worst in the EU in death rates. An alarming circa 50% came from cardiovascular diseases, fifth coming from cerebrovascular diseases; both could be influenced by lifestyle and dietary changes (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a).

Talking about wellbeing in general, it encompasses both objective and subjective indicators that can be collected in a statistical method. It goes beyond quality of life, indicators such as living conditions, quality of everyday life, employment, and household statistics; it includes the actual experiencing of such indexes. In this section however, we try to examine only the relevant parts to our project. Happiness is one of the harder-to-define factors but it has close ties to wellbeing nonetheless. During a survey made in Hungary in 2015, 57% of the respondents replied as feeling happy most of the time (adult population), 28% answered 'sometimes' and 15% said 'rarely, or never' (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a). The survey was carried out nation-wide; we can only assume that in the case of Budapest numbers would be better than this average. The same survey shows that people with higher education tend to judge their wellbeing more pleasantly (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2016a).

According to a different survey carried out by the European Commission, Budapest is one of the five EU28 capital cities with the lowest satisfaction level (72%) concerning the lives residents lead. Only 58% of respondents are satisfied with the financial situation of their household, and when asked, only 38% said they trust their fellow citizens (European Commission 2016b) and this number is even lower in case of trust in the national government. The reasons of these troublesome trends are the inefficient healthcare and educational systems, the infrastructural (transport, housing) problems of the city, social and economic issues, and the low number of converging small communities (European Commission 2016b).

3. Problem formulation

There are various issues in Budapest from an environmental and social point of view, which can be connected to different problem areas, such as urban transportation, sociodemographic settings and health and wellbeing of citizens. In the last few years, new, alternative community-based bottom-up initiatives appeared - such as our case study, Cargonomia - with the aim of generating a change, a transition towards sustainability, and providing solutions for the issues of the city, which were introduced so far. We examine these activities and their impact on the city and its citizens through participating in the everyday life of Cargonomia, therefore our main research question is:

How can community-based initiatives regarding transport, food and social spaces contribute to a transition towards sustainability in the context of Budapest?

To allow ourselves to go deeper into the topics and to assist in answering the main research question, we set up four sub-questions:

- 1. What role can social cooperatives have in the process of transition towards sustainability?*
- 2. How is promoting and improving the conditions for cycling in urban areas of Budapest beneficial for the environment and society?*
- 3. How does local organic food sourcing contribute to a transition towards sustainability?*
- 4. What are the benefits of spreading open community spaces in Budapest?*

4. Methodology

This section introduces all the qualitative and quantitative methods which were used in this research's data collection process. Besides providing information about the procedure of collecting information, we also explain how the gathered data was analyzed. In the *Methodology reflections (Chapter 4.3.)* part, we reflect upon our choices of methods and the way how we used them; the drawbacks and shortages are revealed here.

4.1. Research design

Part of our obligations during the semester was to accomplish a traineeship at an organization of our choosing next to formulating a semester project. With the initial idea of *'putting degrowth into an urban context'* the social cooperative of Cargonomia was found in Budapest. Spending the first few weeks learning about the organization and its activities while becoming a part of the team gave us the idea to use Cargonomia as our case study and connect it with our project more than we initially planned. After one month we had our rudimentary research question and we realized that in order to answer it we need to adopt the tools of action research. Parallel to this, our traineeship shaped what we knew about degrowth, giving us a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between theoretical and practical approaches unmasking the notion of different schools in degrowth. The theories of institutional change and transition towards sustainability provided us with a firm theoretical background. We were introduced to the former during our studies at Aalborg University, while we familiarized ourselves with the latter during research for this project.

4.1.1. Participatory Action Research (PAR)

In this project we did not strictly follow the rules or characteristics of one certain research design. Rather, we examined multiple designs, chose the most relevant one and only used certain aspects of it. Consequently our design is akin to the corpus of Action Research Designs.

The conventional understanding of action research is that it has a cyclical form. In this sense, practitioners first establish an exploratory stance, create an understanding of a certain problem we face and devise a plan for an interventionary strategy. The 'action' part of the research refers to carrying out this strategy, from which the researcher makes observations and adjusts our understanding of the problem and forms new strategies accordingly. This cycle repeats, until there is sufficient understanding acquired or (a) valid solution(s) for the problem is/are created (Labaree & Scimeca 2016). In the *'Sage Handbook of Action Research'* we can find the following description: *"Action research primarily arises, however, as people try to work together to address key problems in their communities or organizations - some of which involve creating positive change on a small scale*

and others of which affect the lives of literally millions of people” (Kemmis et al. 2016, p. 2). In this sense Cargonomia - the subject of our case study - is a tool of experimental action research to some degree. This means that the activities of Cargonomia by their nature resemble action research but team members are not researchers in a conventional way; they have scientific background and all of them have one or more university degree but most of the time they do not gather and publish their findings in scientific papers. Cargonomia puts the emphasis on practice. While partly it is research what team members are doing, to give feedback to the academic community is not their main goal. While it would not be possible to apply a coherent repeating cycle to the workings and activities of Cargonomia, team members regularly adapt and develop the cooperative, based on continuous learning and the feedback of the community.

PAR belongs to the category of Action Research Design, though it cannot be explained from only one perspective as it is multidisciplinary. In the beginning, PAR was closely connected to the critique of mainstream social sciences and frequently lined up with revolutionary movements (Swantz 2008). It can be applied to a great variety of research projects and will always be context-specific. Coming from this specificity, there is no fixed formula for, defining theoretical framework, no specific way to design, practice, or implement PAR projects (Mcintyre 2008).

However, there are still some underlying principles, which are specific to the participatory design: *“(a) a collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem, (b) a desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation, (c) a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved, and (d) the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process”* (Mcintyre 2008, p. 2).

Adapted to our semester project in connection with our traineeship at Cargonomia, PAR gains a somewhat different context and can be formulated specifically to our case in the following way:

- The social cooperative Cargonomia is rooted in the local community. It offers a set of sustainable practices for everyday life, sometimes as a solution to a problem, sometimes just as an alternative.
- As a degrowth-induced organization, one foundational element of Cargonomia is transparency, mutual trust and *communication*. Members of the community who recourse services of Cargonomia are not simply customers, but have the possibility to engage and shape the cooperative to some extent.
- The authors of this paper are practitioners (the term practitioners in PAR refers to researchers, who take part in activities thus carrying out action research), who engage with both the team members of Cargonomia and the local community.

- Feedback from the community (sometimes active cooperation) and continuous observation from practitioner-researchers (Cargonomia team) results in cyclically renewed/rethought/redesigned strategies of engagement and cooperation.

To sum up, we have not conducted our Participatory Action Research in a conventional or strict way, but we adapted its principles. As part of the team we helped with everyday tasks at Cargonomia, Cyclonomia, Zsámboki Biokert and Kantaa, while at the same time gave voice to our ideas and provided insight, thus shaping the cooperation. Besides these, we continuously attended various workshops and discussions which were connected to the open community space function of Cargonomia, and we participate on university presentations, speeches and festivals; sometimes as presenters, sometimes as listeners.

Next to the gathered experience, knowledge and skills, we used different forms of interviews as qualitative data sources and second-hand data to help us in developing this research. The data that we gained from the interviews was separated into groups in line with Cargonomia's main activities (promotion and use of sustainable transport modes, local, seasonal, organic food provision and the impact of social spaces), which assisted us later in the analysis and discussion.

4.2. Methods of data collection

4.2.1. Interviews

As one main method of gathering qualitative data and information to this research, we chose to conduct several interviews in different ways (face to face, e-mail, skype) to widen our knowledge and understanding of the investigated topic.

In general, face to face interviews were selected based on the fact, that these types of interviews are personal, there is a space to make observations and take notes about the interviewee and identify facial expressions, body language, which also adds to the content and reliability of the gathered information. Another benefit of personal interviews is that we had the possibility to ask follow-up questions and clarify things immediately, if there was a misunderstanding. From the three kinds of interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured) based on the types of questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2008), we selected to work with the semi-structured ones, especially in case of face to face and skype interviews. In almost every occasion, we formed the questions based on our theoretical framework, the interviewees' background and possible insights on the investigated area, therefore the interview questions were different. The interviews were conducted between the 28th of November and the 8th of December; we recorded all of them to make it easier to analyze the contained information, and made summaries from the records (***Annex I-VII***).

The first interviews involved the core members of the Cargonomia box community (customers of the organic products provided by Zsámboki Biokert, Pipacs Pékség and Terra Hungarica), who order organic food boxes regularly. We sent out the same three questions to 15 respondents, asking about their perceptions of organic food products and the open community space which Cargonomia provides. Our goal with this was to understand the end-users' side of the story, gather feedback and find out some possible impacts on their life.

Secondly, we interviewed all four founders of the Cargonomia social cooperative, and the coordinator of Zsámboki Biokert, who can be considered as experts in various specific fields. The four founders are: Vincent Liegey, Logan Strenchock, Levente Erős and Adrien Despoisse. Except for the interview made with Levente Erős, all interviews were personal ones, and two interviewers were present. Vincent Liegey is an interdisciplinary researcher, co-author of the book '*A Degrowth Project*' and coordinator of the Degrowth Conference Budapest 2016. His professional background and the fact that he lives in Budapest since 15 years, and he is actively engaged in transition as a member of this small community gave us the possibility to not only ask him about Cargonomia, but about degrowth in practice, and transition initiatives in Budapest. He was interviewed in a restaurant and the language was English.

Logan Strenchock is an expert in organic gardening and local food systems, while at the same time he works in an academic environment, being Environmental and Sustainability Officer at Central European University (CEU). Logan is the main connection between the organic farm and Cargonomia, therefore we mainly questioned him about the cooperation between them, and about local, seasonal organic food sourcing, transition initiatives in Budapest and transition towards sustainability. We conducted this interview in his office at CEU, and the language was English.

The third founder, Levente Erős is an expert in IT systems and urban logistics, and he is the CEO of the bike messenger company Kantaa. Based on his experience and professional background, we interviewed him about sustainable urban transport solutions, bicycle logistics and infrastructure, Kantaa, Cargonomia and also transition initiatives in Budapest in general. This interview was a bit different than the other semi-structured ones, since it was conducted in Hungarian through Skype and only one interviewer was present because of specific reasons and limitations (see the section of **Chapter 4.3. Methodology reflections**).

Considering the remaining pillar of the collaboration that Cargonomia created, the founder and coordinator of the Cyclonomia DIY bicycle shop, Adrien Despoisse was interviewed as well. Being a team member and an expert in urban transport and logistics, he was questioned about Cyclonomia

and the DIY movement, transport in Budapest, Cargonomia and social cooperatives in general, and local transition initiatives. We interviewed him in a restaurant in Hungarian.

Besides the above described meetings, we also had a discussion in Hungarian with the Kantaa coordinator and bike messenger Flóra Hellebrandt, the organic farming expert Csaba Bolvári (he is also the coordinator of Zsámboki Biokert) and from a decision-maker point of view Balázs Szűcs, who is the municipal representative of District VII (Cargonomia is situated here) and church and civil affairs counselor as well. Flóra Hellebrandt was interviewed in a restaurant about bicycle infrastructure in Budapest, cargo bikes and the relationship between Kantaa and Cargonomia. The interview with Csaba was made in a farm house covering the topics of local, seasonal organic food sourcing, the relationship between Zsámboki Biokert and Cargonomia, and the everyday life, mechanisms, dynamics of the farm. As we saw it important to investigate the topic from a decision-maker's point of view, we asked Balázs Szűcs about the connection between community-based initiatives and politicians, municipalities. We were also curious about his opinion on seeing transition initiatives as a municipal representative, and how important are these initiatives in the context of Budapest.

4.2.2. Case studies

The qualitative case study research method was chosen for this project, because as the Danish economic geographer, Bent Flyvbjerg describes: *"The advantage of the case study is that it can 'close in' on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice."* (Flyvbjerg 2006 p.235). The case study of this research is the social cooperative Cargonomia. Through participation in Cargonomia and its main collaborators' (Kantaa, Zsámboki Biokert, Cyclonomia) everyday activities, our intention was to gather as much information about transition initiatives in Budapest as we can, in order to provide a clear and thorough picture about their situation and impact here. We used the single case study method, although we are also investigating in the effect of Cargonomia's main partners on the transition towards sustainability as well.

There are certain types of main research questions which fit better to the use of case studies than others. These are typically open-ended explanatory questions starting with 'how' or 'why' (Yin 1994), such as it is stated in this research's problem formulation. We are aware that our case study works in a particular environment (Budapest) and touches only at a segment of the population of this city, while it is influenced by a certain ideology and it follows a specific line of principals, therefore we avoid the generalization based on our findings, although various perspectives on community-based initiatives will be presented in the *Analysis and discussion (Chapter 6)* part of this research.

4.2.3. Second hand data

Besides collecting data through different forms of interviews, we also used other researchers' and scientists' work to obtain quantitative and qualitative data, which supports the information acquired by us. These sources mainly involve statistics, case studies, journal articles, scientific reports and surveys conducted by others.

The most important second hand source that we used is the '*Sustainability Acceleration: a Transition Roadmap for Budapest*' report. This is the final report of a three-year long research, funded by the European Commission, called the ARTS (Accelerating and Rescaling Transitions to Sustainability) project. The goal of ARTS was to "*understand how community based initiatives can accelerate sustainability transitions in the five European city-regions of Brighton, Budapest, Dresden, Genk, and Stockholm.*" (Strenchock et al. 2016 p.3). The two main entities which were involved in carrying out the research in Budapest are BEE environmental communication and Central European University (CEU). In the framework of our internship, we were also involved in the ARTS project by organizing and coordinating a workshop at CEU, having members of community-based initiatives and decision-makers as attendees.

4.3. Methodology reflections

Our main intention with the selection of the interviewees was to approach a diversity of people, who are involved in transition towards sustainability in a direct or indirect way. We see that we gathered a decent amount of reliable and valid qualitative information from the interviews with experts, but the viewpoints of decision-makers are not deeply expressed, since we were able to reach only one person from the municipality of District VII. Involving more (or higher level) politicians, municipality representatives, decision-makers would slightly shape the outcomes of this research.

We were limited by time and by resources throughout the development of the project, that is the reason why we could not approach a wider selection of customers of organic products provided by Zsámboki Biokert and Pipacs Pékség, bike couriers of Kantaa, attendees of regular Cargonomia workshops or more members of the Cyclonomia community. We are aware, that their first-hand opinions, feedback and observations would have been useful in providing more thorough answers to the research questions of this project.

Going deeper with the conducted interviews, there are several drawbacks and flaws of them. The general drawbacks of e-mail interviews are lower response rates, one-dimensionality (only text) and lack of nonverbal and visual clues (Meho 2006). Although the e-mail interviews with customers consisted of three questions, and we expected simple and short answers from them, respondents

were not very active in answering; we only got 9 responses out of 15. The Skype interview conducted with Levente Erős can be considered as a phone interview, which comes with its general flaws (lack of body language and nonverbal signs). Making all the e-mail interviews and the Skype interview in person may have provided us with a wider scale of information and more thorough answers.

The conversation which we had with Flóra Hellebrandt is slightly out of line compared to all our other interviews. This interview was originally designed to be a blog post on the Cargonomia website, but we also found useful and valuable information in it to our research, therefore we decided using it as a source of qualitative data. We are aware that when coming up with questions in this case, we only took into account the research question and theoretical framework of our research to a certain degree and it affected the gathered data as well. We would have come up with somewhat different questions if we would have this project in mind. In general, a possible drawback of the interviews which we conducted in Hungarian is that some details could have lost during the translation into English, although we tried to make precise translations and interpretations based on the recordings.

5. Theoretical framework

This chapter provides an overview of the theories and concepts, which are used in our research project. In order to help answering our main research question and to corroborate this answer from a theoretical point of view, we use the theory of institutional change. This scientific theory helps us identifying the various institutions that play an important role in shaping the picture of Budapest and the life of its citizens. It also supports the understanding of the substance of possible sustainable transition processes, which are crucial for us. The theory of institutional change is especially helpful, if the problem at hand concerns a not very well defined, complex mechanism, such as a part of a society and its cultural-social relations.

A common theory of science issue is relevant and needed to introduce here, namely that science and theorizing are always based on paradigms. According to Thomas Kuhn (1970), a paradigm is: *“entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community”* (Kuhn 1970 p.175). So in every case of research, there are particular technical procedures and theoretical ideologies which are adopted by a group of researchers, who share a certain worldview (Kuhn 1970). This principle about scientific paradigms can be applied in case of our research as well.

Although degrowth is not a scientific theory, it plays an important role in this theoretical framework as the ideological background and principles of our case study were formulated with a special attention on *Décroissance*, and the Francophone approach to it in particular. The unique situation of degrowth in Hungary will be presented, and we clarify what does a transition towards sustainability mean. We used this concept to get a more thorough understanding about how the change processes happen, and how transition initiatives work in the context of Budapest, with the intention of providing a full picture about our case and answer the research questions.

5.1. Institutional change

The first step in understanding what is institutional change, is to understand what we mean by institutions. The theory stems from the field of economics and has accumulated vast and diffuse relevant literature with an abundance of terminology by different authors, resulting in totally different understandings (Kingston & Caballero 2008). We use the work of W. Richard Scott, as it gives a clear, transparent framework which encompasses existing literature, brings order to the discussion, but still keeps a broad definition of institutions, which can be used in a variety of arguments and caters to the needs of this project. By his definition, institutions are *“multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources”* (Scott 2001 p.49). These structures enable, control, constrain or support the behavior of individuals

or organizations (Scott 2001). He defined three 'pillars', three elements, which together build institutions.

The *regulative pillar* represents the laws and rules telling us how we must behave coerced by sanctions. The most important ingredients are force, fear and expedience, but they are not used alone. Most regimes try to keep a certain level of belief in its legitimacy also. The *normative pillar* shows us how we ought to behave. It includes both values (conceptions of the preferred or the desirable) and norms (how things should be done). Normative systems impose constraints on social behavior, but at the same time they enable and empower social action. The third and last is the *cultural-cognitive pillar*, the element made up of how we usually behave. Through this pillar action is taken, when the actor feels it is appropriate, or there is no other alternative. To understand these actions subjective interpretation needs to be taken into account as well as the objective conditions (Scott 2001).

According to Scott, institutions are relatively resistant to change, tend to be maintained, reproduced and transmitted across generation, they connote stability (Scott 2008). This persistence is associated with the term 'path dependency'. This concept means that past events are influencing current events by a) past solutions lead to a restrained set of possibilities, b) when a decision is made, there is a higher chance of more steps being taken along the same route, or c) actors are locked up in a single solution depending on the length of the path already taken (Ebbinghaus 2005). Institutional change occurs when a) there is a disruption of mechanisms that previously reinforced path dependency or/and b) certain conditions appear that motivates actors to change the institutional setting. In the case of a) the change can be either abrupt (punctuated equilibrium), or incremental (gradual change) (Streeck & Thelen 2005). An example for the former could be the changes in security procedures at airports after the 9/11 attacks, and the shaping of MPAs (Marine Protected Areas) for the latter. In the case of b), actors within the institution discover a problem and decide to change the institution. It is either because of a deficiency in compliance (faulty enforcement procedures, or the misinterpretation of rules), or there are power imbalances among actors. There is a possibility to either reorganize the existing institution in a different way (bricolage), or transfer ideas from somewhere else, thus combining new institutions with existing ones (transfer) (Campbell 2007).

In order to make institutional change successful, a handful of criteria have to be met. First of all, the new alternatives have to fit in the receiving context well, the incoming ideas have to be adapted, as well as the receivers. The benefits have to be highlighted, so actors are aware and conscious, the proposed changes have to be in accordance with public sentiment and agents of change must be able to access power resources (financial, technological, decision-making, implementation capacity) (Ramirez 2016).

5.2. Degrowth

As it was mentioned in the *Presenting the case: Cargonomia (Chapter 2.1.)* section of this research, the social cooperative Cargonomia was formed and is still working with a great attention and involvement of degrowth ideologies. Therefore, in order to understand the reasons behind certain dynamics and activities of Cargonomia, an explanation of degrowth is needed, where there is a special focus on '*Degrowth à la française*' in our case.

The reigning growth paradigm has been dominating politics and decision-making as well as science since the middle of the 1940s. Environmental concerns were always secondary behind growth objectives, and even in case of sustainable development, there is still a great emphasis on economic growth (Schneider et al. 2010). According to the *Ivan Illich* influenced thoughts of the German sociologist and environmentalist, Wolfgang Sachs: "*Capital, bureaucracy and science - the venerable trinity of Western modernization - declare themselves indispensable in the new crisis and promise to prevent the worst through better engineering, integrated planning and more sophisticated models. However, fuel-efficient machines, environmental risk assessment analyses, the close monitoring of natural processes and the like, well-intended as they may be, have two assumptions in common: first, that society will always be driven to test nature to her limits, and second, that the exploitation of nature should be neither maximized nor minimized, but ought to be optimized.*" (Sachs 2010 p.34)

There is a great number of environmental, social and also economic issues which can be connected to the prevailing growth paradigm, that accompanies the neoliberalist paved way of globalization, liberalization and privatization (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010). One main social issue, *consumerism* originates from the rising demand for services and products and the increasing connection between materialistic means and social, cultural values. Consumerism is a principal driver of the unsustainable exploitation and utilization of various natural resources (minerals, land, energy sources) and intensive energy use, which causes resource depletion and environmental problems, such as different pollution types to soil, air, water and ecosystems (Demailly et al. 2013).

As one of the critiques against the neoclassical thoughts of prosperity through growth, the concept and social movement of degrowth has emerged in the last 10-15 years. It is true that the root ideologies of this new way of thinking and living can be found over the 20th century in different sources, criticizing and questioning the idea of infinite growth on a finite planet (for e.g. *The Great Transformation* by Karl Polányi, *Limits to Growth* by Meadows et. al and *Small is Beautiful* by E. F. Schumacher), but the word itself (*Décroissance*) was first introduced in several different French publications by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, André Amar and André Gorz. *Degrowth* is the literal translation of *Décroissance*, which means reduction in French (Demaria et al. 2013).

According to Demaria et al. (2013), the origins of degrowth as a social movement are coming from Lyon, which was the citadel of protests for anti-advertising, car free cities, food cooperatives, and meals in the streets. A lot of people, who are now members of the Degrowth Movement were in connection or close to the French activist organization ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Citizen's Action). This organization criticizes the dominating neoliberal thoughts, denounces the '*merchandisation*' of today's society, and emphasizes the importance of an alternative globalization, where instead of profit people should be in the core. The ATTAC and the Degrowth Movement has some common goals and linkages nowadays as well (Uggla 2004).

At the beginning, *Décroissance* started as a project of reducing consumption and production voluntarily, in order to achieve ecological and social sustainability. According to the French industrial ecologist and degrowth researcher, François Schneider: „*Sustainable degrowth may be defined as an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term*” (Schneider et al. 2010 p.512) The term '*sustainable*' means here that the transition process and the end-state should be socially and environmentally beneficial (Schneider et al. 2010). Involving researchers, activists, politicians, economists and members of the society coming from a great variety of scientific fields and cultural backgrounds, degrowth represents a mix of alternatives in the fields of environment (agro-ecology, energy, waste), society (equality, work-sharing, social metabolism) and economics (reciprocity, local currencies, finance) (Cattaneo et al. 2012).

As an academic research area and a civil society dispute, degrowth materialized on the first Degrowth Conference in 2008, when the gathering was held in Paris. Degrowth conferences started to take place every second year after the Paris event, Barcelona (2010), Venice (2012) and Leipzig (2014) served as homes to the next conferences, while the 5th Degrowth Conference was held in Budapest between 30th August and 3rd September, in 2016 (Liegey 2016a).

5.2.1. Degrowth à la française

We can make a distinction between two types of degrowth; the mostly ecological economics influenced one (Anglophone), and Degrowth à la française (Francophone). Of course these are similar to each other, and share common goals and ideas (Philippe 2011). In Hungary, we mostly come across the latter one, and the transition initiative Cargonomia also follows the ideas and main characteristics of the Francophone approach to degrowth. One of the main Francophone intellectuals working with degrowth, the political scientist, philosopher and economist Serge Latouche defined a degrowth society as: “*Society built on quality rather than on quantity, on cooperation rather than on competition. The motto of de-growth aims primarily at pointing the insane objective of growth for*

growth. Degrowth is not negative growth, a concept that would be contradictory and absurd, meaning stepping forward while going backward” (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010 p.1742)

The first appearance of Degrowth à la française was in the mid-1930s, when Jacques Ellul and Bernard Charbonneau asked for a revolution of the civilization and sharply criticized modernity. According to their Marxism influenced views, solidarity and the quality of life should be the prevalent values in society, instead of individualism and productivity. The motto “*think globally, act locally*” is also connected to Ellul (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010). Degrowth (and à la française) was mainly influenced by two key lines of thinking, one being Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen’s work on thermodynamics and his book ‘*The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*’, while the other source of inspiration is the culturalist views. The main reference here is the intellectual Ivan Illich, who criticized the concept of development, followed Ellul’s ideology and stood up against modern institutions, and at the same promoted social subsistence and autonomy (see also Cornelius Castoriadis’ work), which are key goals in the Francophone approach nowadays as well (Cattaneo et al. 2012).

The question of how to enjoy a *good life* and the *enjoyment of life* concept - which comes from Georgescu-Roegen, stems from ancient philosophical thoughts and appears in Serge Latouche’s or Wolfgang Sachs’ work as well - are not only the particularities of Degrowth à la française, but are highly emphasized through frugality, solidarity, *voluntary simplicity*, sharing of labor, working less and the re-localization of economic activities in the Francophone approach (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010). According to Liegey et al., conviviality (meaningful social intercourse), the political, individual and spiritual freedom, the stimulation of creativity, and the decolonization of the imaginary are also essential components of Degrowth à la française and contribute to good life (Liegey et al. 2013).

Even if Degrowth à la française thinkers are considering economic questions as political ones (influenced by Marxism), their intention is not to construct ‘*radiant socialism*’, but rather to highlight the importance of different forms of autonomy (autonomy of individuals, groups, regions etc.). Degrowth à la française is constantly referenced to economic anthropology, and the French degrowth thinkers can be seen as anti-economics, since they consider economics as a ‘*dismal science*’ which we need to get rid of (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010). Still, the thoughts on degrowth economics are little developed, which makes intelligible why the ecological economics critiques against the neoclassical economics are widely and actively supported by Degrowth à la française espousers. Besides the presented theoretical principles pillar of the Francophone approach, the political and the activist ones are essential as well (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010).

5.2.2. Degrowth in Hungary

In Western Europe and other wealthier societies, the critiques against capitalism, the reigning ‘*always more*’ attitude and against the immoderate level of production and consumption of goods seems logical and legitimate. When we talk about countries or regions from the Global South and the once socialist states of the European Union (such as Hungary) it is still important to question the prevailing growth based model, although the situation is different in case of these less affluent countries, and the concept of degrowth appears in distinct ways (Liegey 2014).

Taking the V4 (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) or other former socialist states of the EU, the fact is that degrowth is a rather sensitive topic and people immediately start associating it with communism (and its limitations in the accessible assets for people), which brought about terrible failures resulting in social and economic issues (Liegey 2014). In addition to this, after the communist regime was driven out from these countries, in most of the cases capitalism quickly took its place and started to generate consumerism by allowing access to different kinds of goods and products, and letting investors move in to create new *Western* types of services (Nemnövekedés-Degrowth 2016).

It was mentioned before that in Hungary, degrowth appears in a specific way. As a community influenced by the ideology of degrowth started sounding their voice and people became more and more aware of the environmental, social and economic problems stemming from growth, capitalism and consumerism, multiple local transition alternatives and initiatives were set up in relatively short time aimed towards sustainability (Liegey 2012).

5.3. Transition towards sustainability

In general, *transition* means passage from one place/state/stage or subject to another place or state etc. It can also refer to movement, development or evolution from one quality to another. The answer to how to govern a transition towards sustainability is only an emerging field, but has already vast literature and has been the focus of research in a wide variety of scientific fields since the 1990s (Markard et al. 2012). According to literature reviewed by Markard and his colleagues: “*Sustainability transitions are long-term, multi-dimensional, and fundamental transformation processes through which established socio-technical systems shift to more sustainable modes of production and consumption.*” (Markard et al. 2012 p.956) While there is a wide variety of approaches, methodologies and topics, it is a general understanding, that such transitions are to be framed from a systems perspective (Farla et al. 2012).

The general understanding of socio-technical transitions are rather similar as they refer to major changes in technological, organizational and institutional terms for both production and consumption (Geels & Schot 2010). In this context, *actors* may refer to different types of firms, organizations, policymakers, research institutions, or social movements. The main characteristics of these actors is that they can pursue strategies, meaning that the institutional structures they are set in enable their decision-making to some degree, they have both tangible (equipment, human resources, finance) and intangible (know-how, reputation, social contacts) resources, and they pursue activities to achieve their goals (Farla et al. 2012).

In our case, the most interesting, important and relevant part of the above mentioned research field is the *social movement* type of actors. In connection with this, there is a network called the Global Transition Network, which was founded in 2006 to encourage, inspire, support, connect and train communities on their transition. In 2005, it started with one Transition Town, but the movement was quickly renamed to a Transition initiative to reflect diversity - to show that such transition can take place also in neighborhoods, villages, suburbs, schools or even on a city-wide scale (Alloun & Alexander 2014). One of the primary goals of the movement is to catalyze localized, grassroots movements in response to climate change and the end of cheap oil (Hopkins 2008). According to their website, the Global Transition Network today encompasses 480 official initiatives and hundreds of 'mulling' initiatives (Transition Network 2016). The Hungarian member of this network is the Transition Wekerle project. Wekerle is an urban neighborhood district in Budapest, following the core principles and methodology of the Transition Movement. Despite the fact that Wekerle is a suburb of a city with 2 million inhabitants, it is Europe's largest Garden City with a natural and built environment which strengthens and reinforces community bonds. Their main activities include the promotion of local food sovereignty, the creation of a local energy efficiency and renewable plan, the support of local nurseries and schools by setting up kitchen gardens, and different kinds of educational programs, events (Sepsei 2015). Although the Transition Network was founded as an experimental answer to specific issues, in its general core concept it is similar to the notion of *Degrowth Transition*.

The name refers to degrowth-fueled alternatives such as urban garden food production, co-housing, CSA, communal kitchens, producer-consumer cooperatives, decentralized energy production, renewable energy usage, open software etc., possibly supported by community currencies, ethical banks, reciprocity economy and other new forms of exchange. Projects of degrowth transition will definitely be generated from the bottom-up, just as grassroots movements, but in both cases, as it is noted, "*broad institutional changes will be needed to foster adoption of such practices*" (Kallis 2015 p.4).

For this project we understand *transition initiatives* as “A group of actors who work together to implement uniquely innovative, creative and impactful strategies which promote locally appropriate solutions to social and environmental issues in their community” (Strenchock 2016 p.8). The feature of being a bottom-up approach is definitive in such initiatives; actors are driven by their own desire to make a difference and collaboration is developed upwards, which gives these movements legitimacy and credibility and combined with its growing popularity across the EU, it is a potentially powerful driver of change (O’Hara 2013).

6. Analysis and discussion

This chapter follows the structural logic and framework that the sub-questions of this paper create, while it is also linked to our chosen theories. First, we analyze and discuss our findings about Cargonomia and the cooperation in connection with the effects of cycling on the Budapest environment and society, the importance and impact of local organic food provision and promotion, and the role of open community spaces in the city from a transition point of view. The chapter ends with a general overview of challenges and summary of our case study's impact on transition towards sustainability in Budapest.

6.1. Transport and infrastructure

In (*Chapter 2.2.4. Urban transport and traffic*) we outlined several failings of Budapest's infrastructure and transport system. It is the aim of this paper to advocate the use of bicycles instead of cars and motorized public transport, just as it is one of the many anticipated and hoped-for changes of our case study Cargonomia. Situated in Budapest, the transition initiatives in the field of transportation are mainly aimed towards reducing the GHG emissions stemming from heavy car traffic, therefore people involved in these initiatives are promoting the use of bicycles instead of cars and at the same time trying to influence facilitating a suitable infrastructure. A good example here is one of the collaborators of Cargonomia, the non-profit organization and DIY bicycle shop Cyclonomia, where different types of hands-on activities and workshops are taking place regularly (Liegey & Lazányi 2016). There are multiple environmental, (mental) health and financial benefits in switching from cars to bicycles, we only discuss the environmental and health benefits as examining financial aspects are not in the scope of this project.

6.1.1. Saving emissions

A study done by the European Cyclists' Federation in 2011 attempts to compare GHG emissions from the use of bicycles, e-bikes, buses and cars by passenger kilometers travelled. The study uses the method of life-cycle assessment, which deals with 3 phases: production, operation, maintenance. After thorough examination, in its first part the study concludes that the released amount of carbon-dioxide equivalents per passenger kilometers travelled:

- for bicycles 21 g CO₂eq/km
- for e-bikes 22 g CO₂eq/km
- for buses 101 g CO₂eq/km
- for cars 271 g CO₂eq/km (Blondel et al. 2011).

It is important to note, that the authors of this study needed to resort to important assumptions when calculating these numbers, such as measuring the impacts coming from consuming extra calories because of cycling, compared to driving (e.g. the CO₂ intensity of beef is around 130x higher, than the CO₂ intensity of corn [compared in g/100 calories]), or had to deduct averages (like in the case of the number of passengers in cars, or buses). The study being done in 2011 is also an important factor - the emissions of newly produced passenger cars and vans decreases year by year, complying with EU regulations (European Commission 2016a). Taking this into consideration the emissions of cars would be around 240-250 g CO₂eq/km which is still more, than 10x higher than bicycles or e-bikes. The study also calculates the emissions saved by cycling on a European level and states that cycling contributes to approximately 3%-6% share of the EU's Kyoto protocol commitments in 2011 (Blondel et al. 2011).

More interesting to this project is the impact of the bike messenger company Kantaa on Budapest's environment and air quality. According to co-founder and current owner of Kantaa Levente Erős, the messengers of Kantaa commute around 1400-1500 km/week by classic bike or cargo bikes altogether and work for 50 weeks/year (Erős 2016). Using the numbers and methods from the above mentioned study, with their activities Kantaa saves around **18-19 tons of CO₂eq** annually by substituting cars and vans to bicycles and cargo bikes. According to the Hungarian National Climate Change Strategy emissions coming from transport in Hungary reached ca. **12.7 Mt** (multiplier of 10⁶) CO₂eq in 2011, which was almost exactly 20% of overall net emissions, 19%, if we do not take carbon sinks into consideration (NÉS 2013). The report discusses the importance of increasing the modal share of public transport and cycling in order to reduce the emissions of GHGs and mitigate the impacts of climate change. However it is ironic, that while the study has been ordered by the National Ministry of Development, on the top of every page it is written that it does not represent the official standpoint of the government. Although we can see that Kantaa's impact is only a tiny fraction of the transport sector, it was (and being continuously) achieved by only a dozen young adults committed to a cause. *"When Levente and I started Kantaa we thought of as a kind of experiment, both the structure and the service we provide. [...] There's a strong convergence between us and the entities we are in connection with, helping each other, which is a really important part for us. For example, I may not be making as much money as I could somewhere else, but I can get wonderful organic bread from Pipacs bakery almost for free. [...] It is like reciprocity economy, not all of our clients pay with money sometimes we just like to be part of something meaningful, to help a sympathetic cause."* (Hellebrandt 2016).

6.1.2. Health

Anyone who uses their bicycle regularly can verify the statement ‘cycling is healthy’ but there are a lot of aspects to investigate for researchers who try to confirm this simple statement scientifically. Studies show a number of small or moderate health benefits caused by cycling regularly even if it is for short trips. Cycling-specific studies show a clear positive correlation between commuter cycling and cardiorespiratory fitness in younger generations, there is a strong inverse relationship between regular cycling and all-cause mortality, cancer mortality, and cancer morbidity among middle-aged to elderly subjects, and consistent improvements can be seen in cardiovascular fitness and decrease in cardiovascular risks in working-age adults due to commuter cycling. It is also suggested that the more we cycle, the bigger amount of health benefits we experience (Oja et al. 2011). Although some of the results are considered to be inconclusive, it is mostly due to the fact that there has been only a small amount of research done in the topic.

There are also several benefits of which are it is impossible to do quantitative studies. Regarding this segment, we rely on our own experiences, the experience and thoughts of our interviewees and the thoughts shared by people in Cargonomia’s community. General studies about physical exercise show that exercise such as working out, aerobic-fitness, yoga or cycling can help reduce stress, relax and can even help manage mental illnesses like depression (C3 2011). Founder of Cyclonomia, (Despoisse 2016) in his interview with us talked about how DIY workshops such as his help members liberate their mind and their bodies by creating a space where the mind and body works together and people can have meaningful interactions and spend quality time together which has its own health benefits. Dispatcher and messenger of Kantaa, (Hellebrandt 2016) said it is a good way to substitute having to go to the gym regularly and spend extra time and money on it, while (Erős 2016) highlighted the notion of less heart attacks and mentioned the British study ‘Time to #ChooseCycling’ that stated if more people used their bicycle every day in Britain, it could save hundreds of millions of pounds for British healthcare (British Cycling 2014). Another study done jointly by the University of Birmingham and the British Department for Transport puts this number at almost 400 million pounds (Rajé & Saffrey 2014). *“There would be also much less stress; much less frustration caused by sitting in the car and people would generally be happier”* (Erős 2016).

6.1.3. Infrastructure

Previously we presented an overview of the different problems with the infrastructure of Budapest (**Chapter 2.2.4. Urban transport and traffic**). It is obvious, that cars are overwhelming the traffic of the city and that the established infrastructure and its development in the past 20-30 years are assisting to this trend. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, in 2015 there were more than 1 million passenger cars in Budapest and its agglomeration (Tenczer 2016). **Map 6** shows the routes used by cars pouring in from Budapest's agglomeration.



Map 6: The roads used by traffic coming from the agglomeration (Tenczer 2016).

It is clear that current infrastructure and parking space situation cannot handle the amount of cars that are moving around the city every day. To avoid traffic jams and to find parking spaces, cars flow into the smaller back streets, basically turning every available inch into parking space and causing chaotic situations daily even in the side streets (Tenczer 2016). The economic crisis of 2008 presented an opportunity to create a suitable transport system, but the city council did not make the most of it. An obvious first step would have been to create new parking spaces around the important nodes of car traffic throughout the outskirts of the city, while synchronizing public transport to be a viable alternative for drivers. On the long term passenger cars and vans could be banned from the heart of the city, leaving it to proper public transport and bicycles.

Talking about the transport infrastructure, the founder of Cyclonomia had a well-formulated idea: *“There are three motorways slicing up and dividing the city, people cannot connect with the riverside, it is really embarrassing in my opinion. The second problem is that green waves are set to 50 km/h. I think it should be maximum 35 km/h in the city, that way there would be much less congestion and it would be more friendly to bicycle traffic. I don’t really believe in separate bicycle lanes, the danger lies in the difference in travelling speed. The suburbs are getting bigger and bigger, everyone tries to commute and the public transport in the city cannot handle it. There would be enough lines but the maintenance is horrible”* (Despoisse 2016). Asked about the problems of Budapest’s infrastructure from a biker point of view (Erős 2016) said *“There are no bicycle lanes on the bridges (except Margit Híd but there are seven others), it’s chaotic to use the smaller ring road, and cycling is not considered when making improvements (on important routes like Bartók Béla út, or Szentendrei út, or the large ring road). Suburbs are not designed to help commuters leave their cars and go to the city center by public transport and I kind of miss congestion charging. Regulations are totally screwed up, practice is really different from theory, fines and penalties are not thought through, like it was pushed down from the top without consideration”* (Erős 2016).

Of course there seems to be agreement about the state of infrastructure in the biker/bike messenger community: *“For example, there are no markings on the grand boulevard that would help cycling, the same goes for Üllői road. The city administration should undertake creating cycling paths on the more busy roads, but they want to avoid confrontation with car-drivers. Budapest’s infrastructure right now favors car traffic big time, which should be changed”* (Hellebrandt 2016). When we asked about the environmental and social benefits of an improved bicycle infrastructure our interviewees they did not start to list scientific sources, rather they shared their own ideas and beliefs, coming from many years of personal experience. *“I think reducing the speed limit is much quicker and much more effective than building new lanes and paths. The other issue is parking. Cities have always been connected to nature, but nowadays there is concrete everywhere”* (Despoisse 2016). Reducing the speed limit would have both environmental and social benefits and should be considered as an alternative solution. It would cause less GHG emissions, helping the issue of climate change, cars would require less fuel which (on a larger scale) would help resource dependency, there would be less noise pollution, which would help reduce stress levels, less traffic accidents, resulting in less medical bills and so on. It would also encourage more people to use their bikes, helping drivers and bikers to coexist effectively and peacefully. *“It points further than just infrastructure, there would be more solidarity, patience, people would learn how to be better to each other, but this whole problem area is a good tool to show how to do things differently”* (Erős 2016).

Indeed, the community of Kantaa is highly evolved in the sense that the messengers do what they love while they can participate in other projects freely, they have a close-knit community where they experience meaningful interactions on a daily level and by that they contribute to both environmental and social sustainability. According to the founder of Cyclonomia, the main impact of the workshop is that hundreds of bikers get the everyday chance to find and use the workshop, repair their bikes, rest, have a conversation and through this reinforce their motivation to use their bikes for commuting (Despoisse 2016). Also the creation and use of cargo bikes obviously contributes to sustainable transport, while the low-tech metalworking everyday solutions contribute to degrowth and transition, just as creating the cargo bikes locally and being part of the unofficial reciprocity economy of Cargonomia.

One role of Cargonomia in general is to promote sustainable urban transport solutions. This means representing the values and ideology of degrowth, sustainability and Kantaa and Cyclonomia as a cooperative in events and workshops. Sometimes it means sharing knowledge or educating an audience, sometimes it means introducing Cargonomia itself as a transition initiative offering low-carbon transport solutions in the city. To achieve a significant shift from today's practice in transport, a systemic institutional change is needed. It would mostly affect the cultural-cognitive pillar but alteration of the regulative pillar is also needed as several laws, regulations and taxes need to be reworked.

6.2. Local organic food provision and promotion

A fundamental part of our case study's activities is the distribution of local organic food and promotion of conscious and sustainable consumption. In general, the food what we eat has a significant influence on the environment, economy and society. It has an effect on our personal health and wellbeing as well (Springmann et al. 2016). Nowadays, the reigning globalized food systems brought about a lot of different issues, which can be separated into three interconnected topical categories; socio-economic justice and equity, ecological sustainability, quality of food and human health (Strenchock 2012).

As one of the three constituting pillars of the cooperation that Cargonomia created, Zsámboki Biokert has an important role by providing local, seasonal organic food for inhabitants of Budapest, who can pick up their organic food boxes from different locations in the city. After participating in the works, having continuous conversations with the coordinator and employees of the farm and interviews particularly for this research, it became clear, that the core goal is to minimize input and output, so all the sowing, harvesting, plowing and other gardening tasks, marketing operations, distribution of food is planned precisely, environmentally and socially consciously. The main

principles are following the principles of organic farming, biodynamic farming and community-supported agriculture (CSA), with a greater emphasis on using low-tech solutions and less fossil fuels, and the wellbeing of employees is essential as well (Bolvári 2016; Stenchock 2016). In a nutshell, Zsámboki Biokert is trying to produce a potential value without the exploitation of the soil, while improving the state of the biodiversity and putting an emphasis on the fair livelihood of employees. They have made conscious decisions about not growing further from a certain point, so the farm can operate on a *'human scale'*, on 4 ha with only six to ten people (Stenchock 2016). The fundamental principles and core values of Zsámboki Biokert are very much in line with the ideas of degrowth, and change the normative pillar of farming. These drive away the farm from the values and norms of conventional and somehow even from traditional organic farming, and the change of the institutions in this case was initiated by actors of Zsámboki Biokert either by reorganizing the existing structure or transferring ideas from somewhere else (mainly the French CSA system, called AMAP).

Since Csaba Bolvári is responsible for coordinating the farm, there was an optimization of management and a slight modernization in the farming technologies that they use, which is mainly aimed towards reducing the working hours of employees and making more monetary profit, so the farm can survive in the challenging Hungarian environment (Bolvári 2016). In connection with this, the main challenge for small-scale farmers in Hungary is that farmers need to play different roles and have a diversity of skills (managerial, communicational, administrative, marketing, gardening and farming), while the Hungarian tax system with high number and level of taxes and the market limits the possibilities in small-scale organic farming (Bolvári 2016; Stenchock 2012; Stenchock 2016).

Moving forward to the cooperation between Zsámboki Biokert and Cargonomia, several synergies can be found. As Csaba Bolvári expressed the importance of this fruitful collaboration during the interview; *"On our farm we work to bring life to the city in the form of the organic vegetables we produce, but at the same time the city brings life to Zsámboki Biokert. There is a solidarity which is worthy to mention, where Cargonomia is a medium for transferring positive energy, feedback and support from the city back to our team in the village."* (Bolvári 2016). Their partnership with Cargonomia is beneficial and important for both entities; there is a process of giving and getting back. The social cooperative can be considered as the farm's voice in the city, which gives them more publicity, resources and volunteers (Stenchock 2016; Bolvári 2016). When Csaba is talking about support, he means all these mentioned factors and the fact that Cargonomia links them to the blood circulation of the city; they can reach their customers and partners in an easier way (Bolvári 2016). Although mostly the positive side was highlighted of the collaboration, the truth is that there are always challenges: *"It is a happy, chaotic type of partnership"* (Stenchock 2016). During our internship period, we served as practitioners at Zsámboki Biokert, harvesting garden produce,

putting together organic food boxes, or helping with other tasks every Wednesday. On the next day, we were there handing out the food boxes together with the organic bread from Pipacs Pékség and the biodynamic wine at Cargonomia. What we perceived as being practitioners at both entities, is that this collaboration is truly beneficial for all actors in a direct or indirect way, especially if we take into account the fact, that nowadays there is a psychological and physical distance between the farmer and consumer, and it is particularly true for city and urban area residents, whose consumption is dominated by supermarkets and fast food chains (Malandrin & Dvortsin 2015; Ranganathan et al. 2016). The problems with buying food in super-, or hypermarkets were presented in the *Health and wellbeing of citizens (Chapter 2.2.5.)* part of this paper.

The trends in connection with food consumption in Hungary show varying patterns. According to a survey made by the WWF in 2016 involving 500 urban respondents from the age group 18-59, Hungarian people are more susceptible for making environmentally conscious lifestyle changes compared to the year 2010. These changes are mainly the ones which can be applied to their everyday lives. The results of this survey show, that the preference of local products raised from 34% to 43% but still only 16% would pay attention on fair trade products (WWF 2016). Even though we could criticize the study made by WWF, in general, Hungarian people seem to be a bit more aware of what they consume; for example, per capita meat consumption fell from 70,2 kg to 55,5 kg from 2000 to 2013, while the consumption of other animal based food also decreased. On the other hand, per capita vegetable consumption slightly declined in 2013 compared to the five years average (-3%), but raised compared to the year 2012 (+7%). The consumption of organic food products have stagnated in the last few years, there is no significant change (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2015c).

If we consider the customers of Zsámboki Biokert's products, we can see a way different approach to food consumption compared to an average citizen of Budapest. That fact became clear after spending time and having discussions with them while handing out their food boxes at Cargonomia, and after receiving their feedback to our questions which were posted to them by e-mail. Their comments and thoughts are summarized in **Table 1**.

<i>Question 1: What do you think about the organic products that Cargonomia provides (vegetable boxes, bread, wine), why are you buying them?</i>	- their origins are more reliable/verifiable (food safety)
	- baby/small children in the family
	- trust in products and source, transparency
	- lower environmental impacts (energy and resource use, emissions to air, water and soil)
	- corporate social responsibility

	- health benefits
	- top quality, freshness and good taste of products (free from fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, preservatives)
	- diversity of consumed food (gastronomy)
	- higher nutritional value of food
	- supporting local Hungarian producer and labor
<i>Question 2: How are these products affecting various aspects of your life (health, wellbeing, etc.)?</i>	- the short- or long-term effects cannot be measured in a home environment
	- influence on cooking habits
	- better quality of health
	- more vegetables, less meat in the diet
	- educational effects (the box system teaches families to consume seasonal vegetables and less meat)
	- less waste

Table 1: Aggregate results of e-mail interviews (Questions 1, 2) with organic food box customers of Cargonomia
(Own representation 2016)

Summing up the consumer responses, the most determining factors why they have chosen to consume the type of products what Cargonomia provides are the trust in the producer and the way of producing, family reasons, the lower environmental impacts through the whole life cycle of the products, better food quality, higher nutritional values, diversity and safety of the food what producers provide. Results of various studies about local, organic food made by (Feldmann & Hamm 2015; Thøgersen 2011; Bloemmen et al. 2015; Lazányi 2013) show almost the same components as the most important factors in consumers' decision making. Research made on the impacts of local and organic food sourcing conclude that this system and these products have a significant effect on society (wellbeing, human relations and interactions, health effects etc.) and environment (lower energy and resource use, lower emissions to water, soil and air, protecting biodiversity etc.) as well (Reganold & Wachter 2016; Springmann et al. 2016). The effects that e-mail respondents perceived on their everyday life are mostly in connection with health benefits, these products influence a changing diet and a certain way of thinking, while some interviewees also highlighted the fact, that the outcomes and impacts on their personal life cannot be measured at all, or in numbers. If we consider 'food consumption' as an institution, it is certainly changed in the case of consumers of local organic food provided by Cargonomia, mainly driven by norms, perceived values and the cultural-

cognitive pillar as well. According to their feedback, we can see a tendency towards an increased awareness and consciousness in their consumption patterns.

We can see from the answers and the interviewees also mentioned, that Zsámboki Biokert is well connected to communities, in Zsámbok and in Budapest as well, which is beneficial for customers and the people from the farm too. Systemic thinking is essential, and the reason why Zsámboki Biokert has resources to concentrate on building a community of local organic food consumers is because making profit is not a core goal for them, they have energy and time to focus on more important and meaningful things (education, providing information, protecting traditions, reciprocity, wellbeing of employees etc.) (Bolvári 2016; Strenchock 2016). *“Zsámboki Biokert shows a really unique desire to not just provide a service by providing food, but to really connect with people, remain open to educating people about food systems, hosting and welcoming people to the farm.”* (Strenchock 2016). We need to take a note about some contradictions here, namely that Zsámboki Biokert’s decision of selling their goods in the city was mostly based on the level of effective demand in Budapest. Csaba and Logan also talk about this contradiction: *“It is quite contradictory, because we do not serve food for people living in poor health and financial conditions, but rather the wealthier ones, although the former are in bigger need for local, seasonal organic products.”* (Bolvári 2016). *“Our goal would be not to only reach one segment of the society, the portions of the population which would be greatest served by eating a more diverse diet, that is rich in organic vegetables and free from pesticides, fertilizers and chemicals, are often the ones who have the least access.”* (Strenchock 2016). The prices of the farm’s produce are lower compared to average large-scale organic producers, but it is still expensive to consume this type of food for most people living in the countryside (e.g. in Zsámbok). That is where providing information and education comes into the picture, the benefits of local organic products should be communicated way better to consumers, so they can see the hidden costs (medicine, health care, environmental damage) that they pay next to buying conventional products for a cheaper price (Bloemmen et al. 2015; Bolvári 2016). Another crucial thing besides teaching about conscious consumption would be to have more organic food in primary, secondary and high schools and especially in hospitals, where people consume the worst quality food in Hungary (Strenchock 2016).

If we take into account all the opinions and facts which were presented in this section, local food sourcing can contribute to a transition towards sustainability in a very positive and influential way. Starting from the early stages of production (farm level), through all phases of the life cycle, positive effects can be observed both from an environmental and societal perspective, but it is still only a small-scale change, the truth and future challenge is: *“That we absolutely need to revolutionize food systems.”* (Strenchock 2016).

Through Cargonomia, Zsámboki Biokert not only provides local organic food, but an ideology and a way of life as well, which has a lot of connections with the concepts emphasized by Degrowth à la française; good life, conviviality, autonomy, solidarity and enjoyment of life. Talking about other transition initiatives in connection with agriculture and food, among *Pipacs Pékség* and many others, we can find a Sunday market for local organic products based on direct trade (*Szimpla Piac*) situated in a ruin bar² in the city center, an association (*Szatyor Association*) formed on the principles of social entrepreneurship offering local and organic shopping alternatives and organizing educational programs, and a catering company (*Házikó*) providing local seasonal processed food alternatives with minimal, biodegradable packaging. These kind of local food initiatives are fundamental in Budapest from a transition point of view, especially if we take into account the high level of health problems and diseases which can be connected to the undesirable food trends and the unhealthy traditional diet of Hungarians.

6.3. Open social space

The third part of Cargonomia's activities is about providing an open space for people to discuss, debate and experiment degrowth, sustainability and transition. They have the opportunity of doing these by attending gatherings, presentations, discussions and workshops, either organized by the Cargonomia team or others as it was explained in the *Presenting the case: Cargonomia (Chapter 2.1.)* section of this research. The aim of providing an open public space is to create a community, where members can rely on each other, share their knowledge and skills, and at the same time they also have the opportunity to participate in Cargonomia's activities. The quality of social relations are quite fundamental (Adloff 2016), and according to (Francis et al. 2012; Humphreys 2010), belonging to a certain community results in improved civic participation and volunteering, whilst the feeling of increased safety, security and wellbeing are also necessary outcomes.

Even though its effects cannot be measured in numbers, the open public space function of our case study is just as important as the promotion and use of sustainable transportation modes and the distribution and popularization of local organic food. Through offering a social space, Cargonomia puts forward a type of sustainability and degrowth education, with offering the possibility for people to meet, have dialogue, debate, learn, criticize and question themselves and their way of life, similarly to the form of an open forum, without the pressure of having to consume anything and

² Many abandoned or ruined buildings in Budapest have been converted into clubs or bars in the last 10 years, especially in the downtown area (District VII). This neighborhood was pretty much left to decay after WWII, providing places to develop an underground bar scene. These places mostly contain second hand furniture, and a unique interior. They host regular events, which can be different kinds of arts events (music, exhibitions, poetry, theater etc.), flea markets, second hand markets, workshops, or a food market providing organic local products.

spending money (Despoisse 2016; Liegey 2016b; Strenchock 2016). As a result, people would automatically start the desired change into a ‘*more sustainable*’ life, but the path which leads there is also essential (Liegey 2016b; Strenchock 2016). As Adrien Despoisse expressed during our interview, he has the same thoughts about the public space function of Cargonomia and Cyclonomia as well. According to him, physical and intellectual work is strictly divided nowadays, which is a mistake. In their everyday life and through events, Cargonomia and Cyclonomia is working on connecting these, and offering them to society as an alternative (Despoisse 2016), initiating a kind of institutional change as well, where people can change their mindset and quotidian norms, habits.

As practitioners, our role during the internship period was also to organize and participate on various events during the semester which were held in Cargonomia, including a sociocracy workshop, the DIY knitting and sewing workshop Varronomia, visits from German and Danish student groups and a free talk about permaculture and sociocracy. Next to these, we constantly had visitors from other civil organizations, universities and media. We had the chance of experimenting the knowledge and skill sharing function of an open public space, and through conversations, discussions (even with organic food box customers or bicycle messengers from Kantaa) and practice, we learned a lot about sustainability, transition and degrowth from others, while they also learned from us. These experiences made clear what open social spaces and conviviality really mean, whereas the educational effects were inspirational and positive from a transition towards sustainability point of view as well.

Moving forward to the opinions of organic food box customers about Cargonomia, the results of the e-mail interviews show somewhat mixed results (**Table 2**).

<i>Question 3: Why did you choose Cargonomia as a box pick up point?</i>	- good atmosphere and welcoming people
	- informational, educational reasons
	- feeling of being a part of a community
	- practical reasons (convenient location, home delivery)

Table 2: Aggregate results of e-mail interviews (Question 3) with organic food box customers of Cargonomia (Own representation 2016)

Half of them enjoy visiting the place, because of the added values of ‘*shopping*’. These involve the feeling of being a member of a community, conversations, discussions and flow of information what we already mentioned as our personal experiences as well. The other half choose Cargonomia based on the fact that this location is close to their living or work place, and because of the bicycle home delivery service. From the answers and our perceptions, Cargonomia could make some improvements in communicating and interacting better with members of its community, so the

goals, benefits and impacts would be more visible. A thorough discussion on deficiencies and overall challenges of this social cooperative can be found in the next part (**Chapter 6.4. Discussion on Cargonomia's overall impact, challenges and the future**) of this research project.

The effects of the open social space function of our case study are the hardest to evaluate. If we take into account all the above mentioned things, there are benefits and positive outcomes for people who are involved in Cargonomia's activities in some ways (team members, food box customers, attendees of events, bike messengers etc.), and Cargonomia can certainly have a kind of educational, instructive, awareness raising and inspirational effect on local communities from a transition towards sustainability point of view.

The main challenge of open community spaces in Budapest can be connected to some general issues, namely that even though the city has the suitable infrastructure, people are not motivated (because of political, psychological, economic and historical reasons) (Strenchock 2016), resources are lacking and there is an absence of a certain culture of occupying open spaces (Liegey 2016b). Some of these problems are in correlation with the overall wellbeing and societal situation of the city, which shows worrying patterns. For example, even though the personal satisfaction numbers had displayed a rising trend from 2012 to 2015, Budapest citizens are still among the most unsatisfied ones (taking into account their financial situation, job situation, health etc.) from the EU28 country capitals (European Commission 2016b). From an institutional change perspective, path dependency is really strong in case of the general issues mentioned above by Vincent Liegey and Logan Strenchock, therefore radical external conditions (political, social influence) would need to appear to motivate people to change, or there should be a disruption of path dependency reinforcing mechanisms.

6.4. Discussion on Cargonomia's overall impact, challenges and the future

After evaluating and discussing the possible impacts of our case study following the line of the three main areas of activity, a collection and summary of comprehensive impacts are needed, together with the main challenges and the potential future.

As it was mentioned before, Cargonomia's overall effect and contribution to a transition towards sustainability is hard to measure in quantitative means: *"If you think about how many researchers started to work with us, how many talks we gave all around Europe or even the world (for e.g. US), it has a very huge impact, and the impact is even bigger if you think about how it participates in decolonizing the imaginary of people, who are connected from time to time by us. I think the impact of Cargonomia in how many boxes we deliver every week, how many bike deliveries we make, how much vegetable are made in Zsámbok or how many bikes are made in Cyclonomia, it's nothing, it's really just the top of the iceberg"* (Liegey 2016b). This social cooperative is influencing a so called

'silent transformation' - which is a concept coming from China - meaning that even though there are no immediate and visible outcomes of the activities, the change is still happening (Liegey 2016b).

As practitioners, we observed and experimented that this social cooperative has the potential (and wants) to stand out as an example, and show viable and meaningful sustainable alternatives which could be replicated in different ways, offering locally appropriate solutions in a generally profit oriented world. All of our interviewees who are Cargonomia team members expressed almost the same: *"I think our collaboration is a showcase to people, we show an alternative, something different from capitalism and that is important."* (Erős 2016). The fundamental values for this social cooperative are not monetary means, creating cultural and social values; social capital and social cohesion are far more important (Liegey 2016b; Hellebrandt 2016; Despoisse 2016; Strenchock 2016). These values are also major ones from the perspective of transition towards sustainability: *"If we are going to talk about models of society which are going to help reduce the level of social and environmental exploitation, which our modern economic system encourages, we need to talk about the increasing importance of socially valuable interactions."* (Strenchock 2016) The social interactions can be motivating and influential for people in questioning and assessing the effect of their everyday activities on their happiness, indirect and direct environment and society, and after they can connect the dots between these, leading to a more thorough understanding of different issues.

In Hungary, sustainability and environmental problems have always been pushed aside because of different reasons. The social context and environmental governance regime are still substantially influenced by Hungary's post-socialist state being, therefore transition initiatives and other civil society organizations play a marginal role (Strenchock et al. 2016). The major obstacles for transition initiatives in Budapest in general can be categorized into two groups: structural disadvantages and communication barriers. The structural challenges can be connected to the fact that there are rather weak policy support structures for community-based initiatives, and it is hard to get access to grants and funds. Most of the communicational challenges occur due to the lack of resources and participation, and the absence of effective communication between transition initiatives and decision-makers, which makes the cooperation difficult (Strenchock et al. 2016).

According to (Szűcs 2016), the change should still be initiated from the top-down, because civil organizations do not have the power: *"I think in this situation district councils and decision-makers should initiate because civil organizations are not taken seriously."* (Erős 2016) also thinks this way, but at the same time, he criticizes politicians and their attitude towards innovative initiatives: *"I think politicians should stand up for the cause. Personally I see these things a little bleak, I am a little disillusioned with politics. When there is an interesting initiative, or idea, it is strangled by decision-makers. In general, they don't care at all, they don't have time, energy, or interest."* This can be one

of the reasons why motivation is lacking from a lot of Budapest citizens, because: *“...people, the populace are unaccustomed from thinking and discouraged from participating in the decision making.”* (Szűcs 2016). Furthermore, there are some organizations and initiatives, which are not working for the community or the local environment, but decision-makers still support them in order to provide a better picture about themselves and show how aware are they of the issues (Szűcs 2016). These opinions are pretty much in line with the findings of the ARTS report (Strenchock et al. 2016), and with what we observed and perceived during our internship period and as inhabitants of Budapest; this old fashioned way of making politics certainly creates obstacles for transition initiatives. Of course the attitude of politicians is not a Budapest or Hungary specific issue, but as (Liegey 2016b) pronounced, in order to launch social enterprises or community-based transition initiatives nowadays: *“...you have to be crazy, because the system is not made for that.”* (Liegey 2016b).

There are also structural and communicational challenges inside these alternative organizations in Budapest in general. Even though it would be fundamental, transition initiatives - Cargonomia as well - are struggling with finding the right channels to communicate their goals and activities in an efficient way towards general public and sometimes they do not reach their target group. Civic initiatives in this case should improve their organizational and cooperation culture, and at the same time acquire more management and planning skills (Szűcs 2016; Strenchock et al. 2016). During our participation in Cargonomia, we observed other difficulties as well, such as finding qualified and passionate volunteers to work with, deciding on focus areas and core activities, and challenges on the personal level. A basic limitation of transition towards sustainability is that transition initiatives always face contradictions and there are areas where they could be improved. The task would be to reflect upon these contradictions from time to time and deconstruct them, or at least make them visible for the community (Liegey 2016b).

“I think the most important task is to learn how to interact and cooperate with each other.” [...] *“Basically everyone should realize that community decision-making is better than individual decision-making. This is the basis for everything”* (Szűcs 2016). Like-minded people, who believe in environmental and social sustainability, share this sentiment. Cargonomia, just as most transition initiatives around the world have arrived at a crossroads. Their future depends on their ability to reach people, to augment their communities or inspire people to create new ones. One of the most important future goals is to reach a critical mass from which these initiatives can snowball both in size and in influence.

For the political environment, we are neither better nor worse than anywhere else in Europe. Even though the political system is demotivating, *“We keep going, it won’t change anything, and Trump or*

Orbán are not here blocking the door to do the things." (Liegey 2016b). To implement a critical mass, it starts from grassroots movements, connected with each other and connected to other type of institutions (political, NGOs, media etc.). Politicians can help, but not by implementing top-down approaches, but to offer more spaces and protection (basic income, sharing work hours etc.) (Liegey 2016b; Despoisse 2016). Thankfully there are always communities that are interested in new ideas and new initiatives, they interact with and test these novelties, which is an important positive aspect (Erős 2016).

The future of Cargonomia is exciting at least, if not promising. Of course in the coming years the Cargonomia team will be just as busy developing the internal connections and synergies as working in and for their community. *"It is far too early to start thinking about transition and bigger scale impacts of Cargonomia at the moment in my opinion."* (Strenchock 2016) According to Logan, it is objectionable to see Cargonomia growing and distributing 1000 food boxes, or hosting a discussion with 10 000 participants, it is definitely not the goal. The main aim is to exemplify one way how people can work together and create a space which has benefits on the local community, which has benefits on the socially conscious small-scale likeminded enterprises which are part of the cooperation and where people can be part of meaningful activities, without the aim of making profit (Strenchock 2016). For example Zsámboki Biokert can be used as a living classroom to test and try out the low-tech machines which were made in Cyclonomia, but it is a potential collaboration now, which they started to breach (Strenchock 2016), but members are also thinking long-term *"The next step would be not to make Cargonomia city-wide or nation-wide, but to have multiple cooperations, forming a web with each other"* (Despoisse 2016). In order to being able to stay local, small-scale and sustainable both environmentally and socially, centralization must be avoided.

A small number of decision-makers and politicians also agree with this vision of future. *"I choose the church and civil affairs because I'm sure that if we need to rebuild our democracy and our society - and I think we do - it can only be done from that side. That is the last place where the still functioning part of our society and culture can be found from which democracy can be rebuilt and something new can be created. The revolution I'm expecting will come from them I believe"* (Szűcs 2016). For the representative of District VII these people symbolize the qualities that are needed (for this transition), they think something about themselves, they think about their resources and opportunities, and their place in their communities or in their cities, they think about synergies and joint decision making. *"During their activities they contribute to the kind of community-based knowledge upon which the future can be based"* (Szűcs 2016).

Looking beyond Cargonomia and its impact, we can see that more and more journalists, activists, economists, researchers and scientists believe that an alternative to globalization, consumerism and sustainable development is needed. *“If degrowth is to going to have the impact that is necessary, it needs to be much more effective than what has come before, sustainable development”* (Strenchock 2016). It may seem harsh to mention consumerism and sustainable development on the same page, but we need to take into consideration that since the Brundtland Report in 1987, this concept has transformed in recent years into a go-to expression for politicians and captains of industry to hide behind and gain voters and backing (green washing).

A new wave of politically active, environmentally conscious thinkers from all around the world believe, that it is time for transition initiatives and degrowth thinking to gain space and it is time to change the existing institutions, re-localize, re-appropriate, decolonize our imaginary and work towards a more substantial, meaningful life. Re-localization is already happening around the world. Thousands and thousands of new initiatives are springing up (e.g. the Transition Town initiatives), sharing the same principles, but too often isolated from each other. Most of these initiatives are connected to food - CSAs, farmers' markets, permaculture, 'edible schoolyards' (Helena & Rupert 2016), but there are also instances of local currency (banking & finance), knowledge-sharing, energy sources, built-environment and transport.

7. Conclusion

It is a concordant notion among Cargonomia team members that even though some sustainable development or other ‘green’ development scenarios have useful and meaningful ideas and solutions, it seems like our general society is missing the whole issue by wanting to solve environmental and social issues by concentrating on making more and more profit (Despoisse 2016; Liegey 2016b; Erős 2016; Strenchock 2016). Furthermore, as Vincent puts it *“In my opinion it is easier and more valuable to debate on the meaning of life, than to debate on physical limits to growth”* (Liegey 2016b).

Although Cargonomia in itself is not a solution to the introduced problems, it offers alternatives as a showcase project, proving that creativity and resourcefulness can generate meaningful changes in local communities without having stable financial backing or many team members to remain in existence. These observations are unique to Hungary and Budapest because of the country’s post-socialist state and being a relatively new member of the European Union. The social context, general behavior and attitude towards sustainability and transition initiatives, and the country’s environmental governance system are highly affected by these factors and transition initiatives had to adapt. Due to mostly historical reasons, public policies of national governance have yet to shift from economic growth marginalizing environmental and sustainability issues, leaving NGOs and social cooperatives (transition initiatives) with rather limited resources and possibilities (Strenchock et al. 2016).

Cargonomia is a diverse organization that fits the description of a transition initiative. One of the main roles (as well as challenges) of Cargonomia is connecting other transition initiatives (Kantaa, Zsámboki Biokert, Wekerle, Házikó, Szatyor, Cyclonomia, Pipacs Pékség). The most important limit of transition is that you are always facing contradictions (how to reach the critical mass needed to inspire a change without growing, how to grow without concentrating on profit, etc.), and it is an essential task to reflect on them.

From the example of the community based initiative Cargonomia it is possible to conclude that such transition initiatives can help in changing existing institutions, have positive impacts on multiple key areas of sustainability and they are able to contribute to a transition towards sustainability in a positive way. Local food distributing initiatives can improve the health and wellbeing of their community and improve social sustainability, while organic and biodynamic farming methods lower environmental impacts. Do it yourself workshops influence creativity and pass on practical knowledge and know-how on how to reuse and recycle, while solutions of sustainable urban logistics,

such as the use of bicycles and cargo bikes helps reducing air-, and noise-pollution, lowers GHG emissions and last but not least saves money.

Either these initiatives (transition, degrowth-inspired, or sustainability-) will not be able to work together and to become a viable alternative to globalization or sustainable development systems, both of which have proven to be ineffective, or they thrive under the pressure and against a system that is currently assisting the opposing side and become powerhouses to a desired change.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Annex I: Summary of face to face interview with Csaba Bolvári

Interview date: 30-11-2016

Interviewee: Csaba Bolvári - Organic agriculture expert, coordinator of Zsámboki Biokert

The interview was conducted in Hungary, Zsámboki Biokert, 2116 Zsámbok, Szent László street 56.

He thinks that one main challenge for small-scale farmers, that you need a diversity of skills, playing different roles (lot of times small-scale farmers only have the skills of being a farmer, gardener). Everything in Zsámboki Biokert is based on and planned precisely with the idea of minimal input, minimal output. The other two main principles are protecting biodiversity and the quality of soil. Csaba highlights the fact, that the social part of farming in Zsámbok is really important and the farm is connected very well to communities, it is integrated in the city and in the village of Zsámbok as well (school garden). In his opinion their decision of carrying and selling goods in Budapest was mainly based on the level of effective demand in the city, although he thinks that the people living in poor health and financial conditions are in bigger need for local, seasonal organic products.

They can keep their prices lower compared to large-scale organic producers, because they are not forced to make big profits. The main things why it is important to consume local, seasonal organic products for people living in the city is because of health benefits, good taste, gastronomy, environmental benefits, being part of a community, etc. Csaba also talks about the importance of education and that the benefits of organic products should be communicated better to consumers. In his opinion it is really important to have transition initiatives in Budapest, and their partnership with Cargonomia is fruitful for both entities. They bring life to the city in the form of vegetable boxes and 'ideology', while the city provides them volunteers and resources, publicity. He really thinks that Cargonomia links them to the blood circulation of the city.

9.2. Annex II: Summary of face to face interview with Vincent Liegey

Interview date: 01-12-2016

Interviewee: Vincent Liegey - Interdisciplinary researcher, Co-author of "A Degrowth Project", coordinator of the Degrowth Conference Budapest 2016, founder and coordinator of Cargonomia

The interview was conducted in Hungary, Piroska Restaurant, 1071 Budapest, Damjanich street 40.

First Vincent started working on a project called 'Degrowth research and experimentation center Budapest', because he wanted to go ahead with research but outside of academism and to connect directly research, political activism and experimentation. For Vincent, Cargonomia is mostly like a

showcase project of how the alternatives could work and how if you open spaces for people, a lot of things could happen. He expresses his thoughts about the other transition initiatives and projects in Budapest, and says that the system is not ready for these.

According to Vincent, Cargonomia really contributes to sustainability in connecting people, in re-localizing some activities, in creating synergies between activities, cooperatives, companies, businesses. Cargonomia can stand out as a good example, creating a pathway for the future. For him, the cultural impact is the most important. Vincent highlights the fact that if you bring together people and offer a community space to question themselves and their way of living, they would automatically go to sustainability, they start to open discussion. He is not interested in technical solutions, we have the technological background that we need, and the blockades are on the human scale and human dimension.

Cargonomia is a transition initiative in his opinion, with the role of connecting other transition initiatives as well. The limits of transition is that you face a lot of contradictions. He is talking about that these initiatives cannot do anything from one day to another. He expresses that the most important thing is not where you are, but what are the dynamics, how aware are you, and how you work on your contradictions. So the role is not just to create these initiatives but more to reflect on it and to push it even further to step by step deconstruct the contradictions or make people aware of these contradictions. For each of Cargonomia's partners he can see some part of degrowth.

He thinks Budapest is offering a lot of positive things. First, it is easy to have access to empty buildings in Budapest for a really cheap renting price. His main concern about Hungary is that we have the right infrastructure to take a step, but we do not have the resources (because a lot of people left) and motivation (because who is here, suffers economically, politically, psychologically) and the culture to occupy open spaces.

The role of a network of grassroots movements and organizations is important in creating a critical mass. In this way, we could step by step spread the ideas to transform the society, production and economic system. Politicians can help, but not by implementing top-down approaches, but to offer more spaces and protection. Except for the technocratic elite, he only met with open minded people towards the ideas of degrowth, but it is quite important how you pass these ideas to the audience. He is talking about the institutional dominance, in particular economic institutions where we totally lost the control; culturally, humanly and politically. One main task of degrowth is to work on strategies and tools on different levels to somehow get rid of these addictions to growth and alienation. It is easier and more valuable in his opinion to debate on the meaning of life, than to debate on the physical limits to growth, people are more interested in the former.

9.3. Annex III: Summary of face to face interview with Adrien Despoisse

Interview date: 02-12-2016

Interviewee: Adrien Despoisse - Expert in transport, founder and coordinator of the Cyclonomia DIY bicycle shop, founder of Cargonomia

The interview was conducted in Hungary, Govinda Restaurant, 1051 Budapest, Vigyázó Ferenc way 4.

First he introduces Cyclonomia; it was born three years ago with the main goal of making cycling in the city easier for everybody. There are two main branches, one of which is a DIY workshop, where you can have access to tools and knowledge and the other part is a welding workshop where they construct cargo bikes and other alternative low-tech solutions. Adrien's aim in Budapest is to put the economy back to reality, to teach people how to use local resources according to local conditions, to strengthen local economy and to pass on this knowledge resulting in a reformed work division. He thinks it is important to connect intellectual and physical work and to offer it to society as an option. Social spaces are very important, because that is where people can meet with their friends and have meaningful interactions. Their activities also include attending discussions about infrastructure, they work on bicycle maps, they keep in touch with district councils and sometimes even schools arrange trips to their workshop.

He talks about the main infrastructural problems of Budapest, and that planners kept the old socialist and productivist model of infrastructure in the city. He also mentions possible solutions to the infrastructural deficiencies of the city. After asking about who should stand out or initiate a change, he answers that in a representative democracy nobody from the decision-makers would go against profit, everybody believes in growth. Nobody thinks forward a hundred years and our politicians and decision-makers have not worked a single minute with their hands. To his opinion, the change should come from grassroots movements, bottom-up.

Right now Cargonomia is still very small-scale, but that is how it should be in his opinion, concentrating on one district. The next step would be to form a web of initiatives. He thinks that on one hand it is much easier to work without the need for profit, on the other hand it is hard because you have to find ways to survive. They try to give each other work, orders and favors go round, if there were more members of the community, a critical mass, it would go much smoother. He thinks Cargonomia has way more legitimacy than a lot of establishments.

Adrien thinks people are open to these transition initiatives. There has been a slight increase in the number of Cyclonomia members since the beginning, which is really good. They do not advertise

themselves and do not put a lot of time into communication, but somehow the information reaches out to people.

9.4. Annex IV: Summary of face to face interview with Logan Strenchock

Interview date: 05-12-2016

Interviewee: Logan Strenchock - Expert in civil engineering, small-scale organic farming and local food systems, Environmental and Sustainability Officer at CEU, founder of Cargonomia

The interview was made in Hungary, Central European University, 1051 Budapest, Nádor street 11.

Zsámboki Biokert is really unique in his opinion as it does not only provide food, but connects with people and remains open to educating them. He thinks that it is not important to reach people from the city, but realistically speaking, for small-scale farms (under 10 ha) the main goal is survival, they need to be very efficient in reaching consumers. There are several problems if Zsámboki Biokert would like to sell their products in the countryside, he mentions some of them.

Besides the principles of organic and biodynamic farming, which are very much in line with the ideology of degrowth, Zsámboki Biokert's goal is to produce a potential value without the exploitation of the land, improve the biodiversity and provide a fair livelihood to people who works at the farm. The conscious decision of not growing and to keep the farm operating on a "human scale", without modernization and mechanization is also essential from a degrowth point of view.

Logan mentions the importance of making diversified food choices, while he also expresses the importance of transparency and trust. Besides the garden works and regular management tasks what they have to deal with as a farm, they also have communicational and community building, marketing tasks. It is a huge help for the farm that they have citizen and volunteer partners, helping and supporting them at the farm and in the city as well. According to him, the food systems need to be totally changed. He expresses the importance of consuming local organic food (environmental and social benefits). He says almost the same thing, what Csaba Bolvári mentioned, that people who are in need for local organic food are the ones who have the least access. Consuming local organic food would be especially important in primary and secondary schools, high schools and hospitals.

The collaboration with Cargonomia is beneficial both ways, the Cargonomia team and partners help in spreading knowledge about organic agriculture and Zsámboki Biokert. Cargonomia offers a space for dialogue about different types of cooperation and social relations, thinking beyond capitalism, challenging people to question their ideas about happiness, family and community. In his opinion, the cooperation is really important, because all these people work together, it is a process of giving and getting back. It is far too early to start thinking about bigger scale impacts of Cargonomia, it is

really about showing a good example and an alternative to people at the moment. The greatest value of this initiative is the community building role, and that it enhances social cohesion. He definitely does not want to see Cargonomia growing, instead he would like to see more transition initiatives in Budapest, Hungary and globally as well. Logan also talks about the social cooperative's challenges, and the Hungarian political and social situation. Next to the challenges, the benefits of starting a transition initiative like Cargonomia in Budapest are also mentioned.

He thinks that it is not important how we name the change (sustainable transition, alternative transition, degrowth etc.), but people should question themselves about the impact of their activities on their own happiness, direct and indirect environment. The whole point of the degrowth and transition is to get people to continually assess their own personal ideas for the fulfillment of happiness, personal and community health and then connect the dots between their activities and impact on society and environment.

9.5. Annex V: Summary of face to face interview with Balázs Szűcs

Interview date: 08-12-2016

Interviewee: Balázs Szűcs - Municipal representative of District VII, church and civil affairs counselor

The interview was made in Hungary, Balázs Szűcs's office, 1061 Budapest, Paulay Ede street 50.

His motivation to become a politician is that he was fed up with the arrogance surrounding him, mainly coming from city administration, he was fed up with how democracy works, he felt that the church and civilians are completely excluded from decision-making. Balázs feels that civilians are discouraged from participating in decision-making, and he sees that rebuilding democracy and our society should happen through the church and civil initiatives. One of the most important part of community-based initiatives is their message and the fact that they have a message. He expresses the importance of cooperation and interaction between initiatives and also decision-makers.

Traditional NGOs and civil initiatives nowadays have to deal with serious supply shortages in human resources, and young adults have no idea what it means to work in communities, they do not see the point of these organizations. Usefulness is really important to them, to see what does it contribute to their career or personal life and NGOs do not know how to speak this language. These organizations struggle financially, they depend on financial support from the district council. All of this results in a rather fragmented situation. Civil initiatives and members should improve their cooperation culture, their organizational culture.

Balázs highlights a crucial thing, he says that everyone should realize that community decision-making is better than individual decision-making. Politicians and decision-makers should learn and

understand that not every problem can be solved immediately. He thinks that the change should be initiated by district councils and decision-makers because civilians and their initiatives are not taken seriously now.

9.6. Annex VI: Summary of Skype interview with Levente Erős

Interview date: 03-12-2016

Interviewee: Levente Erős - Expert in IT systems and urban logistics, CEO of bike messenger company Kantaa, founder of Cargonomia

Kantaa is trying to grow slowly and they need to have some of the capitalist aspects, but at the same time they try to function as a kind of labor union too, with paying attention to their employees and not exploit them in any way. Levente thinks that in some ways there is a lot of degrowth in Kantaa. 99% of the equipment in the headquarters is second-hand, the tables are made from pallets, the computers, the kitchen tools are all second-hand as well. They select their clients carefully (no fast food distribution etc.) based on their environmental and social consciousness.

He says, that there is an enormous need for transition initiatives to change the economic system or at least provide alternatives for the society. Profit should not be measured in only monetary means, the social and environmental benefits are also crucial. Kantaa contributes to shaping the infrastructure and transport of the city in a very simple way, by having their messenger out on the streets (self-made spokespersons for cycling), attending events, contributing to research, studies and education. Levente also expresses his thoughts about the infrastructural issues in Budapest, and that politicians should stand out for a change, even though he is pretty disillusioned with politics. The improvement of bicycle infrastructure and the promotion of biking should be a first priority. He is talking about social, economic and environmental benefits. According to him, Cargonomia is a showcase project, showing an alternative, where monetary profit is not in the core. Levente thinks that the communities of Budapest are open to new ideas and initiatives and they are always interested, which is good.

9.7. Annex VII: Summary of face to face interview with Flóra Hellebrandt

Interview date: 28-11-2016

Interviewee: Flóra Hellebrandt - Bike messenger and dispatcher of Kantaa

The interview was made in Hungary, Udvarrom Ruin Bar, 1072 Budapest, Klauzál street 21.

This interview was originally made with the purpose of being a blog post on the Cargonomia web page, therefore it is mainly about cargo biking and bike related themes in general. We only used

some parts of the interview, which are summarized here. She says that nowadays people call Kantaa when they want to substitute cars in urban traffic, and because they can carry basically anything in the city with their special bikes. She expresses her thoughts about the infrastructural problems in Budapest and says that it is totally wrong that car traffic is the first priority when planning. Flóra presents the benefits of using bike for everyday transport as well. She talks about Kantaa and that it is different from other bike messenger companies, mainly because of the structure of the company, their relationship with customers and partners, the diversity of messengers and their social and environmental consciousness. One important thing at Kantaa is reciprocity, the messengers are not always paid in monetary means, but bread from Pipacs Pékség and other goods from partners. The same can be observed with customers, some of them also pay Kantaa with other means, not money. For her it is important that she participates in local community transition, it really motivates her, because there are added values (appearing through Cargonomia's activities).