



**I**t is time to get together to create our life-world... one that is diversified, based on equality, solidarity, and in tune with the needs of each of us.

In this self-managed space, we want to reduce cash exchange to a minimum in order to foster the emergence of an alternative economy. We might imagine, for example, a local exchange system of goods and services within the Center.

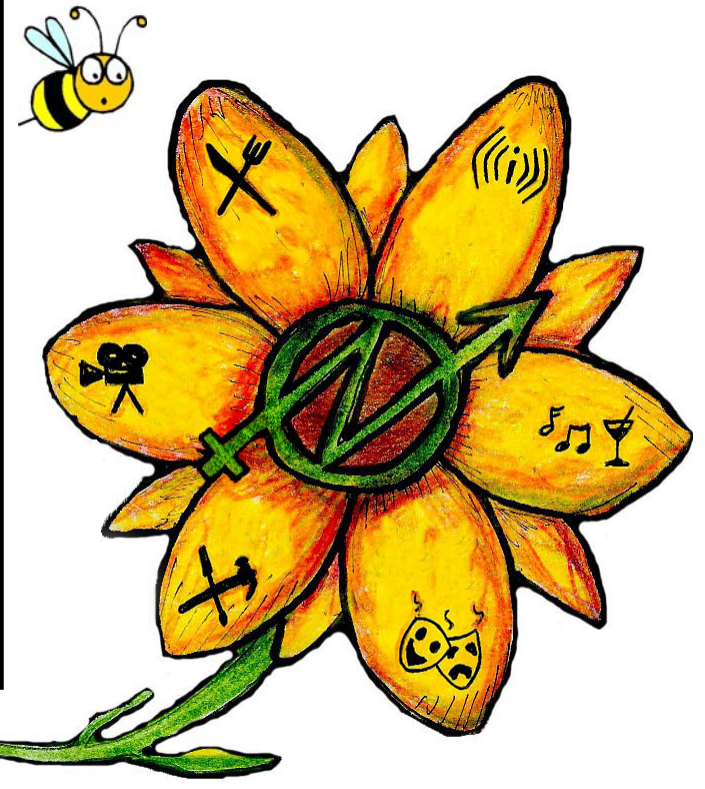
 Many different projects are possible. It is possible, it is realistic, if enough people get involved. In its early stages, the Center will be a meeting space, a space for dialogue, for the creation of new friendships, but also for culture — concerts, plays, exhibits, and a café-bar (a second chance for the Café la Petite Gaule?).

In the near future, the Center could be home to pick-up for food baskets within community-supported agriculture, a bike repair workshop, an independent media center with Internet access, a travel hostel, an activist university, an audio-visual library, a movie theatre, word-working and recycling workshops... 

And, eventually, other flowers will grow, in the neighbouring buildings, in the outdoor spaces. Why not an alternative housing project? An ecological and fair trade public market that would help build ties between city dwellers and farmers? Or an elementary or high school?

**This project is realistic and necessary.  
We hope that we will do it together.  
A field full of flowers is more pleasing to the eye  
than a single daisy.**

**Y**ou miss the Café La Petite Gaule – the bar with a cultural and political mandate that had to close its doors because of the high rent on Center Street? You find yourself remembering, with nostalgia, the Éco-boutique — that organic and fair trade bistro/store that had just taken root when all went bad because of lack of funding? You find that our neighbourhood needs a concert hall, a movie theatre, an alternative library, spaces for exhibitions, art and woodworking workshops? Together, **we chime a loud and clear YES.**



Towards a **self-managed**  
**social center**  
on the CN site in Point St. Charles

One of the lessons we draw from the history of struggle in the Point is that if we want something, there is no use waiting around for the authorities to get their act together... we must do it ourselves! That's why we are proposing that we set up a **SELF-MANAGED SOCIAL CENTER** in one of the existing buildings on the CN site. There are self-managed social centers all over the world. They are often set-up in abandoned buildings in neighbourhoods like ours, and are, in fact, social, cultural, social and political centers. What makes them different from the community centers or the Maisons de la Culture that we all know, is that they are autonomous vis-à-vis the State, they refuse hierarchical relations and illegitimate authority, and they put into practice a direct democracy.

## Illegal but legitimate



Given the lack of accessible and adequate spaces to hold alternative cultural activities, it is unacceptable that several abandoned buildings on the CN site are left unused, barricaded. As speculation leads to ever increasing land taxes, rents skyrocket, making it impossible for most to rent commercial space in Montreal and in the neighbourhood. It is also becoming more and more difficult to rent halls even on a temporary basis for concerts or other activities. And the few non-profits that rent space are oversolicited. Many of us have ideas and projects that we would like to see blossom... but the lack of money and adequate spaces renders the hill insurmountable.

Moreover, each and every one of us has greatly contributed to the construction and upkeep of these buildings and land through our taxes... collected by the federal government, owner of the Canadian National for close to 140 years. Ever since the government privatised the company and sold the site for peanuts, the CN has pocketed millions of dollars in profits from rent collection and building sales. Not one of us got a penny from those billions. **IN FACT, THOSE BUILDINGS, THAT SITE, BELONG TO US.**

We must act before Vincent Chiara (the new owner who recently purchased the site for \$1) starts selling off parcels of land to big promoters for unsightly prices who will then build condos and shopping centers that will be inaccessible to neighbourhood folks. WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS ENTIRELY LEGITIMATE, EVEN NECESSARY, to occupy, renovate and make use of the existing buildings... and that we do so according to our needs, wants and aspirations.



A shared space

We would like to see this self-managed space become a venue for dialogue, meetings, debate, leisure and action, that would foster the emergence of social ties that are different from those that are imposed upon us by contemporary urban life. We dream of a space for community initiatives, open to all projects that correspond to our collective vision. In other words, a center for the elaboration of creative solutions, a space for convergence and resistance. By giving a part of the city back to its inhabitants, we hope to contribute to discussions about current lifestyles. In all domains, we would like to see flower initiatives, alternatives, in a world that is in desperate need of a new imaginary.

The **bees** use the spaces within the Social center, without necessarily adhering to the underlying principles. They are the individuals who come to see a show or have a coffee; the community groups who will organise events or activities at the Center; independent artists who might want to exhibit their work or hold a movie-night; committees of neighbours who would hold their meetings there. Etc.! The bees take responsibility for what happens in the space during their activities, but are not involved in the decision-making regarding the management of the flower, they don't have a vote.

The **earth** in which this flower grows is very fertile. The long history of the neighbourhood... the union-organising of factory workers, mothers who fought for better schools and urban security, children who play in the streets and residents who set-up alternative health and legal services, allies from here and there who helped organise the fight against slumlords, groups that fought for and built cooperative housing... The fermentation of these struggles makes the compost, the fertility of the earth. The constant support of these people, of these groups, is an essential ingredient of the Social center.

Without a doubt, in the years to come, we will have to deal with invasions of annoying **insects**, be they promoters wanting to get us out to put in condos or the police laying down their laws. Given that we do not want to use pesticides, violent means of extermination to preserve our flower, we will invent other means to counter the storms.

## Antiauthoritarian and anti-capitalist self-management

This social center will be based upon the voluntary (but necessary) participation of all persons wanting to get involved and according to their abilities, availability, and personal choices. Self-organisation, built upon individual and collective responsibility, is essential.

Imagine a **flower**... with many petals, a heart and bees, that grows in the earth.

This flower, heart and petals, is of an anti-capitalist and antiauthoritarian variety. The **heart** is the organising committee, responsible for the coordination of the setting-up of the Social center and for the management and upkeep of the building. The members of the heart are, in effect, delegates from the petals. The **petals** are the committees that manage the autonomous projects or spaces within the Center. Those who come from time to time, and who adhere to the anti-capitalist and antiauthoritarian principles, can get involved via the petals, and as they participate and take on responsibilities, they can eventually become members of the heart.



**Together, as is said in Spanish, « El pueblo, unido, jamas serà vencido »!**

**The people, united, shall never be defeated!**