

Politics of co-operation

La Ciutat Invisible is an innovative co-operative shop/library in Barcelona's Sants district

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● La Ciutat Invisible, an innovative shop, research library and "community centre," has recently opened in the Sants district, thanks to a co-operative of politically-minded locals.

The Sants neighborhood, well-known for its political, social and economic movements,

locale, we already had a bookstore with a research library at the back area of a neighbourhood bar," says Marc Dalmau, a co-op member. "But as the project expanded, the space became too small and we decided to form a co-operative and to move into a brand new space."

This organisational change involved forming a self-administering co-op with members of an already existing group, all life-long Sants residents.

The co-op, up and running for a year and a half now, is composed of a labour project with six members and a political project with roughly a dozen members. They work in an "assembly system" where each person has an equal vote and decides on all issues concerning the coop.

The idea is that both projects work together and support each other. Their research centre and library specializes in transition history after Franco's death in 1975 until today, and is open to the public. Their shop sells books on critical theory, politi-

cal movements, history, communication, social control, globalization, the Spanish Civil War and the Spanish Labour Movement. It also sells poetry books and current novels, and fosters a children's area, offering different types of books and games that you can't find elsewhere in the city.

They also sell a clothing line including t-shirts, sweat shirts, and jackets, "urban wear" with a social message that helps spread the coop's vision with striking images. They manage to keep costs down by having their own silk-screening studio where one of the partners, a designer, puts the final touches on the images that collectively the coop has decided on. For the moment, they have two series: "Nit" with poetic messages such as, "We've taken the humble decision not to go back" with an image of a wolf howling at the moon and another one is an image of a manta ray with the phrase, "No net can capture the entire sea." The other series, "Ciutats" tries to recuperate historical memory of



La Ciutat Invisible has been open for a year and a half / M.W.

They term themselves "anti-capitalists" and try to change the capitalist world

is very active in Catalan politics, so La Cuitat Invisible fits right in by focusing on alternative politics and economics, and by bringing political discussion on current issues to the forefront. They term themselves "anti-capitalists" and try to change the capitalist world in a small, but meaningful way.

"Before we opened this new

urban revolutions: Barcelona in 1936, Chiapas in 1994, Bologna in 1977 and Kronstadt in 1921, and are certainly well worth a look.

They also generate income by designing and printing t-shirts and clothes for other co-ops and sell their clothing line in various stores in town, in other cities in Catalonia: Gerona, Sabadell, Reus, as well as Valencia, Madrid, and Bilbao.

Dalmau explains how to get involved, "Everyone is welcome to join, those like-minded and those with different political inclinations, because only then can change happen. There's an inter-

esting mix already: neighbours, immigrants, and foreigners. If you're involved in any social, political, or economic movement and need documentation or a space to work or need to research online, make flyers, or network with others, just come by."

Members pay 10 euros a month, which entitles them to free internet access, discounts on store items, news bulletins, etc. They also offer conferences and talks every month on current issues happening in Barcelona and throughout the world, and will have up-coming conferences on prostitution in Barcelona.

90€
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