



ESUBSIDIARITY: AN ETHICAL APPROACH FOR LIVING IN COMPLEXITY

J.M. Díaz Nafría (Universidad de León; HM; BITrum; Senescyt)



eSubsidiarity: An Ethical Approach for Living in Complexity



"Complexity does not put us only in the distress of the uncertain, it allows us to see besides the probable, the possibilities of the improbable... We are in an epoch of doubtful and uncertain combat".

(Edgar Morin)

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1. The Need for a New Ethical Approach

- Social order arisen with modernity > reduction of social complexity through cultural normalization (at the level of the nation-states) > **liberal ethics**
- Current increase of the complexity > new social and political order is nowadays to be **intercultural, multilingual and even multi-national**.
- National life is more and more entangled with **international relations**, and cannot be conceived anymore with our backs turned to **nature**.
- The traditional context of posing ethical questions is rather different.
- The **universality paradigm** that pervaded many classical approaches in ethics is not so convincing anymore: Anthropology, ethnography, intercultural ethics has shown the fragility of such universality.

1. The Need for a New Ethical Approach

- As in any other cultural change, it is quite clear that at the **age of information** we need a new way of addressing the issues of the proper behavior, the deep question of the **good live in the complexity** that is proper to our society.
- We may encounter a way of **diminishing the complexity** at the level of the **human agency**, as it was the case of cultural normalization in modernity, but we have to do it in another way.

3. Energy vs Information (Industrial vs Information Society)

- **Information:** what enables the selection of changes in a (self-organised) system/agent (physical, biological, cognitive, social) (Díaz & Zimmermann 2012, 2013, 2013a).
- **Energy:** possibility to perform changes in the system.
- When the change is *actualised*: **Structure / Matter:** New space of possibilities deploys
- Information drives the energy as to produce some particular change

	Industrial society	Information society
Usage of	energy	information
Relies on	Transformation materialised in the (stabilised) industrial system	The selection of changes in the socio-economical system

3. Industrial vs Information Society

- Comparison: industrial/Turing machine
 - Industrial machine: fixed operations
 - Turing machine: action table
- The dynamicity of changes increases
- Industrial society:
 - 1) division & serialisation of work through reliable machines
 - 2) Management of human organization of industrial tasks : re-adaptation of the system
- Freedom of choice in socio-economic tasks: Liberalised ethics (commercial freedom)

3. Industrial vs Information Society

- *Information Age*: (costless) flexibility of the productive relations (socio-economic system)
- Possibility of *sloughing off working force* > changed the game of selling and buying work
- A new social game has to be developed as to attain *human rights* / addressing increasing *inequality* / adapting to the *biospherical* sheltering
- **Information?** Socialised common asset / Property laws
- *Ethical Reflection*: new values / new socio-economic agencies

3. Industrial vs Information Society (the question of democracy)

- An straightforward way to cope with the complexity of a system comprised by too many functional parts and interactions (internal/external): arranging the system in a **hierarchical levelism** (each level its agents follow the rules and mandates given by upper level / interact with other agents of the same level / manage its constituent subsystems of the underneath level).
- *Examples:* feudal societies / industrial organisation
- Alien to the very concept of democracy in which agents operate under relative *equalised opportunities and make decisions in a participatory manner* (in the case of participatory democracy) or *through delegation* (in the case of representative democracy).

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- Can this concept be properly devised at the global scale?
- Can electronic means - as considered since the 19th century - serve as a means to deploy democracy globally or even to implement the ideal of participatory democracy (Bingham et al., 2005)?
- The inequality we have seen constantly growing globally since the 18th century (Milanovic, 2009) is actually compatible with democracy?

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- The Geopolitical reality of globalisation clearly overwhelms the cast of the democratic nation-states in which the rule-of-law is still preserved (Dahrendorf, 2001)
- This rule-of-law was developed within the nation-states (liberal democracies), in virtue of a continuous negotiation between the capitalist and labour forces enabling the reproduction of the productive relations in exchange for a power balance opposed to the natural tendency of capitalism (Bowles, 2007)
- This reservoir of power balance, crystallised in a rule-of-law guaranteeing social rights, has been progressively undermined through several historical factors

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- (i) the introduction of automatic production processes;
- (ii) the networking technologies at the service of the financial, commercial and productive economies;
- (iii) the constitution and advocacy of capitalist interests by unobstructed international institutions;
- (iv) the growing power of transnational corporations.

The development of the *productive forces* within the frame of the existing *productive relations* (reflected and legitimized in the *property relations*) leads to the contradictions between productive forces and relations (Marx 1859).

- In the **liberal democracies**: while the productive forces have evolved within capitalist economy, the productive relations and the corresponding property legitimacy have done it in the democratic frame of the nation-states.
- **Contradictions**: *democracy vs capitalism / equality vs. inequality / participation vs. dominancy*

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- It makes sense to seek after the *general will* of a culturally homogenous society, as in the case of the Greek *polis*, or the political communities Rousseau may have born in mind.
- It is attached to a grounding trust and solidarity < deep normative sense of identity (history, fate, memory, constitution and nation)
- McIntyre: “politics of self-defence for all those local societies as aspire to achieve some relatively self-sufficient and independent form of particed-based community”
- In a more global level: General will / Public interest? > illegitimate neoliberal bias
- Public sphere: Habermas / Vattimo, Capurro, Fuchs
- How to articulate the addressing of issues, the agreement of objectives

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- The **subsidiarity principle** represents a way to decrease complexity at the level of the agents while preserving the complexity at the global level.
- Something that is equally performed in the living organism or in the organization of decentralized political systems.

4. Democratically seizing complexity: Subsidiarity

- It was first developed with the **Christian Reformation** related to the Calvinist conception of the *common being* (Sinod of Emden, 1571: decision making at the lowest possible level)
- It becomes of major political relevance in the 19th C. in the context of *growing inequality* in the **industrialized societies** (Capital-Work)
- It becomes part of the **Social Doctrine** of the **Catholic Church**
- Principle of **Participatory Democracy** → **Positive Subsidiarity**
- Advocacy of **Conservative Liberalists** → **Negative Subsidiarity**
- **Juridical** Principle (Civil Law / Penal Law...)
- Organic principle for activity in **complex organisms**: action is taken at the lowest level, the closest to arisen issue.

4. Subsidiarity (positive & negative sense)

- EU (since Maastricht) > General principle of European Union law
*Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the **Union shall act only if** and in so far as **the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States**, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level*
- UN (UNDP):
*Decentralization, or decentralising governance, refers to the restructuring or reorganisation of authority so that there is a **system of co-responsibility** between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels **according to the principle of subsidiarity**, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels.*

5. eSubsidiarity: subsidiarity at the age of information

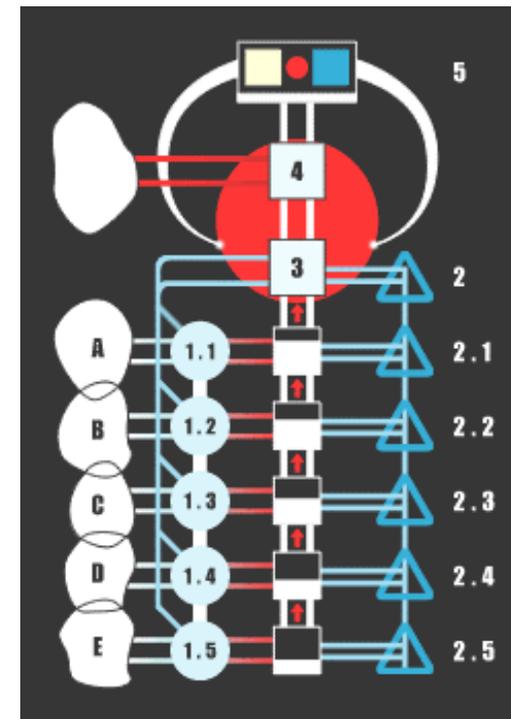
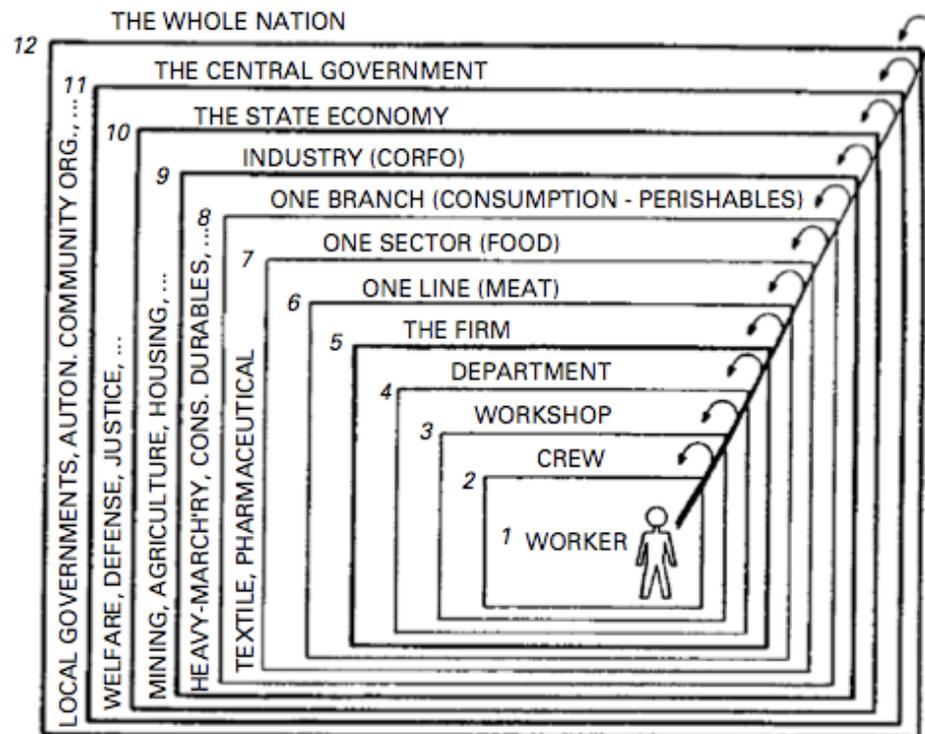
Digital paradise? The new space keep on being strongly unequal



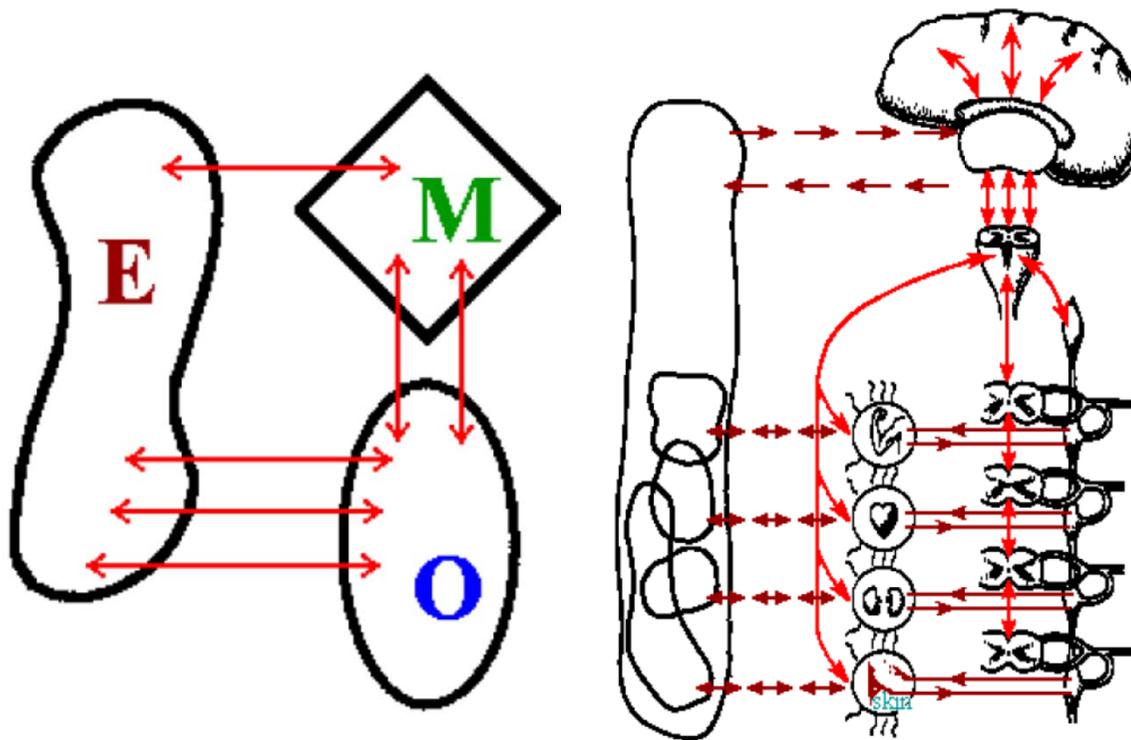
- Cyberattack
 - governmental
 - private
- Liberty under control
- States which are enemy of Internet (according to Journalist without Borders)

5. eSubsidiarity: subsidiarity at the age of information

Can we expand this model from the national to the international perspective?
Cybersyn or Synco 1972-1973 (S. Allende, F. Flores, R. Espejo, S. Beer)

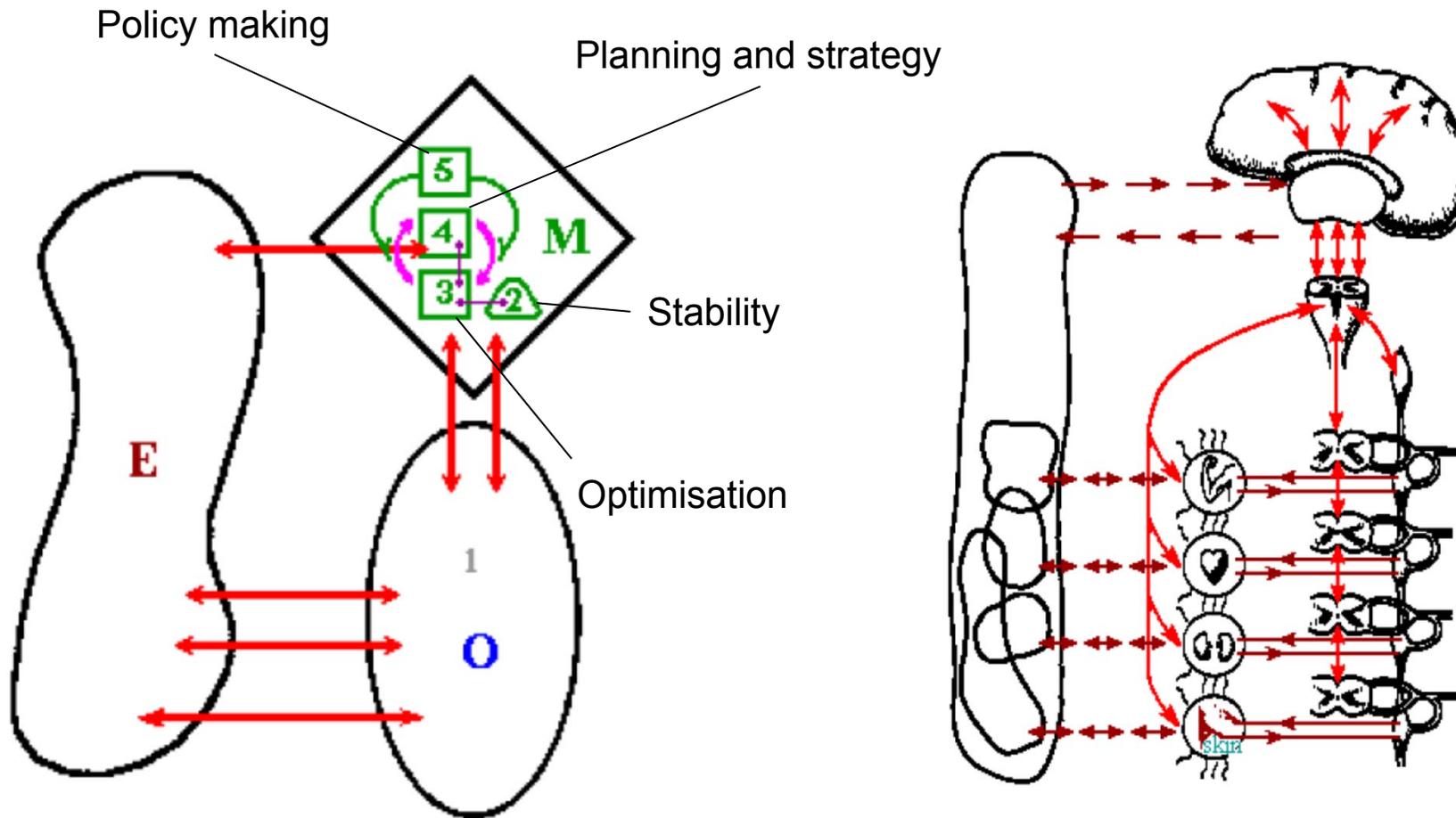


5. eSubsidiarity: subsidiarity at the age of information



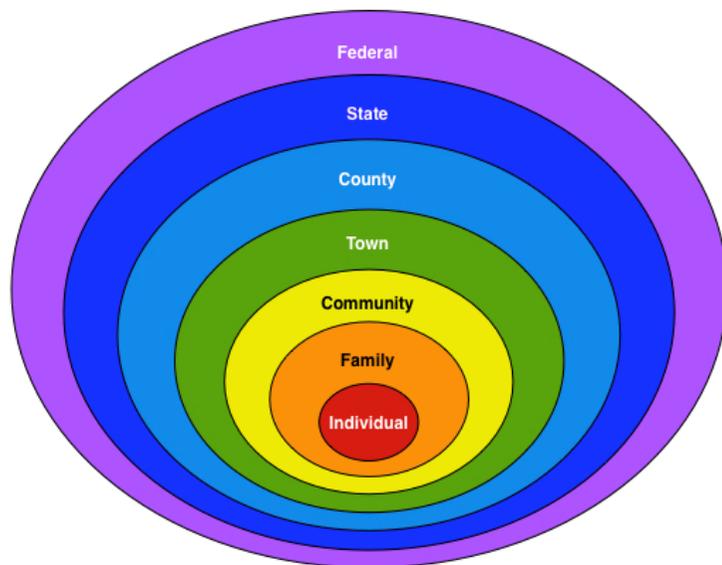
System 5	The Cortex. Higher brain functions.
System 4	Diencephalon Input from senses, forward planning.
System 3	Base brain. Pons and medulla. Internal regulation. Optimisation.
System 2	The sympathetic nervous system. Its function is to stabilise the activity of muscles and organs.
System 1	Muscles, organs. Primary activities.

5. eSubsidiarity: subsidiarity at the age of information

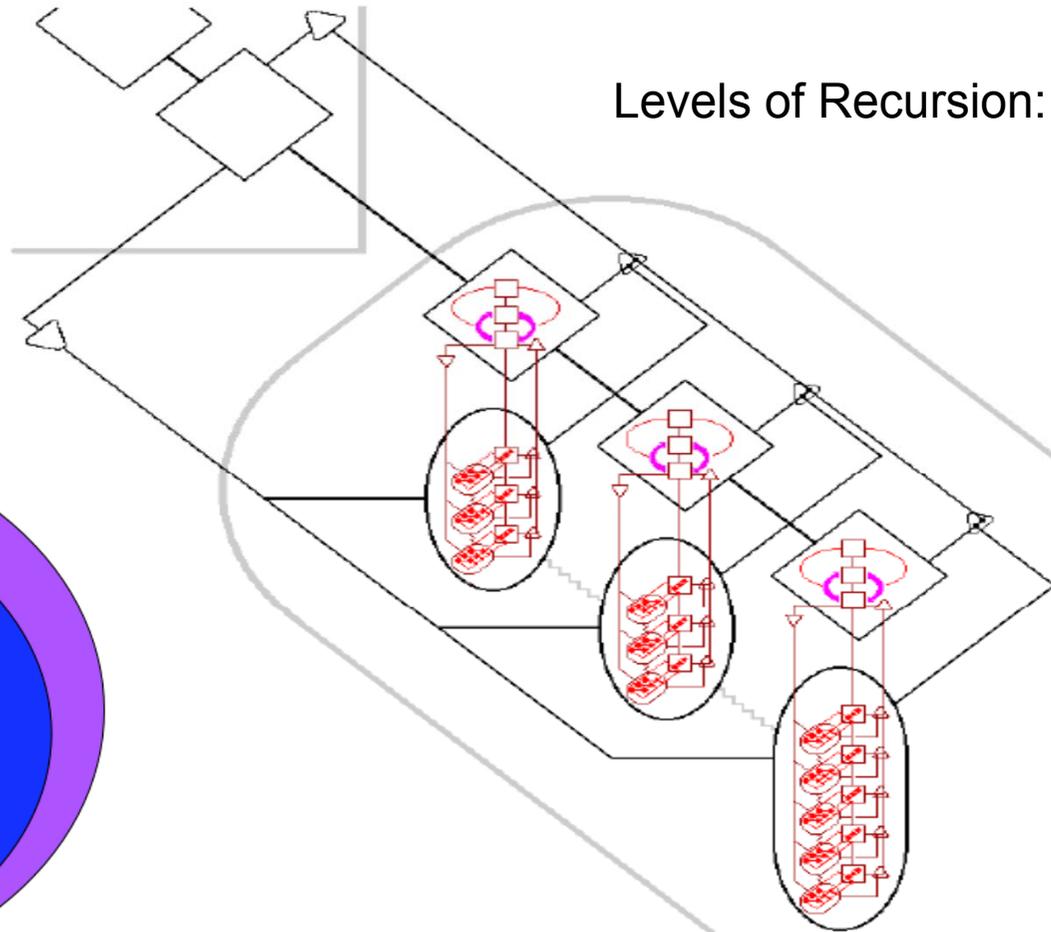


5. eSubsidiarity: subsidiarity at the age of information

Nested systems:

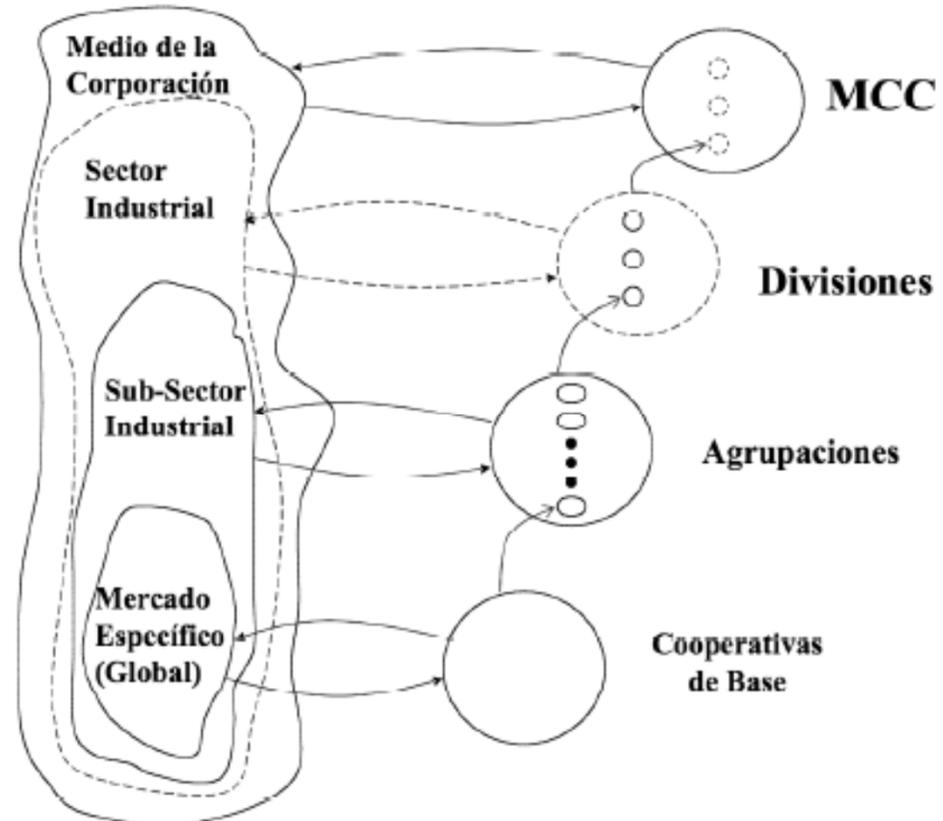
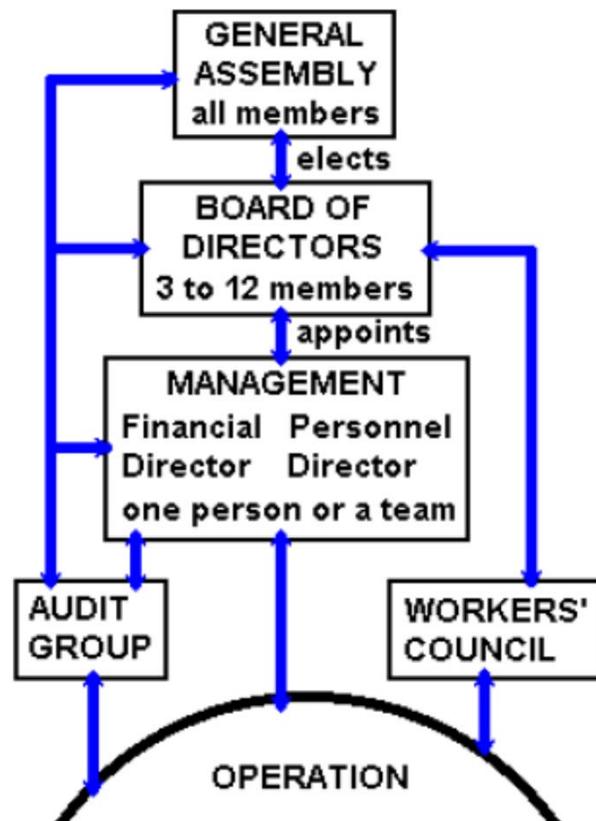


Levels of Recursion:



5. eSubsidiarity case: Mondragón Co-ops Group

Cooperative level



Thank you for your attention

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José María Díaz Nafria
jdian@unileon.es
<http://bitrum.unileon.es>



BITrum

Universidad de León

