

Crypto Funding Social Projects and Redistribution in a Costa Rican Rural Town

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Abstract

The present article explores the interconnections between North-South relationships, transnational gentrification and crypto funding for community projects in the newly *glocal*, rural community of San Salvador del Barú in Tinamaste, Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica. Through in-situ observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews, this research seeks to understand the limitations in the use of cryptocurrency donations as well as the possible misuse of them to further reproduce neocolonial global disparities. In doing so, it sheds light on current Costa Rican tourist-migrant-expat phenomenon of land appropriation as well as new socio-cultural relations between locals and foreigners. From a critical Latin American perspective, it offers possible pathways to transforming globalized relationships by tapping into the branch of cryptocurrencies that promises decentralized and accessible funds.

Key words: Crypto funding; Transnational tourism gentrification; *Glocal* North-South relationships; Giveth; Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs); Social transformation

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INTRODUCTION

The present article takes a first approach to understanding

the ways in which transnational mobile agents and their crypto¹-funded community projects intersect with local communities in the rural Costa Rica town of San Salvador del Barú. For this purpose, it will analyze the impact of four projects developed by the Diamante Bridge Collective (DBC)² and crypto-funded through Giveth, a decentralized platform which connects social projects to crypto donors.

While the subject of cryptocurrencies has become quite predominant in technological and academic communities, few have taken a closer look at day-to-day realities and exchanges in communities where cryptocurrencies have been introduced as a form of everyday currency or through funds redirected to specific projects. This research will guide us through the complex interconnections between cryptocurrencies, crypto-donations, crypto-funded projects, and *glocal*³ socio-cultural relationships in San Salvador del Barú to shed light on the transformational capacity of cryptocurrencies, and its impacts and challenges due to historical socio-cultural inequalities present in society.

We shall begin by detailing the methodology used to gather testimonies, theoretical concepts and data for this research in order to situate our limitations and capacities. Then we shall re-state crypto's mission in the world and its current challenges, followed by a brief integration of transnational gentrification and mobility theories in order to

¹ Crypto refers to cryptography, nonetheless, throughout this article - and because of globalized use of the term - the terms *crypto*, *cryptocurrencies*, *digital currencies* and *virtual currencies (V.C.)* are used interchangeably throughout this academic article.

² Hereinafter as DBC.

³ *Glocality* refers to those relationships, be it political, economic, technological or socio-cultural, which have created a syncretism between local and foreign peoples, practices, knowledge, and institutions through globalization of ideologies of any kind through any method. In our case, *glocality* has been created in San Salvador del Barú through the arrival of immigrants and Costas Rican cosmopolitans.

understand how they may impact the use of cryptocurrency funds and therefore crypto's decentralizing mission.

Setting the ground for our research with the previous sections, we shall then look at the main uses and limitations of crypto funds received by DBC, followed by *glocal* awareness of crypto funds, as well as assessment of *glocals'* curiosity and openness to learn more about cryptocurrencies and ways to embrace them in their everyday exchanges of valued goods, information and services. Finally, this research will present testimonial evidence which reflects on the *glocalized* relationships and how they limit and enhance local livelihoods as well as crypto's mission, followed by a feminist ethics of care proposal to shed light on the underlying Costa Rican care culture as a powerful service exchange which can better both *glocal* relationships as well as crypto funded projects.

METHODOLOGY

For the realization of this research, we integrated a combination of qualitative tools such as ethnographic observation *in situ*, as well as *in situ* and virtual semi-structured interviews, together with the creation of an annotated bibliography and research journal. We also incorporated a brief analysis of funds and projects published in the "Most Funded" filter option of the Giveth⁴ website.

Our semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and themed according to the various subjects explored. With a total of ten interviews, our research subject pool includes foreign immigrants and Costa Rican cosmopolitans both living in the region and linked with the DBC as well as San Salvador del Barú locals. We find it important to distinguish the difference between locals of San Salvador del Barú and cosmopolitans from the Central Valley⁵, due to the sociohistorical differences that determine access to education, globalization, and therefore influence their world views. This differentiation allows us to keep an eye on hierarchical social structures present in the locality of our research, thus deviating from hegemonic dichotomies of local/foreigner. In the same way, we recognize that amongst our foreign research subjects there are educational, social, economic and cultural differences, some of which are also due to hierarchical impositions.

Interviewees were given or read a research consent form and their approval was received in writing or recorded during our interviews. Those who chose not to be recorded were excluded from this research. While only one out of our ten interviewed subjects chose to remain anonymous, we have selected to maintain the anonymity,

at times, of most subjects or parts of their testimonials in order to avoid any possible conflicts of interest that may arise in the publishing of the results of this research. Our decision to take this measure grounds itself in our academic and socio-ethical commitment to do no harm due to the realization that San Salvador de Barú is not only a small community but also a close knit one that is not exempt from hierarchical social relationships. We thus acknowledge that hierarchical relationships can give those in power the capacity to limit the livelihoods of those in limited positions of power.

This research also considers the DBC, Giveth and their coin *Giv*, and San Salvador del Barú as research subjects. The DBC is a decentralized

association of individual contributors, local organizations, and global partners working together as an interdependent network of autonomous communities to cultivate a planetary paradise... creating foundational agreements and more regenerative economies that empower us all to take better care of our bioregion, our neighbors and ourselves. (DBC, n.d., par. 1)

In Costa Rica, the DBC has local and legal interference under the non-profit *Asociación Puente Diamante*⁶, registered in the country and which "facilitates continuous mentoring programs in more just practices for ecological, social and economic dimensions and in management of goods and resources sustainably, adaptively and regeneratively" (DBC, n.d., par. 23).

Giveth is a crypto platform whose purpose is to build the "Future of Giving using blockchain technology" (Giveth, n.d.a., par. 1) through the economic support (via crypto coin named *Giv*) of "public goods" i.e., projects focused on decentralizing, community and altruism values (rewarding those who support/fund others). Giveth's focus and purpose is to create

open, transparent and free access to the revolutionary funding opportunities available within the Ethereum ecosystem⁷. Giveth is building a culture of giving that empowers and rewards those who give to projects, to society, and to the world. We aim to inspire our community to participate in an ecosystem of collective support, abundance and value-creation. (Giveth, n.d.a., par. 1-2)

San Salvador del Barú is a small rural community located about 15 minutes from the *Ruta Nacional Secundaria 243* that connects the highway known as *Costanera (Ruta Nacional Primaria 34* in the Pacific Coast) to the mountainous city of San Isidro del General. Typical to Costa Rican communities, San Salvador del Barú has a local football field, a public school, a catholic church, a community lounge; as well as one supermarket, one convenience store and two restaurants. We have focused on San Salvador del Barú seeing as this is where

⁴ <https://giveth.io/projects/all?sort=MostFunded>

⁵ Central Valley or *Valle Central*, is a highland valley in central Costa Rica, containing most of the country's large cities and about seven-tenths of the total population (Britannica, 2012, párr. 1).

⁶ Diamond Bridge Association (author's translation).

⁷ Ethereum "is a network of computers all over the world that follow a set of rules called the Ethereum protocol. The Ethereum network acts as the foundation for communities, applications, organizations and digital assets that anyone can build and use" (Ethereum, n.d.).

DBC is located in connection to the land named *Diamante Luz*⁸, their first “land node”, and also where the crypto-funded projects analyzed in this research arise from.

Similar to many other Costa Rican rural communities, San Salvador del Barú is also now the home for a variety of gentrifying global projects that have acquired land from locals to harness international communities and businesses which ultimately urbanize previously mountainous territories traditionally left untouched by locals or used for farming and cattle raising. Many of these projects have urbanized with a focus on regeneration and reforestation, adopting Costa Rica’s historical tourism and legislative focus on ecology, while others claim to be stewards of forests that were not in danger to begin with, since they had been protected and left untouched by previous local owners. These projects have drastically changed the landscape, rent gap and cost of living in San Salvador del Barú and have, at times, limited access to natural resources for local communities, including, but not limited to, access to rivers, waterfalls, and land acquisition at fair local prices.

In this way, San Salvador del Barú, as a community of humans, flora and fauna, has been the subject of massive transformations that are the direct product of gentrification. We shall look into this matter more deeply later on; for now, it is important to recognize that, from a Latin American critical perspective, our living communities extend past human agency and into more-than-human agency and the ways in which those two interact.

Finally, the researcher of this project recognizes... (hidden for blind review purposes).

From a Latin American perspective, we recognize that each researcher is positioned in a sociocultural sphere and therefore influenced by their upbringing, experiences, socioeconomic status and education; such influence delimits the scope of research. For this reason, we encourage critical reading of this work, as well as cross-referencing with others for the purpose of expanded views on similar matters. Additionally, while we understand that research positioning delimits this project’s capacity, it does so by providing a unique view of the subject matter that can enrich an *ecology of knowledge* (Sousa Santos⁹, 2009, 2010) in the field of cryptocurrencies, crypto funding/

donating, transnational gentrification, tourism gentrification and Central American/Latin American Studies.

Now that we have situated our methods and positions, next we shall briefly recap the mission of cryptocurrency, how this mission can be advanced by crypto funding and crypto altruism, and the challenges it faces within the savage capitalist¹⁰ system of the neocolonial global structures.

CRYPTOCURRENCIES: CAN THEY CHANGE THE WAY WE EXCHANGE VALUED GOODS, INFORMATION AND SERVICES IN A GLOBALIZED HIERARCHICAL WORLD ORDER?

Cryptocurrencies, as we know them today, are possible due to the development of *blockchain technology*¹¹. According to Howson et al. (2019), blockchain is a “distributed and immutable electronic database—a ledger of every transaction that has ever taken place on a network” (Howson, et al, 2019, p.1; Stuit et al., 2022, p.13). Satoshi Nakamoto (2008) developed blockchain in order to remove the *requirement of trust* from internet commerce transactions, therefore, eliminating the need for *centralized third parties* i.e., banks and governments, from meddling in day-to-day transactions between private individuals. Blockchain makes cryptocurrencies, such as *Bitcoin* and *Ethereum*, a reliable currency for exchange of goods and services since information about the transactions is stored simultaneously and immutably on different computers in a peer-to-peer network. No central authority (such as a bank’s ledger) is needed to store or access information, neither are auditors required to verify it. In a distributed ledger, transactions are stored by multiple entities (‘nodes’) that participate in the network. Information is collectively validated by each and every node. No intermediary is necessary to verify information. (Galen et al. 2019, p.8; cited in Stuit et al., 2022, p.13)

The “trustless”, and therefore, decentralized quality of cryptocurrencies, allows it to become a revolutionary step in human market exchange of valued goods, information and services. According to Maupin (2017), blockchain “hold(s) the key to building an inclusive global digital economy that is auditable, secure and transparently accountable to the world’s citizens” (p. 1), through its capacity to “replace single points of financial system

⁸ Light diamond (author’s translation); <https://www.instagram.com/diamanteluz.cr/?hl=en>

⁹ We consider it important to emphasize that the Portuguese thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos has been accused, in 2023, of sexual harassment in Latin America and Europe, in addition to the appropriation of knowledge from Latin American women. Although investigations are ongoing at the time of writing this article, (hidden for blind review purposes), we believe that we must question whether the knowledge shared here should be attributed to the thinker or to the many thinkers who have nourished his theories. Understanding that thought is a collective construction, and does not belong to one person, this historical moment allows us to question the colonial structure of knowledge citation, and remember that each of the people cited in this research represents the exchange of collectively-constructed knowledge.

¹⁰ *Savage capitalism* is a concept that reverses the view of savagism on colonial, imperial and capitalist discourses that have historically imposed their power and knowledge structures on other cultures that were constructed as savage and uneducated, and therefore, in need of civilization practices and institutions. This concept demonstrates that it is, in fact, civilization practices which have been savage and inhumane.

¹¹ Hereinafter as blockchain.

failure with decentralized market structures ... expand financial inclusion to previously unbanked populations ... improve the oversight of international markets by supplying policy makers with real-time data on financial flows and asset class risks” (p. 2).

Even with its proposed benefits, cryptocurrencies still have a long way to go to achieve their goals, particularly of reaching unbanked populations as well as digitally illiterate ones. Only about 60% of the world’s population has access to the internet (The World Bank, n.d.), a prerequisite to accessing and financing cryptocurrencies. Additionally, technological illiteracy present within populations who do have access to the internet is high, according to the European Union’s Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), “4 out of 10 adults and every third person who works in Europe lack basic digital skills” (European Commission, n.d.). Both of these shortcomings are due to what is known as the *digital divide* which

encompasses differences in both access (first-level digital divide) and usage (second-level digital divide) of computers and the Internet between (1) industrialized and developing countries (global divide), (2) various socioeconomic groups within single nation-states (social divide), and (3) different kinds of users with regard to their political engagement on the Internet (democratic divide). In general, those differences are believed to reinforce social inequalities and to cause a persisting information or knowledge gap amid those people with access to and using the new media (“haves”) and those people without (“have-nots”). (Schweitzer, 2023, par. 1)

According to Baron et al. (2015), the main challenges to successfully deploying a cryptocurrency are:

Having access to the technological sophistication necessary to develop, deploy, and maintain a VC¹² as a cyber service. In the context of VCs, the technological sophistication required includes competencies in networking, computation, and cryptographic techniques. Ensuring that users of the currency have persistent, assured access to their currency while requiring a sufficiently low level of technological sophistication to enable use for everyday transactions. Ensuring levels of transaction anonymity demanded by users while ensuring transaction integrity so that buyers and sellers are assured of proper exchange—all without the need for overly advanced technological expertise. Protecting the overall integrity (and availability) of a VC against advanced cyber threats, particularly those nation-states that would oppose the non-state actor’s VC deployment. (pp. 33-34)

The decentralized nature of cryptocurrencies, also poses the question of regulating measures, how can crypto be used within global and national legislations? In some ways, we believe it is the freedom from Nation-state laws and centralized global market regimes which makes cryptocurrencies a most radical tool for global social transformation. If cryptocurrencies have no Nation-State laws to undermine it, it becomes a simple, trustless,

technological tool to exchange valued goods, information and services, seems to be the thinking of some.

Cryptocurrencies are experiencing a variety of resistances and criticisms from academics, activists, governments and transnational organizations, political and economic, not unlike any new revolutionary innovation. As we have stated above, the benefit of cryptocurrencies is the incapacity of governments and Nation States to intervene and shut down decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs)¹³ that are free from their software (Krishnan, 2020). Yet, according to Krishnan (2020), this freedom can be used and misused by a variety of different agents in the pursuit of their own agendas, ethical or not. Technological advances question centralized power and economies, fueling social movements with tools for their mobilization, but also put in danger the capacity to maintain control of how they are used or created, and can, therefore, become dangerous for political regimes, democratic¹⁴ or not, as well as for the protection of human rights and the advancement of human rights socio-political agendas.

We can see how cryptocurrencies and the goods, services, and knowledge they fund are rising as a global political and economic power, and therefore capable of exerting change and transformation in our world. This capacity for change and transformation has Nation-States responding to this as a threat to their sovereignties, to the ways they have historically organized power within their territory and on a global scale. While some countries have chosen to place complete bans on cryptocurrencies, some have adopted them completely¹⁵. In the Latin American region,

¹³ DAOs, sometimes known as Decentralized Autonomous Corporations (DACs) are “an emerging form of legal structure that has no central governing body and whose members share a common goal to act in the best interest of the entity. Popularized through cryptocurrency enthusiasts and blockchain technology, DAOs are used to make decisions in a bottom-up management approach” (Reiff, 2023, par. 1). Hereinafter as DAOs.

¹⁴ It is important to highlight that democratic regimes are not necessarily human rights centered regimes, with neocapitalism and historically-imperial extractivism becoming the norm in the capitalism crisis, we are seeing a recoil in human rights protection, practices and funding in democratic Nation-States all over the world, this is deeply connected with a resurgence of neoconservatism and extreme right governments, democratically voted, in countries like the United States (Donald Trump, 2017-2021), Brazil (Jair Bolsonaro, 2019-2022), and recently elected, self-proclaimed anarcho-capitalist, Javier Milei in Argentina.

¹⁵ For example, the case of El Salvador, whose authoritarian president Nayib Bukele made Bitcoin the national currency back in 2021. This case demonstrates the arbitrary use of national wealth hyper-focused in investment returns as bitcoin rises in value, instead of social needs such as health care, education, and food security. According to Tidy and Barria (2023), Bukele “has spent more than \$120m (£95m) of his impoverished nation’s money buying Bitcoin” (par. 1). Yet according to Oscar Picardo, director of the Institute of Sciences at the Francisco Gavidia University, in San Salvador, El Salvador, “the government spent a lot of money on the development of the Chivo Wallet application, on the installation of ATMs, which mostly do not work, on a \$30 bonus for all citizens over 18 years of age, on propaganda and international events” (cited in Tidy and Barria, 2023, pars. 15-16).

¹² Baron et al. (2015) use the acronym V.C. for Virtual Currency, nonetheless, we refrain from using this acronym to avoid it being confused for Venture Capital.

Bolivia's Financial System Supervision Authority issued a resolution in 2014 prohibiting the use of Bitcoin and other digital currencies, citing a lack of consumer protection and the potential for money laundering. In 2022, the Bolivian central bank prohibited the banking sector from using, marketing, or transacting cryptocurrency assets to protect the public from "risks, frauds and swindles" and "the risk of creating economic losses". Meanwhile, in 2014, Ecuador became one of the first countries to introduce its own CBDC, the *Sistema de Dinero Electrónico* (Electronic Money System), and banned the use of decentralized cryptocurrencies as legal tender. (Willing, 2023, par. 10)

The Costa Rican government has taken what it's known as a "hands off approach" with blockchain, that is to say it has not recognized cryptocurrencies as legal currencies but it is not actively banning them. According to Freeman Law (n.d.), "the Central Bank of Costa Rica declared that cryptocurrencies are not legal tender, monetary currency, or foreign currency" (par. 5), therefore under Costa Rican legislature, "cryptocurrencies may be classified as quasi-money or as a means of payment" (par. 5).

Another approach by Nation-States, illustrated by Ecuador's Electronic Money System, is the creation of their own National Digital Currencies (NDG), in fact, "as of February 2023, 114 countries, including the United States, are considering introducing their own central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) to compete with the cryptocurrency boom" (Berman and Siripurapu, 2023, par. 2).

Furthermore, regulations can come from other sources, such as international organizations or collectives. According to Maupin (2017), the G20 is the most capable international organization to take on the task to regulate blockchain for the *maintenance of equality, justice, transparency and the continuous fight against poverty, exclusion of unbanked populations*. We question whether the G20, or national governments for that matter, should regulate, and whether this would centralize the currency, therefore, reversing its original functionality.

The G20, being an inter-governmental group that "brings together the countries¹⁶ with the largest economies in the world" (G20 Brazil 2024, n.d.), has enormous capacity to influence the cultural, social, natural and political realities of the world due to our global imposed dependence on the global market regime. While not all the Nation-States members to the G20 are on the same power-centered statuses, since we cannot compare the influence of the United States on world politics, economics and socio-cultures to that of Brazil or Argentina; it is important to note that the qualifying prerequisite to belong to the G20 is to be amongst the "largest economies".

To be one of the largest economies in our world is to have gathered economic power, through imperialism, savage extractivism or historic/modern slave work, all

inherent in the success and maintenance of the capitalist system. Can the Nation-States or the G20, be *trusted* with the regulation for cryptocurrencies and their promise to strengthen "economic resilience while ensuring the global economy works to the benefit of all" (Maupin, 2017, p. 1)? While there is no doubt that the G20 would be more egalitarian than the G7¹⁷, this proposal does not indeed promise a decentralized approach to regulating cryptocurrencies. Furthermore, citizens of the world have very little say as to which countries integrate either regulating body.

In this context, and considering the current global political order, who can be trusted to propose any type of code of conduct by which to regulate decentralized currencies? What should this code look like? Indeed, while this research is not focused on these questions, we do consider it important to keep these questions in mind while we visualize how crypto donations play in the scheme of power struggle in our globalized world.

Let us begin by asking the question: why should cryptocurrencies be regulated? Decentralized economies' lack of regulation, from a Latin American critical perspective, weakens its transformative power by allowing it to be absorbed by the rules of the dominant capitalist system, and therefore, become another pawn in its destructive bottomless greed. Franz Hinkelammert, the German-born Costa Rican theologian and economist, has warned us of the power of absorption of the global market and its *fake harmony*.

This theory of market harmony is accompanied by a dark realism. It does not maintain that everyone does well in the markets. On the contrary, it links the market with a silent, daily genocide. What is celebrated about the market is that it is capable of eliminating all (people) who do not have the capacity or initiative to prevail. Only the fittest survive in the market; the others perish. The market is a system of competition, in which not only are decisions made about products and their production, but in the same way about producers and their lives. Harmony is not only about the supply and demand of products, but also about producers. The market is a lord over life and death. (Hinkelammert, 2006, p. 241, author's translation)

From this understanding, decentralized economies will be absorbed by those agents - private/public and individual/collective - with economic and/or technological power (be it political, cultural, or social) and reproduce the same global inequalities and injustices that have been reproduced by centralized economies and their commodification of all life; for example, human trafficking and modern slavery by those running crypto farms or crypto frauds, such as the case of the Cambodian "cyber slaves" (Al Jazeera, 2022); wealth inequality/accumulation producing crypto billionaires (Hyatt, 2022);

¹⁶ Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, United States, India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, as well as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU).

¹⁷ Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

energy extractivism compared to that of the crude oil market and its impact on the wellbeing of our climate¹⁸ (Berrens et al., 2022); metal mining for the production of electronics (Hühne, 2023).

Similar to centralized currencies, crypto enthusiasts have designed and proposed an endless repertoire of platforms, coins and experiments focused on what can be considered as resistances to the injustices and destruction inherent in the current global world order of political and economic power. Amongst such proposals, is the emergence of donation platforms such as Giveth, Gitcoin¹⁹, The Giving Block²⁰, Optimism RetroPGF²¹, Dao Drops²², Engiven²³, FundraiseUp²⁴ and Classy²⁵ (Arora, 2023; The Giving Block, 2023).

We consider that DAOs dedicated to facilitating crypto funding and donations can indeed support revolutionary projects and communities who are innovative, doing a valued service, or in need, in the same ways centralized economies have done for decades with the added benefit that these donations can escape the bureaucracies involved in receiving funds globally as well as receiving funds faster, tapping into a new market of donors who'd rather donate with their cryptocurrencies; and for donors, maintaining their anonymity (CryptoAltruism, 2023).

The following testimony by Juan Pablo Angulo²⁶, Costa Rican cosmopolitan and DBC member, identifies this potential and challenge,

If you gave me a choice, how I dream or how I imagine crypto should work in an ideal world, it would be to vindicate and value more the people that we have hidden and put at the last step of the chain, who are the farmers. Farmers are the ones who endure everything, no one would be here if it weren't for the food ... particularly because the food industry created monoculture farming and these current ways of making food, now (they) are the ones who receive the least, while being the ones who take care of what is most valuable ... in this world where there is more and more deforestation, wildfires and natural disasters, initiatives that restore places, environments and biodiversity should be the one hundred percent focus of any initiative, digital or otherwise. I feel that everyone should have a sensitivity towards seeing the potential that exists. For me it is still like a mystery, how (cryptocurrencies) are generated out of nowhere ... but if there are people who can redirect them, as we have seen people who redirect them towards our projects

¹⁸ It is important to highlight that cryptocurrencies are aware of their energy consumption, in the case of Ethereum, the network with whom Giveth works with, technological advances through the upgrade named *The Merge* have allowed it to reduce "the energy consumption required to secure Ethereum by 99.95%, creating a more secure network for a much smaller carbon cost. Ethereum is now a low-carbon blockchain while boosting its security and scalability" (Ethereum, n.d., par. 23).

¹⁹ <https://www.gitcoin.co/>

²⁰ <https://thegivingblock.com/>

²¹ <https://www.retropgf.com/>

²² <https://daodrops.io/>

²³ <https://www.engiven.com/>

²⁴ <https://fundraiseup.com/>

²⁵ <https://www.classy.org/>

²⁶ Hereinafter as Angulo.

and we were able to see the cash in hand and use it, how can that be achieved globally? It should be a priority ... I feel that is where it would make a lot of sense for them (cryptocurrencies) to exist. Outside of that I don't know, because before we were talking about regeneration with crypto, the situation started like any other millionaire capitalist thing with people in Ferraris in Dubai, talking about crypto and that was what everyone said, if you were going to take that route, or that the people who have shares in Elon Musk's companies, and I don't know many things, very distant from reality, and very capitalist, really, and consumerist, I was never interested in that option, it's another invention, another digit to continue buying the same garbage, where is the change? But when I heard about these initiatives, yes, I think it is possible and I think that these platforms like Giveth and a lot of others that exist, that are being created all the time, are seeing that there may be good approaches to make social and environmental change, aligned with life and not with destruction. (Angulo, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation).

As we shall see, because of historical and sociocultural disparities, as well as the challenges faced by cryptocurrencies seen above, crypto donations can many times land in the hands of already privileged individuals, rather than in the hands of those that need it most, and whose lives, livelihoods and entrepreneurial projects could be most radically transformed. Our research question was to better understand in which ways such disparities affect the *full transformational effect of crypto* in the development of crypto-funded social projects. Deeply committed to propose ways to transform inequalities and to empower San Salvador del Barú locals, Costa Rican cosmopolitans and immigrants from the Global North to continue engaging in cryptocurrencies from an awareness of social justice, we shall look first at the way in which transnational gentrification and *glocalization* can challenge the intentions behind crypto donation platforms such as Giveth, project leaders connected to the DBC, and local populations.

We end this section by suggesting that if cryptocurrencies truly want to participate in the social transformation of the world, from a Latin American critical perspective, they must start by acknowledging that decentralized financing means not only freedom from centralized currencies and their governments and institutions, for that would be a simplistic and limited view of their potential; it should also mean freedom from historical power relationships that have led to centralized power, and therefore, to disparity, injustice, impunity, systematic ignorance/manipulation, destruction, appropriation and genocide/ecocide/epistemicide.

From this position, we question the "trustless" quality of cryptocurrencies, in its simplistic approach to delimiting trust in the transaction of it. As currencies interact and influence sociocultural, political, economic and technological relationships, how they are created, how they are used and how it dialogues with global inequalities should also be part of that analysis of trust.

WHAT DOES TRANSNATIONAL GENTRIFICATION HAVE TO DO WITH CRYPTOCURRENCIES IN COSTA RICA?

Transnationalism can be understood as the movement, exchanges and transformation of sociocultural and economic relationships due to the migration of peoples, ideas, knowledge, and material objects. While the flow of human populations, artifacts, practices, and knowledge has been a constant in human history, *transnationalism* rises from the imposition, during the Age of Revolution (late-18th to the mid-19th centuries), of Nation-States as the only institutions to politically and economically organize and segregate territories, peoples and resources.

The birth of the Nations, as we understand them today, delimited who and what “belonged” where and why, while the capitalist market became the facilitator of material and commodified-life migrations, Nation-States began to determine who can visit their lands and under which conditions. This, together with our current historical moment, has given birth to modern concepts such as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants²⁷, expats, and residents²⁸.

For the most part, these categories are based on socio-political and economic factors. One example is the rise of the concept of *expats* instead of immigrants/migrants. While many professionals of the Global South who find better living opportunities in the Global North

²⁷ According to the International Rescue Committee (2018), an immigrant is “someone who makes a conscious decision to leave his or her home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there. Immigrants often go through a lengthy vetting process to immigrate to a new country. Many become lawful permanent residents and eventually citizens. Immigrants research their destinations, explore employment opportunities, and study the language of the country where they plan to live. Most importantly, they are free to return home whenever they choose” (pars. 12-13). A refugee is considered as an individual who is “forced to flee (their) home because of war, violence or persecution, often without warning. They are unable to return home unless and until conditions in their native lands are safe for them again” (International Rescue Committee, 2018, par. 5). In comparison, an asylum seeker also seeks “international protection from dangers in (their) home country, but whose claim for refugee status hasn’t been determined legally. Asylum seekers must apply for protection in the country of destination—meaning they must arrive at or cross a border in order to apply. Then, they must be able to prove to authorities there that they meet the criteria to be covered by refugee protections. Not every asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee” (International Rescue Committee, 2018, pars. 8-9). Finally, a migrant is considered as an individual who moves “from place to place (within his or her country or across borders), usually for economic reasons such as seasonal work. Similar to immigrants, they were not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence, but rather are seeking better opportunities” (International Rescue Committee, 2018, par. 14).

²⁸ An expat is understood as a person who lives outside their home country for long periods at a time or permanently, while a resident, as one who has acquired legal permission to be a short-term or long-term inhabitant of a country that is not their own.

are called immigrants or migrants, those from the Global North who do the same in the Global South are called *expats*. This type of social construction of identities is grounded in pejorative conceptualizations related to being an immigrant/migrant, product of historical racial bias inherent in national security discourses by countries of the Global North.

Transnationalism, therefore, refers specifically to a modern migration movement, that is shaped by its current historical context, for this reason transnational studies seek to highlight, understand and identify the consequences and transformations of this phenomena. In today’s understanding, “transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries – and, more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organizations” (Faist, 2010, p. 9).

Academics have identified a myriad of categorizations and variables, according to Dahinden (2010),

one can systematize this body of knowledge as a function of dimensions or domains of transnationalism, such as the economy, politics, culture or religion (Vertovec, 1999, pp. 447-462). One can also distinguish between occasional and durable transnational practices, or between different generations of migrants (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999). Or again, one can differentiate the various types of transnational social spaces developed by migrants (Faist, 1999, pp. 36-72; Pries, 2008²⁹; Faist, 2010, p. 51)

One branch of transnational studies has focused on the observation of *locality and mobility* (Dahinden, 2010; Hayes & Zaban, 2020). Allowing researchers to identify how “the physical movement of people in (a) transnational space” (Dahinden, 2010, p. 51) and the capacity to be “rooted or anchored – socially, economically or politically – in the country of immigration and/or in the sending country” (Dahinden, 2010, p. 51) demonstrate new *transnational formations*. Amongst such new formations would be the rise of what Hayes and Zaban (2020) call *transnational gentrification*, that is

The ability of relatively privileged citizens of higher-income countries to appropriate urban space³⁰ and participate in the displacement of lower-income groups, spatializing global inequalities at the local scale in more direct ways than heretofore – ways that are also resisted, resented, shaped and transformed by local forces and movements. (p. 3011)

In Latin America, this type of transnationalism has led to land acquisitions by migrants of the Global North in regions of the Global South transforming real estate demands in their receiving countries, which in turn,

²⁹ Pries, L. (2008). Die Transnationalisierung der sozialen Welt. *Sozialräume jenseits von Nationalgesellschaften*. Suhrkamp.

³⁰ Even though Hayes & Zaban (2020)’s research is focused on the interconnection between transnational gentrification and urban studies, we believe their findings can be applied to rural locations of the Global South.

excludes not just low-economic class citizens of those regions but, in some cases, also middle to upper class citizens and residents. In doing so, these migrants also raise their social mobility from middle class in their own countries to high-upper class in countries of the South: “a small condo in Vancouver sold at the high-end of the boom can be exchanged for a huge home and luxurious lifestyle in Ecuador. Transnational gentrification is the product of neoliberal globalization and cultures of arbitrage (Hayes, 2014)” (Hayes & Zaban, 2020, p. 3011).

Large land estate acquisitions by foreigners are not a new practice in Latin America, or the Global South for that matter, but rather a colonial practice, where in the past such land was taken by armed force, coercion and manipulation, in the present it becomes a possibility for those who have been historically favored by the colonial enterprise which gave birth to capitalism. Now positioned in economic privilege, foreigners are able to acquire the “paradisiacal³¹ mountains, forest and beaches” of the Global South, in doing so, delimiting the possibility for locals to acquire their own land and to participate in the caring or exploiting of it and from it. In this way, transnational gentrification also

spatialize(s) global inequalities in new ways that nonetheless dialogue with colonial social structures and inherited class and caste hierarchies. As the general character of global accumulation has shifted from industrial activity to urbanization (Soederberg and Walks, 2018), class relations and urban functions have shifted not only within urban spaces but also amongst them. An increasing number of cities have sought to attract mobile populations – as well as capital – to animate historic neighborhoods or to dynamize local economies. (Hayes & Zaban, 2020, p. 3011)

Now we ask ourselves, what does transnational gentrification have to do with the redistribution of cryptocurrencies donations in Costa Rica? As we explained in our previous section, the limitations cryptocurrencies face today, from deregulation to inaccessibility, reproduce socioeconomic patterns of exclusion, where privileged individuals and groups are able to benefit from decentralized economies, while those historically excluded from sociocultural and economic opportunity continue to be marginalized. In the words of one of our interviewees, the *cryptocurrencies’ culture* is

classist and discriminatory to people who do not spend all day on their cell phone, the majority of people in the countryside do not do that, they are not aware of (these innovations) and (financial) movements, nor when to invest or move (funds). (Informant C32, personal communication, September 2023, author’s translation)

When cryptocurrencies platforms donate to peoples

from the Global North inhabiting spaces in the Global South, intentionally or not, they are directly supporting the economic and social wellbeing of those who may be reproducing disparities through transnational gentrification, expropriation and marginalization. When the intention of the receiving party is to better social and natural relationships in their receiving country, we ought to demand, as academics, activists and peoples of the South, that involved parties deconstruct these relationships in thorough due diligence. That is to say, that they apply decolonial knowledge and practices to themselves, their businesses/ventures and their proposals, by employing or requesting the valued support of local leaders and thinkers.

THE RISE OF “ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES” IN PÉREZ ZELEDÓN, COSTA RICA

There’s been a rise in Costa Rica of immigration from the Global North focused on building alternative communities. In the region of our research, Pérez Zeledón, we have seen urbanizing projects such as *Rise Costa Rica*³³, “a family focused community that integrates residences, a Waldorf inspired school, Certified Organic farm, fiber-connected co-working space, and wellbeing retreat into one dynamic ecosystem. Set on 800 acres of natural wonderland” (Rise, 2022, par. 1).

In our immediate neighborhood of San Salvador del Barú there’s *Holos*³⁴, “a private retreat center and community specializing in holistic living and transformational journeys” (Holos, n.d., par. 1) and *Diamante Luz Centre for Regenerative Living*³⁵, a “syntropic farm/regenerative center seeking off grid style & sovereignty through permaculture practices & bamboo bioconstruction” (Diamante Luz C.R., n.d.). The following testimonials exemplify this desire to immigrate to Costa Rica and co-create communities with others from members of the DBC:

When I arrived in this valley this became clearer, because there are many foreigners who leave their country, who want to create something more or live something more beautiful... then I arrived here and I felt like, well here there is something to do, amongst all, because it is not something common... There are so many people who want to do alternative things, or who want to create a more beautiful, fairer world, so, for this reason I am here, I want to believe in a more beautiful world for everyone, and you have to find a way to start and I know that focusing my energy on one place or one point... can help make a change together and then a good change together can be an example for more people, or to connect more groups... And it is a little magical, because I believe that life is magical, I also

³¹ The exoticization of the Global South has long been an imperialist tool for objectification, which in turn justifies the appropriation of lands, cultures, peoples and objects.

³² Hereinafter as I.C.

³³ <https://risecostarica.com/>

³⁴ <https://holos.global/>

³⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/diamanteluz.cr/>

let myself be surprised by what we live now (I.A.36, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation).

Not only the desire to “create change together” and influence other immigrants who seek the same lifestyle, but also to incorporate collective spaces for practices that can be considered as unproductive, and therefore in resistance, to the capitalist system, such as dancing and reforestation for restoration (instead of for profit):

I came straight here to the Valley, and I came with this initiation to redefine a home, a community and a place where I can grow and really be involved with the people ... the two biggest things that brought me here were to reforest and to create space for dancing, already we've been here at this land maybe two years, no more than two years, and we've reforested a lot, there is a lot more I want to do like creating a big dance space somewhere, something that is coming very soon... not just dance but really like, art center, I focus more on the movement arts because is what brought me here. (Informant B37, personal correspondence, September 2023)

During our ethnographic research at the *Diamante Luz Centre for Regenerative Living*, we were able to identify a variety of minimalistic eco-lodgings, vegetable gardens, reforested zones, trails, one of which leads to two waterfalls and a river; we also met various foreigners living on *Diamante Luz* farm, including families, of a variety of backgrounds from Europe, the United States and Canada, as well as two cosmopolitan Costa Ricans.

The phenomena of “alternative communities” in Costa Rica, has been undoubtedly accompanied by *transnational gentrification*, as well as a recuperation and implementation of morals focused on community living, reforestation/land stewardship, hands-on education, new age healing practices which, in vast majority, appropriates indigenous medicines such as ayahuasca, kambó, bufo, peyote. Being aware of these dynamics and finding solutions for bridging the gap is essential to maintaining the coherence of building alternative communities,

There is a substantial economic difference between the people who come with the privilege of moving to another country and being in a place where the cost of living is lower, so there is also a class difference and there are also many behaviors that revolve around that, for example, people who find it very easy to come, buy and pay whatever it takes to build their paradise and have fruit trees and everything, and perhaps for their (local) neighbors it took a lifetime to build their little wooden house ... there is the whole issue of gentrification, which is also very important to mention, because, we are in a country where this is happening in many places, in Guanacaste, Limón and here, and it is important to see each place separately, because they all have different ingredients. I am not in favor of making enemies but rather, if they want to live here and if we live here, finding in our differences how we can have better relationships and better balances, I think it is important to talk about it in any space... I also believe that we (DBC) are an example that things can be done differently, that you can reach a place

and instead of you wanting to make your retreat center, your ayahuasca center or your center for this and that and the other, which is a lot just to feed a specific tourism, of people who don't come much to really contribute to the area. That instead, you worry about the impact that you create in the area, and that you ask how you can help first before creating your little castle, I think it's important. (Angulo, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

For this reason, in San Salvador del Barú, DBC rises out of a collective desire to “do things differently”,

there is already a type of alternative community and what they were missing is a place to meet, to be able to talk about these issues, what we want to do and learn to get to know each other, because sometimes we can't have many meetings, because everyone is already very busy, but seeing each other and knowing who is doing what, that gives shape to community... It is part of what is happening around the world and it is something very beautiful that I think it is good to open ourselves to it. I, for example, do not consider so much that my country is my country... I believe that we are all in this same world and that amongst all of us we could support each other, help one another restore the world for the things that serve the good of everyone, it does not depend on the country where one comes from... which for me is more like doing things with the heart, for God, for life, for those who will come, because very few have done it before, so it is like, “only those who want”, for me it is good that we do something together. It doesn't matter where one comes from, or if you have the money or if you don't have the money, or whether one wants it or not, it is the hearts of the people that are going to really create something, and I feel that it is something very special to experience that, in this world. ...because it is learning to create something together between very different cultures, because we all have different cultures and ideas, but we must put our ego aside, in order to be able to unite and do something together, that for me is a very special job, it makes us grow because it teaches us to communicate, to listen to each other, to be more equal to each other... And I think that we need those morals, I, for example, where I come from, they don't teach us those morals, there is no example where those morals (are implemented by) a group of people, so I couldn't see that as a child, but now if there are groups that are formed like this, the children will be able to see that, they will feel that people have a different vision from what we experienced. (I.A., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

How do alternative communities, their undeniable transnational gentrification, and crypto-donated project implementation intersect one another? In the following sections we will take a closer look at how cryptocurrencies' knowledge and accessibility, together with transnational gentrification are benefitting or excluding the locals from San Salvador del Barú.

Collective projects, building community and crypto-donations in San Salvador del Barú

The following section takes a closer look at Giveth's support of DBC's projects, the collective and individual intentions behind leading social projects, as well as the benefits and challenges in using, accessing and implementing crypto-donations for the development of such projects.

³⁶ Hereinafter as I.A.

³⁷ Hereinafter as I.B.

DIAMANTE BRIDGE COLLECTIVE AND THEIR LAND NODE: GIVETH'S GOLDEN COSTA RICAN CHILD

Three Costa Rican based projects are amongst Giveth's top ten "Most Funded"³⁸, with DBC and their "land node" *Diamante Luz* being two of them as recipients of a total of \$153,224,06 combined. A closer look at the projects funded more than \$100 through Giveth, identifies 13

other Costa Rica land/community projects, out of which nine are connected directly to DBC, *Diamante Luz*, or organizations to whom they and their projects are members of, such as the Perma Vida Foundation³⁹. In total, these nine projects received an additional \$41,182,52⁴⁰. **Table 1** details the name of the projects, their main goals and the received crypto donations.

³⁸ To the date of October 1st, 2024.

³⁹ While *Diamante Luz*, *Diamante Bridge Collective* and *Free the Food* are all projects sponsored by Perma Vida Foundation (<https://permavida.org/>), Perma Vida only received \$354.69 in donations.

⁴⁰ Between all 11 projects, DBC, *Diamante Luz* and Perma Vida Foundation have received a total of \$194,406.58.

Table 1
Giveth's "Most Funded" Costa Rican projects^a

Project Name	Project Details	Donations received
Colorado Multiversity	"Seeks to create an academic and research space with a methodology focused on people and their interaction with the environment, with partnerships and collaborations with projects, organizations and initiatives that feed on content to be able to train and empower communities on issues that benefit the Sustainable Development Goals" ¹ .	\$101,312.02
Diamante Bridge Collective	"Support regenerative livelihoods for our stewards, provide materials for restorative earthworks projects, and fund scholarships for participants who would not otherwise have access to the transformative experiences and education programs offered" ² .	\$77,620.33
Diamante Luz Centre for Regenerative Living	"Diamante Luz is a space for integrated collaboration and cooperation with nature. Our residents, neighbors, and visitors have been drawn to the area in order to co-create a space for living and working in balance with all of our relations" ³ .	\$75,603.73
Revivaging Mutual Mentorships Program	"The Revivaging Mutual Mentorships Program is one of the many projects within the Diamante Bridge Collective. Designed by Dani Bellavita to further the work of "ReInhabiting the Village" book project, the mentorship program provides an environment in which individuals can openly support each other in re-creating themselves within a village context. We can only truly reinhabit the village once we have revivaged the inhabitants" ⁴ .	\$22,061.35
Airbeenbee.xyz	"AirBeenBee has already made a significant impact, with over 20 shelters deployed in educational institutions across more than 10 countries, including Costa Rica, Canada, Mexico, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Spain. The project serves as a bridge connecting communities worldwide in the shared mission of preserving the vital role played by Solitary Native Bees" ⁵ .	\$9,090.42
Free the food	"Our dream is to see many communities and villages plant their street-sides and public spaces with fruit trees, berries, edible greens, flowers, medicinal plants and many other useful plants" ⁶ .	\$6,246.11
ReCenter the Resource, Recycling Center, San Salvador	"Help us build a recycling center and create an Extruder Machine to transform "non-recyclable plastic" into a great building material: Wood plastic or Madera Plastica" ⁷ .	\$5,199.42
Rios Limpios, Grey Water Filters, Costa Rica	"Rios Limpios" or "Clean Rivers". In an effort to stop the pollution in the nearby rivers of San Salvador, Barú Costa Rica, we have successfully installed several grey water Filters" ⁸ .	\$2,726.4
Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road	"Our Diamante Valley neighbors are coming together at this time to help with the maintenance of the primary access road to our beautiful lands, waterfalls, and friends. As we who make our homes and come to visit our associated land nodes here in San Salvador are deeply affected by the condition of the road and also are those who affect the condition of the road - we are stepping up, and invite you to step in with us" ⁹ .	\$2,402.4
The Living Library Sanctuary for Sacred Plants	"We give home to the broadest ethnobotanical collection in Costa Rica. At our sanctuary we prioritize the care and propagation of endangered, endemic and overexploited plant species to enable long lasting ecosystemic diversity and resilience. Our center is focused on education around rare botanical species as well as the cultural practices these plants have inspired around the globe. Our mission is to promote a generalized ethic of conservation, land stewardship, respect for traditional ecological knowledge and the Indigenous peoples that steward this wisdom. The growing collections at the Living Library benefit from both traditional and scientific management techniques" ¹⁰ .	\$1,255.04
Eartheart Commons Local Youth Scholarships	"Many young Costa Ricans are excited about permaculture and agroforestry, and at the same time economically supporting their families. Travis, with his 20 years of tropical agroforestry experience, is living at Diamante Luz and excited to empower more willing apprentices. By empowering young Costa Ricans, we are building cultural bridges as well as spreading regenerative Earth Stewards with knowledge, passion, techniques, experience, seeds, and plants far and wide. Providing these one-month experiences allows us to reach more youth, while also creating an evaluation period for finding long-term apprentices and future team members" ¹¹ .	\$1,135.6

Project Name	Project Details	Donations received
Cahuita Roots Regenerative Development Project	“CAHUITA ROOTS Regenerative Development Community Project was born as a platform and ecosystemic facilitator to support local communities in the South Caribbean Bioregion of Costa Rica focused mainly in Afro-Costa Rican and indigenous population and sociocultural groups of Talamanca. We facilitate the synergy between the different change makers and social, cultural and environment groups that work in the region. Our mission is to promote the protection and regeneration of our natural ecosystems and promote food safety, sustainable, economic, social and spiritual growth for our communities while preserving the local cultural traditions and ancestral knowledge” ¹² .	\$789.37
Financial Coordinator for DBC and DLuz	“Create a Steward Stipend for the role of coordinating the payment, tracking, and reporting of fund management, and allocate \$900 USD of APDC budget to pay for the 1st three months of this role” ¹³ .	\$537.26
Art and Culture Center, Diamante Luz	“We seek to create a structure called Rancho, an inspiration by indigenous cultures of Costa Rica such as Boruca and Bribri. Made with natural and sustainable materials. In this mission, we will receive the guidance and knowledge of Don Ulises, an indigenous Boruca who will facilitate the process to use Palma as a roof” ¹⁴ .	\$519.29
Perma Vida Foundation	“Perma Vida Foundation is cultivating a thriving world. By developing effective strategies for natural habitat restoration, we empower regenerative communities and resilient ecosystems. Our projects include publicly accessible food forests, fruit tree nurseries, seed banks, tool-sharing libraries, volunteer programs, alternative schools, decentralized currencies, homesteads, local economies, and ecovillages” ¹⁵ .	\$354.69
Wild Sun Wildlife Rescue ¹⁶	“Wild Sun Rescue Center is a non-profit organization located in Cabuya, Costa Rica. We are dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of our local wildlife, and are continuously striving to find solutions to the threats they face. Every day we treat sick, injured and orphaned animals that are affected by various threats including electrocution, dog and cat attacks, and illegal pet trade. Our primary goal is to release each animal back to the wild. In addition to animal care, we are actively promoting conservation and offer internships and veterinary externships to increase community engagement and global awareness of conservation in Costa Rica” ¹⁷ .	\$268.99

Notes. ^a The rows highlighted in light yellow are projects directly or indirectly related to DBC and *Diamante Luz Centre for Regenerative Living*.

DBC’S SOCIAL PROJECTS: INCENTIVES AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Through our testimonial research, we were able to identify local awareness of four of these projects:

A) *Free the food*, a project seeking to encourage San Salvador del Barú community members to “plant street-sides and public spaces with fruit trees, berries, edible greens, flowers, medicinal plants and many other useful plants” (Giveth, n.d.c., par. 1). *Free the food* received donations for a total of \$6,246.11.

B) *ReCenter the Resource, Recycling Center, San Salvador*, a project seeking to expand a local women’s initiative, who had been collecting recycling material for a few years in San Salvador del Barú, to build a center for recycling, recycling education and eventually an “Extruder Machine to transform ‘non-recyclable plastic’ into building material” (Giveth, n.d.d., par. 1). This project received a total of \$5,199.42 in donations.

C) *Ríos Limpios, Grey Water Filters, Costa Rica*, seeks to bring to San Salvador del Barú community members the installation of Grey Water Filters (Giveth, n.d.e.). Ríos Limpios project received a total of \$2,726.4 in donations.

D) *Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road*, was a DBC and *Asociación Puente Diamante Colectiva* initiative to raise funds for the repair of the local road that connects San Salvador del Barú to the main highway, *Ruta Nacional Secundaria 243* (Giveth, n.d.b.). This project received donations for a total of \$2,402.4.

Arthur Favrot⁴¹, French immigrant, founder and manager of all of these projects - except the *Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road* - walked us through his incentive and his main challenges implementing the projects collectively, as well as the use, access and limitations experienced with crypto donations. According to Favrot, *collective support* is essential to the implementation of social projects,

They are projects that I started, but I have friends who support me. For example, the recycling center is on the land of a friend who trusts me, that is why he helped me with the leveling of the land to set up the recycling center; he helped me with materials, without my friends or the community where I am, there is not much that can happen... also the work of planting in public places, it is something that I cannot do alone, it is something that more people need to give their permission so that I can plant. (Favrot, personal communication, September 2023, author’s translation)

Forrest Towers, U.S. immigrant, who lent Favrot the land⁴² to locate the *San Salvador del Barú Recycling Centre*, considers that Favrot’s *holistic vision* is essential to implementing social projects, “*he’s not just creating this recycling center to take care of all the trash in this area, it’s always been with this focus of creating a model, teaching, demonstrating, sharing*” (personal communication, September 2023). The social transformation aspects require that community members (local, cosmopolitan and foreign) question the ways they

⁴¹ Hereinafter as Favrot.

⁴² Towers’ land neighbors *Diamante Luz*.

had been handling their trash and recyclables, their grey waters, as well as entertain the possibility of growing food in public areas.

(Favrot) became famous like “the recycling guy”⁴³, and he's very clear with (his recycling instructions), “this is acceptable, this is not acceptable” and I know there's been some conflict with some relationships because people show up with non-clean (recyclables) and they just want to drop it off and leave and he's like “no, if you want to bring this, this is how you do it” and not everybody likes that. His other project “rios limpios”, I don't know how much he puts to it now because he was working on creating filters for some of the neighbors' houses and these are people that we have good relationships with and he ended up seeing that the filters were not really maintained, I think at some point they like did some construction and took it out, and they just weren't really well treated so that really disappointed him, and it really deflated him, like, “well these people don't care so I don't”, he didn't want to put more of his time in something that people don't care about. I'd say in general (his projects) creates this like uncomfortable effect in many people, where (they) are being forced to consider basic things like trash and water and food, not being forced to but like, interacting with, it's not like he's like pushing it on people but it's hard to avoid at a certain point, if you don't interact with him, you're not really going to get influenced by it. (I. B., personal communication, September 2023)

I.B.'s feedback allows us to see that social projects depend on much more than simple implementation, they must be intertwined with *education, awareness and communication*, not just for the benefit of the projects themselves, but also those who benefit, as well as those who implement them can have a positive experience that promotes *continued collective engagement*. Nonetheless, this work cannot be done by just one or two people, it has to be a communal transformation that grows from constant sharing and implementing of the wisdom that these social transformation projects embody,

It is a challenge, taking care of the land, planting food and for people to see the value in it, I think that in rural areas people do have an appreciation for the fact that this exists, right, there are people who do seem to me to be jealous, right, as a matter of speaking, of still having their land here, many of which still belong to locals and who have their food, but they are worlds that are coming together... We (DBC) have the philosophy of sharing everything with everyone, which is very beautiful, very idealistic, perhaps not everyone shares it or understands it. (Informant D44, personal communication, September 2023)

One of the main challenges that arise within the DBC is the inconsistency in the maintenance of social projects caused by the *transnational movement* of both permanent participants, as well as, tourists who travel to *Diamante*

⁴³ The following testimony attests to this statement: “*now everything is different, now is: “I'm going to wash this can because I have to go to Arturo on Monday to drop it off”, because everything is Arturo, Arturo, Arturo, that is, in the recycling center, everyone is guided because Arturo, who is the founder, has dedicated soul, life and heart to that project, so we all know it as Arturo's recycling center*” (Informant G, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation).

⁴⁴ Hereinafter as I.D.

Luz seasonally. Those who have chosen San Salvador del Barú as their home, cosmopolitan Costa Ricans and foreigners alike, who are fully dedicated to the mission of DBC and its farm, experience this constant flow of outsiders as a determining factor in the execution of projects: high-season equals added human support, while low season leads to overwhelming work on those who remain.

These dynamics, caused by migrating flows, are a contributing factor to instability of social projects, conversations focused on transnationalism with project leaders and DBC members allow us to identify these challenges, and therefore, highlight them as factors to consider in the development of future/continuing projects. In the next subsection, we take a closer look at the impact on social projects caused by access, investment and promotion of crypto donations.

Social Projects by the DBC: accessibility, investment and promotion of crypto donations

Even though DBC and their associated projects are amongst the most funded by Giveth in Costa Rica, not all those who lead their projects have a clear understanding of how to manage cryptocurrencies, wallets, or the maintenance of the web pages that keep donors aware of the development and, therefore, incentivized to continue donating. It seems as though DBC, to alleviate this challenge, has implemented a symbiotic relationship between members who are crypto literate and those who are not,

The world of crypto is something that when you don't know much, it is difficult to understand... in our group, there (are some) who work with computers, with crypto, which is very easy for them, but for those who don't, it is a bit delicate to understand this world. For example, if I want to do a project in Giveth, it can be complicated for me, but being part of the collective that does this work, they support us and sometimes we sit down at the computer and “let's do that together” and they explain to us, that's very good... I think that to have a success with that you have to do work on the computer, to find people who are going to be interested, who are going to make updates, have, I don't know, a website, have an Instagram, all those things and send the links and do advertising so that people will donate to Giveth, but all that is a lot, it can be a lot of (work)... the videos to put in Instagram and in the Telegram groups and that's a lot, so to create other posts for another (platform) that I don't know how to get people to earn Givs, I don't know where, sometimes this point seems a little complicated to me, since I don't know where to put the information, between social media and Giveth. People who don't know Giveth, I don't know if they're going to go there. (I.A., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

Another challenge with crypto-donations, as we mentioned before, is their possible instability in regards to their exchange into centralized currencies, that is to say, not necessarily do the funds donated equal the quantity received, as it is advertised on donation platforms. As Favrot explains to us,

I received a donation of about \$5000 or \$6000, at the moment

when they were given, right, because that is different, we have to understand that it is very different, because the crypto (value) fell at one moment, so at that moment I couldn't, I didn't retrieve, I didn't make the transfer very early, so what I received is not the same as what was given, and at first, I didn't understand that very well. (Favrot, personal communication, September 2023)

Despite digital illiteracy and currency exchange disbalances, crypto donations have been essential to the implementation and development of social projects by the DBC, “*money is power and power allows (us to) do the things that (Favrot has) done, without those donations, it's not much, so I don't know how much the funds have allowed for that to happen, but they help*” (I.B., personal communication, September 2023). According to Favrot, the donations he received for his three projects supported mostly materials and labor, nonetheless for *Free the Food*, the donations were also used to buy fruit trees and fertilizer. His strategic focus has been to pay as little as possible for materials or labor,

Because it's not that there is a lot of money, I will always look for a way to not have to pay and look for the material, wherever it can be found, or ask a friend if he can help me build, or ask the community if they can come to put together the structures when the time is right. What we did (with the recycling center), I had prepared all the pieces to make the structure and in two days, my friends came and we set it up. (Favrot, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

In the process of financially strategizing donations, through other forms of economic flows, such as volunteer work, DBC projects work intimately with the support of others, in doing so, they both activate *economies of collective collaboration*, and hinder opportunities for paid labor in the local community. Those who were hired though, were hired based on their capacities according to the needs of the project, highlighting *situated local knowledge* and its value for some of these projects:

Free the food, which is planting, for me it is much better to work with locals, because foreigners do not know how to use, how to be efficient and all that, so, for example, it is easier this way and well, (with) grey waters, I preferred to have help from the foreign community, which is not just foreign, because we have friends who come, who are Ticos⁴⁵, who come from San José, but who are a little more alternative, let's say... so they helped me make filters, paid (labor) ... yes, still the recycling center, a Tico helped me build it at the beginning. Since I try not to pay people too much, I prefer there to be volunteers, but when there is a job and it's a lot to do and I don't have many friends who are available for that, I'm going to pay someone. (Favrot, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

It is clear that crypto-donations enter into dialogue with other flows of goods, time and knowledge, such as centralized currencies, donated materials, advice, free rent as well as with flows of collaboration, paid labor, and ethics of caring (as we shall see later on), we can consider this an *ecology of flows of valued goods, services and knowledge*. In doing so, crypto-donations both participate

in transformational projects and can also remain in the power of those who are more privileged than others, who have more connections, who have acquired digital literacy, who can then facilitate access to funds that local people do not have access to.

According to our interviewees, here's some of the main implementations that could both better the use of cryptocurrencies in San Salvador del Barú, as well as the success of crypto-donations:

- Direct relationships with donors, where donors can receive gratitude messages and personal updates from those managing crypto-financed projects.
- ATMs to retrieve crypto-funds directly and dataphones that accept credit-debit cards that hold crypto funds.
- Education for *glocal* community on cryptocurrencies, we suggest to expand this to digital education and tools to be able to ignite the process of participating, receiving and maintaining crypto-donations for local communities and their self-led projects.
- Marketing team for the projects.
- Building awareness of projects that have been funded by crypto-donations.

The importance of creating community awareness of crypto-donated projects, through informative labels and talks, came up as a reflection in our conversations with Favrot, “*I'm going to think about that, discussing all this makes me think 'it's also my responsibility', if I want donations, (I must) promote the projects and (create) the connection between my social media and the donation platforms*” (Favrot, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation). Favrot's reflection highlights the importance of discussing the effectiveness of the social projects, their impacts and transformations, in general, as well as the ways they are interacting with an *ecology of flows*.

SOCIOCULTURAL GLOCAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SAN SALVADOR DEL BARÚ THROUGH THE LENS OF CRYPTO-FUNDED SOCIAL PROJECTS

This section systematizes the *sentipensares*⁴⁶ of the locals of San Salvador del Barú on regards to the four social projects presented in the previous section, as well as their awareness of crypto donations used to develop these projects; which in turn, sheds light as to their knowledge of crypto currencies and their curiosity and openness to embrace crypto. Furthermore, our conversations with locals, their invitations for us to join them in their homes

⁴⁵ Ticos is an idiomatic term used for referring to Costa Ricans.

⁴⁶ *Sentipensares* is a Latin American critical thought concept that deconstructs positivism's hyperfocus on thought by reclaiming how our feelings dialogue with our thoughts, an English translation of this term would be something like “feeling-thinking”.

and businesses, allowed us to take a closer look at how *rural Costa Rican ethics of caring* integrates the ecology of flows in the region, most importantly, how this, together with DBC's differentiated community approach, could be keys for the bridging of cultural differences caused by transnational gentrification, and therefore, igniting the full transformational potential of crypto donations.

SOCIAL PROJECTS BY THE DBC: IMPACTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

In general, the DBC projects propose *habit transformation based on different values* for community members. These proposals are met with both resistance and gratitude, highlighting the cultural and lifestyle differences that dialogue in the transnational space created in San Salvador del Barú through gentrification. As we shall see, in general, the *ReCenter the Resource, Recycling Center, San Salvador*, has offered a transformational solution to its community, which includes: better management of their recyclables, education as to the proper way to recycle and why, information on ways to reuse recyclables.

The recycling center is a success, because all those holes that were made in our houses were eliminated (where all the waste was burned), they no longer exist, thank God it disappeared. Everyone, we recycle, in our own way, in our homes, everything that is cans, electronic devices, or things that do not work, everything will arrive at the recycling center, they receive cans, bottles, plastic, they do not receive electrical things (large ones), that is, they are not going to receive a refrigerator or a washing machine, but for that, junk dealers come by to collect that, so I would tell you that in terms of cleaning up the community, the recycling center is a success. (Informant E47, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

The disappearance of the practice of garbage burning on its own has a generational impact on the wellbeing of natural resources: clean waters, earth, and air for San Salvador del Barú residents; while also promoting new lifestyle choices that question the ways we handle our waste and brings consciousness to our quantity of waste and its effects on the Earth and our immediate communities. Implementing recycling projects in communities where there's an abundance of healthy resources and the immediate impacts of savage capitalism are not experienced, allows local communities to embrace *conscious preventative habits*, instead of restorative ones, making prevention of illness - via contamination, extractivism or exploitation - of our Natural surroundings a value to live by.

The biggest challenge is that, in general life is really easy right now and there is not any need to really care, to be more specific, here, in this valley and then I guess many parts of Costa Rica, there's plenty of water, there's plenty of food, the air is very fresh but is not like this in many other places ... there's a different attitude towards things like taking care of trash or planting

food or cleaning water, when there's abundance there can be a laziness, apathy, so, it's almost a paradox. (I.B., personal communication, September 2023)

I.B.'s statement highlights foreigners' incomprehension - since they come from countries and realities where the effects of climate crisis are experienced - of the reasoning behind local practices and needs. How can local communities who have lived in rural areas all their lives, who dedicate themselves to small farming and cattle raising, be in tune with restorative practices such as recycling, restoration, growing food? There's a clash of realities and lived experience, and this clash, from the view of the outsider can create judgements that could get in the way of collectively finding solutions.

Capitalism is an invention of imperialism to gather economic power with which to impose political power over the world, and this invention has benefited peoples of the North, in both consumption practices and, for a long time, wellbeing of their ecosystems; it has been the consumption practices and enrichment of peoples of the North which have led to the destruction and extraction of our ecosystems in the Global South. Rural communities, not affected by extractivism and pollution, have not participated in the same habits and practices of consumption as peoples of the North, or cosmopolitans of Costa Rica, for that matter, so why is their lack of restorative knowledge a sign of laziness or apathy? If anything, it's a sign of coherence to a life focused less on consumption and more balanced with their ecosystems.

It is not a matter of essentialism of rural life, it is doubtful that cattle raising at the scale of San Salvador del Barú's farmers is the cause for the global climate crisis. It is most definitely a practice that has been exacerbated by an imposition of a diet system hyper-focused on meat, which in turn, is a U.S. market imposition. What matters is *situating the different realities of diverse communities so that expectations of one another can match their lived experiences*. The focus should not be on the locals' perceived apathy, ignorance or laziness, rather on the lived experiences of foreigners and cosmopolitans who have lived first-hand the consequences of mass meat-farming, monoculture farming, extractivism, and pollution of natural resources; and who can, therefore, offer *methods of prevention* to healthy communities with abundant resources. The following local testimonial, on the other hand, recognizes the value of different lived experiences for local benefit:

This region is rural, but it is not very productive agriculturally, since a lot of foreigners bought property here, there is not much to plant, we all plant, yes, but for personal use, I was born in the south of Costa Rica, where the main source of income is agriculture. Here we have our jobs, and people have agriculture as something secondary, for family consumption, to attend the farmer's market maybe, so they are small productions... but I always loved the initiative that they (foreigners) have tried to implement here, because they come from a very globalized place where cleaning, recycling, do not matter anymore, they, because

⁴⁷ Hereinafter as I.E.

their farm is also very good, want to implement it, it is very good because we as locals also have to learn, since we do not know what can happen if we do not take care. (Informant F48, personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

This clash of realities, nonetheless, affects the ways other projects have been received by locals in San Salvador del Barú, such as the implementation of *Ríos Limpios*, *Grey Water Filters*, *Costa Rica* and *Free the Food*. One of our interviewees reported not understanding why DBC wanted to plant food trees in the public areas, or along the public road, when everyone grows fruit in their own homes. Another recognized that lack of time had kept them from properly maintaining their water filter, the following testimonial sheds light of a lack of understanding, by those who have implemented the filters, of the different products that would find their way to them, as well as the economic disparities that lead to the use of non-biodegradable products by locals.

Yes, I have (the grey water filter) in my house, they came and did it, it was very useful, it just requires more maintenance, because as the days go by, being such a tropical place, there is a lot of rain, so it tends to get covered, and when it is covered then it generates bad odors, it also generates more bad odors, because, as I explained to you, we Ticos consume more fat, that is, they (foreigners) are more of all natural, let me explain, they (use) all biodegradable detergents, and the we Costa Ricans are not used to that part, we still cannot enter that path because natural products are more expensive, sometimes they are more difficult to obtain, that is why the drainage will have a greater tendency to clog. (I.E., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

Finally, in regards to the *Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road*, while all those interviewed were grateful for the support of the foreigners in fixing and maintaining the public road, this project must be considered as an adoption by foreigners of *local practices historically done for the wellbeing of community public goods*. That is to say, locals consider maintenance of public goods as a *collective responsibility*, in this way, the *Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road* is simply the foreigners doing their part.

As Ticos you must know how complicated it is to deal with public institutions for repairs, constructions and so on, so here the neighbors organize themselves and they themselves are the ones who work together in selling food to repair, to raise money and with that money to make repairs to the road or other things, right, that is a reality that sometimes it's difficult with foreigners, because foreigners come from countries where "I pay my taxes and my taxes are those that repair streets, build buildings" or so on, and here we can't, because if we stayed and waited for them to repair the road, we wouldn't get out of here, right? So that's the part that sometimes is difficult for us to explain to them (foreigners), that they collaborate with us when we sell food, that they collaborate with money, because all Ticos organize in that way, so for them sometimes it's like, some understand it very easily, others not so easily, but, this is the process we are in, it's what I was telling you, a process in which we have to adapt

to the new cultures or ways of thinking that they bring and they have to adapt to those that already exist in this community. (I.E., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

AWARENESS OF CRYPTO-DONATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN FUNDING SOCIAL PROJECTS

In general, most locals who were interviewed for this research were not aware that crypto donations were used for developments of the social projects selected for this analysis. In our previous section, we discussed how - through our conversations with Favrot - promoting awareness of the use of cryptocurrencies is a useful tactic to implement the full transformational effect of crypto donations and their potential to both develop social projects and promote the use of cryptocurrencies.

For the *Diamante Valley Commons San Salvador Road* project, we must argue that this project bridges the gap between foreigners and locals, since it is transformative to receive the support of foreigners if it's been difficult in the past for them to embrace collective responsibilities of their receiving communities. The following testimony is of the only person interviewed who was aware of the crypto donations used for repairment of the public road:

A year ago, the people of Diamante helped us run a campaign to raise funds... you know that cryptocurrency is not legalized in Costa Rica, but indirectly many of us are benefiting from it, because by being legalized in other countries, they (the members of the DBC) change it to our currency, in that campaign 12 million (colones) were raised to repair the road, because it was something that, let's say, it could hardly be traversed, there were huge potholes, and they helped us create the platform and collect money and soil, so indirectly all the communities benefit greatly from the help they can give us and from the entire project, because it is about working as a team, collaborating with each other. (I.F., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

In our perspective, awareness of crypto donations can drastically enhance the full potential for cryptocurrencies in San Salvador del Barú by starting a conversation that normalizes cryptocurrencies' use in the region, to begin with, which could then spark the curiosity of locals, which must then be followed by education, as we shall see in the next subsection.

OPENNESS AND CURIOSITY TO LEARN AND EMBRACE CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Most of our interviewees were also interested in learning more about cryptocurrencies and already had some feedback on the challenges of implementing them in their communities.

I know how cryptocurrency works, how it is managed and so on, but no, I have never worked with cryptocurrency as such, for my level of business it is quite complicated to manage it,

⁴⁸ Hereinafter as I.F.

because we are a business that manages employees, so I cannot pay my employee with cryptocurrencies, because they are people, well, they are not open to this new monetary world that cryptocurrency offers us, many, sometimes, do not even have fiber optic internet in their homes, so it is quite complex, or many do not even know it, not even know what it is, in fact, many of my employees, I have to pay them in cash because they don't go to the center of San Isidro as much (where they could get money from the ATM or the bank), so I won't be able to pay them in a transfer because they need the cash. (I.E., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

I.E.'s feedback sheds light on the challenges of employing cryptocurrencies and the *digital divide*, covered at the beginning of this article: lack of access to internet, lack of access to ATMs, lack of knowledge of cryptocurrencies in general. Similar to Costa Rican cosmopolitans and foreigners, San Salvador del Barú locals also believe education and training can be a way to breach the digital divide that hinders the potential of cryptocurrencies, and therefore, the use and interest in crypto donations in the region.

First, I think there should be training or a way to explain to them (locals) what a cryptocurrency is, because I think they don't know what it is, they don't handle the concept as such, maybe that "I've heard it but I'm not interested, so I haven't paid attention to it" mentality, I believe that in this community, more than 80% do not know what a cryptocurrency is, because as I said, it is a rural community, the majority of the people who live here are already over the age of 40, and our children are there, but our children, we parents have to support them, right? That would be the correct word, until they get a job. (I.E., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

On top of the importance of training and education, this testimonial highlights two socio-cultural factors to consider when entertaining the use of cryptocurrencies in a rural Costa Rican community: first, that in general those who live in these type of communities are adults who have grown there, or come back to live there, because this is where they have access to a home, family business or livelihood. For the most part, these community members have not received the digital tools or education necessary to have acquired the digital literacy to understand and embrace cryptocurrencies.

Second, Costa Rican culture, in general, supports adolescents and young adults, through their high school and university education, and whether those are accomplished or not, families will still support their young people until they find a job. Many times, the jobs of young people will help cover their own expenses and, maybe, be able to partially cover the expenses of the households they are sharing with family members. For this reason, seeking ways to implement cryptocurrencies within young populations could be both a challenge and an opportunity, since they are not generally financially autonomous. In fact, according to Viñas & Budasoff (2023), Costa Rica is the Latin American country with the highest rates of youth unemployment (¼ of its population).

HIGHLIGHTING ETHICS OF CARE AS A POWERFUL PARTICIPANT IN THE "ECOLOGY OF FLOWS" OF GOODS, SERVICES AND KNOWLEDGE

While ethics of care was not a focus of our research, our research identified a variety of *practices of caring* present in San Salvador del Barú, from community members of all backgrounds. Caring practices are the product of a socialized *ethics of caring*, which "emphasizes the responsibilities that arise from the relationships and interpersonal ties that occur between human beings and the importance of addressing specific needs; processes for which empathy and the activity of caring are fundamental" (Comins Mingol, 2009, p. 15, author's translation).

In general, caring practices that rise out of collective movements such as the DBC, are focused in the promotion of their *sentidos-mundos*⁴⁹, that is their conception of the world - which includes specific forms of livelihoods, lives' purposes, cosmogonies, and sociocultural practices. From our research, we identify that such *sentidos-mundos* are geared towards: restorative practices for the wellbeing of flora and fauna; embracing and implementing of collective socio-political structures via sociocracy⁵⁰; and seeking *decentralized flows of exchanges* in the process of achieving their vision and mission.

Considering the DBC's perceived *sentidos-mundos*, their social projects and open-door policy for locals to join their events can be seen as the way in which they are practicing caring for and embracing the community which is receiving them, and which embodies different *sentidos-mundos* than theirs. "They (DBC) are very community-oriented, participatory, whenever there has been an activity, or a need in the town and I have arrived and told them, they collaborate with me" (I.G., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation). According to a DBC member,

That's why we added the word bridge to the name of the collective, much of the intention at the beginning was to recognize these differences and look for ways to co-create instead of destroy, because it is very easy to see outside in the world and see the separation that exists and like everyone focuses on separation. And it is even more difficult to create those bridges, but it is worth trying, to be able to have awareness and presence to notice at all times when we are creating and when we are destroying. (I.C., personal communication, September 2023)

Locals are also able to identify a different approach by

⁴⁹ *Sentidos-mundos* is a Latin American critical thought concept that claims the concept 'cosmovisions' and transforms it to embody all senses, not just what can be seen, resisting, in doing so, occidental positivist hyper-focus on our vision as a main sense, a possible translation for this concept could be *cosmo-senses*.

⁵⁰ Sociocracy is "a governance system, just like democracy or corporate governance methods. It's best suited for organizations that want to self-govern based on the values of equality" (Rau, 2020).

DBC members in comparison to other mainstream flows of transnational agents,

The majority of foreigners who arrived here, bought a large property to build a mega construction, a house, a swimming pool, and they are retired, then they are just at home, with their employees, sometimes they come to the store, they buy something, they go home, always within their closed group, let's say, of themselves, of people of the same age, parties for themselves. On the other hand, they (DBC) arrived with the perspective of integrating the community in many projects, many workshops, they always invite us, it is more open. The other foreigners, as I tell you, the majority are older people, retired folk, who just come here and say: "I'll buy this property, do what I want and I'm locked up, resting, don't talk to anyone, don't get stressed". (I.F., personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

The inclusion of Costa Rican cosmopolitans in the DBC is essential for fulfillment of the DBC's mission to become a bridge between foreigners and locals, transforming social dynamics that assume only foreigners have knowledge to offer, or the best way to implement projects, or the highest understanding of what the San Salvador del Barú community truly needs. One particular example of how Costa Ricans' involvement in the DBC transforms such vertical knowledge dynamics, is the proposal of the social project named *Art and Culture Center, Diamante Luz* by Juan Pablo Angulo, for the construction of a cultural center built by and embodying indigenous Boruca architecture.

I am one of the half a dozen Ticos who are part of the collective, the collective is mostly made up of foreigners, so that also says a lot and part of the creation of this cultural center is also to implement a place where we can share all cultures, all colors, but where the culture from here is also prioritized, to be able to show people from outside that here there are also ways, ways of living life and that is also something that is greatly needed, in many places there is a lot of lack of identity of the Costa Ricans, in the Ticos, but it does not mean that there are no colors, that there is no culture here hidden in the mountain. I really like to encourage these types of projects, so this project the first phase was just to build a place, I was only asking for about ten thousand dollars to build everything, including two dry toilets, and to repay the help to the Borucas (indigenous people), not just to bring them and nothing more, but to contribute financially to their labor. (Personal communication, September 2023, author's translation)

Angulo's proposal reclaims indigenous situated knowledge, ignored and overlooked historically, as a powerful incentive to balance out the *glocal* perception of valuable knowledge. Furthermore, unlike other projects that root themselves in empowering volunteer collaboration, this project recognizes the historical disparities present in Costa Rica and instead prioritizes paid labor as a restorative measure.

Locals also reported receiving support in achieving projects, such as the construction of their businesses. According to Doña Sandra's testimony (personal communication, September 2023), foreigners donated the roof and wood columns for her restaurant, and another

lent her their construction team for a day to put together the roof. In regards to reciprocating, there's the donation of wood chips from the local wood store owners to the community members living in *Diamante Luz* farm, these wood chips are used for practices unique to them such as the maintenance of compost toilets. This act of service demonstrates that although *Diamante Luz* members have different ways of living and managing their organic human and food waste, local neighbors have found ways in which to support them in doing so. Additionally, local business owners have adapted their services to foreigners and Costa Rican cosmopolitans' needs, such as vegan and vegetarian meals and products as well as sour-dough bread.

Another caring practice we observed was the emotional and domestic support of older foreigners by adult women in San Salvador del Barú. These supports go from co-living together, to helping them with their bureaucratic transactions, doctor visits and overall maintenance of their social and health wellbeing. Additionally, we heard testimonies from locals who felt bad for the foreigners who seem to be living austere lifestyles - since they are "not as wealthy as others" and "their mothers are not here with them" - older women have taken on the task to mother them through caring practices such as offering a plate of food, advice or someone to talk to. Locals are not aware that some foreigners are actively choosing to "not participate in the economic system", which, from a critical perspective, it's a privileged choice that locals cannot afford to make.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

It is clear that cryptocurrencies and their mission to decentralize the exchange of valued goods, services and knowledge have many challenges to overcome in the current hierarchical world order, from avoiding becoming another pawn of the neo-capitalist system to bridging the gap of the *digital divide*. Nonetheless, crypto enthusiasts continue to pursue ways to manifest the full potential of cryptocurrencies, crypto-donations being a conscious effort to bring financial abundance to those who most need it, especially in the case of Giveth and their desire to promote values for decentralization, community-building, and altruism.

A sociological approach shows that the possibility to build community through donations, decentralized or not, is affected by cultural, political and economic social relationships between individuals, collectives, governments, and institutions. A Latin American critical approach demonstrates that power imposed by colonial imperialism delimits the possibilities of peoples of the Global South both to access finances and technological knowledge required for the implementation of cryptocurrencies. Finally, transnational studies allow us to identify that in the particular region of our research, tourist immigration has led to gentrification, which in turn, imposes new power dynamics on local communities.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that cryptocurrencies' donations geared towards social projects of the Global South cannot have a positive effect. On the contrary, we consider a critical Latin American approach to donations can highlight the ways in which it may be reproducing inequalities, so it may transform them. We propose that for crypto donating/financing to have a *full transformational effect*, they must:

- Promote equality and horizontality amongst individuals involved and affected by the application of crypto-funded projects, starting by their full inclusion in the decision-process before application takes place.

- Promote digital literacy through education, participation and application.

- Promote cryptocurrency benefits and explain current shortcomings so individuals and collectives can take informed decisions.

- Challenge historical disparities and injustices in socio-cultural relationships between humans, fauna and flora.

- Encourage an intersectional approach in the development of projects, thus uniting diverse knowledge that encompasses a critical understanding of both technology, entrepreneurship, society and Nature. Understanding such an approach as a “transdisciplinary (feminist) theory that aims to learn about the complexity of identities and social inequalities through an integrated approach” (Bilge, 2009, p. 70; Hirata, 2014, pp. 62-63).

- Additionally, for collectives mainly founded by foreigners of the Global North in the Global South, we consider it important that at least 50% of their donations are geared towards locally-created and approved social projects - that is projects that involve equal input from members of the collective and the local communities that are receiving them.

While the full effect of transnational formations was not the focus of this research, all interviewees were aware that land price surge, due to transnational gentrification, has made acquiring land inaccessible for most Costa Ricans. Additionally, while some believe the most positive effect of the arrival of foreigners is the creation of jobs in maintenance of homes, gardens, farms, domestic labor and construction, local entrepreneurs have difficulty hiring staff at the Costa Rican wage standards, since some have gotten accustomed to the “gringo salary”.

Furthermore, becoming cheap labour for foreigners is not a solution to a structural issue, therefore, those interested in transforming the negative effects of transnational gentrification can look at the ways they can support structural transformations. Locals mentioned the difficulties of keeping young people in universities due to the costs of housing and schooling, for example, young people unable to finish their studies then have no option but to return to their communities and become gardeners and housemaids. Looking into ways of supporting families who are supporting university students can

have a powerful effect on the future generations of local communities.

Locals reported that besides the DBC, foreigners mostly keep to themselves, and sometimes overlook local costumes, by bathing naked in rivers and waterfalls, making them no longer a location to be visited with their children, therefore, culturally alienating them from their own natural spaces. We also received several testimonies that gentrifying projects, such as Holos, have established no connection to their neighbors and have damaged abundance of water or overlooked the health of natural resources in their construction practices.

Sadly, there were a variety of testimonials that allude to foreigners' overlooking labor rights and employer responsibilities, such as the payment of the 13th salary at the end of the year or of the health care employee payment to ensure workers, as well as the threatening of workers who claim their rights be respected with stoppage of possible future hiring. All of these testimonies question whether

Individualistic cultures of distinction and self-realization through travel can form more egalitarian communities, though it should be noted that there are many well-intentioned lifestyle migrants who would no doubt like to find ways of overcoming material differences and of addressing complex histories of global inequality. (Hayes & Zaban, 2020, p. 3020)

We consider that it is possible for locals of the Global South and foreigners of privileged countries to build communities together, but this work requires decolonization of practices and awareness of privilege, both of which give room for true horizontal collaboration and collective wellbeing. Some of the immigrants arriving in San Salvador del Barú have a desire to build what they term as *alternative communities*, as communities which are resistant to the mainstream neo-capitalism and its values of endless consumerism, destruction, extractivism and hyper-individualism.

DBC and their land node, *Diamante Luz*, have a clear intention to become a bridge between foreigners and locals as well as between alternative living knowledge and local living knowledge. This research, through its application of semi-structured interviews, has gathered a variety of testimonials that both demonstrate that DBC members and their social projects are geared towards these efforts while being fully aware of a need to implement education to further the social transformation potential of their projects. It also demonstrates that DBC has crafted a symbiotic relationship, amongst its own members, between those who are cryptocurrency-literate and those who are not.

Nonetheless, we consider that those leading the social projects are the ones who are closest to the locals, and in their lack of direct management of cryptocurrencies, they reproduce the digital divide, which together with the lack of awareness of the use of crypto-donations by locals, hinders the effect of crypto donations to

create social transformation, inform of new ways to fund social projects, or promote the adoption of digital currencies. All foreigners, Costa Rican cosmopolitans and locals interviewed have an openness to learn about cryptocurrencies, and locals agree that crypto workshops in Spanish, by Costa Ricans, would be the best way to implement them.

Additionally, all our interviewees also offered a variety of suggestions to tap into the full transformational potential of their crypto-funded social projects: education, inclusion, advertisement. One local suggested that acquiring and training local talent to lead educational and informational workshops for locals, as well as, setting up social media campaigns to gather the interest of the younger population could be another powerful tactic.

Furthermore, we invite DBC members to bring consciousness to other foreigners and to invite them to tap into local culture activities and practices - such as the typical Costa Rican dance expositions by the local women's dance group, the weekend football games, collective responsibility for public common goods - so as to weave cohesion and reciprocal interest. There's valuable knowledge to learn from locals, cosmopolitans and foreigners alike, shaping social relationships around this awareness of *glocal* knowledge can horizontalize power dynamics and promote true collectivity. We consider that highlighting and becoming aware of *caring practices* present in the sociocultural *glocal* relationships of the region can ignite a local conversation of the ways *flows of funds, services and knowledge* can better the livelihoods of all those involved.

Finally, from our positioning Latin American decolonial and feminist researchers, we suggest that future cryptocurrencies' research in the Global South involves an interdisciplinary approach that recognizes the interconnections between cryptocurrencies and the endless variables in the world they are part of. Each region will have its own set of variables that can both affect and be affected - positively and negatively - by cryptocurrencies. An interdisciplinary approach should include technological experts as well as socio-cultural experts based in the region of interest.

Currencies are made to become tools in the exchange of valued knowledge, goods and services, that is to say, human-led activities. Even those that are based on carbon-financing are dependent on human-built measurements of emissions. A lack of sociocultural awareness alienates cryptocurrencies from the societies it's trying to become part of, and greatly hinders their potential to become main sources of finance.

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