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Food autonomy at a time of capitalist crisis

a participatory video inquiry into Thessaloniki's autonomous food initiatives

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Food Autonomy at a Time of Capitalist Crisis: A Participatory Video inquiry into Thessaloniki's Autonomous Food Initiatives

By

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Abstract

This study explores the decentralized struggle for food autonomy at a time of capitalist crisis. The analytical lens of Food Autonomy places a particular focus on the significance of (and tension between) individual and collective emancipation from hegemonic forces of the capitalist state, analysed in respect of self-governance and economic democracy. Autonomous Food Initiatives are self-governed experiments instigated by hardship and a desire to break dependency on systems of state or market power (middlemen dominance, capitalist market antagonism, bureaucracy, repression). This activist research was conducted by a 9-person community-academic researcher team using participatory video. It endorses reflective action in economic experimentation in Greece's alternative food systems, with specific historical state context, urban-rural dynamics, and considering the crisis as a unique moment for social change amidst the harshest austerity in contemporary political history. As experiences of capitalist crisis and distrust of liberal democracy intensify globally, the findings will have relevance to food activists in other contexts. The third chapter discusses post-capitalist political theory including the tensions between collective and individual action. In chapter four, I present the participatory action research methodology and the central use of participatory video – combined with semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and participatory mapping. The team collectively conducted 78 interviews and 9 workshops/collective film screenings during five cycles of research. I then unpack the tensions in autonomy which are exaggerated by crisis, including the effect of hardship on individualism, antagonism between consumer and producer, and the incremental burden of experimentation. Solidarity Intermediaries, which cut out formal middlemen, when confronted with these tensions, tend to fragment or adopt a mode of *introvert decentralization* – a term developed throughout the thesis-, as opposed to networking. The development of the idea of *introvert decentralization,* through anecdotes and perspectives from participants, highlights the disabling nature of the capitalist State, and the consequences of this for self-governance. The effect of anti-authoritarianism on the creation of and adherence to new collective agreements in self-governed initiatives is a notable focus of this chapter, touching upon issues of lack of trust, leadership formation, and rumour-mongering. In the sixth chapter, I focus on how these self-organised initiatives deal with difference and conflict, and discuss the main implications for realizing economic democracy. Structural and cultural differences, when glossed over in an attempt at egalitarianism, hide tensions rather than confronting them, feeding antagonism and unacknowledged informal hierarchies. Here, I develop Young's (1986) categories of difference for a social context shaped by austerity, debunking the commonly held myth that Greek people are unable to collaborate. Finally, I present a first-person

reflection on the extent to which participatory video flattens power asymmetries, and fairly represents diverse perspectives in social situations. PV, I resolve, can unintendedly exclude female participants, thus reproducing inequality in representation along lines of structural oppression. I also discuss how participatory video should not be viewed as a tool for representing 'what exists' in polemical settings where disagreement manifests in multiple versions of the 'truth'. This casts doubts on the value of video in all contexts. Overall, this research aims to contribute to movements in the project of autonomy, despite the growing burden of crisis and the contradictory and shifting legal-social-economic context.

1 Introduction

For decades, the capitalist food regime has increasingly consolidated its control over what and how/if we can produce and access food (McMichael 2009). Private accumulation of seeds, land, and retail space, is one part of this story of enclosure (Jansen 2014). Elite power, concentrated in more discernable forms of liberal governance (e.g. national governments and the EU) enables a neoliberal orthodoxy which upholds individual property rights as well as personal freedoms (Harvey 2007). Touted as *the* way to ensure economic growth, and prosperity for all, in reality, the 'myth' of market redistribution through trickle-down economics is an ideological tactic to enshrine in policy the reproduction of elite wealth (Harvey 2007).

The Food Sovereignty movement is based on the understanding that communities, peoples and states should have the right to determine their own food policies and practices (Wittman et al., 2010). Food movement actors, marginalized by capitalist markets, have carved out spaces for collective representation at various levels of governance, from local and international grassroots formations to transnational bodies such as the FAO (Windfur and Jonsen 2005). Nevertheless, In the *Nyeleni* agreement (cited in Patel 2009 666), food sovereignty demands a "transformation of social relations so there is equality between social classes, races, sexes and generations." In the same vein that Food Sovereignty contends that only through the transformation of power structures can equality be achieved (Robbins 2015; Patel 2009), Food Justice advocates (Brent et al. 2015) argue that representation and identities (e.g. class) are central to transformative praxis. This study complements understanding of radical transformation strategies in food movements with a focus on 'food autonomy' - political paradigms of self-governed food alternatives against restrictive and oppressive governance systems, including the nation state.

Scholars have drawn attention to the confusing location of sovereignty in the movement (Schiavoni 2015), with some maintaining that there are multiple sovereignties including but not reserved to the state and communities (Patel 2009). However, where states have adopted food sovereignty principles into policy, such as in Nicaragua and Venezuela, commentators have observed that due to contradictions of the state (Godek 2015), and the presence of conflicting trade and development legislation (Wittman et al., 2010) food sovereignty objectives have been marginalized or overridden. Additionally, critique has been aimed at the ability of states to ensure food sovereignty when "rights are already not guaranteed, due to an oversized reliance on a neoliberal market" (Trauger 2014: 1148).

Godek (2015), refers to this as the 'paradox' of the state: it is both part of the problem and the solution. Problematising the 'enabling' role of the state in food sovereignty (which holds the biggest recent literature on governance of food systems) is an important premise for this thesis, since it asks how attitudes to the state impact just and democratic experiments in self-governance.

Schiavoni (2015) suggests that because sovereignties are competing, the terms of engagement between state and society must be dynamically renegotiated. The case of Greece shows a double barrier to this suggestion. Firstly, as with every other liberal state, the state's interests tend to be deeply implicated in those of corporate power (Harvey 2014: 57), but, especially the austerity years post-2008 financial crisis, states have supported market economies and private expropriation over individual rights to food (Backes et al. 2018). Secondly, the sovereignty of people in respect to the state, already limited, is constrained further by the implementation of the 'shock therapy' of structural adjustments, and accumulation by dispossession (Badiou 2018; Harvey 2010). Harvey (2014: 152) points out, in capitalism, ultimately,

> "the indebted country has to bear the cost of any subsequent devaluation of capital while the creditor country is protected. The resources of indebted countries can then be plundered under the draconian rules of debt repayment. The current case of Greece is a horrible example of this process carried to extreme. The bondholders are prepared to rip to shreds and feed relentlessly upon whole states that have been rash enough to fall into their clutches".

Badiou (2018: 13) similarly describes the Troika's (made up of the EU, IMF and ECB, in charge of managing bailout conditions) new imperial practices: "local states are enfeebled or even absent…where traditional state power is dislocated", which, others agree, pinpoints an obscuring of the sovereignty of the state (Varoufakis 2015a; Salomon and De Schutter 2015). The moral double standard at play here is that private interests are protected, whilst public debt is seen as abhorrent, and borrowers as irresponsible (Mellor 2010; Harvey 2007). European banks gained fees on loans and so for them the boom was profitable (Manolopoulos 2011). That lenders profit from debt is also a moralistically hypocritical trend at the heart of neoliberalism (Harvey 2014: 54).

The 2008 capitalist crisis demonstrated the debilitating potential of capitalism in new regions of the world. The case of Greece highlights that economic powers are also creating a democratic deficit on the level of nation states in the name of resuscitating capitalist markets. In these conditions of minimised national state sovereignty, it will be important to bear in mind the effectiveness of

movement actors appealing to national policy and strategies to form and work with governance structures within new political organisation.

There is currently a gap in the food movement literature (sovereignty, justice, democracy) in terms of unpacking how this kind of transition to economic democratisation takes place during an economic crisis, and which is also confounded by a crisis of confidence in the neoliberal state. The economic governance situation in Greece provides insight into what might happen if neoliberal economic policies persist, and the effect on food movements of further capitalist crises, leading to other 'impotent' or debt-bound states (Bollier and Conaty 2014).

As a reaction against the neoliberal orthodoxy, collective forms of governance or 'hope' movements (Dinerstein 2015) attempt to be autonomous from the capitalist state. This form of post-capitalism is underscored by small-scale economic and political experiments in the *here and now* (Gibson-Graham 2006), or 'real utopias' (Wright 2010). In this thesis, I examine the diverse, decentralized autonomous food initiatives in Greece to better understand how dynamics of subjectivity and collectivity shape the potential for economic democracy and food sovereignty – particularly in times of crisis.

To do this, I will engage with the following sub-questions in the next chapters:

1.   How does the economic crisis affect the project of autonomy for diverse economies of food, and their individual/collective subjects?
2.   To what extent, and in what ways, does the state influence attitudes to governance and autonomy strategies of participants in autonomous food initiatives?
3.   How are self-organised solidarity-based food initiatives dealing with difference and conflict, and what implications does this have for the realization of economic democracy?
4.   To what extent is Participatory Video (PV) a method that can flatten power asymmetries, encourage inclusivity and fairly represent the diverse perspectives in social situations?

I will first map out the thesis, highlighting the themes which I develop throughout and announcing at this stage some of the theoretical dilemmas for which there are still gaps in research. I then go onto address them. First, I develop some of the contextual references, outlining the particularities of the Greek context. This situates the study in relation to the political-economic governance structures, the events leading up to and surrounding the sovereign debt crisis, the effect of the crisis on the agri-food industry, and the solidarity economy which has emerged since. This contextualization will become

important later in reference to local constraints on autonomy for solidarity-based initiatives. References to broader concepts and other empirical examples will be made when it helps to understand the local situation, within a zoomed-out frame of literature, on post-capitalist alternatives. Thereafter, I outline the structure of the thesis and objectives of the chapters.

The overall focus is on experiments in food autonomy as alternatives to capitalism. The capitalist crisis is framed as a potentially important moment for the production of new subjectivities and transformative political paradigms. Due to the consolidation of capitalist interests, it is also a time of contradictory economic and political pressures on individuals and the collective endeavours which attempt to become autonomous from hegemonic power structures. Opting for the autonomy lens through which to discuss the food initiatives that emerged in the years of 'crisis' in Thessaloniki gives way to discussions of political self-organisation and specifically social movement praxis which characterises and influences them, as well as the influence of the state on autonomy. For this reason, I frame the discussion around 'food autonomy', and within that ideas of collective and individual autonomy, the ability to break old neoliberal paradigms, and our associated subjectivities through novel experimentation. Also, important to note, using 'food autonomy' as an expression sat more comfortably with people in Greece than food sovereignty.

In chapter 3, I problematise Gibson-Graham's (2006) post-structuralist view of post-capitalism (politics of possibility) using the lens of autonomy (Dinerstein 2015; Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010) in the context of crisis, where dominant structures counteract emancipatory action. Synthesizing and unpacking tensions between various philosophies of autonomy, I critically engage with divergent notions of authority and connect political organisation to strategies for social transformation. I thus frame the possibilities of personal and societal transformation within this project of autonomy, where post-capitalist subjectivity is contingent on the production of hope and limited by the closing in of hegemonic power structures. Additionally, societal transformation involves the building, instituting and enforcing of collective agreements which deliver justice and democracy, a theme which can be a philosophical or pragmatic hurdle for self-organised initiatives.

Next, the methodology, chapter 4, gives an overview of the participatory action research (PAR) and participatory video (PV) methods used in the research as a means to ascertain, and be party to, the complex dynamics in autonomous food initiatives. I explain how the iterative PAR cycles of inquiry move between the group of community researchers and myself to collectively (albeit to various extents throughout) engage in analysis, reflection, action and planning. This chapter grounds the research in

an emancipatory participatory framework, whereby we as researchers were implicated in the grassroots dynamics. The thesis thereafter will be structured around the aforementioned research sub-questions, in the analysis and reflection chapters.

The first analysis chapter, chapter 5, is co-authored and aims to understand how the context of crisis is both an opportunity for capitalism and post-capitalism and how this contradictorily influences the manifestation of autonomy in experimental food initiatives. The discussion engages with the motivations of participants in food initiatives as a project of autonomy (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010). Whilst highlighting the possibilities for agency during a capitalist crisis, to imagine and create more just and democratic means to exchange and produce food, this chapter emphasizes the need for awareness of structural constraints. We argue that contradiction between collective and individual autonomy becomes exaggerated during a crisis, and thus aggravates the tension between the poor consumer and the marginalized small farmer.

Next, in chapter 6, I aim to fill the gap, on the one hand, in solidarity economy literature, which attempts to understand the transformative potential to economic organization, but neglects to account for dynamics of self-governance and its interaction with hegemonic forms of governance. On the other hand, autonomy literature does focus on this interaction, but stops short of developing an analysis on its nuanced and contradictory effects in the creation of antiauthoritarian political paradigms. To make this convergence, I emphasize the marginalizing effect of the State on attitudes amongst actors of autonomous food initiatives during a capitalist crisis. Their reaction leads on the one hand to a prolific emergence of 'legally creative' survival strategies and, on the other hand, the shaping of a new political paradigm based on horizontalism. A distancing from institutional political power amongst participants, I contend, in autonomous food initiatives impacts on the ability to collaborate with both the state and each other.

Following on from this, chapter 7 critiques the literature on solidarity economy which often uncritically celebrates the novelty of interpersonal connections and mutual aid as an alternative to capitalism, while rarely dealing with the inevitability of conflict, and the importance of confronting it, in self-organised initiatives. In this chapter, I adapt Young's (1986) theory of *politics of difference* to examine autonomous food initiatives in Greece and argue that conflict emerges not due to a cultural inability to collaborate, but because of the negation of structural and cultural difference in self-organised initiatives. As with the previous chapter, it speaks to the political paradigm of non-hierarchical organization, questioning its ability to acknowledge and deal with difference. This chapter

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Chapter 8 is a self-reflection on the participatory process, which mirrors the analytical chapters due to my critical view of agency from structural/post-structural standpoints. I agree that the assumption of empowerment in PV often focusses too much on possibility and neglects the structural conditions that limit agency (Shaw 2016). I also develop the idea of the 'feminist gaze' to ask if multiple parallel representations, whilst empowering, can also fail to represent those at the unfortunate end of unequal power relations – which alas cannot be dismantled through PV. Moreover, the chapter questions how video outputs can exclude some representations and emphasize others, sometimes unintentionally; this is particularly pertinent in situations where conflict is present.

2 The Greek context

2.1 Greece as culprit/victim of the economic crisis

Having been declared a culprit in the 'European Sovereign Debt crisis' (Blundell-Wignall and Slovik 2011), Greece signed its first Economic Adjustment Programme with the Troika (IMF, EC, ECB) in Spring 2010 under the PASOK (socialist) government. It has since signed a further two bailout packages under two different governments (Salomon and De Schutter 2015), including that of the current and hotly anticipated/controversial coalition of the Left, Syriza. Their 2015 election victory created "unprecedented waves of expectation and hope in a population brutalized by extreme austerity conditions imposed by external financial interests with the full cooperation of the Greek political elite" (Gourgouris 2015). An intense and optimistic period of resistive negotiation ensued between the Troika and Syriza; while Syriza argued for a debt haircut, the EU's argument played on fear, insinuating that non-compliance would lead to forced expulsion from the Eurozone and bankruptcy (Knight 2013).

Eventually, however, Syriza capitulated to the pressures and signed a third memorandum in direct contradiction of the 'oxi' vote of the Greek people in a referendum. Incidentally, this 'no' was not an easy decision for the Greek people; it was a choice of either staying in the Eurozone in a relationship of debt dependency with powerful lenders, or to default, lose savings and risk months of slow recovery. Nevertheless, without a realistic plan for leaving the Eurozone and held to ransom by international banks, the Syriza government led with the 'right to govern' above the rights of the people, and in doing so forfeited democracy (Kallianos 2017; Karyotis 2015).

Chomsky (2016) describes the austerity in Greece as "Eurocrats reacting … with utter sadism." Analysis suggests though that banks knew of the risks of lending without considering criteria for repayment (Manolopoulos 2011). Alas, the consequence of crisis, instead of being accepted by economic institutions, resulted in the coercion of economically impoverished nation states using moralistic economic reasoning, such as 'spending beyond your means', and caricaturing Greeks as 'lazy', 'greedy' and 'untrustworthy'. This Mediterranean stereotype was a convenient narrative taken advantage of by the European powers to justify their blame of Greece and subsequent intervention to force debt repayment (Herzfeld 2016).

In the period that preceded the economic crash of 2008, the country's GDP was rising, household spending was increasing and employment was stable and the country was applauded for its swift economic growth (Manolopoulos 2011). Greece was encouraged by lenders after joining the single currency in 1981 to partake in the 'easy borrowing' culture (and as a Eurozone member benefitted from lower borrowing costs) with the imperative to modernisation, "growth was fuelled by loose lending regimes of the banks and by high private sector borrowing" (Manolopoulos 2011). However, Greece was arguably destined to be a debt-laden and uncompetitive economy in the Eurozone since it was already economically peripheral (Lapavitsas 2012).

During their election campaign, Syriza promised better conditions for grassroots social movements – including supportive dialogue - encapsulated in their tagline 'the future has begun. Greece with dignity, justice and democracy' (το μέλλον ξεκίνησε. Ελλάδα με αξιοπρέπεια, δικαιοσύνη και δημοκρατία), which, indeed, sounds like a 'real utopia' slogan. The third bailout conversely gave Eurocrats veto power over policy-making, "in effect to forfeit national sovereignty 'wholesale' to international powers" (Varoufakis 2015a). Despite the celebrations of a 'clean exit', since the final memorandum contract expired, austerity persists, as does supra-state governance with the 'enhanced surveillance programme' until 2060 (European Commission 2019).

Figure 2.1: photo of Tsipras on Syriza campaign with party slogan behind reading "the future has begun, Greece with dignity, justice, democracy". Source: Gourgouris, 2015.

2.2 What crisis? Whose crisis?

The contemporary term 'crisis' has been reserved mostly to describe the consequence of deregulation of financial markets on market prices, banking crashes and sovereign defaults (Harvey 2014). However, in the Greek case, the consequences of the economic crisis are multiple 'crises', since crisis is also defined by the ransom on national sovereignty (Kallianos 2017).

First, following on from this, crisis has been seen as justification for implementing unpopular policy (Kallianos 2017). The state attempts to legitimate its interventions, and itself as a moral authority, by justifying the use of 'law and order' to get out of the crisis. It is in light of the economic crisis that the state is able to embed and worsen a social crisis through austerity policies, as well as using its mechanisms for the "criminalization, marginalization and exclusion of various social groups" (Kallianos 2017).

Second, the neoliberal myth of austerity is that the state is overspending. However, austerity doesn't make economic sense, and, in Greece, Conaty and Bollier (2014: 3) point out that "the repayment of debt … is an absurd assumption given that austerity measures have led to a 35% reduction in real wages between 2008 and 2013. The government's growth targets assume a major boost in exports even though the industrial sector has been the hardest hit by unemployment". Austerity does not lead to growth and a recovery of the economy, it leads to higher household debt and unemployment – which is a social/humanitarian crisis likely to have severe longer term effects (in the next generation when the family housing buffer expires).

Social problems continue, as does austerity, post-memoranda. e.g. unemployment reached 27.5%, with almost 60% amongst young people (Eurostat, 2013). Recent celebration of a decrease in these numbers has been largely as a result of the exodus of hundreds of thousands of, mostly young, people to find opportunities overseas (Oxenford and Chryssogelos 2018). For those still in work, wages and social security including pensions have been slashed (Eurofound 2019).

Third, a crisis of political legitimacy is the public contestation to the authority of the state due to what is perceived as being an undemocratic economic system (Kallianos 2017). Lyrintzis (2011) posits that the same political elite have ruled the country for the past 35 years, due to the large, ineffective, and "irrational" growth of a bureaucracy on the basis of electoral gains. This is significant given that all areas of public life were "penetrated" by party interests, including student and trade unions (Lyrintzis

2011: 3). Moreover, Verney (2014: 33) analyses the 2012 election result and finds a thirst for change and dissatisfaction with the political parties' inefficacy to govern.

"built on a deep and long-term loss of trust in political institutions, greatly exceeding anything that was happening in the European Union as a whole. The delegitimation of the Greek political system began some years before the outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis. However, the latter made it deeper and almost universal. The December 2008 riots were a spontaneous outburst by a dispossessed younger generation facing a grim future. In the 2012 elections, the cry of rage and despair extended to the electorate as a whole".

Ever higher abstention rates were also symbolic of loss of faith in representational democracy and the political system during the crisis (Karyotis 2015). Furthermore, Varoufakis (2015a) notes on a close reading of the memorandum, the obligation for "broadening the tax base and eliminating and streamlining exemptions, generating around 1% of GDP in annual revenues [i.e. squeezing another large chunk from the Greek economy in the form of indirect taxes, jeopardizing in the process any prospect of a new social contract between the state and its citizens]."

2.3   Grassroots politics for democratic organization

If Syriza was the reason for the upsurge in voting, and hope pinned on a political party by movements actors, it was equally a reason for the continued loss in belief in representational democracy after the 'no' vote defiance. On winning power and conceding power in almost the same breath, the new "left-wing pragmatism" (Gourgouris, 2015) was to "achieve everything that right-wing arrogance could not, that is, to subdue a population that has been fighting against neoliberal barbarity for five years" (Karyotis 2015). This was dispossession under the pretext of a progressive left government. Syriza has its own grassroots outreach programme called Solidarity 4 All which skims a percentage off MPs' wages, as well as individual donations, to give to social solidarity groups and for networking. This in itself divides people politically, as distrust of the political system, or disappointment in Syriza's governance, has left some people reluctant to work with any political party. Notably, too, Golden Dawn have some of its own "grassroots" projects, including soup kitchens for Greek people (Backes et al. 2018). Decentralisation of political activity, potentially threatening movement building, will be another theme of this research.

The December Revolts of 2008 influenced the reorganization of social and economic space, including through agri-food networks in Athens (Morales Bernados 2017). The December revolt would have

been impossible without anarchist elements of Greek youth, who owed their culture to the ideologies which emerged out of the post-dictatorial years (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou 2011: 94). In solidarity struggles since 2010 there has been an active involvement by both more traditional leftists and anarchists (Velegrakis and Kosyfologou 2018).

Trust and hope lost in political systems was restored through politicization in neighbourhood assemblies and horizontal political organizing (Velegrakis and Kosyfologou 2018). These non-hierarchical public gatherings opposed the centrist structures of representation that party politics pursued (not just one party or government, but the bureaucratic system) (Theodossiadis 2015). They defined actors not as passive victims of the crisis, but actors in shaping new economic and political paradigms. "Most of the collectives raised in the post-Occupy period try to function on the basis of a wide and complex social network partially independent of political organizations and to create assembly-based forms of organization where the assembly's decisions are binding and have the highest authority (see Petropoulou 2013)" (Velegrakis and Kosyfologou 2018: 249).

With governance and the liberal State under increased scrutiny by the public, and nowhere else to turn, social movements are pushing for 'real democracy'. This disentangles private interests from political power and reactivates civic participation (Hardt and Negri 2011; Roos and Oikonomakis 2014). Consequently, notions of democracy are being reconstructed from below and tested in new self-organised initiatives in Greece (Calvário and Kallis, 2016; Arampatzi 2016). Grassroots currents of political action, for example the anti-authoritarian AK, have been conspicuous in acts of dissent and have been active in setting up social centres and other forms of social solidarity in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. Additionally, there is an autonomous movement of people of all ages, but especially the young, to form autonomous spaces, networks for solidarity and for mobilisations (Arampatzi 2016).

Those who oppose the Troika, however, are not a united civil society – there are some who criticise street protesters, and others who hold nationalistic sentiments in diminishing both their own and the country's responsibility (Theodossopoulos 2013). The leftist 'movements' also remain divided in that:

> "the vast majority of young Greek anarchists seem to be reluctant to abort sectarianism and
> idolatrous invocation to ideological puritanism, which isolates them from the public sphere…,
> their absence from the procedures that shape a new political consensus results for all populist

initiatives to become entirely consumed by the rhetoric of party mechanisms" (Theodossiadis 2015).

According to movement commentators, libertarian and leftist movements are more concerned about preserving their own identity than connecting with the disenfranchised classes. "Social movements … have idealised partiality and fragmentation, they have not addressed the issue of political organization, and have thus been absorbed or marginalised by the hegemonic project of Syriza" (Karyotis 2015). Political organisation in autonomous food initiatives is therefore an important theme of the discussion.

2.4   Food 'autonomy' in Greece after the crisis

The neoliberalisation of Greek agriculture began in 1981 with the accension into the European market and after that, the single currency, opening Greek agricultural and food market to imports from stronger European economies. This period solidified the control of middlemen in market transactions; farmers usually produce small volumes due to the fragmented nature of smallholdings which contributes to their reliance on middlemen (Backes et al. 2018). Meanwhile, the paternalism of EU subsidies 'modernised' Greek agriculture, but also deskilled and deactivated farmers (Konstantinidis 2016). Greece has an aging population of farmers compared to the EU average (European Commission 2014), although this has been reversed slightly with new entrant farmers since the beginning of the crisis (and probably more considering small farmer informality). With 1/6 of the workforce employed in agriculture, compared to an EU average of 4.3%, agriculture is still an important sector in Greece (Backes et al. 2018).

The structural adjustment programme constrains any ongoing attempts to challenge neoliberal practices in agriculture (Backes et al. 2018). First, the market has been opportunistically concentrated into the hands of a few supermarket chains in Greece solidifying the dominance of large conventional farmers (Skordili 2013). This destined markets to be controlled by 'oligopolistic' (Skordili 2013) corporate middlemen, subjecting an increasing number of producers and consumers marginalized by the system to food poverty (Backes et al. 2018).

Second, food and agriculture 'sectors' have been hit hard by austerity. The third memorandum forced government to raise revenues by abolishing refunds on diesel excise tax for farmers by the end of 2016 and damaging opportunities to propel growth through primary sector investment, and marketing of speciality, local and niche products specific to the Mediterranean region. This was compounded by the phasing out of preferential tax treatment of farmers (Backes et al. 2018). Additionally, the law which had previously allowed tax payment in instalments (100-installments law) was revoked (Varoufakis 2015a).

Figure 2.2 a closed down shop in Ippokratous, Thessaloniki, which used to sell organic food [sign in window which is peeling off reads: 'organic produce'], many such small grocery stores have closed since the crisis (Skordili, 2013).

In the 1990s, there were two big farmers' protest movements with road blockades that split the country for weeks (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou 2011: 105). More recently, after the announcement of tax hikes for food producers, farmer protesters in Crete were famously filmed bashing police riot vans with their crooks. In 2010, tractors blocked the roads in a "battle for survival" demanding more subsidies and tax breaks. Demands from farmers taken to Athens were prevented from real negotiation with the government because of the economic reality, demonstrating the gridlock of policy reform as a response to civil unrest. Needless to say, the Prime Minister at the time, Tsipras, was deeply unpopular amongst farmers (Sotiris, 2016).

2.5 Community/Solidarity Economy (of Food)

Community economies conceptualise different types of economy, including less visible non-capitalistic or reproductive forms (Gibson-Graham 2006). This conceptualization includes modes of exchange, seen as illegal or non-credible in neoliberalism and values reproductive economy not based on wage labour. Informal economy has generally grown in times of austerity (Sotiropoulos 2014). Illegal markets and barter systems are set up in situations where formal structures are untenable for producers. In Peru, barter markets are part of a new spiritual and moralistic form of economy where the basic economic value is solidarity (anyi) or sacred reciprocity (Agrumedo and Pimbert 2010).

Based on an economics of generosity, and of care, in Italy, informal solidarity purchasing groups (GAS), made up of consumers and producers, have sprung up to organise the fair purchasing and distribution of food (Grasseni 2013). Wald (2015) refers to 'food utopias' which is an idea of creating small scale food production ideals in the present, through prefigurative politics (related to the philosophy and political organization of anarchism), a notion that this thesis develops in relation to urban economic democratization through the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in Thessaloniki.

The social and solidarity economy is "used to refer to forms of economic activity that prioritise social and often environmental objectives, and involve producers, workers, consumers and citizens acting collectively and in solidarity" (Utting 2014: 1). Although similar ideas and structures of exchange have existed for centuries, the popularity of the term is seen to have arisen from the perceived need to find alternatives to capitalist domination (McMurtry 2014). The social and solidarity economy are often lumped together, but in fact have different relationships with economic democracy. Social economy, encapsulating cooperatives, social enterprises, and mutual associations, is critiqued for having been pulled towards the capitalist ideal of proving 'economic success' (Laville 2014) and for mopping up after market-created inequalities as a substitute for government. Social Cooperative Enterprises (KOINSEPs), a form of urban cooperative, were pioneered during the crisis, under law 44301/16, purportedly to address issues of social exclusion through entrepreneurship (Adam 2018). The government have a SSE strategy, conflating the two, which includes the adapting of the KOINSEP law into a broader framework for SSE (SSE Secretariat 2018). Generally speaking, the scaling up of SSE through mainstreaming intensifies the interaction with the state (Utting 2014).

Conversely, Solidarity economy has the dual dimension of both economic and political empowerment, a welcome addition to the preoccupation of internal functioning of legal institutions in the social economy. One definition of solidarity economy is that it "pushes the envelope of social and systemic transformation. It emphasizes issues of redistributive justice, so-called 'deep' sustainability, …participatory democracy and emancipatory politics driven by active citizenship and social movement activism" (Utting 2014: 2) which stresses a plurality of economic principles with a focus on direct participation. According to Bollier and Conaty (2014), solidarity economy's differences emerge historically due to is its connection with Latin American liberation theory from 1970s. As such it rejects rigid blueprints and a single path, focuses on concrete strategies and practices from a range of movements such as the commons and cooperatives. Rakopoulos (2014a) has followed the institutionalisation of 'no middlemen' movement that emerged as a response the crisis, into cooperatives.

Cooperatives have been seen as the 'model reference point' for democracy (Laville 2014: 49), but elsewhere, McMurtry, (2014) gives the example of cooperatives lacking political accountability or ideological grounding such that they are open to corruption or cooption. Despite cooperatives having variable legal frameworks in different countries, Bollier and Conaty (2014) explain that as a trend across Europe old cooperatives have lost their political identity and thus the trust of their members. Reputational damage of agricultural cooperatives in Greece was a problem in old bureaucratic structurally weak formations (Louloudis and Maraveyas 1997). New social cooperatives associated with the solidarity economy are striving to repair this image by building economic democracy through adherence to the cooperative ethos (Bollier and Conaty 2014).

3 Conceptual Framework

3.1 Crisis and the neoliberal state: the struggle to build autonomy

This chapter is a critical literature review to situate autonomous food initiatives within a post-capitalist political economic framework. An important context for this study is that these emerging food initiatives were examined as post-capitalist alternatives in the aftermath of a financial crash, and explored because of their significance for radical social transformation (Mason 2015; Harvey 2010). In this chapter, I discuss how theories of autonomy implicit in socialist traditions enlighten the dynamics of these autonomous food initiatives, contributing to how they can be imagined and unfolded in ways that advance alternative socially just futures. This work focusses on times of drastic social change, in particular during a neoliberal crisis and a crisis of confidence in liberal democracy (Gilbert 2013).

The chapter begins with a brief review of capitalism as a dominant economic system, it's causal effect on crisis, and on the cultivation of the neoliberal subject. Next, the chapter engages critically with post-capitalist literature. With particular reference to Gibson-Graham's (2006) pioneering post-capitalist politics theory, I contend that the post-structuralist argument is an important contribution to understanding how our realities and subjectivities are both envisioned and transfigured by existent plural decentralised alternatives to capitalism. Since the *politics of possibility* framework emphasises an explicitly agent-centric view of social transformation, it maps onto a notion of utopia where desired action is performed in the present, theorising an opportunity for subjects to become autonomous from oppressive systems. I introduce here the notional ability of agents to self-empower and produce hope in order to change their lived realities and cultivate in themselves "post-capitalist subjectivities".

Thereafter, I postulate that the post-capitalist politics literature pays insufficient attention to the factors which inhibit or oppose the construction of post-capitalism and its subjects. Importantly, different socialist traditions, and here I include ideas from anarchists, disagree on how power operates and the means by which social change can be achieved. Post-structuralist theory depends on understanding power in the productive sense, which allows for performative action, thus overcoming constraining categories contained in notions of hegemonic economic power. Here, I develop the conversation on power, in particular the negotiation between structure and agency, based on Hayward and Lukes' (2008) dialogue. Hence, I put forward a critique to the post-structuralist view of

transformation which emphasises the limits of agency in the face of structural constraints. This demands an account of how individual and social (in)action are shaped unevenly by structures, in their particular contexts, and over time.

Next, I draw on anarchist literature to bring important theoretical insights that help close the gap in understanding in this discussion of decentralised agency – or autonomy as conceived by anarchists and autonomists. Specifically, the analysis draws on prefigurative politics as a form of action exemplifying existent experiments in self-governance, to frame how social relations are formed, depending on understandings of autonomy (or otherwise phrased, freedom). I draw on the critique of traditional antiauthoritarians' 'disdain for power', which – in rejecting all authority (and even politics) – leads actors to become complicit in the continuation of hegemonic power. This isolationist stance is shown to be problematic in the project of autonomy during a crisis due to the encroaching capitalist state, and its effect on grassroots political organising.

Finally, I engage with the literature on economic democracy and the politics of difference to ask how these autonomous food initiatives can deepen democracy at the same time as ensuring social justice. Based on an alternative to the liberal state which has failed to ensure democracy and justice, I discuss the extent to which decentralised prefigurative action, enacted in anarchist perspectives of autonomy, can emancipate wider society, specifically through self-instituting collectively-agreed mechanisms and social contracts. A central question is whether autonomy – in its atomic form - takes precedence over aims of social justice and economic democracy, and thus fails to challenge asymmetries of power and social inequality. This perspective helps with the treatment of the idea of collective transformation and democratic self-governance within post-capitalist politics in autonomous food initiatives.

Throughout this chapter, some key cross-cutting concepts that I pay particular attention to, and that I return to throughout the thesis, are the tension between individual and collective in autonomy and the role of crisis in creating the opportunity for radical social change. These themes necessarily engage with the interaction between structure and agency. Additionally, the assumption that subjects have the ability to cultivate post-capitalist subjectivities is subject to critical review. Throughout the analysis, I address the contrasting views on hierarchy within self-governed 'utopias' and their affect collective action. In the last part of the chapter, I map out how these theoretical debates are addressed analytically through the remaining chapters of the thesis.

3.2 The problems: capitalism and the neoliberal state

To begin the development of the conceptual framework put forward by this thesis, I shall outline the context of a dominant economic paradigm of capital accumulation and explain how it is facilitated through the vehicle of liberal state governance. This frames the foundation of the structural (totalising) view of the economy that post-structuralists such as Gibson-Graham (2006) juxtapose. The capitalist mode of production, as elucidated by Marx (1867), is based on private ownership for the accumulation of capital, private property, wage labour and voluntary exchange of commodities in competitive markets. This system facilitates favourable relationships between private owners of the means of production (e.g. capitalists, corporations), finance capital, businesses and markets (Harvey 2007). Of late, finance capital has bolstered in power and prestige (via banks, hedge funds) to perpetuate capital accumulation (Harvey 2018), to the detriment of collective action (workers, producers), who historically have been able to more successfully mobilise their economic interests (Gilbert 2015; McAdam et al. 2003).

Since the 1980s capitalism has upheld its dominance through the political ideology of neoliberalism (Harvey 2007). Its proponents assert the logic that there is no alternative (TINA) to capitalism to achieve human flourishing, dignity and individual freedom, specifically through the unhindered functioning of free markets (Friedman 1962). Instead of delivering on its promise of freedom and equality, neoliberalism has been shown to undermine economic justice by entrenching wealth and access disparities, as well as social and decision-making inequalities, with the concentration of power laying with the ruling elites (Harvey 2007). Neoliberalism is a utopian project, according to Harvey (2007), but he maintains it is an elitist utopia whose pretext of delivering equality through trickle-down economics was never a genuine aim. Instead, the utopianism "primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal of [global capital accumulation]" (Harvey 2007: 19).

Liberal democracies, which usually espouse capitalism, have been judged as undemocratic (Gilbert 2013; Crouch 2004). Significantly, those who own the means of production - the capitalist class - are able to invest in private property and hold economic power, whilst those who don't have access to the means of production are exploited for their labour (Marx 1867). In a class based society, the working class are forced into a relationship of subordination to capital, which becomes a larger source of both political and economic power (Martin et al. 2019; Cohen 1995). Additionally, rather than being depoliticised sites as neoliberals claim, markets are political constructs shaped explicitly by neoliberal

policy (Chang 2003). Democracy in capitalist states, therefore, is somewhat illusionary. As Harvey (2007: 7) argues: "the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking," and the narrative of *laissez faire* is the justification against state intervention to curb market power. As Polanyi (1957) points out, the freedoms we hold dear, such as freedom of speech, are essentially a by-product of an economy that promotes 'evil' freedoms such as the freedom to own property. Progressive liberals see that universal suffrage, individual human rights, and equality constitute democratic political tenets (Bowles and Gintis 1986), yet these are also viewed as moral obstacles in the duality of personal freedoms and universal freedoms (Polanyi 1957), whereby – as we have seen in Greece post 2010 - "if democratic procedures and/or processes contradict neoliberal thinking, then they may be overlooked" (Afouxenidis 2017). In short, this philosophy when put into practice ignores fundamental human needs and constrains the majority of people's freedom and self-determination, offering only a hollow assertion to democracy. This demonstrates the inherent contradiction in liberal democracies, which promote economic individualism as freedom, at the same time as structurally limiting economic and political democracy.

Harvey (2007) argues from here that the nation state is deeply intertwined with capitalist interests, and although there is a pretence of separate political and economic spheres, the state enshrines individual private property interests in law and uses their monopoly on force to uphold this orthodoxy. Moreover, "there is a good deal of evidence that the coercive power of the state played an important role in opening spaces within which capital could flourish well before private property regimes became dominant" (Harvey 2014: 17). Gilbert (2015) maintains that under pro-capitalist governments, including social democracies, capitalism exists everywhere in the same form, usually alongside other forms of non-capitalist economy. His argument is important here because it supports the claim in post-structuralist theory that capitalism is not an all-encompassing system, but exists in parallel to other forms of economy, including reproductive forms of economy, which prop up 'productive' capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2006). Additionally, it highlights the importance of governance in limiting the capacity of capital accumulation, as occurs to some extent in social democracies.

3.3   The neoliberal states' role in crisis creation

Opponents problematize neoliberalism as a philosophy of individualism and self-interest, whereby the *laissez faire* approach to governance is based on the idea that the invisible hand of the market can mobilise 'human nature' – greed, desire for personal wealth – for the good of all (Smith in Harvey,

2007, 20). Incessant capital accumulation is deemed necessary within the neoliberal narrative of economic growth for prosperity (Harvey 2007). However, the myth that without economic growth, there will not be social equality has been widely discredited (Fournier 2008; Kallis 2011; Miller 2004; Thompson 2006) and in fact the reverse has been shown. Namely, that capitalists have had to invent systems to expand and deepen the extent to which capital penetrates our material and non-material worlds, including through neoliberal restructuring (increased privatisation and austerity) and global imperialism (Bello 2013; Terry 1995). Yet the same imperative for growth has been fuelled by the necessity to keep the market economy competitive and to avoid economic stagnation (Latouche 2009). This has led to over-accumulation through a debt-based, highly financialised economy that incentivises unregulated and irresponsible lending, culminating in the global capitalist crisis of 2008/9 (Lapavitsas 2009; Manolopoulos 2011).

The recent debt crisis, like its predecessor in Latin America (Remmer 1990), cast doubt on state governance structures' ability, due to weakness, or unwillingness, to stand against neoliberal policy demands. The authority of the nation state to govern has been undermined by institutions that protect the interests of capital (Harvey 2007). The neoliberal agenda is ensured also by external finance agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, that have been given full authority "to negotiate debt relief, which meant in effect to protect the world's main financial institutions from the threat of default. The IMF in effect covers, to the best of its ability, exposures to risk and uncertainty in international financial markets. This practice is hard to justify according to neoliberal theory, since investors should in principle be responsible for their own mistakes" (Harvey 2007: 73). Instead, the IMF is part of a trio of elite-run institutions, the Troika, who are holding the nation state to account for its 'irresponsible borrowing' (a commonly critiqued narrative) (Manolopoulos 2011; Antoniades 2013). This constitutes financial imperialism that extends the reach of financial institutions to meddling in nation state governance, forcing a structural adjustment programme and allowing supranational bodies decision-making control (Varoufakis 2015). At the same time, it holds double standards for lender irresponsibility, ensuring that banks and other lending institutions are repaid (Harvey 2007). Whilst the argument is made amongst some socialists of the need for an autonomous state to limit the power of the capitalist class (e.g. Poulantzas 2000), the neoliberal regime has shown the state as complicit in neoliberal policies or impotent against supra-state players.

3.4 An alternative economic vision for emancipation

What is different, then, about the anti-capitalist views of autonomy and how do they stand up to neoliberal ideologies of freedom? Personal freedom, as the main tenet of liberalism, is underpinned by the assumption that humans are innately self-serving, which is disputed as a means to justify economic "competitive, self-regarding values [which have] thwarted human cooperation…and destroyed the possibility of real community" (Wright 1996: 22). Socialism, on the other hand, is anti-capitalist and generally anti-individualist (in the sense of self-seeking, competitive individuals) (Wright 1996). Whilst socialist variants are in broad agreement on desired ends, on the question of means or routes to attaining those desired ends, there is widespread disagreement. Arguments largely diverge on issues pertaining to agency and power; for example, the (non-)role of the state in the transition, and forms of representation and hierarchy accommodated in organisational forms, "as socialism that builds down from the State differs from one that builds up from the community. An organizational socialism of order, planning and bureaucracy rubs up against a libertarian socialism of direct democracy and self-management" (Wright 1996: 33). Although decentralised ideas of organisation were historically sidelined by (orthodox) Marxist socialism because they contradicted the proclaimed 'truth' of the scientific socialism and the proletarian uprising (Wright 1996), decentralisation is making a popular comeback in post-structuralist ideas of political economy (Miller 2006; Sekulova et al. 2013; Gibson-Graham 2006).

Miller (2015) calls for a synergy between centralised (anti-capitalist) communist-style tactics and decentralised militant (post-capitalist) organisation in order to critique and counter capital and build collectives. This symbolises a non-sectarian, open approach that this chapter also embraces. As a compromise between Left libertarianism and centralist socialism, social anarchism conceives of human nature as innately cooperative, because individual freedom is hinged upon mutual aid (Kropotkin 1902) - an idea which will become important later on in the discussion. This dialectic between the individual and the collective is a bone of contention also in the various anarchist traditions, since conversely to communitarians or social anarchists, individual anarchists see that to avoid replicating domination, individuals should enter and leave freely, without coercion of "power-over", and spontaneously into/from social relations (Gordon 2008). Some claim this should be done without meddling in (institutional) politics as this is viewed as synonymous with the state (Biehl and Bookchin 1999). This chapter therefore discusses the concern that individualist action in anarchist liberation ideologies, based on the rejection of all authority, replicate the individualism of neoliberal

democracies. For this reason, it is important to understand the socialist philosophies and associated actions at play in these movements for transformation.

The general position taken in post-capitalism, albeit with strategic variations, is that the current crisis in the capitalist economy has necessarily thrown doubt on the capitalist system and destabilised the ideological structures propping it up (Mason 2015; Harvey 2014). As a consequence, the opportunity has arisen to recreate our economic relationships and institutions (Mason 2015; Bello 2013). Older and more recent post-capitalist theories have criticised the implementation of Marxism, and its premonition of historical materialism, for creating the justification for 'temporary' totalitarian Socialist states (Clark 2014), or for the 'dogmatic' scientific doctrine that socialism came to symbolise (Lefebvre 2001; Gibson-Graham 2006). This doctrine, Wright (1996) acknowledges, created a 'shambolic' unitary Western tradition which silenced or forced assimilation of other socialist beliefs and values. Both of these critiques are aimed at the centralising and deterministic tendencies of the Left, which have overlooked the negative role of perpetuating governance through mechanisms of the nation state during the transition to socialism. Experience shows us that assuming the state will dwindle away after the proletariat revolution leads to the reproduction of state (and other forms of) domination (Arendt 2003). In a similar critique of the acceptance of dominance, criticisms are aimed at Marxism for deterministically delaying social change until the revolutionary moment in history (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Laclau and Mouffe, 2014). Conversely, anarchist thinkers (especially but not exclusively) argue that to create the world we wish to see in the future we must build those equitable relationships to prefigure the revolutionary moment (Leach 2013). I return to these ideas throughout in order to create a discussion that engages with ideas of structure and agency, and collective and individual action in self-organised initiatives.

A post-structuralist view of agency is similar to that implicit in prefigurative politics. In reaction to the perceived determination of orthodox Marxism, from the 1980s post-structuralists began to develop an alternative view of social change. Poststructuralist theorists shift our view of ourselves as agents in relation to the economy, contending that we can change the terms on which we act, in effect, to gain or retain power (Gibson-Graham 2013; Miller 2010). Frustratingly, according to Gibson-Graham (2006), alongside proponents of neoliberal capitalism, many anti-capitalists also buy into this image of an all-encompassing capitalist economy. Drawing on Polanyi, Gibson-Graham (2006) explain the fallacy of economic unity of market exchanges, which falsely defines farmer's markets and international commodity markets as a single phenomenon. As an alternative to capitalism, they assert that our realistic possibilities of 'taking back the economy' can be altered by shattering the boundaries

of our conceptions of the economy as a singular capitalist system. In its place, we can appreciate the existence of plural and diverse decentralised economies. This begins with constructing a new "less-capitalocentric, more inclusive" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 59) language of economic diversity. Their proposal is to fight capitalism by recognising that there is an outside of the capitalist economy. This includes enlightening our view of economy as also reproductive and non-remunerated in its own right and not always in relation, or in comparison, to the productive capitalist economy (Gibson-Graham 1996) – an important component in new forms of solidarity-based economy. Still, they confess in *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Gibson-Graham 2006) nothing is *untouched* by capitalism even if not all modes of exchange constitute it. The project of autonomy's negotiation with, and navigation of, capitalist state power is therefore central to the discussion.

3.5   From crisis to action: an opportunity for autonomy?

Post-capitalist and autonomist thinkers describe hope emerging from the cracks in the neoliberal orthodoxy through the enactment of alternatives (Mason 2015; Dinerstein 2015). It is believed that in these openings our subjugated creative and imaginative subjectivity can flourish opportunistically (Chatterton 2016). This idea of creating 'openings' is similar to the *politics of possibility*, although Gibson-Graham (2006) believe transformative action is not crisis-dependent. Important to the agency-structure debate is the Marxian idea that opportunity is what people make of it, albeit not under circumstances of their choosing, "but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx 1852: 7). To transcend capitalism, another Marxist, Holloway (2010: 9) conceptualises, we must see it from the point of view of its cracks, thus we understand it "not as domination, but from the perspective of its crisis, its contradictions, its weaknesses, and we want to understand how we ourselves are those contradictions." According to Holloway (2002: 1), the crisis is a critical point for experimentation, seen as a period of instability which can create "an unease, a confusion, a longing, a critical vibration".

Similarly, Castoriadis, a philosopher and psychoanalyst who has influenced local ideas of autonomy in the time of crisis, discusses moments of uncertainty ripe for change as a state of "Being is Chaos" (Karalis 2014). He theorises the moment of revolutionary potential as when it is our task to create ourselves through a reflective drive to self-awareness of other possibilities, with a distinct possibility for the emergence of the new and unprecedented in society. With a rather more structural take, Glassman (2003: 692) defines the moment of rupture as "that point at which a given social structure has become destabilized and weakened enough to be partially transformed (reform) or even

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of our conceptions of the economy as a singular capitalist system. In its place, we can appreciate the existence of plural and diverse decentralised economies. This begins with constructing a new "less-capitalocentric, more inclusive" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 59) language of economic diversity. Their proposal is to fight capitalism by recognising that there is an outside of the capitalist economy. This includes enlightening our view of economy as also reproductive and non-remunerated in its own right and not always in relation, or in comparison, to the productive capitalist economy (Gibson-Graham 1996) – an important component in new forms of solidarity-based economy. Still, they confess in *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Gibson-Graham 2006) nothing is *untouched* by capitalism even if not all modes of exchange constitute it. The project of autonomy's negotiation with, and navigation of, capitalist state power is therefore central to the discussion.

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completely changed (revolution)". Thus, in the event of a crisis we are, according to Castoriadis, "dehabituated from an unreflected mode of being and given a restless 'desire to know'" (Karalis 2014: 14) thus shifting our consciousness. Ordinarily, this desire is not present, since the institutions that define our *everyday* limit the meaning available to us. Rendtorff (2008: 106) sums it up thus:

> "According to Castoriadis, we have to conceive human revolutionary projects as an effort to be emancipated from bureaucratic structures in an imaginary creation of autonomous democratic institutions. The social imaginary is not a picture of anything. It is not predetermined, but it expresses a capacity to create upon hopes and desires for a better social reality and new social institutions".

We will come to the issue of creating both autonomous and democratic institutions later on in the discussion, but firstly a discussion of the particularities of the social movements from which these subjective transformations emerge. Indeed, the view that the crisis has shattered the TINA ideology (Dinerstein 2015; Albert 2008), is said to allow us to imagine the possibility of the capitalist economic system being replaced with another. Or, given that pluralism and decentralisation are core tenets of post-structuralist theory, rather a variety of alternatives (Gibson-Graham 2006). According to Dinerstein and Deneulin (2012: 585), social mobilizations, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico and other Latin American movements, which they call 'hope movements', create alternative economic arrangements which stand in objection to social injustice but also "actively seek and experience new ways of living." The basis for naming them hope movements is that hope inspires action in order to create alternatives that take a wholly different trajectory to capitalism. Even though the new social movements (NSM) had already taken a principle stance against the state (Eyerman & Jamison 1991), it is the emphasis on the value of prefigurative politics and the quest for autonomy that distinguishes 'hope movements' from social movements (Dinerstein 2005). Hope is inspired by an anticipatory consciousness of the "'yet-to-become', creating another reality not yet materialized but which can be already experienced" (Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012: 585). These utopian ideas are also the basis of *buen vivir* (Dinerstein 2015; Fatheuer 2011) and *degrowth* (Latouche 2009) movements.

We have therefore seen that economic crisis brought forward conceptualisations of grounded utopias from a spectrum of theorists and literary authors. Noys (2014: 74) makes the point that this conception of utopia differs to Marxist determinism, describing the current concept of utopia as a "place already present … not the classical Utopian desire to radically rework society as a whole and submit it *en masse* to a new order… Instead it seeks to find utopia already embedded in existent social forms – utopia as

somewhere rather than nowhere." Wright (2010) calls decentralised emancipatory initiatives 'real utopias' which signposts appropriately to the argument in post-capitalism that the transition to the end of capitalism is already underway. Gordon (2008) notes that utopia "has always meant something more than a hypothetical exercise in designing a perfect society". The essence of hope movements and grassroots prefigurative action is captured in this quote by Rebecca Solnit (2010):

> "Activists often speak as though the solutions we need have not yet been launched or invented, as though we are starting from scratch, when often the real goal is to amplify the power and reach of existing alternatives. What we dream of is already present in the world".

As a revolutionary ideal, grounded utopias link to the principle of prefiguration (Kinna 2016), which enables us to better understand agency. Leach (2013: 1) describes prefigurative politics as "a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs, and that movements should therefore do their best to choose means that embody or "prefigure" the kind of society they want to bring about". This refers to the idea that there are small self-organised societies within the larger 'society' in which the participants are politically empowered to define themselves and their political or 'ethical' subjectivities (Gibson-Graham 2006). As Graeber (2004) elaborates, people need to create the institutions of the new society in the shell of the old, meaning that transformation begins from the grassroots and cohabit for some time with old social institutions. We ask how, and to what extent prefiguration suffices as a transformative strategy, in particular how old social structures affect or inhibit prefigurative action in a crisis.

This view of utopia, however, is not new, but the gravity of capitalist crisis has revived it. White and Williams (2012) point out that post-neoliberal visions are realised already in praxis and are embedded in new forms of organisation. Arguably they have been since the 1970s, when social movements transformed people and defined them in relation to society as a whole through "creation, articulation, formulation of the new thoughts and ideas – new knowledge" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 55). Indeed, Dinerstein (2015: 2) in describing prefiguration as "a process of learning hope" mimics the revolutionary zeal of May 1968, encapsulated particularly in a slogan associated with the Situationist International, and taken by Baudrillard in his commentary on the movement, to "'take your desires for reality!'" (Poster 1988: 178). Interestingly, the crisis presents two contradictory sides. The same crisis situation which is epitomised by austerity, household debt, mass unemployment and an economic instability (Harvey 2010; Graeber 2011), is also celebrated by post-capitalist theorists as an opportunity to draw hope for progressive alternatives (Gibson-Graham 2006; Dinerstein and

Deneulin 2012; Wright 2010). This reinforces the point that idealism and pragmatism should be balanced in the formulation of social transformation, as they are in ideas of 'real utopias' (Wright 2010).

Some commentators thus criticise post-capitalist theory for being overly optimistic and placing too much naïve hope on an unrealistic version of future, which they predict will lead to failure and disillusionment (mentioned in Wright 2010). However, Wright (2010: 107) defends his utopian stance as a weapon against cynicism, acknowledging though the need for grounding examples in real situations: *"*[w]hat is needed, then, are accounts of empirical cases that are neither gullible nor cynical, but try to fully recognize the complexity and dilemmas as well as real potentials of practical efforts at social empowerment". Gibson-Graham (2006: 2) take a similarly decisive stance in the need for utopian thinking, claiming that assertions of impossibility are ideological tools to ensure that the dominant systems of thought prevail. This necessitates the following discussion of agency in relation to structure, including the effects of individual subjectivities and hegemony on transformation.

3.6   Locating power in agency and subjectivity

Before discussing the possibilities and limitations to agent-centric economic alternatives, we need a clarification of how post-structuralists view power and present alternative viewpoints. Hegemony is Gramsci's (1992) reading of power; as one social group comes to hegemonic dominance, it ideologically conquers other groups. The dominant social group is able to subjugate the values of subordinate groups, owing to their privileged economic position – this reproduces class relations and enables dominant groups to command leadership of cultural institutions. The cultural exclusion of the powerless gives rise to 'common sense' societal values, which are, in truth, a reflection of those values which support the interests of the powerful and the beliefs which maintain the domination of the powerless. Hegemony has the ability to subconsciously induce, and in fact thrives from, internalisation of the 'common sense' ideology by those subjugated by the system, thus maintaining hierarchies of oppressed and oppressor.

Common sense, found nowadays in the ideology of 'consumerist' neoliberalism, and liberal democracy (Gilbert, 2013), is however not a one-way propagation of views of the ruling class into the consciousness of subordinate groups. Common sense is "fragmentary, disjointed and episodic" (Gramsci quoted in Hall 2005: 42) because philosophical currents which make up common sense at a particular place and time are constructed historically so that common sense continually transmutes,

supplementing itself with everyday notions and perspectives (Hall 1986). Therefore, subordinated groups can also develop an embryonic, contrasting ideology that is rooted in the reality of an individual's own experiences. This emerges out of what Gramsci (1992: 165) refers to as "good sense" where a subjugated group gains an "instinctive understanding of its basic conditions of life and the nature of the constraints and forms of exploitation to which it is commonly subjected". Important to a later point, Burowoy (2012: 202) sees that gaining a "good sense" is dependent on institutions to which the subjugated were subject and "not because they were superior beings". This relative notion of sense-making is mirrored by Geertz's (1973) view that common sense is connected to local knowledges and, in this way, is also dependent on the cultural - and institutional - context. So, in the presence of contradictory consciousness, there is potential to see through common sense in the hegemonic logic and go against the dominant groups' ideology. This usually necessitates an unlearning and relearning of understandings in relation to the social structures, which then positions marginalised knowledge incongruously to the common sense of the hegemonic power (Friere 1970).

Deconstructing notions of social categories is a post-structuralist strategy to self-empowerment. For example, in Gibson-Graham's (2006: 19) theory of a *politics of possibility* they reconceptualise social class, from the dual and oppositional classes of oppressed and oppressor, to a vaguer notion (weak theory) of multiple and shifting class processes, so that "class struggles (over exploitation, or over the distribution of its fruits) may be interpersonal and may not necessarily involve affiliation with a group." Performative action, which then occurs in these new discursive spaces, transverses fixed social identities and thus allows for the reimagining of possibilities, specifically of an agent's power vis-a-vis social structures. In other words, the post-structuralist conception of agency contradicts structural Marxist perspectives.

In this sense, post-structuralists such as Gibson-Graham (2006) see these binary classifications in hegemony as reproducing the ideological construction of the dominant conception of the economy. Moreover, Gibson-Graham (2006) criticise the binary view of power as accepting powerlessness and sentimentalising the deprived 'working class' position as morally superior, and thus creating a gridlock in moving beyond the point of subjugation.

"We can observe how we produce our own powerlessness with respect to the economy, for example, by theorizing unfolding logics and structural formations that close off the contestable arrangements we associate with politics. As we teach ourselves to come back with a beginner's mind to possibilities, we can begin to explore the multiple forms of power, their spatialities and

temporalities, their modes of transmission, reach and (in)effectivity. A differentiated landscape of force, constraint, freedom, and opportunity emerges and we can open to the surge of positive energy that suddenly becomes available for mobilization" (Gibson-Graham 1996: 8).

Post-structuralists are therefore refusing to be paralysed in the face of hegemonic economic powers, by affirming the ever-present capacity for human agency. In this respect, they are criticising the notions of domination and subordination that those who vouch for social justice and emancipatory social transformation use as a means to set up an antagonism:

"When power is identified with what is ruthless and dominating, it becomes something the left must distance itself from, lest it be co-opted or compromised (Newman 2000)" (in Gibson-Graham 2006: 6).

Gibson-Graham (2006) see the process of experimentation in new economic possibilities as inevitably unpredictable and encourage us to embrace uncertainty. This, again, reframes utopia as based in reality, rather than "escapist utopianism of all varieties [which] remains in … the sphere of those dreamers of moral perfection who are unable to cope with the ambiguities and uncertainties of the world and history, and therefore cling to a more manageable and immediately gratifying ideal world" (Clark 2014: 15). This contradiction between agency with ambiguous ends and structures with stable guarantees is echoed in the theory of autonomy, which sees the project as inherently flawed, fluctuating between structure and agency, and in that sense, ongoing (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010). There is a question here as to whether experimentation is glorified at the expense of not recognising that for some actors the 'choice' to embrace uncertainty is to gamble for economic transformation (hinged on other actors doing the same) or risk of personal impoverishment or other forms of systemic oppression (while others will not). The final section on social justice frames this concern more concretely.

In a nutshell, autonomy theorists and post-structuralists focus on the politics at micro-levels in order to argue for the possibility of counter-power based on a Foucauldian view of power (which is theorised as being everywhere, including power-to alongside power-over). As Glassman (2003: 695) explains:

"Foucauldian analysis itself reminds us, the crystallized powers we can identify are not only repressive but productive as well. Thus, recognizing their existence is a matter not simply of

recognizing the obstacles to change, but also of recognizing the powers that those who struggle might potentially possess".

Moving forward and developing our discussion of power, through the nuances of the structure-agency relationship, help enlighten the limitations of the agent-centric approach in producing hope and agency. I base this discussion on the dialogue between Hayward and Lukes (2008).

First of all, both Lukes and Hayward agree that there is a recursive relationship between structure and agency, likened to Giddens's (1984) reading of structuration. However, their approach is oppositional. Whilst Lukes places more belief in the power of the hegemonically powerless to act against their oppression using non-coercive forms of power, Hayward diminishes the power of the less powerful in her claim that social structures constrain us, as our actions are at least partially determined by them. Whilst Hayward warns against neglecting the structures in agent-centred analysis (and practice), Lukes in Hayward and Lukes (2008: 12) responds with a view that better suits the *politics of possibility*:

> "[Hayward's] own argument amounts to an appeal to collective agency ('the social capacity for people….') as a form of democratizing power operating within and upon structural constraints. To which I would add that there are other variants of this idea of the power of those subject to structural constraints to contest and even sometimes transform them".

The decentralised nature of food economies is accommodated better by Lukes' version of power. However, because Hayward in Hayward and Lukes (2008: 14) views agency in relation to structures that constrain action, a pragmatist egalitarian in a real utopia would emphasise a recognition of structural power and its variated effect on agency, to guide their collective path out of capitalism:

> "These social expectations and social meanings always mediate between, on the one hand, structural constraints (such as laws, policies, rules, or norms), and on the other hand, the action and the inaction of human agents. Structure does not determine action. **Instead, it shapes action, by rendering some forms, in some contexts, costly or otherwise difficult, while rewarding or otherwise encouraging others.** Structure shapes social action through social meanings, which agents continually interpret and re-interpret" (my bold for emphasis).

Interestingly, although Lukes holds an agent-centric view of power, it is not Foucauldian in the post-structuralist sense, since he stresses the need to identify and attribute responsibility to the powerful for the consequences of power, whether they intend to 'assert' power or not. This broad view

conceives that power is able to take effect even when it is not exercised, but either way the source of power should be held accountable. In response, Hayward makes the point that people with power are not always morally 'bad', but are in social positions in which their actions are structurally determined. Attributing responsibility to individuals with power not of their choosing, or exercised unintentionally, she argues, should not be given equal moral signification as identifying and constraining social structural power.

These contradictions highlight possible pitfalls in seeking autonomy since agency is potentially always diminished by structure. I will now discuss post-structuralist propositions in critiques of agent-centric and 'passive' decentralised forms of organisation to draw out these theoretical tensions.

3.7   Power to experiment

Following the post-structuralist view of power, each human subject can supposedly make a conscious "disidentification with capitalism" and, Gibson-Graham (2006) argue, cultivate in themselves 'post-capitalist subjectivities' which adopt habits and behaviours antithetical to the logic of capital (e.g. cooperative rather than competitive, collective rather than individualist). This echoes Latouche (2009), the founder of degrowth theory, in his call for the "decolonisation of the imaginary". Kallis (2011: 5) elaborates this as "an active process of liberating thought, desires and institutions from the logic of growth, productivism and accumulation for accumulation's sake." Other post-capitalist proponents of different shades of socialism, such as Harvey (2010), Hardt & Negri (2017) and White and Williams (2012), similarly emphasise subjectivity as a necessary component of the transformation to post-capitalism. White and Williams (2012: 1626) state that "strategies for economic change, to be successful, must simultaneously address both the economic practice and the economic imagination. To focus on one, but not the other, would be irrational given their complementary relationship". This theorising places in parallel the need to transform both material and immaterial structures.

Gibson-Graham (2006: 7) emphasise in particular that subjectivity is the initial contingency to the opening of possibilities for experimentation:

"If we want to cultivate new habits of thinking for a postcapitalist politics, it seems there is work to be done to loosen the structure of feeling that cannot live with uncertainty or move beyond hopelessness…we could start to develop an interest in unpredictability, contingency,

experimentation, or even an attachment to the limits of understanding and the possibilities of escape".

Experimentation, therefore, encompasses subjective chaos, instability and renewal (according to Castoriadis in Karalis 2014) and is expressed through action in the self-institution of grassroots actors. This could be seen as an essential part of post-capitalist politics and the mobilizations encompassed in hope movements. However, if we account for Hayward's (2008) contestation that individuals cannot be blamed outright for their actions, insisting their actions are not autonomous from institutional structures, the ability of (all) actors to become "ethical subjects" becomes problematic. Especially since some individuals experience more cumbersome barriers than others, including on their time – as acknowledged by Gordon (2008). This leads us towards the question at the end of the chapter of whether the politics of emancipatory self-governed institutions have positive or negative effects on inclusionary and democratic processes. This is therefore an important moment to look at the social relations that constitute these new organisations.

3.8   Autonomous self-governance through institutions

To begin to develop post-capitalist critique beyond, and in contrast to, the post-structural view of power and agency analysed above, I present theories on social relations in intuitions discussed amongst post-capitalist authors, particularly in relation to anarchism. In line with the "good sense" analogy, Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) view of hegemony is not entirely oppositional, but is partial and incomplete due to ever-present antagonism and resistance running counter to it, embodied in social movements and counterhegemonic institutions. Linking to prefiguration, Leach (2013: 1) posits that the basic means for creating new institutions is "developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation," presumably made up of willing participants who are able to see through "common sense" and self-organise to oppose it. This action is based on the understanding that revolutionary change shapes the means towards the end goal, a distinctly anarchist view on action. The main idea of anarchistic prefiguration is a broadening of direct action by creating "collective structures of the revolutionary movement itself" (Gordon 2008: 35), which foreshadow a better society.

However, as Miller (2011: 196) explains in reference to the solidarity economy, sites of self-governance are disregarded in the totalising discourse of the capitalist economy, along with sites of economic alterity:

"The state is certainly a site of active governance practice, but to locate such practice exclusively in this site through a discourse that links state with regulation and market with freedom is to actively hide all of the other spaces of governance that are spread out across multiple dimensions of social life. Indeed, it might be the case that the essentialized linkage between state and governance is a key ideological edifice supporting a notion of democracy as primarily a practice of engaging the state (or, even more narrowly, of electing people to enact that engagement). It is in this sense that governance must be de-linked from an exclusive relation to the state to become an active question in all economic sites".

This argument about reconciling politics and economics is also central to building economic democracy (Wright 2010; Malleson 2014), which involves realising governance structures in economic organisation. The question of how institutions are formed in an oppositional action to the state means we should consider antiauthoritarian and anarchist mode of organising explicitly. Part of this process of self-governance is breaking from the controlling governance infrastructure of the state, and instead creating parallel governance structures, fairer systems of exchange and unoppressive governance to manage them. This, according to Gordon (2008: 40) is sought in response to being dominated and coerced:

"The individual's own experience of their restriction within the administered world, of their position of subjugation along multiple axes of domination, and of the coercive apparatus monitoring every disobedient crossroads, supplies a direct impulse for taking action to make things otherwise".

Gordon (2018: 33) views "regimes of domination" as "conditioning people's socialisation and background assumptions about social norms, explaining why people fall into certain patterns of behaviour and have expectations that contribute to the perpetuation of dominatory relations". For this reason, anarchists refuse out of principle to work with the state. Anarchists specifically refuse to reproduce the coercive techniques of control of the state, and so refuse to 'take power' from it. Gordon (2008: 53) in his analysis shifts the focus from power-over to power-to, encapsulating a non-coercive and if necessary passive form of power. Whilst Bookchin (1991: 4) argues that "hierarchy and domination could easily continue to exist in a 'classless' or 'Stateless' society", it is through remaking social relations outside of these oppressive structures, prefiguratively, that reproducing coercive authority is avoided (Gordon 2008).

The refusal to 'take power' is also echoed by Marxist Autonomists. Holloway's theory of change is based on a 'negative dialectic' towards social self-determination, equating in consequence to the 'disidentification with capitalism', in that their activism also includes the refusal to negotiate with power structures, or ultimately to take power away from those who hold it, including the state. Holloway (2002: 17) argues that:

> "instrumentalist impoverishment of struggle is not characteristic just of particular parties or currents (Stalinism, Trotskyism and so on): it is inherent in the idea that the goal of the movement is to conquer political power. The struggle is lost from the beginning, long before the victorious party or army conquers state power and 'betrays' its promises. It is lost once power itself seeps into the struggle, once the logic of power becomes the logic of the revolutionary process, once the negative of refusal is converted into the positive of power-building. And usually those involved do not see it: the initiates in power do not even see how far they have been drawn into the reasoning and habits of power. They do not see that if we revolt against capitalism, it is not because we want a different system of power, it is because we want a society in which power relations are dissolved."

Anarchist philosophy always rejected hierarchies across society, distrusting state institutions, vanguards and bureaucrats (Wilbert and White 2011), whilst the negative dialectic with state structures was a later adoption for Marxists, in recognition of their hindrance to emancipation. In a similar vein, this description from Katsiaficas (2006: 6) of Marxist Autonomist activism, although he describes it as novel, strongly echoes anarchist 'hidden' strategies of self-sufficiency and voluntary collective action.

> "Rather than pursue careers and create patriarchal families, participants in autonomous movements live in groups to negate the isolation of individuals imposed by consumerism. They seek to decolonize everyday life. The base of the autonomous movement in dozens of squatted and formerly squatted houses reflects a break with the established norms of middle class propriety in their everyday lives: communes instead of traditional families; movement restaurants and bars where the "scene" can have its own space, as opposed to the commercialized world of mass culture; an international community defined by its radical actions, in contrast to the patriotic spectacles so beloved in Europe. In this context, the Autonomen represent a paradigm shift in politics that began with the New Left but has become increasingly well defined. Unlike other

movements of the twentieth century that have been preoccupied with seizing national power they seek to dissolve it."

Katsiaficas (2006) speaks of the shift in criticism of capitalist states which came about in the late 60s, emerging from workers struggles in Italy. This particular strand of Marxism moved beyond the orthodox Marxist conception of work, widening the working class to include all of those involved in the reproduction of capital, including women and peasants. This conception saw change in attitudes to work, so that liberation was not achieved simply by taking control of production, but to get out of capitalist modes of production altogether (Cleaver 2000). Placing the state central to the revolution was criticised too, since "old notions of planning for the future revolution sounds hollow when we know there may be a very limited future" (Holloway 2002: 26)- especially critical due to climate change. Holloway (2002), instead, sees social revolution being hinged upon the production of a new (egalitarian, collective) power.

In the sense of grassroots autonomy, this anti-systemic shift brought (this strand of) Marxism closer to the cultural-political character of anarchists, but not by the same political and economic logics. Although holding a similar stance vis-à-vis the state and market, and a view to self-organise, anarchism and Marxist autonomism arose from separate movements and philosophies. Arguably, their different historical developments as political theories mean that their conceptions and enactments of autonomy hold important distinctions.

Marxist-Autonomist literature sits at the nexus of self-governance and critique of the Nation State on issues of autonomy – much like anarchism. Its emergence in class struggle has laid the foundation for the ideas of 'commoning' spaces, societies, goods and resources, in ideological opposition to capitalist politico-economies (Caffentzis and Federici 2012). Commoning over the long-term directly opposes the dispossession and enclosing of land by capitalist regimes, typified by the Zapatista movement which is the focus of Holloway's (2002) study. He speaks of 'commoning' as "living a different rhythm" (Holloway 2002: 29), one which beats against that of the capitalist domination. Moreover, Caffentzis and Federici (2014) clearly differentiate anti-capitalist commoning from other claims to commoning, since a social transformation also necessitates a systemic reorganisation of our social reproduction which deals with patriarchal and other forms of domination. There are examples of co-optation of the term in an attempt to "submit all economic relations to the dictate of the market", and this is, according to Caffentzis and Federici, a danger if projects do not specifically engage with reformation of our social relations towards egalitarianism. They give the example of the World Bank,

who claim to conserve the 'global commons' – through the rationality of the neoliberal market. Equally, a 'black market' which evades economic norms set by the capitalist state can still reproduce the same forms of domination as those of the 'conventional' market. As such, "non-egalitarian relations are the end of the commons" (Caffentzis and Federici 2014: 103).

Since reproduction of livelihoods under capitalism is a challenge, as epitomised by the workers' movements of the 60s and 70s, Autonomist-Marxists advocate viewing social reproduction through the lens of class struggle, which includes the struggle to regain democratic control of the economy. Autonomists are portrayed by Notes From Nowhere (2003) as a global network of care and support, which tie together to some degree autonomous struggles which emerged in relation to work (Cleaver 2000). As De Angelis (2017: 283) conceives, reproduction and its creation of value systems would be different in a commoning society, whereby: "commons reproduction (as opposed to reproduction of labour power) includes all the activities that provide material autonomy to the commons: reproduction loops such as care, food, energy and housing. These are reproduction commons (and corresponding commoning), because a hypothesis of social revolution requires a growing autonomy in general conditions of living." In their example of Genuino Clandestino, the working relationship that autonomous farmer networks gain with the council is importantly seen as autonomy on their terms, and not a relinquishment of said autonomy: "our autonomy is never under threat, otherwise we would refuse to comply" (2017: 302).

Holloway (2010: 11), similarly to anarchists, sees a revolutionary overhaul of one system by another as "impossible and undesirable. The only way to think of changing the world radically is as a multiplicity of interstitial movements running from the particular." Everyday 'barely visible' transformation towards postcapitalism, a gradual transition to change, through disobedience and the recreation of new communities holds distinct similarities to revolutionary ideas in poststructuralism (Gibson-Graham 2006). Similarly, in anarchism decentralised sites of power are consolidated into attempts at non-hierarchical self-governance. Both emphasise the importance of sustained grassroots action.

Despite Marxist Autonomist literature being of importance to the discussion, especially due to its linking of capitalist crisis to class and collective action, I chose to base the discussion on the *politics of possibility* with reference to anarchist thought for three reasons. Firstly, the political affinity to anti-authoritarianism in this case study resonates with real movements in Greece; second, in these struggles the tension between individualism and collectivity hold analytical importance and I perceive post-

structuralist notions of autonomy allow for a more concrete critique of this using ideas of individual subjectivity and self-interest. Thirdly, the post-structuralist theory of *politics of possibility* gives allowance for subjective and economic contradictions within the transition to post-capitalism. This premise is interrogated to gain understanding of real possibilities for social change, whilst knowingly acknowledging social equity and difference. Despite their differences, practically speaking, I argue for the recognition of growing philosophical similarities of left strategies to aid solidarity-making. I engage in the next 'critical' section with the question of whether, in fact, neoliberal ideas of freedom can be unintentionally perpetuated in the creation of self-governed alternatives.

3.9 The critiques of post-structuralism: disregarding state power and leadership

This refusal to participate in countering or adopting the power-over position is problematized by some anti-capitalists (Harvey 2014; Hardt and Negri 2017). Explicitly, one of the critiques aimed at Gibson-Graham is that they place too much emphasis on people's agency in changing their worlds, and on their ability to change, and not enough on the structures in which they operate. Thus, Glassman (2003: 685) takes issue with Gibson-Graham's deconstruction of Marxist "notions of structure as a force constraining and enabling human behaviour" to allow for subjective contradiction and unrestrained possibility. He talks about the likelihood of *"a specific form of crystallized power, centering around the structural relations of dominant classes to others in society … the social positions these classes occupy may function as relative 'permanences' …, a matter of great practical significance to political strategy."* He maintains, therefore, in line with an argument more aligned to Hayward, that the agency-centred approach neglects to properly consider barriers to action.

Firstly, Glassman (2003) insists on the crucial element of timing for struggle, defending the Marxist perspective of uprising, whilst also complementing Castoriadis' view of social renewal being triggered by crisis. His argument therefore also takes issue with Gibson-Graham being ahistorical in breaking too much with old ideas of revolution, the belief in which "has been heavily conditioned by the results of generations of social struggle and is not just an unconsidered prejudice" (Glassman 2003: 694). He is arguing that lessons from the left need to provide ongoing support for the view that "the kinds of changes in class relations and state power that the left has sought have been—and continue to be—conditioned strongly by the structural dynamics of the capitalist accumulation process" (Glassman 2003: 695). This view casts the transformative potential of experiments of politics of possibility into some doubt, especially in relation to their ability to negotiate or challenge structural power.

Secondly, grounded utopias are seen by Marxist autonomists such as Holloway (2002) as antagonistic in themselves. In his book *Crack Capitalism*, he describes negative dialectics as a type of resistance involves the ability to say 'no' to existing forms of power and domination, including institutions endorsed by the state, such as political parties and trade unions. This is the same logic as prefigurative politics: "autonomism lies in practices of subjective 'doing', … doing negates an existing state of affairs. Doing goes beyond, transcends" (Holloway 2002: 23).

In opposition to viewpoints which advocate the negation of state power, Harvey argues that history shows this strategy to have worked against the objectives of movements for autonomy. According to Harvey (2014:12), during the Spanish civil war*:* "[t]he reluctance of the anarchists of whatever sort to take state power for ideological reasons when it clearly had the power to do so left the state in the hands of the bourgeois republicans and their Stalinist/communist allies who bided their time until they were well-organized enough to violently crush the CNT movement in the name of republican law and order." He asks what the point of building movements is if ultimately there is a refusal to take power, or to act coercively towards the concentrations of power. Following on from this argument, the social anarchist Bookchin (2014: 183), argues that coercive power, or violent confrontation, is necessary to break state power:

> "Every revolution, indeed, even every attempt to achieve basic change, will always meet with resistance from elites in power. Every effort to defend a revolution will require the amassing of power – physical as well as institutional and administrative – which is to say, the creation of government. Anarchists may call for the abolition of the state, but coercion of some kind will be necessary to prevent the bourgeois state from returning in full force with unbridled terror. For a libertarian organization to eschew, out of misplaced fear of creating a "state", taking power when it can do so with the support of the revolutionary masses is confusion at best and a total failure of nerve at worst".

Similarly, Harvey (2002: 73) points out that so far only completely autonomous zones have shown to be able to avoid 'taking power' from the state and rather exist in parallel, but apart from the Zapatistas, there are few which are benign or progressive, or non-violent. Stahler-Sholk (2007) argues when talking about autonomy projects in Latin America, that there is a constant threat of being subjected, and potentially forced to completely succumb, to pressure from global capital to conform to its commodifying logic. Additionally, breaking engagement with the capitalist state leaves initiatives

isolated from resources needed to reproduce themselves. Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010) agree that autonomous movements are continuously compromised in their goal to create a fairer world due to the limitations placed on them by the state, through policy co-optation, and development agendas (as a vehicle for global capital). The former includes the forced or subtle assimilation, mainstreaming and surveillance (Lefebvre 2001) of autonomy projects into state bureaucratic structures, the latter into violent evictions and criminalisation (Stahler-Stolk 2007; Dinerstein 2015).

Thirdly, Graeber (2002: 73) argues that the anarchist strategy "is less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it", similar to the dissolution of the state discussed by Marxist Autonomists. Nevertheless, opting to create new organisations completely outside of formal political institutions is aligned to what Bookchin (2014: 139) called the "anarchist disdain for power", which isolates movements from the consequences of oppressive powers, and which also passively allows hegemony to continue. It can also cause sectarianism due to groups adopting a stance of "purity of uncompromised opposition" (Starn 1992: 105), creating opposition to other movements and initiatives, rather than collectivising against the common subject of injustice. Lukes in Hayward & Lukes (2008: 12) critiques the view of power in Foucauldian terms, referencing also "Vaclav Havel's analysis of the 'power of the powerless', in which individuals 'living in truth' reject the symbols of the official power structure, expose and demoralize its agents and leaders". This reaction to power has more recently been taken to the micro-level in movements which seek to reject leadership and vanguardism (see Graeber 2004), and described by Hardt and Negri (2017: 10) in their more recent study *Assembly*:

> "An individual being designated as leader or representative of the group would undermine the hard-won accomplishments of democracy, equality, and empowerment with the organization. When someone did present herself or accepted being designated as a leader or spokesperson, she was subject to "trashing", a sometimes brutal process of criticism and isolation".

Although self-institution is conceived as possible and is indeed attempted in a mode of informal and non-hierarchical organisation (e.g. Lefebvre 2009), there are others who view the inevitability of 'fixing' organisation into an institution as the first stages of what will become bureaucratisation (Ward 1966; Castoriadis in Karalis 2014). The phenomenon of individual actors refusing to become participant to a collective involving any hierarchical relationship believed to imitate bureaucracy is criticised by Noys (2014) as being dangerously close to the capitalist ideal of deregulation.

Comparing the idealism of capitalists and anti-capitalists, Noys (2014: 75) reminds us that capitalism is itself a utopia: "the ideological trope of the contemporary moment is to use the 'utopian' nature of capitalism as the means to run-together and criticize all utopian projects of planning." He elaborates that communist utopian ideas mimic "the nightmare of repressive observation and control" and therefore represent "our dystopian horror … of planning, transparency, 'purity,' and social control." Therefore, in Noys' (2014) opinion, this 'anti-planning' aspect of existing alternatives – which has been inherited by the failure of State-led attempts at socialism (see Laclau and Mouffe 2014) - is being resisted both by capitalists and their opponents. 'Anti-planning', which Noys (2014: 76) uses as a euphemism for aversion to centralised planning, therefore represents a convergence of the two 'utopias' with oppositional ends: "What lies at the heart of contemporary anti-utopian utopianism is a fear of planning … the necessity to consider the organisation of material needs as the means to overcome capital. It is this…that results in the convergence of this anti-utopian utopianism with the capitalist utopias of the market and production 'freed' of state control". This is echoed by the warning from Harvey (2014) who emphasises that anarcho-capitalism is a very successful form of decentralised decision-making, which, like left libertarianism and individualist anarchism, rejects liberal democracy and state interference in the market. The embracing of absolute individual economic freedom is a real problem because advocates don't understand capitalism enough to foresee the inevitable corporate-grab which would ensue without 'powerful' governance (Gilbert 2013; Harvey 2010). Moreover, this philosophy's understanding of individual freedoms can be hard to distinguish from anti-capitalist anarchism. It also echoes Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010) in describing capitalist's adaptation of 60s movement demands of autonomy into flexible entrepreneurialism in today's insecure work relations.

3.10 Problematising autonomy in a capitalist state

Autonomy in individualist anarchist terms then involves actions that contradict, through denial, existing structures of state power, and which provide an ideological opposition. This has been critiqued also in autonomist theory on the basis that enacted negativity is not counter to, and therefore does not challenge existing structures, it is rather:

"an attempt to escape from state legislation and determination and often rejects the possibility of creating social change from the state. According to this conception, autonomy involves a negative movement whereby all forms of state power are not only subjected to ongoing and rigorous

critique but are even simply rejected outright or 'forgotten'" (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010: 21).

Noys (2014: 77) sheds light on the tendency of real utopias to swing either towards the 'purist' sentiment, or to be mainstreamed or 'institutionalised'. He says the main contradiction of this kind of positive 'concrete' utopia - a utopia based on concrete and not abstract thinking - is the result of 'enclave-thinking', where there is a continuum of points which end up either being almost entirely isolationist, or moving towards a "dangerous convergence of the utopian with capital's own utopias". Here, Noys is talking about the fate of real utopias as being defined by the capitalist state context in which they emerge, with no choice but to isolate themselves 'autonomously' or merge with capitalism's own institutional framework. Reading Noys (2014: 77) raises an important question: if an initiative is not "explicitly political, affirming nascent communist political projects" and thus avoids being isolationist, does the economic form adopted not also feed liberalism which enable state and capitalist structures to reproduce, rather than forwarding a radical transformation? Could decentralisation be the problem here? Harvey (2017) thinks so, particularly in the examples he gives of anarchocapitalism which mirror the dispersed nature of capital itself.

Stahler-Stolk (2007, 50), similarly, claims that autonomy can become 'fetishised', on the one hand, "eschewing affiliation or engagement with any political structure for fear that it might absorb the newly asserted identity—can be a dead end. On the other hand, negotiating a share of power with existing political institutions runs the risk of replicating dominant hierarchies (serving global capital) and distancing the "autonomous" representatives from their social bases." Autonomy is therefore a project which is riddled with contradictions because of the ever present structures of capitalist state that it self-institutes. Through a process referred to by Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 27) as "defensive localisation", even the Zapatistas in Chiapas have been criticised for acquiring "territorial jurisdiction, …at the cost of being subsumed within the existing state structures, [as] only pseudo-autonomy" (Stahler-Stolk 2007: 50).

Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 24) elaborate on this, showing the limits of autonomy as a counter-hegemonic process:

"despite the discourse of self-determination and self-organisation at the heart of autonomous movements, autonomy cannot be seen to be detached from accumulation processes of capital, nor from liberal democracy, nor development. Rather, it is intertwined with these modes of social

life, which autonomous social movements seek autonomy from…autonomy cannot claim to have an essential 'ground', a space which is completely beyond capital, the state or development. In fact, we argue that autonomy should be understood as a permanent and ongoing struggle within each of them".

Moreover, Harvey (2014) sees that non-capitalist (alternative) economy is always influenced by or even supported by (and therefore to some extent defined by) the capitalist economy. Castoriadis, in Karalis (2014: 175), explains that it works both ways: "Capitalism and its critical opposition coexist in a permanent tension that is mutually modifying, with each putting the other's organisational forms, disciplines and practices into question." Additionally, there are tendencies for institutions to homogenise in a process of isomorphism due to pressures (force or persuasion) exerted by other institutions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 15). This tension between prefiguring an egalitarian community in the reality of hierarchical state structures, is what Hoffman (1996: 124) refers to as Rousseau's paradox: "people are to govern themselves in a world in which they are everywhere in chains. On the one hand, they are enslaved, but on the other hand the ideal of self-government forbids recourse to special assistance from leaders and rulers 'on the high.'"

Therefore, whilst antiauthoritarians wish to free themselves from authority of hegemonic forces to create their worlds anew, they are unfortunately unable to become completely free. New economies have to nevertheless negotiate structures in order to retain some autonomy, and this requires assessing the beneficial recourse to engaging with existent hierarchical structures (Young and Schwartz, 2012). Harvey's (2010) idea of reconfiguration maps moments of reconfigurative possibility onto the moments of crisis. Because capitalism is unpredictable, Harvey (2014) maintains, we need resources to predict modes of configuration; and act in a 'tactical space', in order to embed direct action in a strategic practice of counter-capitalism. This, he maintains, is preferable to waiting for capitalism to strike its next blow before reacting.

The process of becoming autonomous is therefore imperfect, and it remains an ideal, in reality involving points at which compromises and trade-offs are a possible tactic to avoid becoming entirely isolationist. Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 26) conclude that autonomy is relational, that means it is defined by what it wants to be autonomous from. Therefore, there must always be some kind of resistance, avoidance and strategizing, as capital and the state attempt all the time to sabotage the autonomy project. The contextual interplay between new organisational forms, which are in some way autonomous from the state, and the state itself, make it important to take note of the extent to which

autonomy is and can be achieved through prefigurative politics, especially in the conditions of crisis. In a moment of weakness, it is also an opportunity for capital to re-establish its interests and for the ruling powers to regain strength (Harvey 2014).

The way to retain hope, therefore, is also to see the autonomy project as fraught and continuous, which Gibson-Graham (2006) advocate by theoretically breaking down binaries in order to reframe the language of 'good' or 'bad' economy away from alternative and capitalist. They see the politics of possibility as fluctuating and non-linear. In a similar way, Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) elaborate on the need to reconsider definitions of success and failure in order to prevent the horizon of utopia receding and activist burnout and disillusionment. By adopting a conceptual hiatus between success and failure, they wish to allow a different approach to collective strategizing and self-appraisal. In some ways, this shows the value of producing hope in itself, rather than evaluating initiatives on transformation 'beyond' capitalism when it still very much exists. This brings us onto the question of the value of drawing boundaries around the social contract the state has failed to deliver, including 'universals' of democracy and justice, and the more pertinent question of how they are remade in decentralised efforts.

3.11 Where does democracy feature in these self-governed 'utopias'?

Lefebvre (2009: 61) views democracy as the movement "against the state, and is an impossible objective", in fact "there is no democracy without a struggle against the democratic State itself." The liberal democratic state is supposed to guarantee rights and protections to all of its citizens. The State is nevertheless a double-edged sword, in that as well as giving rights, it has been used as a tool to suppress any such rights through authoritarian rule (Anderson et al. 2014). To this, and the criticisms of post-structuralist arguments, Koch (2011: 24) provides a defence for the power of post-structuralism in challenging state structures, namely through pluralism in resistive economic and political organisation.

> "Post-structuralism confronts the state by undercutting the foundational premises that support it. Rejecting the modernist epistemology and the universalist ontology, the post-structuralist's argument asserts a plurality of contexts for the generation of discourse. The recognition of plurality becomes the basis for resistance to that which would impose universals. In political terms, that resistance is directed against the state".

If heterodoxy is power in itself, according to Koch (2011), I ask how decentralised experiments in economy give assurances for inclusivity and universals. Laclau and Mouffe (2014) argue that the "embod[iment] in more and more political practices and institutions" allows for "increasing numbers of people to take up democratic imaginary." Following on from this, Gilbert (2013: 22) claims it is the responsibility of the movements to understand how power manifests in the institutions that they are opposing, and because "the tendency of 'network' capitalism to concentrate power and authority at particular privileged 'nodes' (corporate headquarters, hedge funds, media outlets, and so on) … has to be constantly worked against by efforts to develop transparency and opportunities for participation at every possible level of decision making." This is essentially an argument for decentralisation of participative organising, but with a far-reaching view of capitalist power, indicating that democratic efforts need to somehow join up. This, Gilbert (2013: 28) emphasises is the key to democracy, "wherein groups, on whatever scale, can (however temporarily) achieve the capacity to co-ordinate their interests, resolve their disagreements, and intervene together in the fabric of their world".

Indeed, it is in response to the inadequacies that these democratic alternatives have emerged. Referring to Crouch (2004), Gilbert (2013: 2) asserts that "given that existing 'democratic' systems of government are almost exclusively designed to facilitate the representation of interests … by dividing the political spectrum into clearly defined 'parties', it is perhaps not surprising that citizens and politicians experience them as increasingly frustrating and unsatisfactory." Yet, let us not forget the warning from Noys (2014) that emancipatory idealisms when materialised can unintentionally feed into the agenda of the powerful and strengthen free market utopias (and their vision of an elite society). Worryingly, in the context of economic and political (and environmental) instability, hateful visions have manifested in other nationalist utopias based on exclusion and oppression, for instance to name a Greek example, Golden Dawn (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Liberal democracy is currently fought from both sides of the political spectrum, left and right libertarians, so pushing for universal rights and liberties can be a contradictory, but an important political goal for ensuring rights of the more marginalised as governments erode them (see Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

Deeper democracy can be more easily achieved on a smaller scale of economy (Hahnel and Wright 2013). Malleson (2014: xii) argues though that democracy has never been realised "because it has not yet been comprehensively tried. A genuine democratic society cannot quarantine democracy in its political structures; democracy must spread beyond formal political structures into the economy itself, since it is the economy the root of such social inequality." Democratisation within these alternative economies are, from this understanding, essential to democratisation of society as a whole. Yet, there

remains a tense connection between prefigurative politics and democracy. Gordon (2008: 39) claims that prefigurative project is an individualist project; he emphasises the point that because participation in prefigurative politics is voluntary, it is attractive to each person because it enriches their own lives (perhaps alongside the idea that eventually it will lead to wider social change), but mainly to liberate themselves as much as they can from social constraints. How, if this is the case, can real utopias embody both collective efforts for solidarity and democracy on the one hand, and be an individual project of liberation on the other?

The individualist anarchist view is that the spontaneous and temporary character of self-organisation allows for domination-free participation (see Ward 1966). Eliminating of course any interaction with state structures, or any other form of authority, Gordon (2008) thus claims that the decentralised and voluntary nature of the participants' involvement in anarchist organising is not the ultimate form of direct democracy as some claim, but it is something else entirely, encapsulated by non-hierarchical affinity groups and collectives. As each individual's freedom trumps the collective, there is no formal system which binds one person's opinion to another; this in his mind would create relationships of authority. This position shows that in individualist anarchist thinking, there is not only a tense relationship between the collective and the individual, but also between autonomy and democracy.

Faced with these tensions, Bookchin (1974) became disenfranchised within anarchist movements of the 70s complaining that individual anarchists - by dismissing all rules - occupied an identity which was not a true form of anarchism. In his view, they were betraying the ideology, and their claim that anarchism was antithetical to democracy is false. Bookchin (1974: 43) gives a decisive and strong-worded take on this:

> "To argue that democracy and anarchism are incompatible because any impediment to the wishes of even 'a minority of one' constitutes a violation of personal autonomy is to advocate not a free society but Brown's 'collection of individuals' — in short, a herd. No longer would 'imagination' come to 'power.' Power, which always exists, will belong either to the collective in a face-to-face and clearly institutionalized democracy, or to the egos of a few oligarchs who will produce a 'tyranny of structurelessness'".

Institutions, as organisations of economic, social and political relationships are in Bookchin's view necessary for building a cooperative world, based on solidarity relationships. Harvey (2017: 8) agrees, since:

"[M]utual aid societies (whether anarchist inspired or not) had, like the commons, codes and rules of behaviour that had to be followed as part of the membership pact and those who did not conform to these rules found themselves excluded (a problem which marks the problematic boundary between individualistic and social anarchism). Perpetually questioning authority, rules and codes of behaviour and disobeying stupid or irrelevant rules is one thing: disobeying all such mandates on anarchist principle… is quite another".

Alternatively, in the vein of social anarchism or communitarianism the collective future figures importantly – the vision of a world which is accommodating, inclusive and based on individual responsibilities to the collective good, or as Bookchin (1974) conceives freedom is a product of social relationships which can coerce as well as liberate. In other words, if freedom is not from each other but with each other, anarchism and communism don't need to be mutually exclusive. Moreover, Bookchin (1974) argues that just to be exemplary to the pockets of anarchists who manage to 'escape' authoritarian structures by creating and self-managing their own structures, defeats the objective of mobilisation for revolution, when transformation requires a knowledge of larger phenomena of social concern to humanity. An interesting take on this comes from Laclau and Mouffe (2014: 184) who see that there is a tension in the broadening out of autonomous struggles, when "chains of equivalence" extend to bridge autonomous struggles to each other in an effort to strengthen it, in antagonism to what it is against (hegemony). This has important connotations for struggles against exclusionary politics.

Nevertheless, Gordon (2008, 63) defends the anarchist organisation as informal, seemingly accepting the impasse that democracy (in institutions) presents to his notion of autonomy, by saying that the call "for formal structures amounts to requiring the movement to entirely change its political culture, placing itself in an entirely unfamiliar mould that needs to be learned and followed against one's habits." Otherwise, Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010: 19) definition accommodates autonomy in the social anarchist sense, since it moves the focus of autonomy away from the individual to the collective, expressing self-governance as a process undertaken by groups of people working in relation to one another, not necessarily directly, but with a wider view of inequality. An autonomous institution is:

"…governed by self-established rules, self- determination, self-organization and self-regulating practices particularly vis-à-vis the state and capitalist social, economic and cultural relations. Autonomy also entails 'mutual aid' and an 'impulse fuelled by present and past hardships such as

hunger, poverty and subjugation'…, and…Finally, the project of autonomy is essentially collective …, as it involves a group working together in common to construct alternative ways of living, rather than simply an individual seeking to assert their subjective autonomy against a dominating group".

Institutions, which put into effect democratic conditions, are thus necessary for enshrining the politics of equitable relations produced in democratic movements, as Young & Schwartz (2012) also contend. Wright (2010: 132) discusses the need to create "mechanisms for subjugating state power to social power in civil society, [otherwise] none of these pathways can effectively translate social power into control over the economy. If socialism as an alternative to capitalism is, at its core, economic democracy, it is essential that democracy itself be democratized (de Souse Santos 2007). In mindfulness of reproducing domination, then, a clear distinction can be drawn between the process of self-institution, an association of people in the process of defining their own rules of the game, on the one hand, and bureaucratic institutions, on the other. Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage (1994: 11) discuss this as the creation of "objectified symbolic capital, codified, delegated and guaranteed by the state," solidifying relationships in hierarchical structures based on authority.

3.12 Do they deliver social justice?

Wright's (2010: 109) research into the deepening of democracy through "empowered participatory governance" posits that:

> "people should have the power to participate in making decisions over matters which shape their collective fate [which] evokes the idea of direct participation, not proxy participation. Both representative and associational democracy seem one step removed from "real" democracy; they are practical accommodations to intractable problems of scale, complexity, and time constraints that occur whenever the problem of collective fate and democratic decision-making move beyond small scale, face-to-face communities".

Wright here is elucidating the value of small scale organising, in which a deeper form of democracy can be achieved, which is watered down when layers of representation are necessitated amongst a larger public. Democracy is the *struggle* to build in plurality and active participation from the ground

up. How then do we include wider society into this transformative agenda, and not only specific communities?

Given that the function of the state is to enforce comprehensive laws and enshrine universal rights (even if this is not true in practice), self-governed groups deal with the issue of making and enforcing collective rules, at least partially, separate from this mandate. Lukes takes the agent-centric approach that we are all responsible for, and therefore should be accountable to, the power we exert over others, whether intentional or not. This speaks to a collective responsibility and acknowledgement of power, by both the dominant and subjugated in society, in order to take action and bring justice. Following on from the idea of "disdain for power", if participants do not acknowledge power and therefore refuse to engage in the act to hold it to account they do not try to prohibit the perpetuation of dominating structures and mechanisms which have at least some hold over all of our lives.

Hayward in Hayward and Lukes (2008) criticises Lukes' view by asserting that institutions currently created by human agents create "patterned asymmetries" (commonly referred to in structured social relations of class, gender, race) which impact on some human agents more than others by significantly limiting freedom. In other words, structures curtail agency in an uneven manner so that some agents have more agency than others. Here, Hayward raises the issue of social privilege in agency, claiming that structural constraints on human freedom are often "social in origin" (Hayward and Lukes 2008: 10). An individual's autonomy is relatively determined by institutions such as laws, culture and enforcement infrastructure of the state; to have powers to make autonomous decisions is dependent on the individual's socio-political position. This kind of agency then can be used by the individual to free themselves from collective problems prevalent in that part of society, while others are not able to. This emphasises the relational dimension of autonomy which counters the myth that "there is some sort of absolute freedom that exists outside of some mechanisms of exclusion and even, sorry to say, domination. The dialectic of freedom and domination cannot be so easily set aside in human affairs" (Harvey 2017: 8). In cases where there is disregard for power amongst participants in food economies, and the resultant effect on the reproduction of domination in political organisation, will be a discussion in chapter 7.

3.13 Conclusion

To conclude, I summarise the theoretical tensions in the politics of possibility, around the issues of autonomy, decentralisation, on the one hand, and democracy and social justice, on the other. The

politics of possibility is an idea that breaks down conceptual binaries in the economy so that participants in alternative economies realise their collective and individual power to overcome subjugation. According to post-structuralists this 'opening' of imaginative space, allows for people to cultivate themselves, and shape their world in their view of post-capitalism, having previously been boxed in by such conceptions as 'oppressors' and 'oppressed'. Prefigurative 'utopias' that embody the transformation as already underway, according to post-capitalist theorists, produce hope to fuel movements against capitalism.

I argue that this idea of social transformation is overly agent-centric and neglectful of the structures which define social action – specifically the political power of the structures which instigate it in the first place, i.e. those of the capitalist system and the nation state. Orthodox Marxists assumed the power of the state would wither away after capitalism and therefore reproduced its power unintentionally in 'socialist states'. Anarchists' and Marxist Autonomists' refusal to 'take power', however, mean that on the one hand it is not wielded for progressive politics, and on the other, due to ignoring or downplaying power structures, actors can become passively complacent in the continuation of hegemonic domination. We therefore, to achieve autonomy, need transitional socialist standpoints which adopt strategies between hopeful human agency and which acknowledge structures that define the powerful, and the marginalised, in the struggle.

The 'escapist utopian' attitude to state power is also a critique of the prefigurative approach to social transformation, highlighting a contradictory dynamic between the individual and collective in the project of autonomy and also raising the issue of scale in social transformation. Nevertheless, when personal freedom is conceptualised as the liberation of the individual from all relations of domination, the power of state governance can be 'forgotten'. This can have a negative impact on initiatives prospect of countering or adequately navigating obstacles in the transformation to autonomy. Moreover, utopias based on this (liberal) idea of freedom can emulate the utopias of neoliberal capitalism at its most extreme, in the sense that decentralised anti-planning is pitted against centralised bureaucratisation (Noys 2014). The collective-individual tension in autonomy is discussed in relation to Thessaloniki's food initiatives in chapter 5, followed by the effect of individualism in the philosophy underpinning antiauthoritarianism in chapter 6. Both chapters discuss the idea of *introvert decentralisation* as a consequence of taking the route of isolationist or escapist utopia.

Despite this critique, it is also at the decentralised scale that democracy is deepened and redefined against the political paradigm of liberal democracy underpinning capital's dominance. Important new

political paradigms are being shaped in economic organisation, tackling the basis of social inequality (Malleson 2014). What's more, ideas of democracy can go much further than liberalism has purported to (and which practically has never achieved). Specifically, I ask if seeking autonomy can actually prevent or undo the democratic gains in self-instituted forms of organisation. In other words, if there is an emphasis on voluntaristic 'power-to' in participation (which excludes recourse to power-over), I question how rules are made in institutions so as not to replicate the elitist nature of the capitalist state. What interests me additionally about the idea of hope then is whether the collective future is to only include collectively-minded "ethical" people. These questions will be further considered in relation to the data used in chapter 5.

This chapter made a synthesis of socialist ideas which accommodate both decentralised democracy and broader social equity, hoping to incorporate a radical realist approach for leveraging economic democracy. It thus threaded into the discussion ideas of reconfiguration with prefiguration, from individualist anarchism, to decentralised social anarchism, to centralising neo-Marxism. In relation to the latter, Harvey (2017) describes how other forms of governance can complement anarchist movements, if they take a planned and strategic (reconfigurative) stance to political and economic power. Like Glassman (2008: 679), who critiques Gibson-Graham, I want to reiterate the "significance of structural power to struggles for social change," without resolving to take sides. This argument will then be empirically examined in the following chapters.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I give an outline of methods used and research design followed in this research project. The thesis is based on twenty-four months of residential research in Thessaloniki, between Autumn 2015 and Spring 2018. This research involved participatory video with a total of twelve groups (leading to five edited films and thirty stand-alone published video interviews) as well as interviews with ninety-nine research participants (twenty-three of which were group interviews involving two or more interviewees). The interviewees included farmers, activists, and workers, alongside the collection and analysis of footage from meetings, workshops, and fieldnotes collected from events, assemblies and informal chats. These elicited perspectives and stories on the interconnected topics of food autonomy, the politics of self-governance and conflict in the solidarity economy. These themes emerged out of a series of five iterative PAR cycles of planning, action, observation, reflection. Cycles of the research will later be discussed in relation to the specifics of methods used in each chapter, along with the initiatives in this study. I begin by discussing the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of my approach.

The overall aim is to justify the use of participatory methods to explore the grassroots dynamics of emergent autonomous food initiatives. I then discuss, particularly as an "outsider" undertaking a project of ambitious scope, the benefit of combining participatory methods in a 'bricolage' approach with various and evolving ethnographic techniques and activist approaches. Next, I position myself and my subjectivity in relation to the research context, its design and the co-participants of the participatory video research group (PV group). I then introduce the facilitation process with the co-facilitator, Jenny, followed by considerations of consent and confidentiality and an outline of limitations to the (scope of the) study. Finally, I explain how we undertook the analysis between the 1st, 2nd and 3rd modes of inquiry - self-reflection, group dialogue, coding and techniques which implicated wider society.

4.1 Epistemological groundings of Activist Research

The study initially drew on Gibson-Graham's (2006) idea of 'community economies'. According to this theory, power is located with the agency of economic subjects to 'perform' and subvert dominant narratives of the existence of a singular, capitalist, economy. This grounds the empowering and

emancipatory basis for PAR and PV in the process of becoming a subject (Gibson-Graham 2006). Thus, in this poststructuralist theory of change, the actor's identity is understood as fluid and continuously emergent. Through reflexivity, individuals are said to cultivate in themselves a "post-capitalist subject" (Gibson-Graham 2006), in a manner related to the PAR notions of conscientisation (Friere 1970).

Equally, an individual's knowledge is situated and shaped by worldviews and variances in identity (Haraway 1988). Actors constituting a local context are therefore not encapsulated in one representative viewpoint. The feminist, plural understanding of the economy is mirrored in the post-structuralist notion of 'community', which contains multiple and competing representations of the local (Gibson-Graham 2006). Relevant to participatory video and speaking directly to community economies, Antke Engel (2010) captures the subjectivity of producing images and interpreting them: *"any image of society depends on the perspective one takes, and the perspective one takes influences what one sees."* Representation therefore is dependent on the subject's social position within the community, and so acting in recognition of agency occurring within established social stratification (class, age, gender, ethnicity) can mitigate against only getting stories from the most powerful community members (Cooke and Kothari 2001), for example, spokespeople and those with larger amounts of social capital.

As with the conceptual discussion of autonomy and transformation, the interplay between structure and agency is of importance to the discussion of methodology, participation and action. Consistent with Gibson-Graham's feminist foundations, queering of political economy dismantles binaries of identity and conventions in political transformation, including revolution and reform, global and local, and organisational and individual transformation, since these processes occur simultaneously and interdependently and by the same, and different agents (Gibson-Graham 2006). However, this is problemetised in PV by the accusation that mobilising poststructuralist ideas of agency can extend a liberal framework for understanding identity, which focusses on the individual as agent (see Walsh 2016). At times, PV uncritically accepts local knowledge as authentic, focussing on local models of social change that exclude an understanding of wider structural constraints (Walsh 2016). Refuting that the individual is the site of social change, gives weight to structuralist arguments. Similarly, social movement theory until more recently tended to negate individual agency and the micro-politics in understanding collective action hinged on mobilising a shared identity (Jasper 2004). An interest in how transformative these initiatives are necessitates marrying local social dynamics to wider struggles for social change, such as social movements.

Indeed, efforts to create democratic and just alternatives (especially in a time of crisis) have been at least paralleled, and at times dwarfed, by the intensification of competitive individualism (Gilbert 2014) and liberal state protection of capital interests (Harvey 2007). So, whilst the feminist post-structuralist theory enlightens and amplifies the agency of marginalised participants working in tandem, the scope of this project to facilitate change is limited by structures of domination, as highlighted in the conceptual framework. Familiarising ourselves also as activist-researchers with structural limitations (political, economic, cultural) which inhibit social transformation is key to really understand the potentials opened up by agent-centric *politics of possibility*.

Nevertheless, during the initial stage, the economic experimentation advocated by Gibson-Graham (2006) was mirrored in an open and iterative methodological approach to research: to start in the *here and now* with the recognition of not knowing (very much), and to "treat obstacles and local deficiencies as resources rather than (merely) as barriers to projects of economic construction. Approaching the existing conditions in a spirit of experimentation and generosity, we are encouraged to view them as conditions of possibility as well as impossibility" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 194). This methodological approach underpins our focus on the interplay between various levels of agency and governance, including within grassroots food initiatives.

4.2 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR developed in 1970s Latin America out of the concern for increased frequency of (capitalist-induced) structural crises and their impact on the life of communities (Fals Borda 2001). Breaking with the Western scientific position of discovering an objective truth through linear processes, PAR sought to reconcile the incontrovertible link between knowledge and power by pursuing knowledge production in its plurality, situated in the particular social conditions in which it is produced (Haraway 1988). The methods of producing knowledge were also turned on their head; from the conventional extractive 'discovery' by the 'expert' academic, to a community-focussed, iterative process of understanding and acting to change lived realities (Fals Borda 2001). Instead of doing research *on* 'subjects', then, PAR is conducted *with* co-inquirers (Heron and Reason 2006), to address issues that are important to everyone involved. When undertaking participatory, deliberative processes through the cyclical stages of planning, observing and acting, there is the potential to "produce radical, democratising transformations in the civic sphere" (Ryan and Destefano 2000: 1). In light of current austerity in Greece, and due to the top-down structural policies implemented by the Troika, the

countering imperative was to act in concert with movements that are already undertaking experimental, democratising action.

Through the production of critical knowledge (Herr and Anderson 2015: 17) and "a shift in consciousness … attained through recognising individual and collective potential and praxis" (Lykes and Mallona 2015: 109), PAR is said to entail the joint liberation of the mind and the potential of social emancipation from oppressive forces. The liberation process must come from the people in the struggle "from within themselves rather than external agents of change" (Esteva et al. 2005: 24), through self-learning and self-inquiry, a process called 'conscientisation' (Friere 1970) – whereby individuals, as community researchers, develop the confidence and capability to find answers to questions on their own. In this respect, PAR fundamentally breaks down the distinction between theory and practice, and researcher and researched closing the gap between knowing and acting (Reason and Bradbury 2008), so that 'applicability' of the research is never separated from the question of purpose. "It is the asymmetries of knowledge control which limit the possibilities which can be either imagined or acted upon" (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008: 176) and in participatory research, agency expands these possibilities. At the same time as enabling and encouraging action through research, PAR builds reflective processes into communities already undertaking collective action, in the form of first-person (self-reflection) and second person (as a group) reflection (Bradbury and Reason 2006). Praxis, defined as informed, committed action (Carr and Kemmis 1986), is the undertaking of action which becomes meaningful through the process of conscientisation (in terms of principles and outcomes) to those involved (hooks 1994: 47), in this case grassroots food movement actors.

The Frieran ethos for this type of research is emancipatory and a transformational tool for grassroots social movements, and is – importantly – distinct from institutionally-captured variations of PAR which orchestrate "participation" to satisfy funding gatekeepers (Wakeford et al. 2008). Problematically, there is a pressure in academia to focus on producing outputs in the short term, which can have the effect of watering down or undermining the potential of participatory processes to contribute to social change in the long-term (Wakeford et al. 2008). Whilst PAR can challenge structural inequalities by breaking down the monopoly of Western research institutions on knowledge (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008), they can also act to reproduce and even reinforce hierarchies of knowledge if those less powerful do not gain power over the knowledge processes (Chambers 1977). Equally, using participatory processes can manifest (sometimes unintentionally) in a 'glossing over' of difference amongst participants, so the process excludes some participants in order to make the

process simpler (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008). In researching with "those who suffer the gravest weight of oppressive forces" (hooks 1994: 53), such as people of Greece at the receiving end of harsh austerity, we also inquired into the effect of politics on difference in the solidarity economy of food.

Reflection on the part of the researcher is also vital for a quality PAR process (Heron and Reason 2008: 6), which embeds the practice of inquiry as a philosophy with the co-researchers, "to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act choicefully and with awareness, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting." Self-reflection is a practice that I adopted in order to decentre power and critically reflect on my positionality. This allowed me to work towards emancipatory change with the co-inquirers. Being transparent about limitations of my own role, including the contradictions of being a participant and an outsider researcher were key reflections within this practice, which I begin to describe here in the section on positionality and go into more 'analytical' depth in the final, reflection chapter. This negotiation between reflection and contributing to the research process with others necessitates within the PAR praxis a negotiation not only of what methods to use, but also making power visible and negotiating them together (see Brem-Wilson et al. 2019). Self-reflection and Action Research then is concerned with contributing to the transformation of power relations towards greater socioeconomic justice (Fals Borda 1979) and thus corresponds to the research aims of contributing to democratic and just food systems.

4.3   Participatory Video (PV)

PV is a method which uses video as a tool and medium for a participatory research process. Video is said to be "easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns … and tell stories" (Lunch and Lunch 2006: 10). Participants are familiarised with the equipment through a series of games and collective tasks, after which they are invited to direct (including to plan, film and edit) a film collaboratively. Decision-making is shared between participants allowing local power relations to be democratised and levelled (Lunch and Lunch 2006). Nygreen (2010) sees PV as a "tactic" within a broader research framework; PV thus only follows the emancipatory nature of PAR on the conditions mentioned above. Working with several disparate actors across various food initiatives in a city, PV was seen as an appropriate tool for finding common interests, and documenting and analysing their own reality in a collective.

PV also brings distinct potentials and concerns because of the use of a camera during the process, and the ultimate product of a film, adding a "further layer of complexity" to the already uneven power

relations (Shaw 2016: 422). Others have, contradictorily, spoken about it as a positive tool for collectives to "promote equitable relations" (VeneKlasen and Miller in Plush 2012: 79). However, desired objectives of stakeholders or participants can contradict one another, most pertinently between the emphasis on the process and the product (Lunch and Lunch 2006). The direction the participants want to take will depend on the type and quality of film produced. For instance, PV may be advocated at the outset as a way to capture many community members' voices, and to build self-reflection, communication and trust. Storytelling through PV has the potential to empower by facilitating a process which is inclusive of marginalised individuals, and which simultaneously gives spaces for participants to explore needs, desires, and 'prioritised solutions' (Plush 2012: 82). Therefore, PV is said to allow "the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world", aligning itself here with a poststructuralist view of agency. Equally, PV can be used to raise awareness of an injustice or a relatively unknown subject "to educate, persuade, and advocate in ways that can bring positive change" (Plush 2012: 68) by easy sharing of knowledge.

Figure 4.1 Participatory video group practice using equipment during the Svolou street Festival in June 2016

Blurring roles, researcher/observer and researched/observed, reduces hierarchies of knowledge created in a research setting, and is referred to as the 'feminist gaze' in participatory video (Kindon 2003). However, "discourses shape worldviews and consequent actions, and so control over social

representation …, or stories about social groups, is viewed as a site of social power" (Shaw 2016: 419). Only some (and partial at that) realities are represented, depending on who is behind the camera and who holds power in the story-making process. There is an assumption that people *will* find their voice. However, the imperative 'to give voice' can be naïve and simplistic, whilst refusing to participate may be active non-participation rather than apathy (Milne 2012). Although in agreement with Walsh on most points in reference to the limits of participatory video in an unjust world, Shaw (2016: 420) empahsises that "idealistic notions on instigating a more *just* world do not make it so." We must recognize where these voices end up, and who they serve, "towards imagining, reflecting and constructing other ways of being and living in the world" (Walsh 2016: 408). Indeed, the process of making video itself, and then brining people into dialogue around the produced visual materials and stories create new opportunities for dialogue and meaning-making in communities, potentially deepening consciousness and connection. PV therefore helps to "shift from an individualist to a collectivist orientation" (Gergen and Gergen 2008: 166), congruous to the process of social transformation.

4.4 The Participatory Video Research Group (PV group)

The participatory video research group was established in two stages, and thereafter had open and fluid membership throughout the fieldwork. Firstly, in Autumn of 2015 during the first cycle of research, I met and discussed with Jenny, a prominent food sovereignty activist in Greece, the idea of researching food movements in Thessaloniki using the method of Participatory Video. It was via links with food sovereignty campaign group that I was able to reach out to Jenny. We decided together that a PV project would suit both of our research aims, conferring to movement building and construction of grassroots knowledge and relationships. This meeting was part of a scoping visit to various regions of Greece. From then, we were in touch by email and Skype to initiate the PV research project, and Jenny agreed to co-facilitate alongside myself, providing the bridge to local initiatives and local contacts as well as knowledge of the context. From the beginning of the second cycle, we set about communicating the idea of the PV project, via email and face-to-face, to local people involved in food initiatives and gauged interest and enthusiasm. Once a number of people committed to involvement in the PV project, we set dates for PV training, which took place at the beginning of June 2016 and was run by myself and a CAWR colleague, Paola.

Thereafter, the PV group of nine members met regularly to discuss, plan, edit and reflect on the video footage, and overall process. A couple of members who received the training discontinued their

membership of the group due to change in life circumstances or difficulties within the group (I discuss this in chapter 8), and new members joined, keeping the number of members stable. Each member was engaged to different extents, directly, through contacts or participation in events, with the different food initiatives. Included in the group were members of social cooperatives or collectives, researchers and activists, or a mixture of these identities. All of us were involved in choosing themes and collecting the data, through filming events, participatory processes and conducting interviews. We held fortnightly meetings to discuss the data and the next steps. The PV group held their meetings in venues which were associated with food movements, for example in Allos Tropos' space above the shop, or in Mikropolis. When we held events we did so at Ecofestivals, Perka or APAN, also associated with the 'movements'. There were also ally PV group participants who helped facilitate or co-host events, or assisted with the website, for example.

4.5   Movement between modes of inquiry

During this chapter, and the following chapters, I oscillate between using the first-person singular (I/me) and first-person plural (we/us) in order to reflect the movement between individual and collective modes of inquiry. In PAR, adopting different modes of inquiry as a researcher in relation to co-researchers, and the wider field of study is commonly referred to as 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-person inquiry (Reason and Bradbury 2008). The first-person mode of research is used in reference to the subjective reflection of the researcher. This thesis was only able to accommodate my reflections as the main author. However, reflection, planning and observation was principally carried out in interaction with others, namely with the PV group (described below), in order to discuss issues of mutual concern and evolve the PAR project collectively according to these intersubjective issues. This accounts for the second-person reflection constituting the biggest part of this study. These dialogues occurred in face-to-face weekly or bi-weekly meetings and in informal chats. The 3rd- person inquiry seeks to reach the impact of the study beyond the scale of action. This links into the more familiar research territory or seeking universal 'objectivity' in that generalizable implications are sought and communicated (Reason and Bradbury 2008). The study moved consciously between these modes of inquiry, allowing participants themselves to understand and reflect on issues and problems they experienced through self-reflection and interpersonal dialogue. Within these modes of inquiry, I was situated as an engaged co-researcher, but with the responsibility to deliver academic 'outputs', including this thesis. Where these modes of inquiries were adopted within the cycles of inquiry will be remarked on in the analysis section below.

Figure 4.2 PV group reflects on the PV process, Autumn 2017

4.6   Ethnography and other parts of the 'bricolage'

All methodologies allow for disclosure of opinions and experiences, but also hide truths or parts thereof (Barnham 2012). In particular reference to PV, the material image is not necessarily a depiction of reality, but is a representation of it, and for this reason, the use of film exposes some experiences and hides others (Packard 2008; Pink 2011). This participatory video process is therefore inadequate for capturing some experiences, and especially in relation to the mosaic of cultural contextual understanding, so using other additional methods was appropriate. Nevertheless, PV as a method did pose difficulties to equal representation, especially along gender lines, and in corroborating what 'exists' as I discuss in detail in chapter eight. Moreover, this research process had a specific relationship between the 1st and 2nd person modes of inquiry because, firstly, I am not from the local context and therefore some social phenomena were unfamiliar to me. Following Swantz (2008) even though the intention of the PAR researcher was to break with the idea of being a distant 'participant observer' as is the case in anthropology, foreign researchers are often not able to "become one with the community." She reiterates the need to identify with the interests of local people and gain trust from them through long-term engaged research. Even so, identification with 'the people' is an impossibility due to locals possessing multiple interests. This was especially the case due to the second specificity, the comprehensive collective of 'case studies' and their relationships to one another which made an ambitious scope of this study. The major benefit of conducting the study from the PV group was that as a collective, we had direct face-to-face links with various initiatives, which provided subjective insights and knowledge that we were able to share in dialogue with each other. However, the scale of

research meant that some initiatives and composite members remained at a larger distance than others from the PV group.

A multi-methods approach situates the researcher as a *bricoleur*, "deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 4). The research therefore used elements of ethnographic practices alongside semi-structured and open-ended interview techniques to compliment the PV process and "uncover empirical issues and generate critical theoretical insights that are simply not accessible through traditional objectivist methods. For example…political and cultural tensions, conflicts, and power imbalances" (Juris and Khasnabish 2013: 4). 'Friction' has also been revealed through ethnography in the encounter between activists from different political backgrounds (Tsing 2011). Ethnographic observations, undertaken via note-taking, voice recording or the filming of processes, from all co-researchers in the working group were shared between us through second-person reflection in meetings. Additionally, reflective writing – in personal journals, and in this thesis - was used to make sense of my own internal processes (as an outsider, with particular world view and expectations of the research project). The reflection chapter speaks to the (limits of) agency I had in the PAR process due to my positionality.

For Colectivo Situaciones (2007: 85), a collective that engages in the praxis of militant research, because "the very conditions of the encounter are somewhat anticipated by the shared will to co-research, it does not matter much what about (the topic might change), as long as on this 'journey' we all experience substantially changes." For example, even though we set out to only use PV in our research, we as a PV group decided later on to create a survey in order to understand diverse factors that were of concern to small producers and to ask questions that were not readily divulged by participants on camera. The survey, drawn up by a smaller working group, but endorsed by the entire PV group, contained some questions alluding to more sensitive political orientations and opinions, so there was an option to keep answers anonymous. This filled a gap in which PV represented a methodological shortfall.

4.7   Activist-driven research

Gibson-Graham's (2006) decentring of the capitalocentric vision sets a stage for activist research grounded in the local context of communities or social movements. Activist-research situates the politics of the researcher within the objectives of study and involves contributions to social action (Hale 2008). 'Bias' is thus inherent in the research and as with 'anarcademia' (Gordon 2007: 276), or

research militancy (Colectivo Situaciones 2007) it is assumed that there is some political or social motivation for the researcher(s) who instigate the collaboration to be involved, acting with others to bring about change. However, it has been widely noted that practitioner researchers from outside often have different motivations to the subjective drive of 'insiders' (Mistry et al. 2016). The combination of research and activism requires a higher commitment to the community than most researchers have (Kobayashi 2001: 63). Solidarity research turns the priority settings around, so that the outside researcher alters their expectations according to the priorities of a social movement or activist group (Brem-Wilson 2014). This necessitates 'going in' with an awareness of preconceived expectations and an openness to listen and negotiate, or hand over, the research framework (e.g. see Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). In the penultimate chapter I reflect critically on my positionality as a feminist foreign researcher within patriarchal, but also self-created participatory, settings and the limitations I perceived these factors had on the radical potential of the research agenda.

Calvário and Kallis (2016) call for an action-activist research approach in food solidarity economy research, arguing that there is an overemphasis on critique and skepticism which discourages action. Encouraging the visibility of new economies, whilst successfully demonstrating existing heterogeneity and opening up possibilities, is matched with a double-edged imperative: a pressure to prove that another way is indeed possible. Solidarity initiatives face criticism from within communities and external funders and partners, based on a particular notion of success (Loh and Agyeman 2019: 7). This is especially true when "success" and "failures" in transformation are thought of in terms of concrete goals rather than as a continual struggle (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014), or on a fluctuating spectrum (Gibson-Graham: 2006). Consistently, solidarity economy discussions center on economic viability and opportunities for mainstreaming in a capitalist context (Utting 2014), thus falling someway into the capitalocentric trap critiqued by Gibson-Graham (2006). Therefore, the methods that are selected in an eager quest to demonstrate social solidarity can overlook conflict and its root causes. This study attempts to remedy that through both activist participatory process and in-depth and long-term ethnography.

4.8   Knowledge production between community and academics

We created an insider-outsider team in the PV group, which allocated time to raise concerns and facilitate participation, creating a safe space, but with an open attitude to accepting future participation from newcomers. Nevertheless, there remained an inevitable distinction between myself as the 'outsider' researcher from a foreign institution and the 'insider' community researchers who were

involved in shaping the subjects of study. Swantz (2008: 43) argues that on the one hand "PAR broke off from the rule of keeping distance as a participant in a community", and on the other hand, that "the researcher who participates in research with a community cannot claim the traditional researcher's distance and thus have a view as an independent observer." Herr and Anderson (2005) see that each of us has a continuum of multiple positionalities vis-a-vis dominant groups in society including our participatory status. Therefore, they argue that when creating an insider-outsider team it can be difficult to negotiate equal levels of commitment but maintains that in terms of representation, PAR is said to partly solve this dilemma "when research is done collaboratively, it brings both the insider and outsider perspectives into the research" (Herr and Anderson 2005: 65). In the eighth chapter, I comment on aspects of being an outsider researcher which are irreconcilable to insider understandings, namely culturally imbued ideas of feminism or female empowerment.

From the beginning, I was cautious not to co-opt the research for the interest of fitting into the PhD time constraints or to monopolise the conversation, as tends to happen (Herr and Anderson 2005). During the decision-making processes, I facilitated and allowed plural themes and strategies to emerge organically; the making of multiple films and keeping the films in separate track forms, rather than intercutting scenes, during community showings which was done to avoid the creation of a "hierarchy of opinions" and to keep the discussion open-ended and ongoing (Corneil 2012: 26). The struggles we had to gain equitable representation in PV are described in the reflection chapter. During the gathering of data, it was essential to review and keep thorough records of it so we didn't forget bits of information that didn't conform to our own worldview (Vaughan 1993) alongside holding regular discussions with the PV group members. Within this process, I took time to be honest, with myself and with others, about my own identity and positionality in systems of hierarchies and privilege (Brydon-Miller 2008: 204).

4.9 Positionality

I was drawn to Greece, and Thessaloniki especially, having lived there organising a grassroots project connecting ideas and practices between international participants and local activists by bicycle. This experience, as well as allowing me to gain some familiarity with the people, projects and culture, also inspired me to understand how these experiments connected to the crisis and to each other. It was my feeling that there could be learnings there for other activists across the world. Admittedly, it was this preconceived idea, having just scratched the surface of what "exists", and helped along by celebratory media overseas, that had built up an image of a radical groundswell of activism. I was

aware as an outsider from a colonial country that "Western realist conventions are technologies of power that cannot escape 'the weighty legacy of history and the always-fraught politics of representation'" (Kindon 2016: 497). For this reason, it was important to remain reflective and open to changes in research design that I could not have anticipated – a process that chapter 8 deals with.

I am a white woman who grew up in a small town in the Midlands, UK. I attended a comprehensive school made up of pupils from lower or lower-middle social classes in an area with generally low levels of social aspirations. However, my expectations were shaped by my middle-class upbringing; my parents were university educated and this gave me an advantage in terms of academic success from a young age. In respect to academia, being able to undertake a PhD put me in a position where I have access to resources for knowledge that most people do not. Now, being a Northern European in Greece again sets me apart culturally and economically. For young people, employment opportunities are scarce, and many older people have lost jobs. Conversely, I have been consistently privileged enough to find paid work. This shaped the way that people view me, and the extent to which I truly understand others' struggle.

On the other hand, the education setting, especially my bachelor's degree at university, provided the first opportunity in which I became passionately engaged in activism, working towards my engagement with the topics of food sovereignty. My own subjective conceptions of the world, which are guided by geographical and social class background, shaped 'utopian' liberation theories that resonated with me, and which came to ground this study. In terms of activism, I have been involved in regional and neighbourhood campaigns and mobilisations, to demonstrate against social and environmental injustices, and supporting workers and other socially marginalised groups. Therefore, I am familiar with favoured methods for organising, such as through consensus decision-making and anti-oppression work in groups.

Despite being in receipt of a studentship, education has been an expensive path to take, for which I have depended on part-time work, loans, overdrafts, external funding, and hardship grants. Even being able to borrow money is a privilege in relation to Greeks who endured a clampdown on lending in this period of austerity. Being a researcher as part of a UK institution means that I have access to expensive resources – camera equipment and computers – which set me apart, materially, from some people I was working with, who were under financial strain, unemployment and dealing with household debt. These tools are necessary for this participatory video project and thus provide an opportunity, but also perhaps suspicions of the agenda of a researcher that makes such offerings

(Kindon 2003). English, the dominant global language, is my mother tongue. Most Greek people can speak English fluently or conversationally. However, there are class differences in English language proficiency, since private extracurricular lessons are commonplace, but not affordable to all families. The rural class are much less likely to be able to converse in English. In order to prevent English becoming the default spoken language in the research, I was determined to become competent in Greek and was able to pay for private Greek language lessons to be able to ultimately communicate without a translator. It was thanks to a combination of this, my previous connection with the place, my relationship with Jenny and the building of the PV group that I was able to gain widespread trust.

4.10 Facilitation

PV can lead to higher levels of democracy within the group if effectively facilitated. For this to happen, there needs to be a careful reflection by facilitators and stakeholders about the processes (and power) which are at play away from the camera, and how the camera impacts these. The concern that participatory researchers have is that they wish to guide the process without taking over in such a way that collaboration is jeopardised (Herr and Anderson 2005). This is mimicked by the contradictions of facilitating, for example, "facilitators need to provide structure and time boundaries; at other times, they need to flex structure and time boundaries" (MacKewn 2008: 617). There may be times when guiding the research process overrides the need to cede control to other participants and vice-versa. Lunch and Lunch (2006: 56) advise to train translators as facilitators. Co-facilitation between Jenny, a native speaker of Greek and myself was conducted, in a tandem approach, during the first months of the project. During this time, I became fluent enough in the language to undertake facilitation (see figure 4.3). At times where I lacked understanding, I asked individual co-researchers from the PV group to interpret. This was also the case with translating the dialogue of video footage (written or verbal) whilst coding it.

Figure 4.3 Facilitating a collective editing process with the PV group

4.11 Consent and confidentiality

Informed consent was gained by checking with video participants that they were in agreement with the use of video and audio data for the university-initiated study. Many participants were aware of the PV group, before undertaking video interviews or general footage. Even so, we informed participants about the objectives and possible uses of the videos before filming. At this point, participants were asked to agree to their involvement. Importantly, however, before publishing videos publically online and sharing them, the consent was sought again, in case – as is the nature of evolving and iterative praxis, their decision to participate had changed status. The consent was recorded on video in their mother tongue before or after the videoing took place, including name, organisation, agreement to participate and where they agreed for the footage to be used and shared (or not). Since some of the data constituted sensitive topics, the names of people have been anonymised in the thesis and articles which resulted from the study (apart from members of the PV group who wished that their real name be used).

Conveniently for sharing ideas and messages, videos can move over geographical boundaries in their digital form, unlike 'products' of many research projects which wind up in a subscription journal which only other academics can access. They can also be shared again and again, and can be subtitled accordingly. This, however, makes the ethics of who is in the film, their consent, and what message it conveys all the more important. Another related question is who gets to 'own' i.e. have a copy of the film and the video data produced during the field work. This was something we consulted each other over as a group. The data was saved onto two separate hard drives which were used by the person

who was working on computer software for video production at that moment in time (this was usually myself). Another hard drive was later purchased to store video data from this study for the NGO Agroecopolis, set up during the course of fieldwork, of which several PV group participants also participate. As a legacy of the project, members of the group have passed on knowledge of PV and they continue to use visual methodologies in their work.

4.12 Scope and Limitations

The videos themselves functioned to mobilise knowledge in several ways. Firstly, they were played back by the participatory video group to instigate discussion. In edited form, clips told a story around particular topics, for example, the 'no middlemen' markets, from which we could see common perspectives and concerns, alongside the tensions amongst members of initiatives. This functioned for the PV group as a means to formulate new research questions and set up further interviews or informal chats, or to find out information to clarify on vaguely elaborated issues. Additionally, we used the videos at collective film screenings to elicit further opinions and insights on particular issues, such as the Autonomy of Per.ka film screening at APAN (Neapoli Autonomous Intervention) social centre. In this way, we maintained a feedback dialogue between the PV group and the other participants of the food initiatives, which acted to control accountability for our research and provide further edits to films. Otherwise, we made public many of our films, especially those which were produced during the 2nd and 3rd cycle (see below) onto our collective's website. We anticipated that videos uploaded onto YouTube, as they are, could be transmitted between sites of action, in Greece and through international networks. The website served as much as a platform for logging the course of the project, and to keep the process transparent, as to make available the videos we were producing. Longer interviews were edited down in respect to particular topics. When there was potentially inflammatory content (which could upset social relations), we chose not to make these clips public.

This project received a small grant of 3,000 EUR from the Agroecology fund, which was spent on payment for initial facilitation by Jenny, and on purchasing of equipment to be used on site, and map printing materials in the first year of field research. Besides this, the studentship supported the living expenses of the planning and fieldwork stages of my PhD. The paradox of funding is that, whilst large scale well-funded projects can bring with them constraints on participants (Wakeford et al. 2008; Milne 2012), the shortage of funding for our participatory project meant that funding for events, technical support (such as website, or software, or on-PC editing), was limited and the majority had to be done voluntarily by the participants, if at all.

4.13 Methods with chapter breakdown

People were invited to participate based on their participation in alternative food initiatives, via the methods mentioned above. Interviews were gained largely dependent on willingness to speak to us, on video/audio, or informally. Video/audio records were kept for future advocacy, but also in order to ensure clarity of understanding whilst analyzing the data. Interviews were conducted mostly in pairs, with at least one native Greek speaker present as the majority were conducted in Greek, with a few in English. The interviews (see table 4.1) incorporated as data in this paper were semi-structured, in that we had prepared interview questions related to our topic of 'lessons learned' and also to the individual participant and their respective initiative, but left the process open-ended in order for the participant to guide the direction of topics. Some interviews were spontaneous and unstructured. Both these interview styles allowed the participants to elicit their opinions freely and to steer the dialogue to areas of which we as interviewers were previously unaware. It also allowed for the incorporation of emotive response, which, given the subject matter, was important to give deliberative space to contemplation in reference to the 'lessons learned'.

Cycles were guided in relation to local and theoretical understandings that help explain findings and suggest directions for the next iteration. As the process developed, new empirical materials gave insights which led to a shift in the methods or themes. At the PV group meetings, we discussed themes that came from the interviews in order to collectively shape our understandings of autonomous food initiatives. At several moments when difficulties were experienced by collectives, we would gain observations and thoughts informally from participants in initiatives which we would share amongst ourselves to understand how the situation was evolving. In this way, we all had a role in the analysis. We also had workshops to brainstorm themes as a group and at events to show footage and instigate discussion amongst members of initiatives.

4.14 The food initiatives
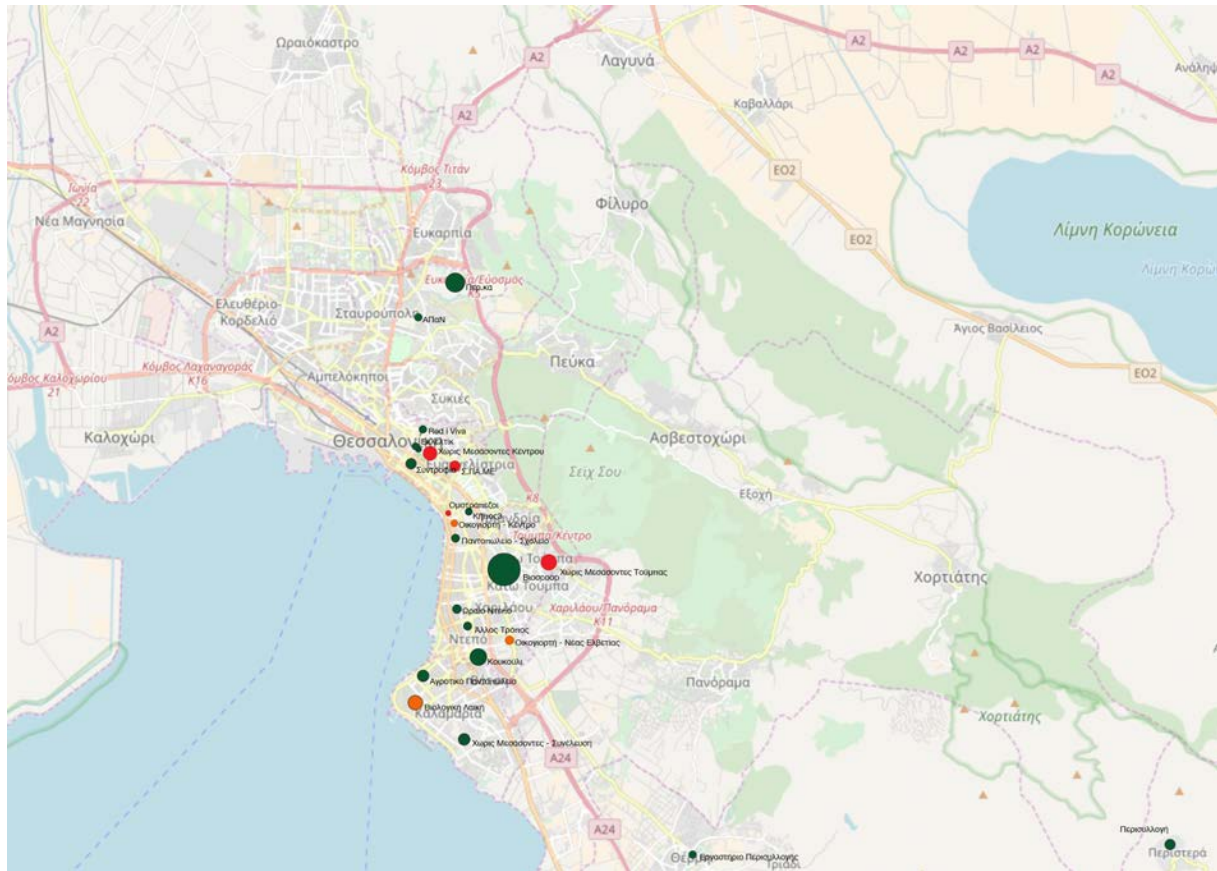
Figure 4.4 Map showing geographical position and approximated size of alternative food economies in and around Thessaloniki. Key: red = now stopped functioning, orange = existed before the crisis, green = current initiatives [created August 2018]

Food initiatives located across the city (see figure 4.4.) were involved in the PAR process to various extents as detailed below. Participants from all initiatives attended workshops or film screenings we as a PV group held. Members of the PV group also attended events held by most of these initiatives. Interviews were conducted with members of all initiatives (ex-members when the initiative was defunct, as with S.PA.ME and 'no middlemen' markets).

The 'no middlemen' movement (Χωρίς Μεσάσοντες - Horis Mesasontes): a landmark in the story of self-organised food initiatives and one which is important to the 'learning' of the crises years on the topic of food autonomy. For that reason, it was a subject of historical significance to the research. Established across Greece in 2011, 'no middlemen' markets were held weekly or bimonthly, cutting out middlemen to provide affordable products for consumers, and fairer price for producers. Many markets operated on a pre-ordering basis; contrary to producers' dealings with supermarkets, they were paid immediately. These were self-organised through an organising team who took care of the logistics, voluntarily. Volunteers initiated markets in different regions of the city, central, Pilea,

Kalamaria and Nea Poli, and liaised with producers and consumers between each market. In 2014 legislation (4264/2014) criminalised such markets, and the movement ended; this was because the law forbade trade near shops with similar products in municipalities of over 3,000 and obligated approval from municipal or regional authorities (Calvário and Kallis 2016). The majority of markets ceased to exist; two 'no middlemen' markets, *Sinelefsi (Συνελεύση – assembly)* and *Agrotiko Pantopoleio (Αγροτικό Παντοπωλείο – farm shop)*, continue in the suburbs of Kalamaria. We spoke to two activist members of Sinelefsi and two of Agrotiko Pantopoleio, as well as numerous food producers active in either/both.

S.PA.ME: a volunteer-run non-profit 'no middlemen' cooperative grocery store in the West of the city. It emerged in 2008 right at the beginning of the economic difficulties in the country, before the signing of the first memorandum between the Troika and the Greek government. It was organised based on weekly assemblies and volunteer shifts by over twenty people. The store prioritised solidarity to producers working cooperatively. The store closed in 2012 due to a unanimous decision by members. We interviewed three ex-members.

Perisyllogi (Περισυλλογή – Contemplation): a KOINSEP, established in Peristera, a mountain village 30km from Thessaloniki. With the aim of providing local employment, the cooperative grows herbs and vegetables that they process and sell at their nearby workshop, in Thermi. Members of the initiative also host school visits at the mountain fields and lead walks to reconnect locals and city folk with the natural environment and culture of the village. They sell their produce at 'no middlemen' markets and ecofestivals, as well as other cooperative and grocery stores in the city. One member of the PV group was a member, and we interviewed three others, as well as following their events and development closely.

Pervolarides (Περβολάρηδες – Gardeners): a collective in the neighbourhood of Pilea who self-organise for self-sufficiency through beekeeping, urban food production, foraging and sourcing waste produce from conventional markets. Food is shared between participants and the most deprived of the neighbourhood. They now have a space in Harilaou and co-ordinate a project with the NGO Agroecopolis from there.

Per.ka (Περαστική Καλλιέργεια – Periurban Cultivation): a collective in an ongoing struggle since 2011 to retain peri-urban land for food production in the municipality of Pavlou Mela. 120 families grow for subsistence on plots organized into seven collectives. Two of the research group were food growers at Per.ka. The PV group attended festivals and informed participants about the research through a mapping exercise. We also held events, assemblies and conducted interviews with eleven food growers on the topic of autonomy. We participated in assemblies, including one discussing changing the statute, and collective film screenings where feedback was given to the group (see figure

7.4). The Per.ka collective has now won a campaign to move into the remit of the municipality, in order to protect it from being taken over by the national defense fund.

Bioscoop (Βιοσκοοπ): a pioneering consumer cooperative convenience store, consisting of over 400 consumer members, and seven worker members. It stocks a wide range of products consisting of a mixture of niche, alternative and mainstream products and sources them based on a set of criteria which prioritise local and clean produce. It has been operating as a supermarket since 2014. We interviewed seven members of the cooperative, one who undertook a follow-up interview. Participants of the PV group also attended their anniversary celebration event and had informal conversations with participants of the cooperative.

Sintrofia (Συντροφία –Companionship): a small grocery store which works directly with small scale, predominantly organic, producers. It has been running since 2012 and has paid staff who are part of the collective, one of many in the explicitly antiauthoritarian social centre, *Mikropolis*, in the city centre. Sintrofia and Allos Tropos collectivise some orders. We interviewed one member and two ex-members and had informal chats with three other former members.

Koukouli (Κουκούλι – Coocoon): an urban cooperative whose membership consists of both producers and consumers. Producers who supply the shop are also members and are involved in the decision-making for the cooperative. It has a physical store on the East of the city, but also does online delivery for larger orders on several days a week. We conducted two full interviews with members, had informal chats with worker and producer members and attended events held at their site.

Organic market (Βιολογική Λαϊκή): in (two locations in) Kalamaria and Nea Poli, a producer-run market of small to medium sized organic producers, all certified. They are unionised through the Northern Greece Organic Producers Union. Although they began in the early 2000s, before the crisis, producers involved in other initiatives are also members of this union, and so this was an opportunity to speak to them face-to-face, particularly about political dynamics related to the discussion in chapter 6. They were also actively involved in lobbying for change to farmers' market law. We spoke to 18 food producers on film in total and many others off-camera.

Scholeio Bazaar (Σχολείο Παζάρι): a weekly food market, organised with volunteers at the space, to sell produce direct to customers. The majority of producers there were producing or processing on a very small scale and were uncertified. The market took place in a well-known squat, an occupied school, near the centre of the city. We conducted short videos with six producers and two of the volunteers. They also have a grocery store inside the building.

Allos Tropos (Άλλος Τρόπος – Another Way): a neighbourhood store in the East of the city, also a KOINSEP, set up from the experience of S.PA.ME. It sells organic and traditional food produce, including fresh vegetables, alongside other non-food products, and solidarity products such as Bio.Me

(occupied workers factor in the city) soaps and Fairtrade jewellery. It is run by a close-knit, small team of members and workers who also organise awareness-raising events and raise money for refugee projects. As a video research group, we held workshops and other events in their free space at the shop. We interviewed three members, and held informal chats with all of them.

Eklektik (Εκλεκτίκ): a social cooperative entreprise (KOINSEP), a legal form of cooperative specific to Greece, which was set up by a small number of old members of S.PA.ME. It sells quality and artisan products from cooperatives and producers around Greece, combined with a coffee shop and small events venue, also in the West of the city. We interviewed one member, and attended several events.

Ecofestivals (Οικογιορτές) – these producer-run festivals were established over 25 years ago, with the aim to self-organise promote better consumer-producer relationships and respect for nature and the environment. They take place during the summer all across Greece. Many producers involved in Thessaloniki's food initiatives take part, and have been influenced by the ecofestival tradition. These markets are informal and have no legal form. The video group participants took part as producers or participants in the ecofestivals in Trikala, Katerini and two locations in Thessaloniki, Ert3 and Nea Elvetia, on three consecutive years, where we did a film screening and discussion on People's Food Council.

4.15 Cycles of Action research
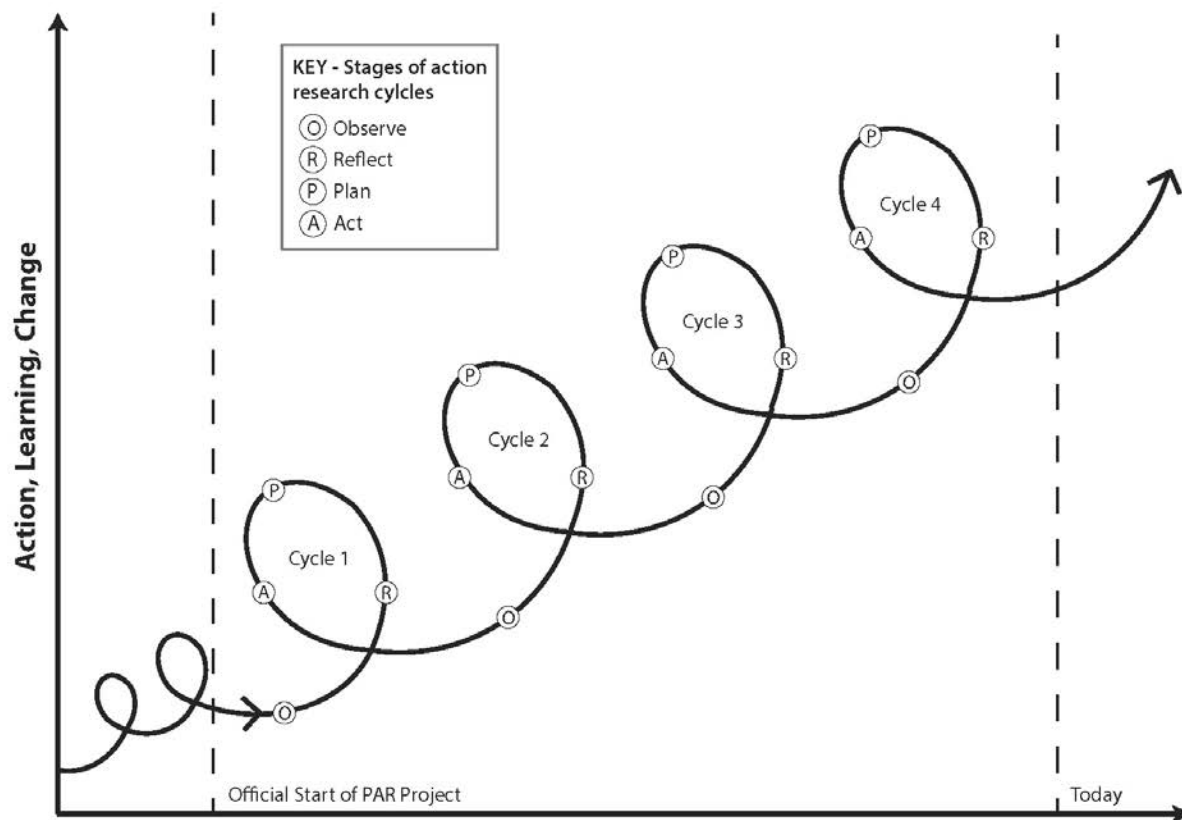
Figure 4.5 Cycles of Observation, Planning, Action and Reflection starting from Autumn 2015 to Autumn 2018. Source: Anderson 2013

Conducting the PAR process in iterative cycles of co-learning allowed the research to unfold in process of discovery where we as a group attuned to the local needs and themes of interest (to each of us and as a community of researchers) as they became apparent or arose. The research path or themes of interest changed over time, not having been identified as such at the outset of the project. For instance, the research began with the aim of showing the potential for movement building in the region, by making visible what exists, and identifying gaps. However, conflict became important to the theme of our research because of the events on the ground, most prominently, the experience of substantial internal strife (some to the point of crisis) or fragmentation in numerous initiatives. Narrowing and re-focusing to themes was a process which occurred chronologically from one cycle to the next, increasing the (collective) researcher's knowledge of the original question, or problem – with the desire to contribute towards a solution (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Each cycle constituted stages of planning action around an identified problem, undertaking action to address desired change, observing consequences of action, and reflecting on meaning of these observations to feed into the next cycle

(see figure 4.5). There were five cycles altogether which overlapped to some extent, but with distinct thematic strands. These influence the chapter discussions, but do not map neatly onto them.

4.15.1 First cycle – Scoping and co-facilitator planning

To initiate the study, I undertook a scoping visit to Greece in the Autumn of 2016, where I met and built up a trustful working relationship with Jenny, as described above. We talked on the phone and made arrangements, including building a contact database, for the first months of what became 24-months of engaged research in Thessaloniki. Reflections from this cycle helped define the design of the research scope and the call out for participants in the second cycle.

4.15.2 Second cycle – mapping, workshops and PV training

Figure 4.6: Mapping alternative economies a Per.ka event

To introduce the project and to begin discussions, we as co-facilitators held a mapping exercise in Spring 2016. At an event at Per.ka, and at a Social and Solidarity (SSE) event, we asked attendees to use a pin to mark, and identify the type, of food economy that exists in and around the city (see figure 4.6). We continued with the mapping exercise also as part of a three-part series of Spring workshops.

In the workshops, we used Gibson-Graham's theory of plural economies to instigate a conversation on alternative economies. We asked participants to plot on an 'iceberg diagram' the initiatives they knew and to discuss why they were alternative and what how/if they were anti-capitalist. There were also questions raised of what does and doesn't 'belong' to the social and/or solidarity economy. Participants were invited to undertake a revaluation of meanings of 'economy' and associated social relations. These exercises elicited interesting and divergent responses. Definitions can be personal, evolving and subjective, which traditional methods of surveying and interviewing often miss. This participatory approach to relaying views on what 'exists' opened "communicative spaces" (Kemmis 2008) for intersubjective exchange about individuals' hopes, needs, desires, in a bid to find common values. These initial workshops entitled 'participatory video for food autonomy in Thessaloniki' were open to everyone interested in alternative economies of food.

In addition to the workshops, we put a call out via email lists and through networks and initiatives, as well as word of mouth to find co-researchers for the PV project. We arranged training to suit as many of those who expressed interest as possible. The training lasted for three days in June 2016, with the aim of giving a lively, participatory and productive short course in using the equipment and creating a film as a participatory group (Lunch and Lunch 2006). It was inspired by the training given to members of Coventry University by participatory video consultants InsightShare, but was tailored to the group. For instance, the course was shortened in terms of number of days and number of hours in the day to accommodate people's other commitments and so that people who had to leave early on some days didn't miss too much. Even so, because the beginning of the PV process required such an intense block of time commitment, it excluded a couple of people who were interested but whose schedules did not allow them flexibility. The training was delivered by myself and Paola, from CAWR. Jenny acted as the primary facilitator, and she also interpreted for Paola and I.

At the end of the training, the participants decided on the themes for their videos and began to plan them using storyboarding and online document sharing software. The PV group was a space where participants were able to meet, sometimes for the first time, get to know each other. The dynamics that originated in this setting will be discussed in the reflection chapter. The videos were framed around alternative food economies. Five themes were selected and films planned during the last planning afternoon of the training.

4.15.3 Third cycle – what exists and what didn't go well?

We began to make plans and collect footage for the five films. The topics were: KOINSEP Perisyllogi's story, the autonomy of Per.ka and, as a separate film, the animal production on Per.ka's land (this was never completed), exploring informal spaces (a film was made about Scholeio market), and a film about the provision of food to refugees in the camps surrounding the city. The latter "spin-off cycle" (Anderson 2013) is not discussed in this thesis as it is beyond the scope of food autonomy framed here, but was important to movements at the time of research undertaking when the camps were just being set up and humanitarianism and food security were a concern. Another later spin-off cycle involved trips to Karditsa in the centre of Greece with another member of the research group, Christina, to conduct interviews with farmer members of a new integrated model of cooperative economy, to better understand democratization in new food systems throughout Greece. Alongside the exposure of what 'exists', we reflected during this stage that we wanted to know more about what difficulties initiatives had or were experiencing, so that lessons could be carried into the future, and shared between self-organised Greek initiatives.

Our research journey explored past projects, several of which had evolved into other forms, or ceased to exist, to hear what common experiences had led to change. The discussion therefore has a historical perspective, in addition to the focus on current socio-politics in the region of Thessaloniki. Framing the inquiry within the broader topic of 'lessons learned' opened up discussion on experience and encouraged reflection on the change that had brought the initiatives to that point. Due to the volume of work, we worked in clusters to plan and film, and sometimes edit; we collectively edited the Per.ka video, but

Figure 4.7 A Snapshot of page of our website detailing PV training

consistently brought back concerns and showcased new material in order to 'check in' with the group. There were several versions of the film which we watched and discussed as a group and mapped out on paper before editing in video software, Premier Pro CC. In the paper edits, we used moveable printed images to represent clips and post-its, which we placed on a paper 'sequence' with time indicators to show where changes should be made. Jenny and I oversaw the coordination of the films and the meeting arrangements and I also set up a website at this stage where we could document the project and as a platform for the visual data we produced. Given the importance of collaboration and disagreement in the everyday functioning of the initiatives, this became a focus of discussion and analysis within the research group (see below).

4.15.4 Fourth cycle – questions of the state and questionnaires

Informal discussions with participants of alternatives drew our attention to the shifting state of laws related to farmers' markets and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), and the varied response of movements to them. Chats and interviews at markets with food producers about their everyday political experience, as well as with individuals working on policy helped shape the fourth cycle, on the topic of the state and grassroots governance. The questions asked in the interviews revolved around the current character of governance structures in these new kinds of food economy, the collective's attitudes to politics and government, and personal or collective perspectives on collaborative relationships, with an emphasis on ideas of autonomy and democratic processes within new organisations. The interviews with small producers were supported by the collection of

questionnaires (18) which give a multiple choice and qualitative overview of the current situation and attitude to government and politics of producers involved in these food economies, as well as their involvement in political parties and other activity. These were distributed in paper form at events, such as markets, and were also sent to solidarity initiatives by email, and – importantly - could be left anonymous.

4.15.5 Fifth cycle – collective screenings and further interviews

In the final cycle, we distributed the films locally, collected feedback on the processes and on the thematics to feed our collective analysis. First, we had a film screening of the Per.ka film at APAN social centre where 25 members came to discuss what they thought of the film, and wider issues of the initiative. From this feedback, we took more footage and altered the film so it corresponded to what the participants wanted, and was more representative. Secondly, we had a screening at the Nea Elvetia eco-festival which initiated a conversation about the potential of a food policy council with members of various initiatives. We also followed up with second interviews or with people suggested to us by those we had already interviewed, or where we had located a gap in the stories. Together as a group, we began to analyse what we had found out overall through brainstorming, using clips or quotes from the footage to unpack the different practices of autonomy and solidarity in these food initiatives, which lay the foundations for writing the thesis. These chapters were and continue to be turned into shorter, simpler texts in Greek and English and be uploaded onto the website.

Figure 4.8 Collective Film Screening at Nea Elvetia Ecofestival Spring 2018

	Semi-structured Interviews	Events	Fieldnotes – ethnography/ informal discussion	Gender of interviewees
Per.ka	11 x single	Film screening and discussion Assembly - statute 2 x festivals Mapping at festival	Dinners at APAN Discussions whilst gardening at Per.ka 2 Informal chats with friends	2 x female 9 x male
Bioscoop	5 x single (1 repeat) 1 x group (2)	Celebration event Assembly	Informal discussions with members	1 x female 5 x male
Koukouli	2 x single		Informal discussion with participants	1 x female 1 x male
Allos Tropos	2 x single	Chat with staff members and those involved in refugee initiative	Events at the store Held workshops there Informal chat with worker	1 x female 1 x male
Sintrofia	3 x single	Attended producer event	Held PV meetings opposite Off-camera chats with female workers	3 x male
Eklektik	1 x single	Taster event and evening promos		1 x male
Organic Market	10 x single 6 x group	Celebration meal with customers	Wednesday and Saturday attended markets	4 x female 15 x male
'No middlemen' markets	11 x single 2 x group	Attended weekend markets of Agrotiko Pantopoleio and Sinelevsi	Fieldnotes on chats with farmers and observations Anonymised Surveys	1 x female 15 x male
PV group	3 x single 5 x group reflection 1 x follow up	CSA event Thematic workshops x3 PV Training Collective screenings Collective editing Analysis workshop	Meeting agenda and minutes Reflection journal Group discussions and one-to-one chats	2 x female 1 x male
Perisyllogi	3 x single	Event at workshop Event at Peristera – filmed/photos Ecofestivals	Frequent discussions on development of the co-op Helped at oikofestivals and herb harvesting Off-camera chats with female members	3 x male
Pervolarides	1 x single 2 x group (2) 1 x follow up	Chat with one member regularly, olive picking trip PGS events and CSA event	Informal chats with members From attendance at olive picking Visit to new space	1 x female 5 x male
Other – Bio.Me/ Oikogiortes	12 x single 2 x group	Attended 5x ecofestivals in Thessaloniki, Trikala and Katerini, Bio.Me event, Interview with Peliti founder and other ex-member of Peliti Aegilops	Filming from Agriherb event with Jenny speaking, plus Peliti member Refugee camps and events in other parts of Greece Workshops at conferences	6 x female 14 x male

Table 4.1 Details of interviews and participation of PV group in each initiative

4.16 Analysis

The analysis occurred throughout the iterations, but with variable emphases on collective work. In the first cycle, 1st and 2nd person inquiries took place as singular researchers (community and academic) between Jenny and I in planning and analysing the next steps of the research, and to build trust between each other. In the 2nd cycle, second person inquiries were engaged in choosing the themes for PV, and in the creation of a PV group. In the third cycle, where we collected footage and held regular meetings, 2nd person analytical modes allowed us to build understandings of the 'data' collectively, and plan who and what to engage with next. It also allowed us to develop research questions and strategies for video-making and screenings.

The fourth and fifth cycles looped between 2nd and 3rd modes of analytical inquiry, given that this cycle intended to feedback to the community through workshops what we had found, and develop our research design accordingly. In the fourth cycle, we focused in on 2nd person dialogue in order to unpack the topics of most concern to the problems endured by local people and thus also ask more difficult questions in respect to the nation state, trust and the solidarity economy. This part of the process drove me as the academic researcher with access to time and resources towards theoretical ideas which I fed back to the group, before planning the next steps. The fifth cycle included the analysis of 'data' - videos, photos, voice recordings; fieldnotes, interview transcripts, meeting and workshop notes and participant and facilitator reflections - through coding in Nvivo, and intermittent workshops with the PV group to deliberate on 'findings' from this.

Coding in Nvivo identified common emergent themes in the data and connected them to literature and other relevant news stories or reflective memos. The coding also acted as a way of noting down translations using annotations. Participants were given identities, such as producer, worker or activist, in order to see patterns in and between social groups. The reduction of the data through segmented codes and sub-codes made it simpler to pinpoint whose opinions or stories corroborated, and those that diverged. The broad themes of autonomy, democracy and collaboration were designated main codes based on the emergent patterns, under which sub-codes showed nuances and more detailed tendencies. They were then corroborated with the other members of the PV group in a thematic workshop. This helped sort out the large amount of interview and visual data, but was most useful when combined with reflection (brainstorming and discussion), and a 'complication' of the data which opens it up to more expansive interpretations and reconceptualisations when married to theory or cultural contextual understandings (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

The analysis within the third cycle included coding refined into interconnected sub-categories related to collaboration, including difficult interpersonal relations, producer-consumer collaboration/tensions, activist-producer tensions, and finding the right people. The coding was then brought back to findings to draw comparisons and contrasts, exposing contradictory accounts of events. Because versions of events did not match each other, this revealed discord and underlying personal (subjective) disquiet, as well as political or social frictions. The theory of politics of difference was drawn on by solely by myself as the author of the seventh chapter to highlight phenomenon in the data and discussions collected by the group. We recognize that discord may appear more exaggerated due to the tense period in which the fieldwork was conducted, although this pushed us to untangle notions of collaboration from conflictual realities.

Codes relating to autonomy, self-sufficiency, attitudes to government, political parties, ideas of democracy and participation, legality and trust were selected reassembled and recontextualised in order to interpret heuristically the meaning of the discussions that had taken place. The initial findings were presented to group members in Thessaloniki and comments and discussion points were also used to give analytical depth to the issue of the state in the view of solidarity economy actors. Interviews were uploaded onto the website or collated into a montage to show at events. Some footage was left largely unedited in order to keep the stories in full. Chapter 6 speaks to this cycle of inquiry.

In positivistic social science, there is a tendency to use hypotheses or 'models' to create unified theories of human behaviour (Gergen and Gergen 2008: 166). In this trend, research outcomes are used, sometimes solely, to create new theoretical assumptions about the world. In participatory research, the emphasis is on using the knowledge generated for direct practical social implications, and so in this respect it skips a step; but it can likewise shed light onto theory. Our initial aim was not to build theory, but to gain an understanding of the overall situation amongst food movements in the city which could be useful for people involved in these initiatives. It was also helpful to think of generalized lessons from food movements, and from solidarity economy, which could be extended to areas in other parts of Greece, or overseas. However, in writing up the notes and interviews and finding connections, using coding, and reading on the Greek political situation, it was Young's (1986) theory that elucidated that a different kind of politics would lend itself to acknowledging and dealing with difference in strategies, tactics, and political culture, encapsulated by the heterogeneous alternative food initiatives of Thessaloniki. I therefore used Young's theory to understand the context of conflict in the solidarity economy, and this context simultaneously helped to develop the theory.

In ethnographies, "most retain a strong notion of the author as expert" (Foley and Valenzuela 2005, 219). They set the agenda, collect the data, and write the account with little input, so as to retain the basic goal of producing universal, scientific knowledge, which is publishable. In PV, conversely, the process drives analytical input from all participants and the video outputs should demonstrate this. This dilemma between satisfying the academy and 'getting your work out there' is resolved by including people in the writing stage as well. However, this was not possible with people who do not have a good grasp of English in this case, or with people who do not have time to contribute to academic writing. Although the writing was undertaken predominantly by myself, 2nd person inquiry was the mode used throughout to get to the point of writing and thereafter to 'moderate' my representations. 2nd person inquiry connected to both self-reflection and a bigger picture analytical view privileged by my access and time to engage with theory (more at the beginning and end of the fieldwork than other times). Jenny acted as a co-author of the fifth chapter on Food Autonomy.

4.17 Chapter presentation

The chapters which follow differ in how they represent the research design and analytical modes. The fifth chapter was a collaboration between myself and Jenny, initiated through a plan and dialogue about the topic of food autonomy, which I structured into a chapter. This was followed by iterations of writing and commenting where between us we developed the arguments and selected examples. The sixth and seventh chapters are written solely by me, but based on thematic/analytical workshops. Especially the third empirical chapter gained more analytical traction after discussions and feedback from participants at two academic/activist conferences in 2018, demonstrating the value of instigating third person inquiry which taps into wider contexts and multiple ways of seeing. Important ideas and understandings emerged via a dialogue with another researcher, Christina, who was in the PV group. We aimed to include a co-authored article as a chapter in this study, but were under too much time pressure to do it justice as a co-written piece. The final chapter is a subjective (1st person) reflection which I used as a space to reflect on my own, limited, and also liberated, position within the PV group, and as a participatory action researcher during the two years of study.

5 Contradictions of Food Autonomy in the Greek Crisis

Co-written with Jenny Gkiougki

This co-authored chapter aims to show that the contradictions of autonomy are exaggerated by austerity. We show that hardship is a drive and also, problematically, a barrier to collective autonomy, meaning that individuals striving for self-sufficiency can undermine the collective project. Replacing conventional intermediaries with 'solidarity intermediaries' aims to bring together interests of diverse food actors. Yet, perceived self-interest and opportunism of particular groups by others leads to distrust and disempowerment within initiatives. We argue that due to continued market antagonism, contrary to Wilson's (2013) observations, identities in Thessaloniki's autonomous food initiatives are reinforced. Solidarity intermediaries direct solidarity to either marginalised producers or poor consumers. Still, we suggest there are ways to reconcile this division and build trust, through context-adapted models to mediate solidarity relationships and cut across initiatives, such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). Finally, this chapter aims to understand the fluctuation – and in some cases dissipation – of hope in face of structural barriers to autonomy.

1.1   Introduction

The effects of austerity implemented since the first bailout package of 2010 continue to penetrate Greek society. Tax increases and a consolidation of corporate control of the agri-food market have hit farmers hard (Backes et al. 2018), forcing them to accept low prices (Skordili 2013). Meanwhile, austerity has led to food poverty on a "humanitarian" scale (Konstantinidis 2016) in rural and urban areas (Backes et al. 2018). Food economies distinct from the dominant market are a form of resistance in Greece (Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015; Rakopoulos 2014a). In Thessaloniki, experiments in food autonomy exploded out of the 'indignados' (*aganasktismenoi*) street protests and occupations (Backes et al. 2018) and later established self-organisation in grassroots initiatives (Petropoulou 2014; Sotiropoulos 2013). Significantly, these movements contributed to the creation of the 'no middlemen' movement at a moment when conventional middlemen were prolifically dominant, open air markets were comprised almost exclusively of traders, and no legal framework existed for Farmers Markets (this only came into being in 2018 with the enacting of a new law no. 4497/2017).

Self-organisation demonstrates the catalytic effect of the crisis on social movements, emerging from what Castoriadis describes as "historical openings as conspicuous projects of self-definition and spontaneous collective action" (Karalis 2014: xvii). Otherwise referred to as the *politics of possibility* (Gibson-Graham, 2006), these initiatives were fuelled by hope for a different way of organising the economy for the future. Commentators familiar with the Greek situation, as well as participants in these initiatives, view the creation of such 'alternatives' as positive outcomes of the crisis (Daskalaki

and Kokkinidis 2017; Zaimakis 2018). However, others have warned that this narrative is overly idealistic, and uncritical of the opportunity given by the crisis for the advancement of the neoliberal political agenda (Afouxenidis 2017) and the hollow promises of a 'leftist' government (Karyotis 2015). This chapter sets out to understand how to balance the utopian practices with the constraining effects of the crisis, in a bid to learn from and shape autonomous food initiatives.

To do this, we purposely question for whom within the autonomous food initiatives the crisis is an opportunity, and extend this analysis to power struggles between actors, aiming to give suggestions on how to join up the struggles for food autonomy. Thus, we begin by introducing the autonomist theory behind the term 'the project of autonomy' (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010), a process of balancing and negotiating between the cultural imaginaries which open up possibility in practice, on the one hand, and the structural (and cognitive) barriers to autonomy, on the other. Then we describe the autonomous food initiatives in Thessaloniki, presenting an analysis of these initiatives based on the participatory video an ethnographic approach described in the fourth chapter. Towards the end of the chapter, we discuss three primary tensions that pervaded the autonomous food initiatives. Our analysis revealed there to be a (perceived) pervasiveness of individualism; an antagonistic relationship between producers and consumers, as well as between producers and activists, upsetting the bridging action of solidarity intermediaries; and participants experienced an uneven burden of experimentation. This chapter was written in collaboration with Jenny, therefore we use the first-person plural throughout.

5.1 Literature Review

5.1.1 Autonomous Food Initiatives

Existing literature sets up a clear understanding of the antagonistic relationship between producers and consumers in capitalistic food systems. Specifically, the contradictory pressures of low wages and unemployment on the price and quality of food result in the undermining of the struggle for a dignified livelihood by small-scale, ecological, food producers (Pratt and Luetchford 2013). This tension is a result of structural inequities evident in capitalist societies which dichotomises producers and consumers (McMichael 2009; Goodman and Dupois 2002). Moreover, economic crises have been shown to have an accentuating effect on these inequities within capitalist systems, due to unemployment, alongside the implementation of structural adjustments and austerity (Harvey 2010; Backes et al. 2018). This chapter converges these ideas and uses the empirical data to advance understandings of the amplifying effect of the crisis on food system antagonisms, even as actors seek to reconcile relations in solidarity-based initiatives.

Alternative Food Initiatives (AFIs) are characterised as offering reprieve from the capitalist market, through the establishment of closely-knit and traceable networks of producers and consumers (Goodman and Goodman 2009). However, critiques of AFIs show that they often perpetuate power and access inequality, especially as they begin to mainstream (Goodman and Goodman 2009), catering minimally to economically marginalised people (Tregear 2011) and ultimately ignoring social justice aims (Allen 2010). Catering to the middle classes in order to support otherwise marginalised producers is referred to as the "paradox of exclusivity" by Zitcer (2015). As an alternative approach, Wilson (2013: 727) summarises the need to place equity and power relations at the centre of the concept, in what she newly terms 'autonomous food spaces' which "situate food within a broader context of non-capitalist communities seeking to build relationships of mutual aid and non-market exchanges."

Wilson (2013: 727), following Gibson-Graham (2006), applies the idea of the 'politics of possibility' to the food system, claiming that 'performing' identities breaks down defined capitalocentric concepts, including "the potential for food spaces to 'play' with the categories of producer and consumer." She maintains that opening possibilities closes the gap in understanding between producers and consumers – as well as the material disparity - that binaries create. This vision advocates the need for "self-cultivation of ethical subjects capable of desiring and enacting diverse economies and the collaborative pursuit of economic experiments" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 726). This idea of blurring identities

through performative politics will be critiqued based on empirical evidence from Thessaloniki, as will the notion of a 'capitalist' or 'individualist' subject.

Gritzas and Kavoulakos's (2015) study into community economy narratives in Greece highlights that hope is produced through the process of creating and participating in alternative initiatives. They conclude with an affirmative, yet balanced, position regarding the theory's transformative potential. Given contingent geographical, institutional and political contexts in which these initiatives take place and the pervasiveness of power relations throughout all value systems, they assert that an "awareness that choices are constrained by power relations is a deliberative process, similar to the process of 'reframing', because it is the only way through which contradictions could be understood and overcome" (Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015: 14). Due to the materiality of these power relations, Lee, Leyshon, & Smith (2008) emphasize that hope in itself is inadequate for transformation, and the barriers to collective action should also be part of the strategies for enacting possibility. In light of these studies, alongside the endorsement of participating in existent plural economies, the material, social and psychological limitations of the 'production of hope' as the fuel for initiatives should be acknowledged. We now outline an adapted concept of autonomy, including what it is contingent on, before using it to draw out its inherent tensions using the empirical findings.

5.1.2   Developing the autonomy approach

An autonomy approach sheds light on the transformative potential of food initiatives. Transformation, according to autonomists Chatterton and Pickerill (2010: 730) is the disengagement from capitalist structures, and constitution as "non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social, and economic organization through a combination of resistance and creation." Chatterton (2005: 545), following Foran, argues that autonomy is an "impulse fuelled by present and past hardships such as hunger, poverty and subjugation" which shifts economic organisation. It is the motivational force that connects the project's motivations in the present to those in the future and it is through self-organisation that people disconnect from capitalist structures. Hope is created through this forward-looking cultural imaginary (Dinerstein 2015) and is enacted in the prefigurative politics of 'real existing utopias' (Wright 2010). Autonomy can therefore otherwise be seen as the collective endeavour of organising hope through self-management.

Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 19) define autonomy as "governed by self-established rules, self-determination, self-organization and self-regulating practices particularly vis-à-vis the state and capitalist social, economic and cultural relations." Importantly, they emphasise that this project is

necessarily collective, and not merely concerning individuals resisting domination. The self, then, is collective. The concept of 'relational autonomy' incorporates multiplicity, interdependency and mutuality into the concept (Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000). Rather than the 'masculine characteristic ideal' of individualistic, self-sufficient and atomistic individuals embedded within Western concepts of autonomy, argue Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000), a feminist conception of autonomy understands individuals as socially embedded and at least in part constituted by social relations. Autonomy is not intrinsically inhibited by social practices, relationships and communities, but, instead, these atomistic notions of self-sufficiency perpetuate structures of domination and subordination which reproduce unjust societies. In practice, notions of autonomy have been co-opted by narratives of the far-right to promote exclusionary, racist and nationalist practices and beliefs, including narratives of feeding your 'own' found in Greek-only soup kitchens (Arampatzi 2013).

Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010) perspective is that autonomy projects constantly adapt in their changing context. They argue that all contexts for transformation to autonomy are limited by institutions, and related access to resources (political, social and material). Autonomy projects can therefore be seen as inextricably interdependent on the systems on which they are driven to become independent from. Kentikelenis (2018: 39) shows that during the Greek crisis, people relied on "a combination of material survival strategies, the reconfiguration of social resources, and the reconstruction of cultural imaginaries." Kentikelenis (2018) discusses the promise of the early years of self-organised 'countermovements' after the crisis began, while scholars since have charted the subsequent repression of radical social movement initiatives (Calvário and Kallis 2016), most notably of the 'no middlemen' movement (Backes et al. 2018), and the tactics to formalise into recognised legal forms in order to retain economic and organisational viability (Rakopoulos 2014a). The negotiation between worlds in creating 'real utopias' acknowledges the real difficulties and impossibilities within the struggle for autonomy, and as such the transition to autonomy is fluid and persistently experimental (Castoriadis 1997).

It is through the paradox of crisis as a pivotal catalyst for imagination, but also as the driver of material needs based on hardship, that inherent tensions in autonomy can be drawn out. Autonomous Food Spaces theory embodies an approach of fine tuning, engaged critique, rather than evaluating whole models across a binary of 'success' or 'failure', thus transcending binaries pivoted around capitalist imaginaries (Wilson 2013). This is similar to Haiven and Khasnabish's (2014) analysis of social movements' maintaining a collective and radical imaginary by rethinking notions of success and failure. Furthermore, Chatterton (2005: 559) posits that autonomy as a process of collective self-organisation

enhances self-belief, and the co-production of individual self-respect. Unemployment and financial insecurity have the opposite effect, however, of personal insecurities and depression, which inhibit collective action (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). The economic, as well as political and social effects on this dynamic between the collective and individual in autonomy are explored empirically in this chapter.

5.1.3   Definition of Autonomy

The concept of autonomy we develop here enlightens considerations of power relations and equity within collective food initiative dynamics in the struggle inside state-capitalist structures. To demonstrate a project of autonomy, we use Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010) conception of the 'project of autonomy', in order to explore food initiatives in Thessaloniki:

a) *Have the ultimate goal of breaking away from dependency on systems of power, such as the state and/or the market*
b) *Act as a reaction to hardship*

In order to draw out the tensions and contradictions in the project of autonomy we emphasize the difficulties in these being contingent on the following, as outlined in the literature review:

c) *Necessarily collective endeavours*
d) *The production of hope*
e) *Continuous*

We aim to show in this chapter that one component of the project of autonomy can contradict or undermine another. Therefore, this definition helps to show the inevitability of a fraught trajectory of autonomous food initiatives, especially in the context of crisis.

5.1.4   Demonstrating Food Autonomy in Thessaloniki

Taking this comprehensive concept of autonomy as a point of analytical reference, we now discuss the findings of the participatory video study undertaken by a team of community and academic researchers, including the two of us (Christabel and Jenny). We found that these initiatives were connected by motivations and strategies to become autonomous from the capitalist markets, or to circumvent restrictive state regulation (which will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter). Motives for self-organisation were given literally and idiomatically as a 'way out' of the economic and

political situation, as described here by Andreas from the neighbourhood subsistence collective, the Pervolarides:

"I don't think it's a matter of one government or one specific state… the global guideline is that people will have less and less jobs, will be paid less and less for many hours of work and this cannot be changed in the capitalistic system, so we have to start looking for and creating new alternatives and that's what we want to do… I think it's a one-way street to getting some cooperativism".

This view situates the crisis experienced in Greece within wider unjust capitalist state systems, whose inaccessible markets and regressive policies are impoverishing people. As Greece under Syriza continues to be politically invested in this economic system - proved by the signing of third memorandum - the majority of the population experiences the harsh consequences of the economic system's contradictions. Andreas' reference to a one-way street indicates a 'moving away' from a negative system, or escaping, rather than 'moving towards' in the affirmative, as the notion of 'opportunity' suggests. This is the result of social movements "explicitly and implicitly challenging [the socio-political order] and actively seeking to imagine and create alternatives" (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014: 64). That is to say, that the creative process of self-organised economic activity is intertwined with a *necessary, even unavoidable* shift away from structures of power.

Bioscoop, an urban consumer cooperative, has as a motto 'taking food into our hands' as a means to collectivise food provisioning on a significant scale. Their objective was to design a supermarket of their own visioning, stocking a comprehensive range of products – including some from Greek corporations – in order to exist as a larger convenience store adequate enough to replace conventional supermarkets. It has pooled a substantial number of members (420) who are incorporated into the decision-making processes of the store. The initiative advocated cooperativism as an ideal economic form, and, in this respect, represents the first of a new generation of urban cooperatives in Greece connected to values of social and solidarity economy (SSE). This was an accomplishment in upending the social imaginary of producers since the old generation of agricultural cooperatives fell into disrepute and undermined social collective action (Konstantinidis 2016).

Idealism in a project with a new vision proved to be an important reason why active members participated. Haris, who at the time was in a position of secretary of the supervisory board, explains:

"I joined Bioscoop, because for me it's an experiment... It's a small utopia, we are trying to build something different, it's not the best but we are still in the process, and for me it's very important also the social and solidarity economy background and how they try to implement direct democracy among different participants in the collective".

Discussions among members of this and other initiatives evoked ideas of collectivising actors who had previously been politically and socially estranged from one other, in order to find a common way, through diverse experiments of varying scales (between 5 and 300 members), in which decisions were made by members as equal participants in the initiative's 'assembly'. This non-hierarchical and consensus-based manner of organising was standard among autonomous food initiatives in the city (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 photo of Per.ka's assembly in Spring 2017

Accessing the dominant markets became an increasing challenge for smaller farmers amidst the crisis, with tax regimes and consolidation of the agri-food sector (Konstantinidis 2016; Backes et al. 2018). According to producers we spoke to, this situation was exacerbated by the refusal to give out (new) licenses to farmers for the open-air markets, markedly so with the introduction of the law 4264/2014 (Calvário and Kallis 2016). This difficulty was coupled with the manipulative actions of middlemen who frequently delayed payment and reduced the offer price after the harvest, resulting in farmers receiving inadequate income for their crop (Skordili, 2013). A young producer from a small family farm, Lazaros, described the increasing difficulties for them to sell to supermarkets:

"To sell to a supermarket you have to give the best produce you have, you have to get the [organic] certification done again for your own 'monitoring'; it's difficult to enter into

supermarket chains…, your organic produce needs to be prepacked in order to supply small grocery stores and supermarkets. You need permissions and licences. The price of these is going to increase next year. After opening up the workshop (for processing), you have to wait two years for the papers, so you can't sell for two years".

Despite still being an important sector of the economy for employment (Konstantinidis 2016), there is an ageing farmer population in Greece (European Commission 2014). Conditions of crisis further restricted survival opportunities in agricultural occupations, thus making participation in the conventional market less appealing or unreachable for small-scale farmers. Moreover, those producers who were not able or willing to occupy the dominant form of agriculture, or its respective economy of scale, i.e. farmers with smaller and less consistent yields and polycultures, now felt systematically excluded from the capitalist economy. A small-scale Beekeeper, Nikos, describes this feeling:

"The government has closed its ears to small producers… I believe that now the small producer is a problem for the government and for the new economic policies being implemented, because the small producer has low inputs, meaning he doesn't purchase much, and low outputs. He has low turnovers, the money is not making the necessary circle that is needed for the economy to work the way they think it should. The small producer is a problem and for that reason they want to eliminate him".

Already before the crisis a union of producers set up an organic farmers' market, which has since been joined by new entrants and small organically certified producers. Despite not operating entirely legally (more on that in next chapter), membership of this union was still not an option for producers - of which there are a significant number in the vicinity of Thessaloniki - without the means to print tax receipts (needed to pay tax). The trigger of the economic crisis led to alternative markets and retailers being set up specifically with the aim to support marginalised, and informal, producers. Because of the attraction of these new markets in contrast to conventional markets, the membership was diverse, including conventional and organic, family farmers and new entrants, certified and uncertified, formal and informal producers.

The findings of this study indicated that new food initiatives in Thessaloniki generally had both a strong ideological basis connected to political movements of 2008, and an extra stimulus driven by increased material need. As the social and economic effects of austerity became socially embedded, the necessity and desire for autonomy was thus fused by the wish to move out of reach of the causes

of hardship. The motivation for joining new food initiatives by an individual therefore could be a need to make a livelihood wherever possible, as much as a desire to remake institutions in a new imaginary. Austerity politics facilitated by the narrative of economic crisis had subjected much of the population to hardship (Kentikelenis 2018). Since 2017, for example, a significant 'solidarity contribution' had been in place, and income and municipality taxes had been 'hidden' in the electricity bill (ΔΕΗ - DEH) to prevent tax evasion (Kolasa-Sikiaridi 2017). Although tax evasion is a cultural practice which predated the crisis, untaxed subsistence food production had been one way to ease this financial strain, either as a professional or amateur growing for self-sufficiency. Dimitris, an unemployed young member and principle food grower at the Pervolarides group (at the time of interview), explained:

> "I want to stress this, that our everyday survival is becoming more expensive by the day. This here is one solution, to be in a group and cultivate some products that you consume. Apart from knowing the quality of what you have, you also have economic relief".

Compared to the city, having a base in the countryside was seen by some producers we spoke to as more autonomous, because "there in the village you won't starve" (Dimitris). Both amateur and professional growers engaged in the practice of collecting "horta" (weeds) to use in soups and pies, or gathering fruits from abandoned fields nearby. Foraging was also organised by the Pervolarides collective, who annually travel from the city to collect olives via a long-term, loose arrangement with a farmer who directed them to abandoned fields. The collective then shared oil, processed at a small cost, amongst participants, and in their solidarity network. On the day that I (Christabel) accompanied them, there was unfortunately no collection as we found the olives diseased. This showed the lack of assurances gained from informal, and remote, harvesting arrangements, where the local farmer had no economic (or other) interest in checking the condition of the olives on the collective's behalf.

Self-sufficiency in food has been shown to be a collective endeavour in multiple areas of Thessaloniki, with integrated versions of social redistribution. It was a key driver of neighbourhood resilience efforts, for the Pervolarides in Pylaia/Harilaou, through vegetable cultivation, beekeeping and acquiring systemic food waste. Food was picked up from markets at the very end of the working day for redistribution amongst neighbours who are unemployed or without much income. Per.ka, too, was an important initiative for subsistence food growing – discussed more below. Besides this, producers had returned to family-owned land in order to become professionals, or to their towns and villages to cultivate part-time, often supported by other, on or off- farm, occupations e.g. camping or holiday rentals. These new trends showed the inventiveness of food provisioning whilst based in the heavily

urbanised environment of Thessaloniki, and recourse to food in both rural and urban areas. This enacting of self-sufficiency reduces inequalities in local areas, and empowers active participation in resource production and redistribution – also to family, friends and neighbours.

5.2   The (Perceived) Perpetuation of Individualism: the case of Per.ka

Per.ka is a peri-urban food growing initiative collectively occupied on ex-army barracks for self-management of land for cultivation, and resources such as water. Vegetable growing was combined with the saving and sharing of seeds and knowledge of alternative cultivation methods. Decisions were made collectively and by consensus in monthly assemblies, tying self-sufficiency with new ways of organising which encourage active participation. This was a rare case in Greece, where a diverse group of people who were not openly from an antiauthoritarian tradition participated in an occupation. Initially, the Per.ka collective was fairly cohesive, made up of a small group of people connected to the ecological movements. The scarcity of green space in the city coupled with abandonment of large sites by the military drew the amateur food growers to the outskirts. Here, in a climate of uncertainty they occupied the disused site and struggled for many years to maintain it as a place for collective action and food production against threats from government and the military. The statute was agreed in this initial period: to not use chemicals or commercial seeds, as Evripidis says, in order "to spread organic agriculture, with the ultimate goal to avoid being dependent on companies, or on food that is unfortunately sprayed with chemicals".

Although space was consciously opened up at events with music, food, and skill-sharing, in order to celebrate the collective nature of Per.ka and to communicate and exchange ideas amongst participants, eventually rifts between members led to a watershed 'crisis' moment in 2018. Some members explicitly left the assembly, but not the site, and other members resigned membership in reaction to this. Yet, there was fear of reclusive, apolitical participation leading to the destruction of the collective before the crisis, as Anthea voices:

> "The only threat which I can see apart from the HRADF [ΤΑΥΠΕΔ - the asset fund set up as a condition of debt relief], is maybe the breakdown of the relationships between ourselves. That is to say, if Per.ka focuses solely on cultivating, if we are only allotment growers, that for me would be missing the point of what we are, the beauty that is Per.ka. That the fact that Per.ka is part of the movement and participates in different events and projects in the city …is very important. If we remain only gardeners, it's not as beautiful I think".

Another principle of Per.ka was to remain open and inclusive to new membership. Per.ka started as one collective and after six years, multiplied to be constituent of seven collectives, each with their own assemblies and a general assembly for all members. Allocation of plots was issued per new individual/family or through the creation of a new collective, and at the time of the fieldwork, families who benefitted from the land totalled approximately 120. As the whole initiative expanded, increasing numbers of collectives and members, the nature of the organisation of the site also shifted towards the impersonal, with new members tending to focus only on growing food in their individual plot, new collectives neglecting to hold assemblies, and participation in the general assembly declining. Though it was encouraged, participation in assemblies was not obligatory, and it could not be easily enforced by an initiative with horizontal principles of organising. Ultimately, the shared agreement was ignored by a significant number of members, who persistently used chemicals and hybrid seeds, instead of the traditional seeds that were collected and shared amongst themselves and within local and national networks (e.g. Peliti).

Here, self-sufficiency was pursued as an atomistic practice which undermined the collective. It was reported by those who believed in the importance of the collective mode of organising, that those who exhibited 'individualistic tendencies' broke away from the collective and formed their own collective alliance, as Stavros explains:

"He [an individual seen as the ringleader] approached and gathered those who (already) infringed on the agreement. The people who used and had a locked chicken coop, the people who set up constructions in their plots and kept going until they had fenced off their entire plot and locked it. People who grew hybrids for convenience, believing they would get a greater yield. People who did not participate in the food sharing events and the common costs of the Per.ka collectives, giving thousands of excuses [for their actions], and getting away with not paying - something even the unemployed or other disadvantaged people managed to do, they refused to pay their annual subscription which was €10. And people who, besides their own plot, had a second plot pretending to be their son's, their brother's, their cousin's, and they cultivated it themselves".

This description indicated self-interest and an intentional undermining of the collective effort (a parallel analysis of this situation is unpacked in chapter seven). Interestingly, the member who 'rounded up' defectors to the collective was a long-term and active participant to the collective. This suggests that there were multiple factors which influenced individualistic actions. On the one hand, neoliberally socialised individualism imbued atomic characteristics more comfortable to those who

were not motivated by politicised social movements (Gilbert 2014). Individualism associated with capitalist alienation performed through self-sufficiency was observed to persist in Greek society by Telis, a small fruit farmer.

"… our society passed into a stage of much individualism. Everybody is trying to be self-sufficient in their own floor in the city, having everything".

On the other hand, autonomous food initiatives attempted to remedy this and create a sense of community and collective responsibility. Although social space was created to communicate and exchange at Per.ka, an increasing absence of a culture of collectivism to connect interests and 'politicise' people not used to collective organising emerged. Increased membership led to a decrease in collective action as a proportion, owing to the notorious difficulty of accommodating all participants in scaling up (Goodman and Goodman 2009). Moreover, as Per.ka grew, ideological fractures began to appear between the initiators and those who joined later (further discussed in relation to difference in chapter 7). The combination of the openness to new members, even those who did not hold the philosophy of collective work, and the organisation of the space into individually managed plots, allowed an individualistic mentality to become a recognisable cultural factor of the place, in particular, due to symbols of territoriality such as fenced-off plots.

Additionally, though we suggest that hardship was a factor which affected the process of collectivisation, poverty became more significant in Per.ka for two interconnected reasons. Firstly, newer members came from the nearby, poorer neighbourhood, and as a result were relatively food poor and, secondly, as time passed and the economic impacts of the crisis deepened, the general feeling of insecurity intensified. Thus, those who acted on a desire to avoid chemicals were generally speaking ideologically distinct from those who were (or felt) dependent on the success of yields as an essential need and were motivated to cultivate due to the same feeling of insecurity. Using bought hybrid seeds and growing with inputs, in the belief that higher productivity would be 'guaranteed', gave growers peace of mind about their ability to sustain themselves nutritionally. Even amongst organic promoters at Per.ka, some growers distrusted the unknown nature of the source of openly pollinated and shared seeds and preferred to buy registered organic seeds.

These acts of defiance of the Per.ka rules demonstrated not simply a deficiency in know-how for growing food using entirely self-sufficient organic methods, but also a resistance to them based on the belief that their efficacy was uncertain. The research findings point to a sentiment amongst some

participants that they could not afford to experiment with what was essentially an added insecurity. This highlighted a desire for guarantees in a fluctuating and difficult economic environment. It also showed that operating in collective settings does not necessarily nurture identical opinions about food production, and that perspectives, as knowledges, are diverse, explained by Allen (2010: 7):

> "Working toward social equity in local food systems requires questioning an assumption of shared interests among all members of the community when there are often substantially different material interests and power allocations".

Unequal power dynamics further created a distance between people who believed ideologically in the necessity of Per.ka, and those people whose urgency for food provisioning trumped other matters of concern in the collective. Additionally, the tensions that emerged in Per.ka were due to psychological conditions - a related, but distinct factor to economic hardship. Anthea described the significance of gardening at Per.ka as an occupation of people's time and of their mind:

> "More people came, which showed the need people have to cultivate in order to have autonomy in growing vegetables. And many unemployed people, trying to do something with their spare time. We can say cultivating is a kind of psychotherapy. …you feel better because you escape from the troubles of being unemployed, instead of sitting all day".

The openness of the collective gave people from different backgrounds and with different motivations the physical and psychological space to cultivate and engage in therapeutic workshops e.g. bread-making, to find solutions to their problems. However, Per.ka increasingly became a place to deal with these individual struggles, such as mental health issues, as the crisis endured. Members reported that these problems manifested in issues associated with financial insecurity, namely alcoholism and depression, which could cause individuals to withdraw and thus made collective working more difficult for all members.

Therefore, events at Per.ka also showed that two conditions for autonomy, collective work and hardship, can work against each other, where being autonomous and self-sufficient are distinct and divisive strategies. Whilst some people saw the problems as larger, related to the political economy and ecology of food and resistance to the domination of companies over their lives, others were looking for immediate solutions to personal financial and psychological problems. Though there existed acts of opportunistic individualism, these 'self-interested' motivations are inexorably entangled

with genuine need and feeling of insecurity caused by hardship. In short, hardship was a reason to become autonomous and at the same time can be a driver to individualistic action - a factor working against self-organised practices of collective decision-making.

5.3   Solidarity Intermediaries: resolving the producer-consumer antagonism?

Food autonomy is a collective responsibility, which incorporates a combination of interest groups who comprise heterogeneous actors - producers, consumers, workers, activists and members. As well as 'no middlemen' markets whose coordinators bring together producers and consumers in a direct exchange relationship, such as the Agrotiko Pantopoleio and the Sinelefsi, there are other initiatives which play a similar 'solidarity intermediary' role, including Sintrofia and Scholeio grocery stores, KOINSEPs Eklektik and Allos Tropos, and consumer cooperatives, Bioscoop and Koukouli. Note that KOINSEP is a Greek-specific legal form meaning social cooperative enterprise. These new initiatives removed the reliance on exploitative middlemen yet they served a continued role in negotiating the relationship between food system actors. Run by activists, these 'solidarity intermediaries' created a marketplace, most often a physical space, for otherwise marginalised producers and consumers. Coordination roles existed based on a view to prioritise the needs of marginal actors, on a voluntary or low-paid basis.

Although the exploitative middleman no longer distanced the producer and consumer through taking an excessive cut, the most basic contradiction in the capitalist food system – the struggle over a 'fair price' from either end of the food chain - remained. Moreover, it was aggravated by austerity affecting both producers and consumers in the context of crisis, described by Lazaros, a young farmer from Pellas, from his perspective:

> "The crisis affects farmers' livelihood a lot, because the price continues to rise which means that the customers that we would have, we don't have".

Recognizing the increased hardship of a small producer and giving them a fair price, then, was at odds with the needs of consumers, who were increasingly slipping into food poverty (as discussed by Pratt and Luetchford 2013). This issue of price polarising the food chain is highlighted by the splitting of consumer and producer interests within the initiative of Mikropolis, an anti-authoritarian social space consisting of several self-standing, but centrally coordinated self-organised collectives. Since it was established in 2011, disagreements had arisen due to the conflicting philosophies, motives and 'beneficiaries' of the two food-related collectives. The producer-focussed grocery store, Sintrofia, on

the one hand, supported small, local producers, especially those without official documents. Because of the rising cost of production, evading external costs was a strategy of multiple initiatives which has allowed producers to earn a living, but within the constraints of informality. Small and new producers commonly did not disclose their production or processing activity to the tax authorities, and did not certify their produce as organic, even when it was. A worker, Alekos, from the collective Sintrofia, one of the collectives of Mikropolis, talked about their role in providing a retail space for these producers:

> "… that's one of the most important things we do here, is to allow people who can't distribute their produce in other ways [to do so]…it does not make economic sense for them to set up a business, … so we can give them the opportunity to make some money but mostly to express and share their creativity. … in particular for the smallest producers, I can see they take an interest, they ask 'did people like it?'… That is to say that earning something like €15 a week is not going to make such a big difference to their income, but it pleases them to share what they have with other people outside of their family".

On the other hand, the Antipeina anti-hunger kitchen, a separate Mikropolis collective, served low cost (€1-4), food twice a day. The collective sourced mostly from 'inexpensive' wholesale markets, save for some fresh food from Sintrofia. This agreement to buy some produce from the shop was made after years of discussion and persuasion on the side of the grocery collective, and still not all of the general assembly believed, on principle, in Sintrofia. This was because they prioritised low prices for consumers and believed Sintrofia's food prices to generally be too high to accommodate this objective. The low cost of food from the kitchen provided for poor people, including a rising migrant population who engaged through other solidarity initiatives in Mikropolis.

Marginalised as they were from markets themselves, small(er) producers, organically certified or not, were simultaneously criticised for charging too much for their 'gourmet' produce and targeting middle-class consumers, emulating the "paradox of exclusivity" (Zitcer, 2015). In this case, we found that the social problems of many Greek people were not reflected in these initiatives, and in this respect they failed to be transformative. This unintentionally alienated producers from the majority of people as well as from the social consequences of crisis of which they were also subject. Grigoris, a worker at the occupied factory of Bio.Me, put across another perspective which advocated cooperation throughout the economy.

"…We look at eco-festivals and all of that, they have lots of autonomy, they have taken everything upon themselves, without judging anyone, … to produce what they produce…, and with a lot of effort, they sell it at a very high price. Because they produce it on their own, …, it eats up the daily wage and the product becomes very expensive. We believe in a cooperative economy where … the product is accessible and appeals to everyone and not just to a few like the organic and ecological products which are produced today".

In producer-led initiatives, such as ecofestivals, exclusions were based on cultivation methods alone; otherwise those participating have autonomy over their product and the setting of the retail price, independent of the consumer. It was in social spaces, which include parallel, but plural interests, such as Mikropolis that these tensions in power could be teased apart through discussions that enlightened participants to the contradictions of solidarity action. However, it remains also a cause of division based on divergent political principles or alliances.

This tension between motivations showed the difficulty of supporting marginalised producers and marginalised consumers at the same time. Therefore, 'solidarity' action in efforts during the crisis was generally unidirectional, prioritising only one interest group – which is a similar criticism aimed at AFIs. As Allen (2010) points out, due to constraints of social structures, in which these initiatives are embedded, their actions may work contrary to ideals and values. This epitomises the fraught and imperfect trajectory of autonomy.

Access to food was broadened to many consumers thanks to the anti-hunger kitchen and the affordable 'no middlemen' markets. Simultaneously, Sintrofia, like other autonomous retail spaces, created the opportunity to establish and continue as a small producer that has little market power otherwise. However, producers discussed the occasional powerlessness they felt when engaging with solidarity intermediaries, which they saw as selective. Telis described the continued race to the bottom for price:

"…another group of people, actually an individual, came onto the scene selling oranges, with a much lower price [than me], and this 3 year cooperation that we had with this specific group, Mikropolis, ended because of the price even though we tried to warn them that a production, a price of oranges this low cannot be explained, you cannot explain how the producer lives with this. But it was a good example of what is really happening because of the pressure for income".

As the example above demonstrates, the continued systemic pressure on price, from consumers, but also from initiatives that need to gain enough income to survive, has been known to create competition between producers. This leads inevitably to price undercutting even in solidarity intermediaries aiming to cater to producers' needs.

The interdependence between autonomous food initiatives is illustrated by another example. KOINSEP Perisyllogi in the village of Peristera combined cooperative cultivation, processing and retailing of products using principally aromatic plants. It produced unique products which make a comfortable mark-up, and attempted to employ local people (although in reality without much, if any, payment) and to offer education on methods of self-sufficiency. Itself a formal entity, it had important links with other food initiatives in the city selling products through cooperative retailers, including Bioscoop, as well as informal stores in social centres, such as Sintrofia and Scholeio. They also sourced their plants from the national traditional/heirloom seed-savers network, Peliti, and from a nearby organic herb nursery, making use of alternative retail spaces, as well as selling gradually to more 'conventional' stores in the city. In this respect, autonomy also meant seeking financial viability by sourcing and selling through a network of small conventional businesses and alternative initiatives. This endeavour nevertheless became possible due to the existence of a selection of solidarity intermediaries.

More recently, Perisyllogi set up a shop in nearby Thermi, where they produced and sold their own and other initiatives' produce. However, Perisyllogi's continual search for new outlets demonstrates that limited custom of solidarity intermediaries results in an unpredictable future for producers who rely on them, and who were forced to look for other distribution channels, as Nikos explains:

"There are initiatives like Sintrofia in Mikropolis which are really good initiatives, there are KOINSEPs, …, all of them small but also very promising for producers. Still, speaking with a number of producers here in the countryside, they regard this as a positive step, a direction, a way out for the distribution of their produce. The point is that they don't know who they will reach and how they will find the people to distribute as much of their produce as they need".

Small producers seemed generally to realise the importance of solidarity intermediaries for having some sort of mediation between them and the market place. However, there was little marketing amongst small producers and autonomous food initiatives, especially since many participants shied away from establishing or collaborating with sales reps, either individually or as a collective between

many producers. Capitalist exploitation had deterred some producers, and participants in solidarity intermediaries, from using strategies like business plans, promotion and sales strategy as these were regarded as capitalist tools. In this way, they were potentially jeopardising their futures by remaining economically and socially introvert with limited reach to wider society (anticapitalist 'behaviour' will be further discussed in the next chapter in relation to anti-authoritarianism). This observation also echoes the observation from Adam (2018: 9) regarding limited networking of decentralised solidarity projects in Greece:

> "contrary to what might be seen as conducive to their transformative potential, exclusive reliance on symmetrical exchanges among similar minded initiatives may also pose threats if it restricts these initiatives to dwarfish and marginal production activities".

In response to Wilson (2013) advocating of blurring roles of consumers and producers this case study showed that economic interests of consumers are markedly distinct from the interests of the producer. Dichotomies not only continued to exist in crises, they are evidently accentuated and defined identities more clearly at times. The poststructuralist reframing which encourages transformational novelty, must contend with the structural obstructions of an unequal system. We argue, therefore, that because austerity contributes further to patterns of material and social oppression, distinct conceptualisations are important in recognising existent systemic inequity and not to make one group's situation and interests invisible at the expense of the others'. This does not imply pitting one against another, as dominant market conceptualisations consistently do. Instead, their mutual marginalisation by the capitalist state could be viewed as a shared challenge, which makes them natural allies in the increased struggle for autonomy and to reconcile a reciprocal basis for exchange. Solidarity relationships which enable equitable collaboration between different actors should incorporate lessons from experimentation. This requires an examination of power between these actors in their collective endeavours to mitigate inequity in these autonomous food initiatives.

5.4   Self-interest and animosity between producers and activists

The narrative of consumer power in the economy was commonly expressed in idioms amongst participants in these food initiatives and emerged in discussions about the difficulties of making a livelihood in autonomous networks. Equally, it was heard in the stories of producers and activists; from being thankful for loyal custom during the crisis, to discussing marketing strategies which were consumer-targeted. One producer criticised the eco-festival participants for not using marketing to gain custom, and being satisfied with below-par presentation of products, feeding the view that

products need to be directed to high-paying consumers. This type of attitude also demonstrates a view of consumer loyalty in the crisis being subject to gratitude. In this respect, there therefore remains a neoliberal logic of individual consumer choice which negates efforts for equity (Allen 2010).

Conversely, a producer-led initiative, the certified organic farmers' market was criticised by members of solidarity intermediaries as operating more like a 'cartel', by agreeing to and selling vegetables at a high price and obligating producers to maintain a minimum price. In the critics' perspective, they had a monopoly on that particular large(r), certified organic market. Nevertheless, this strategy minimised competition between producers who hold their stalls side by side, and thus protected them all from the risk of having their prices depressed too much due to the decrease in consumer purchasing power.

Larger initiatives, for example Bioscoop, incorporated into their quality control the practice of 'checking' the produce they stock, independent of certification status, through benevolent links with university departments. This acted to reassure customers that the produce sold is high quality because it is 'clean' – not just organic, but also free from pollution. In checking all produce, it went beyond limited formal certification processes, creating criteria for production that were not solely based on standard definitions of organic production. Thus, placing conventional and organic under the same controls. This procedure also created a parallel, separate system for verification and bypassed high certification costs for the producer.

Incidentally, a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is being set up by members of the eco-festival after a solidarity event at the Bio.Me factory in December 2018. A PGS is a local assurance system for produce which empowers and created unity between small organic farmers whilst circumventing high costs of private third-party certification schemes (IFOAM 2019). Preliminary discussion indicated that the introduction of a PGS system could pose a challenge to relations between currently certified producers and non-certified organic producers, because the cost of official certification (which will remain a necessity for continued participation in specific markets) makes the cost of production higher than for uncertified producers. At the same time, some farmers do not have the option to certify their crops because their production is too small (according to Maria). There existed also sceptical producers who were uneasy about verifying the origin of traditional seeds passed through informal networks, and who trusted company-bought seeds more. Others feared that some producers would cheat a self-organised vetting process (there is already suspicion of deceitful practices in solidarity intermediaries) or not be knowledgeable enough to be able to check others' fields. Nevertheless, there is hope in a

new PGS system to create a knowledge exchange network, and to motivate more consumers to take interest in alternative agricultural methods.

In supplying solidarity intermediaries, producers were sometimes kept waiting for payment, usually one order behind. These were conditions introduced by the intermediary, especially when in a tough financial spot or in the setting up stage, before the products had been sold, or reputation spread, and with little access to capital. For some producers, delayed payment mimicked the unpredictable conduct of intermediaries in the capitalist industry who held power over them. Future dated checks are a standard practice in Greece markets, referred to as μεταχρονολογημένη επιταγή (metachronologimeni epitagi), with payment frequently being delayed by 3 months or more. In contrast, the system set up in solidarity intermediaries was supposed to be fairer, more transparent and universal, and also compelled a shared responsibility of sustaining food initiatives in volatile times. However, some producers reported that in one initiative, this rule applied to some producers, whereas other producers were paid immediately, depending on favours given to them by the worker on particular days.

Conversely, participants in solidarity intermediaries identified practices of producers 'taking' power. Workers in Sintrofia talked about the way that producers 'worked around' this delayed payment system by bringing in a large order one day, and the next a very small order, with the expectation of getting paid for the large order almost immediately. A worker in Koukouli, another solidarity intermediary with many producer-members, reported that producers would move their produce to the optimum eye height on the shelves in order to maximise their chance of selling, at the expense of another producer and without agreement of the assembly. This indicated a presence of competition (certainly in contradiction to solidarity aims), on the one hand, and saturation of products to a low customer ratio on the other. It also hinted at lack of 'fair' formal processes of making and enforcing decisions in the cooperative – which is dealt with more fully in chapter 7.

Moreover, the 'no middlemen' movement, which essentially ended in 2014 with the introduction of state repression, was laced with disappointment due to the actions of individual producers. Activist-volunteers from three separate no middleman initiatives, as well as some producers, complained of the 'exploitative' and 'self-interested' actions of producers. They described:

1. Producers repeatedly asking to take a larger cut than was agreed at the beginning (Athanasios):

"..the producers do not appreciate the consumer's need. They want the full price for themselves. This is their tendency, they do it all the time. They don't want to pass onto the customer part of the price that has been gained by bypassing the intermediaries".

2. Producers bringing falsely advertised, poor quality produce, or under-weighed bags of priced produce (Thomas and Andreas):

"We had a man with cheese from Crete, who in the end proved to not be bringing us cheese from Crete at all, he brought it from Drama"
"Lots of such things…"
"Poor quality potatoes for example"
"Yes! We had lots of problems with potatoes"
"Underweight [bags of] potatoes…They were sold in sacks of ten kilos, but instead weighed 8 or 9 kilos"
"Or on the outside they were fine, but on the inside they were rotten".

3. Producers competing with one another to try and get the best spot, arriving earlier and earlier, at the market – which gave the volunteers extra work (Vasso and Mathaios):

"At 06:30 in the morning it was chaotic, because there was this mentality between producers that if you get there early enough you will get a 'good spot'. Nevermind all the work we had done, making a detailed plan to cater for the increasing number of producers… And why were their numbers increasing? Because, unlike other no intermediaries markets, we decided not to exclude anyone".

4. Producers trying to bribe the organisers (Athanasios):

"We had producers who tried to bribe us to enter, they thought we were conventional open air markets… we had producers who said, put me as the exclusive seller [of a product] and I will give you this and that. We sent them away immediately. 'Bye, you are not for here. You do not understand where you are, you think we are something else. These things happen in the conventional markets, not here'".

5. Producers demonstrating low loyalty to the initiative by failing to turn up when they say they will and giving excuses – only to be found attending another 'no middlemen' market (Thomas):

"When [excuses are given] 2 or 3 times, or when another 'no middlemen' market is happening in another area, you end up guessing that they don't want to come…for example, on Saturday, when we had our market, their vehicle was broken, but on Sunday it wasn't, and they managed to go to another market".

Producers' perceived lack of loyalty to initiatives is also explained by the existence of plural, small initiatives, which could not satisfy the producers' income alone, as Alekos, and Nikos both indicated in earlier quotes. By existing as they do in their multiplicity, an arena of solidarity was created whereby producers participate in multiple initiatives. Some saw this as an opportunity to 'shop around' for the marketplace which suits them the best and this was seen as fickle. Given the uncertainty of custom - especially as purchasing power dropped in the crisis – this was a necessary strategy for small producers.

Because participation in many initiatives was time-consuming and exhausting, it was impossible to fully participate in any one initiative. For this reason, some participants in solidarity intermediaries believed that intermediaries of some kind were beneficial. Konstantinos, experienced with 'no middlemen' market organisation in Katerini, was of the opinion that producers worked hard, and so did not want to also be the distributors. This was true for both monoculture producers with larger quantities of produce and small producers who labour hard. Another reason was to connect the activists in the city and the cultivators in the countryside, even when it came to decision-making, as Alekos explains:

"You can't expect the other person (farmer) to drive into town and find a parking space in the city-centre in order to attend an assembly which might even not happen. That stuff is for us, … for me, it is a decision to make and see if you can afford to take on. There are many practical problems to overcome even if they want to participate…all of the initiatives have a student-like activist atmosphere and that doesn't suit those who need to make a living from this".

Although this absolved producers from their collective responsibility in decision-making, or even excluded them from the possibility, it did acknowledge the distance not just in real terms between the urban and rural dwellers, but also in their respective level of politicisation, social position and divergent cultural imaginaries. Nevertheless, many activists saw producers' actions as taking advantage of 'movement' initiatives and those who dedicate time to it voluntarily. This was assumed to be due to 'capitalist' or individualist traits that came from their experience in conventional food markets; in their

opinion, participation in an initiative should rather have been driven by an honest belief in social solidarity, and not purely to make money.

This gap in understanding of the initiative was signposted by the conventional background of many of the producers in attendance at 'no middlemen' markets who, used to competitive market environments, may have seen lax and overworked self-organised structures as an opportunity to sell produce that the strict vetting procedures of supermarkets would not allow. In the language of the *politics of possibility*, these producers did not inhabit an 'ethical' subjectivity "capable of desiring and enacting diverse economies and the collaborative pursuit of economic experiments" since they put their interests before those of their co-participants, and continued in the logic of capitalist accumulation.

However, we argue that this may be an unfair judgement of intention, and character. Alternatively, in sympathy with producers, few intermediaries saw the link between producers' hardship and 'taking what they can', voiced here by a small farmer who used to be involved in the 'no middlemen' markets:

"there are many examples of things that were not safe that were on sale at these markets. [I think] because of opportunism, and the need, [and] the actual very difficult stress that is on [farming] families".

Seen to be trying to scam consumers and abuse this system set up 'for' their interests, producers were potentially driven by their arduous personal economic situation, which was not alleviated enough by these autonomous initiatives. The stress and suspicion on them led individual farmers to lack confidence in activists in the solidarity intermediaries and therefore this reproduced the distance and distrust between the producer and the intermediary.

Moreover, organisers themselves were implicated in the new relationship and held their own power. They were responsible for selecting producers to begin with and for 'setting' fair prices (to undercut supermarkets but at a higher than the market rate for producers); this was done in negotiation with producers at the beginning but not always reassessed as situations changed. One particular producer reflected on having stopped his participation in the market because the economic situation intensified meaning the price was not worth his time.

Possibly as a result of larger producers with more overall market power and a culture of competition having been originally 'selected', rather than the solidarity stance with poor consumers expected of the producers by the intermediaries, they now anticipate that all producers will exploit their situation if they can. The initial proposed Farmers' Market law was rejected because they were to be organised solely by producers, which some activists believed would be detrimental for initiatives. This loss of trust in producers, and their perceived inability to self-organise, led in some cases to the 'control' of producers by organisers. In the case of 'no middlemen' markets which continued - after most were closed in 2014 in the midst of police repression - the nature of the relationship of organisers with producers became autarkic and inflexible, as Athanasios detailed:

> "In the end, [the other 'no middlemen' markets] ceased to exist. The rest that started functioning at a later stage, and ours that is still going, place strict criteria on producers. We adhere to the rules of outdoor trading standards for open-air markets. We pressure them to keep the process low. Because, if left to their own devices, the producers will, unfortunately, try to take all the profit margin for themselves".

Importantly, a reason for adhering to the rules of outdoor trading was fear of repression. The penalty had become more severe since the introduction of the law 4264/2014 that shut down the 'no middlemen' movement, including higher fines and risk of imprisonment (Calvário and Kallis, 2016). The effect of this disabling nature of the state is followed up in the next chapter. Similarly, another existing market had become a cooperative and forced loyalty through a written agreement (though this is disputed by an organiser – see chapter 8's reflection on rumour and truth); equally, they encouraged consumer loyalty through membership discounts.

5.5   Experimentation as both hopeful, and a burden

Since the crisis, initiatives had folded and participants and their creative energy had been reshaped into new initiatives, with a mixture of old and new members (see figure 2). S.PA.ME, a volunteer run 'wholesale' store, which no longer existed, fed into the creation of Eklektik, a KOINSEP in which four paid staff members run a café and quality food store. Another KOINSEP, Allos Tropos, was also a legacy of S.PA.ME. People from S.PA.ME filtered into various neighbourhood 'no middlemen' markets in the time of their boom, from 2011. An ex-member and now a member of Eklektik, Ermis, asserted that as an initiative S.PA.ME was only ever meant to be temporary, as a transition towards building other initiatives:

"Even from the beginning when it was first set up we said that it was created to be broken down again at the end, that it was just a stepping stone. We knew from the start that it would close at some point to give way to other things".

It also became clear during the research that many people were involved in several initiatives since the beginning of the crisis. For example, a member of Bioscoop was 'recruited' after completing a period of informal 'employment' at Sintrofia. Several people moved from Sintrofia to Bioscoop in the same way, due to their competence of working with producers and in a retail environment, as well as their 'movement' credentials (i.e. they were trusted because they were known in the social movements). This shifting project of autonomy was embarked on through practices of non-hierarchical organising, of politicisation through 'doing'. This is what Haiven and Khasnabish (2014: 15) talk about as everyday research – "constant experimentation and reflexive refinement of political ambitions, organizational forms, forms of democracy". This can be self-empowering and tied in with the reproduction of hope (Dinerstein 2015), or as Orfeas, a member of Bioscoop, described, he learned more about cooperative working than he could have learned at a university when he felt despondence at having experienced a breakdown in working relationships.

However, analysis of the evolution of initiatives also requires consideration of the economic viability of a project. Both the difficulty in covering costs and the lack of agreement in continuing were voiced as other reasons to close S.PA.ME. The production of hope, therefore, can be contingent on both an economic need to experiment and the need to maintain economic viability, which can push back against each other if the viability of an initiative is dependent on volunteerism. Pavlina, from Allos Tropos, talked about the merging of the two:

"It is like a recycling game [of initiatives], we import something, we process it and we dispense with it. S.PA.ME was run completely voluntarily and it was [at the time] something completely different. Here we are trying to connect two things. That is to say, that you can have a job and live from it without compromising the rest of your personality or your concerns…, you can combine the two in a way, that's it".

The evolution of initiatives can therefore be viewed as a process of continual adaptability or of 'becoming'. It was an uneven process, which, as we saw with the examples of the solidarity intermediaries, caused tensions and relational difficulties when they affected some participants more than others. The 'burden of experimentation' was discussed by Ermis as falling on the shoulders of a

few of the participants. Those who were responsible for keeping the initiative financially afloat at crucial times:

> "Eventually S.PA.ME came to an end. Imagine that to set it up we put money from our own pockets to finance it, we were not getting paid for our work and at the end we had to fork out more of our own money for it. Meaning it was financially unsustainable. It was problematic. What we say is that volunteering comes with the added problem of lack of responsibility when it comes to work".

Another lesson that came from this initiative was that the margins were set too low, due to incorrect pricing, so that they undercut themselves and were not able to meet the needs of the collective. Thus, the dissolution of an initiative could be positive, as in the case of S.PA.ME, as it allows for the subsequent and cumulative experimentation to flourish, and as Pavlina says it "gave light" – and lessons - to be able to set up other initiatives. However, as the crisis endured, the ability for individuals to be informal 'guarantors' of initiatives became increasingly difficult, since the opportunities for income were depleted exponentially. In addition, there was a feeling that the burden needed to be shared, at the same time as initiative participants lose hope. There was an almost visible fatigue and disappointment when people experienced an initiative fading and the energy that was put into it dissipated, as voiced by Mathaios from 'no middlemen' movement (city-centre group):

> "I believe we all came out of this having gained something even if 'this' ended for each of us in a different way, ingloriously, due to fatigue, due to disappointment etc., because first of all, we channelled in this particular initiative, apart from all other activities we run as a citizens' assembly, a big part of the despair, the rage, and the violence we have been subjected to by the whole system in which we live in".

Consequently, disappointment and depression set in when it was felt that this intermediary relationship was abused or taken for granted, since it upset the vision of what the organisers hoped to achieve, and took their unpaid role for granted. Haiven and Khasnabish (2014: 95) call this the "crisis of activist reproduction" which is "characterised by endemic egoism and loneliness, breakdowns in communication, burnout resulting from endless struggles against movement and individual entropy, and the costs and consequences of grappling with success and failure." Activists saw that actions for individual gain are against a movement, which is already struggling under political pressures. These

organisers were themselves experiencing the difficulties of the unending crisis and were beginning to feel the burnout effect of limited activist capacity.

5.6   Conclusion: Introvert Decentralisation or autonomous transformation?

This chapter showed the crisis's accentuating effect on tensions within the project of autonomy. Overall, the interdependence of the conditions of autonomy as a project (being necessarily collective, the presence of hope, being continuous) and the drivers of autonomy (hardship, goal of breaking away from hegemonic systems) created paradoxical processes of becoming autonomous. The economic crisis raised the stakes, temporally and materially, so that whilst seeking autonomy is always fraught and fluctuating, the continued polarising of interests in food systems, and lack of other economic options, can lead to the reproduction of competitive and mistrustful relationships that fuel the process of *introvert decentralisation.*

Firstly, we gave examples of the wish to be autonomous being driven by an increase in or anticipation of financial insecurity, thrust upon individuals by austerity policies. Herein lies a tension; the agency which shows promise in the 'opening up of possibility' within the cracks of hegemonic capitalism can be either collective or individualistic in nature. In some cases, the desire for autonomy isolates individual's needs, and consequent actions, from those of a collective. In food production, 'individualistic' acts exhibited in insular self-sufficiency efforts or violations of collective agreements frustrate the collective autonomy project. We argue, however, that actions viewed as individualistic could be due to economic insecurity in a fluctuating economic context, whereby certain actors feel they cannot afford to experiment. The process of the 'cultivation' of ethical subjects (Gibson-Graham, 2006) was therefore shown to be subjective, since some actors are able to experiment more readily with transformative praxis, while others are constrained by economic or ideological barriers, or excluded from the endeavour altogether. Embracing uncertainty, as Gibson-Graham (2006) advocate, is to a certain extent an 'elitist' strategy, as the more marginalised have less possibilities to experiment, and also desire security.

Second, in the crisis, the contradiction in market relations between the producer and consumer is made greater with the increase in cost of production, on the one hand, and decrease in purchasing power, on the other. The negotiation of these oppositional, and urgent, needs are reflected in the establishment of solidarity intermediaries which prioritise interests of economically marginalised producers or consumers by removing the dominant market middleman. However, given the

perpetuation of antagonism caused by socioeconomic inequality, solidarity intermediaries continue to exhibit a 'paradox of exclusivity' (Zitcer 2015) where solidarity is unidirectional. Specifically, this dynamic distances struggling farmers, including informal producers (operating without licenses and outside of tax parameters), from impoverished consumers, and for this reason we find little evidence that identities blur in these autonomous initiatives, as suggested by Wilson (2013). Notably, in some cases, activist intermediaries feel their altruism is exploited, particularly by producers, in this continued antagonism between consumer and producer. They are nevertheless seen as necessary mediators of economic relations between the countryside and city.

Thirdly, experimentation in food autonomy is indeed a path to finding a solution, by creating hope and the substance of the cultural imaginary. However, the initiatives' promise of autonomy is countered by the burden of experimentation over time. The excitement of experimentation in the early years is negated by the continued need to seek autonomy in the context of diminishing prospects. Here, the benefits and responsibility of the collective endeavour are experienced unevenly by different actors collaborating in these initiatives. The evolution of food initiatives in this fraught project of autonomy leads some to reform into new initiatives, carrying experience along with the hopeful sentiment of new beginnings, and others to dissipate, alas with a detrimental effect on the production of hope when participants consider an experiment to have been unsuccessful. In some circumstances, individuals felt dejected by displays of individualism causing them to retract (active) participation (this was the case when some members left Per.ka and Koukouli) which contributes to a phenomenon which we came to refer to as *introvert decentralisation.*

Decentralisation sometimes accommodates diversity (Steinfort, Hendrikx and Pijpers 2017), but can also exclude those who don't occupy the position of 'ethical subjects' - who have yet to learn the spirit of collectivism - or those experiencing isolating socioeconomic factors. Autonomy can come to mean self-sufficiency without social justice aims. For example, outreach strategies are not generally pursued, which leaves initiatives alienated from the mass of the population, and limited spread of ideas. *Introvert decentralisation* implies political or ideological separation, conflict and fragmentation (which will be dealt with more in the following chapters). This isolationist trend is also a cause/symptom of a lack of collective strategy within initiatives and between initiatives to resist the barriers emerging from the 'recovering' capitalist State.

A possible way is to overcome the 'paradox of exclusivity' and unidirectional mediation of solidarity, as well as reproduce hope, is by co-ordinating strategic action on a larger scale. Likewise, an

acknowledgement amongst actors in these experiments that contradictions are an inevitability during the process of becoming autonomous could instigate an understanding of the polarised, but equally marginalised positions in exchange relations, as well as the various compromises which small-scale projects must make. This could take place in an initiative such as Mikropolis which has separate collective catering to the two - the next chapter suggests political reasons why it doesn't. Networking between initiatives – some more consumer focussed, others more producer-led, would be a starting point for coordinating a common struggle in parallel but interconnected solidarity efforts.

Generally, a greater active participation on the part of consumers would slowly remove the reliance on the few activist intermediaries and create a sustainable ethical bridge to producers and their production. For example, Solidarity Purchasing Groups (SPGs or GAS) collectivise consumers to instigate negotiations and build a connection with producers to gain fair prices and costs. Similarly, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes endow members with a collective responsibility and mutual recognition of socioeconomic position. Additionally, PGS systems can help build trust amongst producers, and mitigate competition, as well as reducing the cost of production, bypassing corporate certification costs. However, in all models which bridge interests, structural asymmetries of power and resources must be factored in, as well as the insecurity and uncertainties prevalent in crisis, so as to accommodate those who are financially insecure. Allen's (2010) suggestions of donating surplus food, having the option to volunteer for shares and subsidising low-income shares, could be supplemented by schemes using 'sponsors' (who donate capital) or 'guarantors' (who contribute financially in moments of crisis) by more established, formalised initiatives in a network.

6 Governance in, between and against Autonomous Food Initiatives: the State, self-organisation and anti-authoritarianism

In this chapter, I aim to better understand the attitudes towards, and reactions to, laws and regulations in autonomous food initiatives, and the wider implications for organising. I develop the previous chapter's discussion of *introvert decentralisation*, problematising the tendency of initiatives to narrow in a process of political homogenisation and separation. I centre the analysis on the prevalence of anti-authoritarianism as a reaction to state governance ineptitude, arguing that the reinvigorated (radical democratic) political paradigm, epitomised by grassroots non-hierarchical structures and avoidance of institutional politics, is not always conducive to collective autonomy. I show that the new political paradigm is a logical response to the disabling nature of the state, and the effects of its austerity programme, on autonomous food movements. The reframing of justice by initiatives in face of legal vacuums (no applicable law), and opaque and shifting laws leads to 'legal creativity' or 'informality' as an autonomy strategy, which contests legitimacy of 'law and order' implemented by the political class of the state. However, the continued effect of hegemonic state governance on self-governance, is discussed as problematic when food actors' undermining and thus disregarding of authority within initiatives creates uncertainty about the location of and dismissal of power.

6.1 Introduction

Constituting a liberal democracy from 1974 after seven years of dictatorship, state power in Greece is now complicated by a first-of-its-kind debt repayment agreement between the governance structures of the EU (along with the ECB and the IMF) and the government of a constituent state. Despite the post-Junta period (*metapolitefsi*) being heralded as the start of political democracy in the country, political institutions remained objects of distrust, tarnished by a reputation of corruption and clientelism and centralised bureaucratic obstacles (Lambropoulou 2012). More recently, a swift economic growth agenda encouraged by Eurozone membership, which attempted to propel the country into liberal 'modernity' (Ovenden 2015), proved unsustainable. On the one hand, the country's acceptance into the Eurozone was based on falsified figures by the Greek government, a revelation which contributed to international images of Greece as 'untrustworthy' (Antoniades 2012). EU accession, on the other hand, was followed by promotion of public and household 'easy borrowing' by economically stronger EU countries' leaders and financial institutions (Manolopoulos 2011). The period of 'debt crisis' that ensued signifies entangled international political and economic interests since the Troika (IMF, ECB, EU) mandated structural adjustments on Greece through memoranda (Salomon and De Schutter 2015), which subjugate the sovereignty of the Greek government (Kallianos 2017). The debt crisis resulted in the implementation of 'legal' widespread impoverishment through austerity forced by the memoranda (Salomon and De Schutter 2015).

"The most destabilising deficit of Greece, during the period under examination, was not its fiscal deficit but its credibility deficit," (Antoniades 2012: 12) overseas and at home. Amidst the crisis, doubt deepened in respect of the efficacy of representative democracy to respond other than to economic problems. Syriza, the party representing a 'coalition of the left' promised solutions to the crisis and sympathetic policies for social movements before the 2015 general election, but hope turned to disappointment and feelings of betrayal when they took power (Cabot 2016; Capelos and Demertzis 2018). Rather than delivering on their promises, they began a process of re-embedding neoliberalism (Lapavitsas 2012) beyond the achievement of previous governments (Karyotis 2015). The impact of signing the third memorandum with the Troika, despite it being rejected by the public in a referendum, gave weight to the argument, and belief, that the national government was in the hands of supranational and international powers (Varoufakis 2015a; Kallianos 2016).

The obligations of the memorandum in effect surrender responsibility of the national government. This allows the government to claim helplessness in face of growing social demands (Kallianos 2017); leading some commentators to align the economic crisis with a crisis of governance (Kallianos 2017; Varoufakis, 2015a). Moreover, the Greek government tried to legitimise its action (and delegitimize the groups contesting its legitimacy) by reengineering the state, using technologies of governance and public administration to transform imaginations and subjectivities. For instance, mobilizing the discourse 'to get out of the crisis' to "justify the criminalization, marginalization, and exclusion of various social groups" (Kallinos 2017). Agamben (quoted in Kallianos 2017) maintains that "today crisis has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision."

Syriza's failure of "left governmentality" provoked an urgent *radical* democratic shift epitomised by "mass withdrawals of consent to existing political institutions" (Gourgouris 2015). People demonstrated disavowal of representational democracy with large demonstrations, riots and street occupations, symbolised by a demand for 'direct democracy now!' (Mason 2013). This anti-austerity resistance exposed doubts in the compatibility of capitalist states with democratic processes, despite the long-held claim to the contrary, because governments assented to bank bail outs, against the will or benefit of citizens (Varoufakis, 2015c). During this absence of political legitimacy there is an opportunity to reformulate democratic politics outside of official definitions and practices, and to reclaim decision-making power (Kallianos 2017). How autonomous food initiatives respond to and interact with the politics and institutions of the state in these new economic arrangements is an

underdeveloped area of research. In this chapter, I examine grassroots actors' attitudes to governmental power (Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015), and how this influences strategies for autonomy.

To address this question, I first examine the attitudes and experiences of autonomous food initiatives to laws and law-making. This section analyses the effect of state repression, legal vacuums and frequent law-changes on the distancing of movements and their politics from government institutions. Second, I examine not only the ways that autonomous food initiatives interpreted the laws, but how they adapt to them. I show how reframing the common sense of 'legality' led to 'informality' as an autonomy strategy emerging as a logical justified response to the disabling nature of the state. This contests legitimacy of 'law and order' implemented by the political class (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014; Kallianos 2017). Third, I examine how changing laws, and attitudes and adaptations, influenced the processes of collective organisation in and between food initiatives. I argue that a political disregard for authority can obfuscate forms of power and representation within initiatives and restrict extrovert strategies, including networking. Here, I develop the discussion of *introvert decentralisation* introduced in chapter 5, which refers to the tendency of autonomous initiatives to produce fragmented inward-looking politics, rather than projects looking outwards for wider movement strategizing. The emerging phenomenon, in effect, problematizes the manifestation of anti-authoritarianism as a reaction to state governance ineptitude, and the resultant consequence for transformative politics. In this way, I further the discussion of the tension between the individual and the collective in the project of autonomy, from the viewpoint of political organisation.

6.2   Literature Review

6.2.1   The starting premise: critical view of the Nation State

To begin with I set up a critical stance to the nation state in order to locate state power in relation to capitalism and anti-capitalist organisation. According to the combination of arguments from critics of the nation state, including anarchist or autonomist thinkers (e.g. Bookchin 1991; Holloway 2002), neo-Marxists (Harvey 2010) and political theorists (Hoffman 1995; Gilbert 2014), the ideological basis of the liberal state is bound up with several problematic and contestable notions. Cracks appear in these notions, and in the legitimacy of governance, especially during a neoliberal crisis. The following consolidation of critiques of the state frame participatory and ethnographic inquiries on the disabling nature of the state.

Firstly, the state serves the interests of the capitalist economy before those of its citizens. Neoliberal economics rationalises the free market by delinking the political sphere from the economic sphere, and denies that market forces underpinning capitalist economies are enabled by state regulation (Hoffman 1995). He discusses the idea of "an increasingly public and visible state which is counterparted by an increasingly private and atomized society. As the state 'withdraws' from society, so the notion develops of the market as an autonomous and impersonal mechanism which exists 'on its own'" (Hoffman 1995: 86). However, Harvey (2005: 3) argues that the liberal interests of the State are deeply intertwined with those of capitalism to uphold the 'economic orthodoxy', for example, "to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets." In effect, governments have mobilized, and in doing so have eroded, state sovereignty in order to facilitate individual rights for capital and corporate power (Crouch 2004), using legitimate force to retain hegemony (Weber 1978).

The ongoing neoliberal imperative of economic growth (within the discursive vehicle of the nation state), has brought about financialised capital (including futures speculation) with a lending/borrowing culture which leads to an accumulation of unsustainable debt in the economy – the main cause of economic crisis (Harvey 2007). Badiou describes the economic crisis as "the world served up to the authoritarian anarchy of Capitalism", leading to an *"imperialism of disorganisation"* (Badiou 2018: 15) which creates 'zones of general insecurity' on which the capitalist market can predate. No constituted state authority is able to stop this, since the intervention is being carried out by the international community, in the case of Greece, by the Troika – a marriage between financial and state interests. Reducing the sovereign government deficits in Greece forced "trickle-down austerity measures" (Arampatzi 2013) to pay back lenders, e.g. removal of welfare provisions, pensions, wages and conditions, high taxation and the privatisation of common goods.

Secondly, the liberal state, besides using violence, retains the façade of legitimacy through the representational democratic social contract, which gives elected politicians the mandate to authorize laws that citizens are then obligated to obey (Hoffman 1995: 112). The monopoly of legitimate force is necessitated only because it is contested, and Kallianos (2017) asserts that since the crisis, contestation to the government's legitimacy has increased through subversive political paradigms at the grassroots. Participatory democracy and collective action build forms of governance in spaces which critique through everyday praxis political norms such as hierarchal power maintained by liberal state governance (Gilbert 2014). The assumption that the state is the sole site of governance is according to Miller (2011: 196) false, because "…spaces of governance … are spread out across

multiple dimensions of social life." Anarchists, and other social movement actors, view the state to be illegitimate in its role to exert authority over others to preserve its own domination (Bookchin 1991; Gordon 2008).

Thirdly, the enforcement of universal rules through bureaucracy is a tool of control. The modern nation state characteristically penetrates everyday life with the "deep regulation of social (and personal) life through law" (Gledhill 2000: 15). Bookchin (1991: xxi) views states as "organised systems of command and obedience" whereby legislation is the state's mode to consolidate power and favour interests of those at the top of the (class) hierarchy. Similarly, from Bourdieu's (1977) perspective, the state infrastructure in the form of bureaucracy acts to control, homogenise, and erase marginal forms of knowledge and practice. This problematizes the argument that bureaucracy is an embedded form of authority that is a vehicle for inclusive and universal "mass democracy" (Weber 1978). Castoriadis (in Karalis 2014) claims that institutionalisation – which ultimately leads to bureaucracy - jeopardizes the imaginative creativity of movements to bring about change. The state democratic ideology, of infrequent, but consistent voting practices to uphold representational authority (Gilbert 2014), is distinct to that of social movements, where "hierarchical structures have been dismantled and overturned as a function of both the crisis of representation and a deep aspiration to democracy" (Hardt and Negri 2017: 8).

6.2.2 Autonomy and the state

The project of social movement autonomy from the state, according to Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 21), "involves an escape from state legislation and determination and often rejects the possibility of creating social change through the state. According to this conception, autonomy involves a negative movement whereby all forms of state power are not only subjected to ongoing and rigorous critique but are even simply rejected outright or 'forgotten'".

Similarly, anarchists – albeit with various strategies - advocate for a rejection of the state and a full retraction from it in order to avoid becoming entangled in its 'web of power relations' (Holloway 2002). Holloway refers to 'practical negativity', embedded in the act of 'doing', and framed as a subversive action which instead promotes the forming of decentralised, self-organised groups to create the social relations and realities based on desires and new possibilities. This prefigurative politics occurs 'within the shell of the old' (Graeber 2004), which, much like the *politics of possibility* (Gibson-Graham 2006) embodies radical, post-capitalist agency, with the idea to transform a microcosm of society, albeit while dominant power relations remain.

As the state tries to "'recuperate' autonomy and make it work for their own purposes" (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010), self-organised groups exist in a constant struggle against the agenda of the state, compelling them, willingly or unknowingly, to sacrifice autonomy to market forces favoured by neoliberal legislation. Similarly, projects of autonomy are continuously repressed and marginalised by the state's 'rule of law' (Chatterton 2005). Following Hardt and Negri, Gilbert (2014: 18) talks about how "capitalism and the institutions of government play a frequently decisive strategic role in creating, delimiting and determining the conditions under which creative collective activity of groups, networks, and collectivities takes place." Laforge et al. (2016) describe how food movement strategies vary due to necessary negotiation in relation to governance strategies, including collaboration, cooption, contestation, or containment (not all of which are options at any one time). Extensive research on autonomous collectives such as the Zapatistas (Esteva 1999; Stahler-Stolk 2007) and the Mondragon cooperative in Spain (Gibson-Graham 2006), as two prominent examples, demonstrate the ongoing struggle with the hegemonic state, pitted with tendencies to compromise on autonomy. This echoes Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010) ideas of autonomous utopias, where the threat of becoming co-opted on the one hand or isolated on the other is an everyday challenge. Starn (1992) refers to this political isolation as the tendency to maintain a "purity of uncompromised opposition" in relation to the political other. This feeds into the notion of *introvert decentralisation*, in which initiatives self-isolate, politically, and thus limit transformation strategies to collective autonomy.

Politics of social movements reject centralised forms of organisation which Badiou (2018: 25) asserts creates "a distrust of all authority, the myth of 'the grassroots against the leaders', a disdain for thought, ideas and writings in the name of a cult of 'concrete' action, and the rejection of any long-term discipline." However, the opposition to centralised authority is not equivalent to rejection of all organisational and institutional forms argue Hardt and Negri (2018). Furthermore, Noys (2014), on observing the anti-planning and anti-institutional attitudes of new movements, warns that the strategies of these utopian visions are verging on a dangerous convergence with capitalist utopias since they reject the control mechanisms of the state (institutionalisation and planning) in a similar way within their self-organisation. Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010: 18) point out that in the 'new spirit of capitalism', autonomous forms of economic organisation are captured "into the neoliberal service provisions of the state." As a way forward, Harvey (2014) encourages strategic planning as to how state institutions should be shaped by anti-hegemonic movements. I explore here the question of how movements whose political paradigm opposes the authority of the state are able to harness power for transformative food systems.

Until now, the relationship between political organisation and autonomous initiatives is made usually when the motivations of those involved come from explicitly anti-authoritarian social movements (e.g. Cahill 1989), for example from anti-capitalist movements such as the Zapatistas (Stahler-Sholk 2007), or from street movements such as 'Occupy' (Graeber 2011). I contend that these anti-authoritarian politics are present in other self-organised economic forms that have consolidated from social movements. Some literature has begun to look more in-depth at the concept of anti-authoritarianism in respect to heterodox spaces of 'post-neoliberal' and non-commodifying economic activities (North, 1999; White and Williams, 2012), and other thinkers examine how these politics morph into institutional economic spaces such as cooperatives (Malleson 2014; Wright 2010). More recently, the Backes et al. (2018) report on food sovereignty in Greece during the crisis typifies the distinction between autonomous strategies of movement actors, where there exists no interest in engaging with state or government authorities, compared to transformative or reformist strategies that aim to reclaim state power or collaborate with public policy making, respectively. This chapter specifically traces how anti-authoritarianism exhibits and thus shapes the trajectory of food initiatives in their project of autonomy.

6.2.3   The case of Greece and the government in (a) crisis

Theodossopoulos (2013: 202) describes the offsetting of blame onto powerful players as a discursive tactic of empowerment in the face of apparent political peripheralisation. In order to explain the opaque (and thus inexplicable) relationship of themselves as citizens with the state, people begin "theorizing in search of explanations and meaning against the injustice of bureaucracy, state affairs, and politics". He also associated this culture of attributing blame to external actors as a result of a "profound disbelief of most local Greek actors in the transparency of their political system: their aversion for the formalism and inefficiency of Greek bureaucracy (Herzfeld 1992) or their distaste—complicit as this may be—for clientelist structures that have not radically changed in past decades (cf. Mouzelis 1978)" (Theodossopoulos 2013: 208).

As a reaction to austerity and anti-democratic structures of the state, various anti-authoritarian movements have resisted state tactics of repression and capital intensification (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011), becoming visible with riots and street assemblies in 2008 (Karamichas 2009; Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011). The Greek *indignado* movement was hostile to all political parties (especially those on the Left with whom mobilisations were more usually associated) and trade unions politically tied to the

old social democrat party, PASOK (Ovenden 2015). Scholars have observed a further distancing from institutional politics taking place in Greek civil society since the beginning of the crisis, including in Thessaloniki's food movements (Rakopoulos 2016) Studies on new food economies, produced as a reaction to and defense against austerity politics during the economic crisis in Greece, are presented as self-instituted forms of solidarity (not necessarily legal forms) that are produced as a reaction to and defense against austerity politics (Arampatzi 2016); or as the consolidation of movement politics in legal forms due to the pressure of economic and organisational sustainability (Rakopoulos 2014a). Informal and formal institutions make up the new food economies, and will be distinguished to some extent in this chapter. The former encompasses collectives without legal forms, or with shaky or no legal grounding occupying the solidarity economy. The latter includes legal forms such as urban cooperatives, associations and KOINSEPs, which may have formalised from informal groups, and some partake in 'informal' (at least partially illegal) activity.

In Greece, non-compliance with law pre-dates the recent economic crisis (Kapalanoglou and Rapanos 2013). The importance of the informal economy increased in Greece, especially tax evasion, during the years of austerity (Pappada and Zylberberg 2015) , partly due to the entrenchment of a distrust for official political authority (Kaplanoglou and Rapanos 2015). Importantly, this was coupled with tax payment becoming an impossibility for many, especially in light of the removal of the 100-installment law which allowed tax payments to be paid incrementally, and introduction of tax pre-payment a year in advance (Varoufakis 2015a). Gershuny (1979) talks about the informal economy as a non-market economy or economy on a "self-serving basis" – including tax evasion. Another definition is undeclared economic activity that is not recorded in the formal national economic records (Danopoulos and Znidaric 2007). Gurshuny (1979) argues that out of three options available to governments to 'deal' with this hidden economy, namely ignoring it, exploiting it or suppressing it, that the latter is the most preferable to the state. In reality, the Greek government have employed all three, which this chapter details.

As of 2010, there was a 'can't pay, won't pay' movement which was short lived as a 'boycott' movement because it didn't attract wide support (Sotiropoulos 2013). However, refusing to pay fares, or insisting on half fares for unemployed people, continued to be a personal survival strategy (Sotiropoulos, 2013). It echoed the sentiment, that everyday people were not responsible for paying the public debt ('we don't owe, we won't pay'), and that forcing austerity to do so was perceived as an injustice (Theodossopoulos 2013). Later, the 'can't pay won't pay' movement was even endorsed by the then-opposition party Syriza, who, now in power, have (re-)launched a programme to crack down

on tax evasion especially of the wealthy "in order to win an extension on its debt repayment programme" (Kakissis 2015). This tension between disobeying the law to deny the authority of government, on the one hand, and engaging with or succumbing to inflictions of government power on the other, will be used to show the effect of governance and political strategy on the ambiguous project of autonomy for Thessaloniki's food initiatives.

6.3 Findings and Discussion

6.3.1 State repression and law-making marginalises autonomous food initiatives

Negative attitudes of the state were exacerbated by experiences of movements early on. The popular 'no middlemen' movements began as a result of the crisis, spreading throughout Greece from 2011. In 2014, they were heavily repressed by police, due to complaints by traders at the conventional open-air market that 'no middlemen' markets undermined fair competition. Having until this point been supported by various municipalities, the markets were subjected to violent evictions and multiple producers were arrested following the introduction and enforcement of a new law (4264/2014) by the central government. This symbolised the end of the movement – although some individual markets continue. Babis from the still functioning Agrotiko Pantopoleio describes the repression and how it was related to their legal status:

"Because at the beginning we belonged to the movements with no legal form. But then we experienced violence from the police many times and … we stopped functioning. The riot cops came, fully armed like we were criminals. And we told them why we did what we did, they told us that the open markets had filed a complaint against us, … from different traders' unions and we were ordered by the district attorney to stop. In any case, they told us that we were operating without permission, that we are illegal, whilst the others have their shops and they have their legal status".

The repression these markets faced was seen by some farmers and activists as an offensive from both the central government and the capitalist market, with whom the traders held favour. This corresponds to the observations of Skordili (2013) and Backes et al. (2018) whose report showed that the Troika pushed through neoliberal policies in correspondence with the OECD toolkit. Calvario and Kallis (2016) demonstrate the increased difficulty in accessing legal markets after the crisis, which was compounded by the criminalisation through law 4264/2014. The new law prohibited these 'no middlemen' markets from operating near other grocery stores or markets, excluding them from the

majority of the city. It demonstrated to them the tendency of the government to disable and sideline self-organised peoples' initiatives for food autonomy through repression as well as legislation.

The effect of criminalisation by the state in favour of dominant economic actors was to geographically (and with it, economically) marginalise, or destroy, autonomous initiatives. The statement from Babis demonstrates the tension between formalised economic activities and informal, self-organised ones, as well as the pressure to conform to rules made by the new law, especially since this market has since formalised into a cooperative. The relationship with the municipality in this case of Agrotiko Pantopoleio, and in the case of Per.ka has been favourable in retaining some degree of autonomy, with the latter symbolising a strategic takeover by the municipality to protect the initiative from Defence Ministry takeover. The trend of formalisation commonly shows the role of law in creating unfavourable legal conditions - and thus suffocating economic opportunities - for people involved in informal (and politically radical) food alternatives.

The perceptions, dynamics and responses of Thessaloniki's autonomous food initiatives, when unpacked and developed in the general context, demonstrate a complex but generally disabling dynamic of state governance on the shaping of a politics 'from below', and a negative impact on their attitudes in relation to the governmental power. This complements Gilbert's (2014) argument that the capitalist state plays a significantly determinate role in autonomous food initiatives' futures, and Kallianos' (2017) claim that the state's 'reengineering' during the crisis is to the detriment of the movements. It also echoes the assertion that employing uncertainty is a political tool of governance, which renders the subject 'resilient', rather than secure.

Opinions of laws held by small-scale producers were that they were either contrary to their activities, inappropriate for supporting their endeavours, ineffectively enforced, or non-inclusive. Governance changes introduced during the crisis which affected unprofessionalised food producers meant that it was difficult to start or expand an agricultural business, impossible to get a loan (due to the absorption of the Agricultural Bank of Greece into the private Pireaus bank), and difficult to make a living because of the tax regime resulting from the memoranda. The feeling that state governance has for a long time been to the detriment of the small farmers' livelihood was discussed by family farmers, which Vassilios reflects on:

"My view of the government is very, very bad. It's always been this way because no government has ever helped. My father was a livestock farmer and … I remember the man was tyrannized

and he was fighting it completely alone. And we are talking about products that are essential, it is a primary material to establish a country… We are not a self-sufficient country… No government ever since I can remember has ever helped the farmer … Never".

The penetrative effect of the state on the lives of food producers can be seen here as a historical phenomenon which has led to an entrenched distrust of government, alongside the inefficacy of policies for delivering food autonomy on a national and local scale. Specifically, the recent rise to power of Syriza represents to many a continuation of the inadequacy of past governance on agricultural issues, despite promises of more comfortable conditions for those involved in 'movement' initiatives. Moreover, an articulation from new farmer Christos in relation to recent political events demonstrates the cumulative intensification of distrust of political parties, and the need for a new kind of politics.

> "Syriza I think is an inappropriate party, a totally inappropriate party, and New Democracy is an inappropriate party and all the parties since '74 I find unsuitable to govern this place. We need new people, … we have no political consciousness … the governments change and we never change ourselves. We must first change our rationale, our ideas, our perceptions of politics, and then take on people who will be able to govern us".

Other small or organic producers reported in closed questions at the end of interviews or chats (to retain anonymity) an explicitly anti-governmental stance. Namely they declared they were not members or supporters of a political party because they felt that no party represented them as small farmers, that the government couldn't be trusted to deliver on promises and they didn't have the power to change their (economic) situation anyway. Autonomous Food Initiatives are therefore also grassroots reactions to the inaction of government; they take control of food provisioning which is being further eroded by neoliberal political agendas, justified by the crisis. An organic fruit farmer, Kyriakos, describes his motivations for participating in autonomous initiatives including the eco-festivals, in this respect:

> "I do not feel that there is any public or state body to deal with these things, everything has been abandoned, supposedly due to the economic crisis, but I think that it is done for political purposes, we are trying to substitute what the state was really supposed to do. We cannot of course do that, but we can do it in a small-scale".

Although there was a palpable sentiment of distrust of the EU amongst food producers, there are occasions where people believed that it was positive, for example because they see their subsidies as beneficial to them. This demonstrates the clash of economic dependencies with political autonomy in relation to the EU. A conflicting argument though was that Greece needed to regain its national sovereignty by leaving the EU; the feeling amongst farmers was that they carried the burden caused by the undercutting of quality and price by outside markets and exacerbated by the high cost of production due to austerity measures. For example, a food producer lambasted the pressure on all Greek farmers, with friends of his having already gone out of business, because of the "colonisation of Greece" (his words) by foreign markets; he saw this period of struggle as preceding a catastrophe unless the country left the EU.

Commonly heard amongst producers was that Greece's membership of the EU had changed the economic relations involving food (mostly for the worse). Multiple powerful subjects of blame were however entangled and overlapping in the narratives of economically marginalized actors, including the EU, Troika, IMF, and specific member states of the EU – predominantly Germany. What the subjects of blame had in common was their involvement in the imperialistic agenda, which implicated also the national government. The view that the government is under a pseudo-occupation of larger powers, also indicated that the state does not hold legitimacy over governance (Kallianos 2017), or the laws that are being made during the period of austerity. This is indeed correct, as the Troika have veto powers over legislation (Kallianos 2017). Although the Syriza government attempted to draw attention to this diminished responsibility (Kallianos 2017; Varoufakis 2015b), the blame has not been diverted from the state and in fact public perceptions of their negligence became more evident. The national government was seen by food producers we spoke to as primarily responsible for their economic difficulties. A further move away from belief in the government's authority did not necessarily equate with anti-statism though. Within this narrative were subtle nationalist ideas which instead blamed the government in its weakness vis-à-vis geopolitical powers.

"Autonomy. Autonomy cannot exist in Greece in 2017 as well as in any country, let alone in Greece in 2017. We must regain our lost national independence again and then acquire the autonomy" (Marios, small fruit farmer).

Law changes are also felt to be out of reach of movement actors. Even in the case of law that could potentially be enabling, policy change has shifted the political landscape during the years of austerity due to the structural adjustment programme enforced through external (Troika) conditionality

(Salomon and De Schutter 2015). This law-change has caused confusion, including through an accumulation of austerity-related policies, such as tax increases, as well as government regulation affecting the 'control' of legal forms of social and solidarity economy. Over recent years, people frequently conceive that policy is in constant flux so much so that "it's difficult to know whether a law still stands or if it has changed again" (Ilyas, Perisyllogi) and this is especially true of participants who are new to 'formal' organisation. Because the tax regime and signing of memoranda tie national legislation to audit by the EU, the process of law-making has accelerated (Varoufakis 2015a). Employment of the rule of law in Greece had the consequence of heavy bureaucratisation, and chasing tax evaders (or those accused of it) (Kakissis 2015, which necessitates participants within legal forms to be mindful of law adaptations. Kallianos (2017) describes how the attempts to re-legitimate governance was to employ narratives which justified the hastening of the neoliberal project, alongside the employment of uncertainty as an apparatus of control.

Paradoxically, at the same time government wants to demonstrate the successes of new legal forms, such as KOINSEPs, in the social economy (SSE Secretariat 2018). From the side of social movements, the formalisation into legally recognisable entities from movement initiatives has tended to give longer term economic stability and resilience to the enduring conditions of economic crisis, albeit with challenges to retaining radical movement politics (Rakopoulos 2014a). KOINSEP Perisyllogi formalised into a small organisation to be able to do business, with opportunities for secure work. Although gaining formal status has allowed the cooperative to trade anywhere in Greece, they have struggle to become sustainable due to government fees. An ex-member, Joachim, resents that this money is going to the government:

> "I'm not even sure, but I believe that they raised [tax] to 29%, or they will raise it. Anyway, if we have income, we will share it with the government, the thing is, what happens when you don't have income, and that's what people, if you wanna keep jobs, if you wanna give people work you need to er...kind of have...let's say the foresight to create better conditions, or favourable conditions, or at least for the first few years of business".

In reality, for those formalised initiatives such as KOINEPs, what started out as an enabling legal framework in 2011, tightened surveillance and regulatory parameters, so that participants took a more cautionary stance towards its benefits. The ex-member of KOINSEP Perisyllogi presumed the worse in the evolution of the prescriptions of the law on expenditure: "it used to cost nothing to start, now with the law changing I think it will be more, I am not sure, but I think". Participants spoke about this

as a tool for control for the government to consolidate grassroots activities under their remit, and watch. Also, tougher regulation of volunteer working hours was introduced - limited to 16 hours (Sotiropoulos 2013). Whilst supporting worker rights, this forced KOINSEP participants into a corner of choosing between reducing production or paying to formalise volunteers into workers, in order to remain 'viable'. In light of this cost, there were cases in Thessaloniki where participants in this study evaded the regulation at the risk of being fined if caught.

Members of other KOINSEPs or other organisations considered to belong to the SSE discussed their scepticism of being listed by the national register, since they felt it would lead to more monitoring and general visibility to the government which they intended to avoid. Frequent changes in regulation, like the new register to support the SSE, was viewed as a tool of state co-optation by participants, or as bringing unwanted regulation and costs. Yet, the government strategy to harmonise and develop SSE in Greece has been hindered by entrenched bureaucratic structures of the ministries, such as creating cross-ministerial working groups (based on informal conversation with ex-ministry-employee). They have also been inadequately prepared to accommodate emerging economies and to deal with official documentation and application procedures, as detailed by Joachim:

"One as every other business in Greece, you have a lot of bureaucracy, still. … For the social cooperatives, we belong directly to the ministry of labour, which is down in Athens, a special department. and when we submitted our file, there were only three people working for the entire country, three employees, so you can imagine it took months to give us our paperwork back".

Despite the KOINSEP model being pioneered as a social structure of a new economy, people involved in them still find there are financial barriers to surviving as a collective, as well as paying wages and, on top of that, the fee to register members as workers (which is the legal requirement if they are to be paid). Formalization can bring extra costs, the burdens of which pit collective aims against ensuring that individual members can make a living. This outcome of austerity politics gives rise to the view that the KOINSEP model and its formulation into an inclusive SSE law are emblematic of the government's mission to regain their reputation as a government who can deliver on economic recovery, at the same time as them perpetuating a neoliberal logic of entrepreneurial insecurity. Whilst there is also a certain strength in belonging to a network of social cooperative enterprises (KOINSEPs), one of the few established networks in Greece, there is also an anxiety that the legal structure's attractiveness to normal business, given its low fee rate, could lead to a co-option of its reputation by commercial interests. Those groups who are interested in pursuing solidarity aims

and creating an economy that avoids conventional markets, felt that this also resulted in people identifying them with capitalist players and that solidarity-based initiatives become marginal in their network. This example points towards the benefit of maintaining an explicitly radical – or "pure" (Starn 1992) political standpoint to remain distinct in a homogenising process.

6.3.2 'Legal creativity' as a necessary and just solution

Adapting to the 'illegitimate' government's tactics is an autonomy strategy undertaken in various ways by food initiatives. Generally speaking, the state is left out of some endeavours, because there is a belief in self-management as a positive, inevitable solution to failed economics and because the state is not seen as accountable, or effective, in its governance. Putting efforts into creating new economies with an alternative political paradigm symbolizes a retraction of citizens from the state's failed social contract (Kallianos 2017). In other narratives, the self-sufficiency of the recent past reminds them that people have the power to protect themselves from state aggression:

"We in Greece, for example, were taught by our grandparents that this was the reason why ..., when it was the raid of Germans and Italians, they did not surrender and they had the power to say no because they had food autonomy. Everyone produced what he ate. They did not care if the supermarkets were shut for example and the food was controlled, they would still have food to eat. They'd buried beans, they'd buried lentils, they had a goat that would slaughter, a pig for Christmas, there was autonomy. In Greece, we have lived it and has given us courage" (Leonidas, Bio.Me occupied factory).

Another effect of shifting legislation therefore is a refinement of strategies of resilience against the reality or possibility of state intervention. Participants in these initiatives attempt to continue to find a way to operate independently of laws and despite the pervasive nature of governance attempting to 'control' the SSE (SSE Secretariat 2018). This is facilitated by solidarity intermediaries which allow or promote informal economies (as discussed in chapter 5). Telis discuss here the illegality of food produce which alternative outlets accept in Thessaloniki:

"Well we have started with the cooperative markets that started in Greece, in Thessaloniki. So, there are 2 or 3 let's say centers where illegal food for the system is being distributed into the cities because we are illegal in most of these things that we are doing. Traditional varieties are not recognized even by certifying organizations. We that cultivate local varieties we do not have the

right to tell to our consumers which variety we are consuming because our certificate cannot say the variety".

Participants have tended to break rules or ignore directives if they see them as a result of unjust politics, if they can't afford them or if they see the laws as inappropriate. There is also an avoidance of law because it is not seen as properly enforced anyway. In many cases, the notion of legality is reframed in accordance with a diverging standard of justice, pitting their view against what they perceive as unfair, and at times illegitimate, government orders. This matches with Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010) definition of autonomy being governed by (collective) self-established rules. Artemis, a small producer from an informal market, explains the link between shifting and inappropriate laws and the inverted effect of justice from his perspective:

> "There are no laws to cover small farmers in Greece and there is no access to the consumer. It's still changing so much, every other month, with new legislation, new corrections. [The autonomous farmers' market], I like to say it is more legal than the rest, because, think about that, it has been working, in Greece, for at least 25 centuries and that way is illegal and the way [the licensed street market] that has been working for the last 20 years in legal. No, I don't think so!"

Apart from conventional markets in the region of Thessaloniki, in which only a limited number of licensed retailers can participate (and no new licenses have been issued since Syriza came to power), all open street markets are conducted without permission, including the organic market which existed before the crisis. Ecofestivals, made up of small food and craft producers, set a precedent as they have been operating mostly without permissions all over Greece for the past 25 years. Even so, the 'occupation of space' is an issue for some while others see it as a non-issue because it ultimately did not prevent their functioning. 'Occupation' is certainly not a unifying political statement of the group. When discussed between members, some members argued with their farming peers that the markets were nevertheless legal:

> Harry: First of all, the priority for me is to make the markets we are organising stronger by making them legal, …".

> Kostas: "Sorry, sorry, but our farmers are legal, talking of the markets, we also want to get permission from the municipality, in order to do more markets. We are legal in everything, in our certification, …, in terms of our invoicing which all of us issue, and our receipts, our tax returns

in order to pay our VAT…the only thing we don't have is the permission from the municipality"
(Harry and Kostas, Organic Market).

Producers at this market see the lack of permissions from the municipality to be both significantly restrictive on expanding their economic opportunities, as well as lacking detail in their mission to be entirely above board since they have all of the other paperwork. They want to be legal, but the system is against their self-organised endeavour which otherwise functions effectively. Other radical and legally subversive initiatives see their work as having a more 'just' basis than the 'anti-social' reasoning of government. Continuing activities despite their infraction of laws demonstrates a reflexive struggle for justice, and survival, which becomes common sense, as iterated by Geertz (1983), amongst actors who are economically and legally marginalised. Said with a sense of irony, and then defiance, Nikos a beekeeper, expresses it this way:

"So, I go to the people so as to be able to sell my produce. … when you don't give permission to producers to sell, you end up where you find a way to give it anyway, you sell food and it's treated as if it's the biggest crime in the world……. Of course, we know that laws are being abolished by people. That is, the laws that are absurd and anti-social, their own community abolishes them, by not adhering to them. I believe that *we* must do something and not ask a government to change the law. But to abolish these laws which are an obstacle to our lives, by ourselves".

His idea of solidarity action demonstrates an anti-authoritarian viewpoint that shows dismissal of state power. Actors consider it their justifiable social and economic imperative to commit illegal acts against the anti-social legal framework. Thus, to take back control, and continue to sell produce, Nikos encourages evading fees and fines, which echoes in the spirit of 'can't pay, won't pay' action. This kind of action, though, is not coordinated through a public boycott and so does not manifest as collective action, making individual producers vulnerable. The restrictive and disabling effect of the legal framework necessitates being 'legally creative' in order to be economically self-sufficient. 'Illegal' acts are prevalent in the form of land occupation, selling in illegal markets, non-issuing of receipts or invoices, and refusal to submit tax reports, as well as working without registering as a worker. Other studies show that many tax reports stated lower than real income after the crisis (Kapalanoglou and Rapanos 2013).

Interestingly, in 2015 – during the crisis years - a new 'enabling' law was introduced which allowed the household processing (as opposed to a designated, licensed workshop or factory), making it more

affordable to process fresh produce or make products like honey. Paradoxically, this has facilitated the widespread selling of processed products in informal spaces, and illegal behaviour in selling (even if it is above board during the making of the product). It is common that some parts of a producer's or collective's activities are legal, while others are not, or that law is adhered to (or not) depending on the situation, as voiced here by Joachim, member of a KOINSEP:

> "…we sold it to our friends, I mean we raised a little but by selling, of course, not legally in the beginning, because you can't sell to your friends you know in the beginning when you don't have you're not a legal entity, you can't do anything legally, but that's how you start that's how everybody starts".

Additionally, I observed during attendance at a 'no middlemen' market in Kalamaria that despite the official rules obliging that receipts were given, there were producers who did not issue them. This points towards a flexible and subjective interpretation of law in some legal forms, depending on the situation of the membership. The reconceptualization of 'legality' in this sense may create a culture of economic resilience amongst people involved in economic alternatives, who want to make something of their produce, but must do it informally, especially when starting small. In these cases, the strategies remain mostly individualised to remain hidden from the gaze of authorities. Individuals employ methods to survive their unique paradoxical position between the assault of legislation *and* at the same time, within a legal vacuum (the state legislator doesn't cover their activities) for their economic activities, although there is potential to collectivise this resilience.

Notably, informality was a strategy for three reasons. Firstly, the economic decision to continue to sell informally is ideological, tied to a belief in doing it the right way, despite it being illegal or outside of legal provisions. There is frustration over the lack of legal frameworks which support such initiatives, specifically in Greece. Many producers mentioned how much easier it is in other European countries, explaining that the legal vacuum in Greece forces them to function illegally or not at all (as with farmers' markets and Per.ka).

In Per.ka, the legality was confusing for years, so that they were forced to squat in ex-army barracks and defend the land from offensives by the ministry of defence, who claimed it was still their land, and the finance ministry. In the end, a campaign and court case saw it moved into the remit of the municipality. Stavros from the 'no middlemen' market in the centre spoke about trying to find the laws that applied to the 'no middlemen' markets, and could find applicable ones abroad, but when the

Greek law was finally introduced it discriminated against them, rather than being supportive. The modification of the 4264/2014 law in 2017 instituted 'consumer markets' which could only operate once a month through consumer-led organisations, and with agreement from the municipality (Backes et al. 2018). Thirdly, defying laws can be based on the fact that small farmers 'can't pay' and therefore should refuse to accept the costs associated with becoming legally visible.

Whilst autonomous food initiatives and their membership, negotiate self-organised terms and conditions not influenced by government, legislation can be a dislocating and divisive force for them. For example, the decision to become a cooperative necessitates that each food product sold in the store has the relevant papers. Those producers therefore who refuse to pay for certification, or are unable to gain it because they use unregistered seed, for example, have a narrower choice over which outlet to sell their products to than certified producers. This is especially the case as there is pressure from within the economic and political environment to conform to institutional standards. Legalisation prioritises above-board practices (although not absolutely), and solidarity intermediaries struggle with cases of movement fatigue (see chapter 5) and organisational differences (see chapter 7). Because criminalisation or economic instability of autonomous food initiatives pushed them to operate within a form recognised by government or to disappear (or become marginalised also from the customer such as with Scholeio and Sintrofia), the consequences specifically for smaller food producers' livelihoods can be significant.

6.3.3 Seeing state political power as inconsequential

Marginalisation does not mean that initiatives are powerless. Admittedly, the reason that initiatives can continue with only a partial adherence to law is that the state's surveillance is not omnipresent and consistent, but also because there exists a strong defiance of state authority. In one explicitly anti-authoritarian initiative, which operates entirely without official records of economic exchanges, the authorities have tried to inspect the building on several occasions and been refused entry. This detail demonstrates the benefits of maintaining a directly confrontational attitude to the state, since participants refuse to give over to the authorities.

One of the political strategies in food movements is to disassociate from, or directly oppose, institutional politics which are viewed as meaningless to everyday livelihoods as they do not represent their concerns. This framing of the government as creating law which doesn't affect those who self-organise is an anti-authoritarian stance which in practice can reject the legitimacy of rule by the state but in practice also leads to a 'forgetting' of the existent of power of the state structures and

mechanisms, as mentioned by Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010). The general view is voiced by a farmer, Christos, from the organic market as a politics that doesn't implicate them:

> "I deal with everyday politics. Because politics for me are the everyday life of the citizen's, you see? It has ended up being a political profession, where the members of the parliament do not deal with politics, neither actively nor passively. I don't care anymore. I'm so disgusted with these representatives that I do not care what they do. Even if this is wrong".

More specifically, many farmers who participate in autonomous markets in the city view the introduction of a new law on farmer's markets in 2017 as unfavourable. The law placed obligations on them through their consumer-led associations or cooperatives. This has led some to decide to ignore the law in the form in which it was introduced, in the same thread of anti-governmental politics.

Viewing of laws as inconsequential is criticised as being an oversight of the structural power of government (including Harvey 2017). In the case of producer markets, the legal vacuum or lack of permissions from municipalities have not halted trade, but this perhaps is also because the markets remain on the margins. Viewing governance as ineffective may not necessarily be entirely mistaken, since, as an acquaintance who studies the development of the field of the SSE in Greece predicted, "the overproduction of the SSE law makes it unclear how to inspect and monitor it, it turns it into arbitrary public administration, and the government proved incapable of processing data in time. In effect, it is unenforceable".

This belief in the ineffectiveness of government is limited by Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer's (2010) position on autonomous movements, namely that it is impossible to completely evade the state's universalising power, in the form of intervention, or cooptation. The state's goal is fundamentally to undermine autonomous efforts by taking back the autonomy (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010). As Laforge et al. (2017) establish, the extent to which the dominant regime of the state (at various levels of governance) is enabling or disabling for initiatives' autonomy influences the strategy of the actors. At the same time, the processes of being marginalized is one end of the spectrum of how self-organised initiatives retain their radical political principles, due to the pressures of the structural re-embedding of neoliberalism in crisis. In this respect, when actors choose to reject authority to avoid, dismiss or ignore processes of law-making and take governance into their own hands, there is an element of self-marginalisation.

This echoes the economic insularism talked about in the previous chapter with regard to dismissing marketing tactics and refusing to work with any kind of 'middleman' – seeing it as too capitalist. When absolutist anti-capitalism plays out, Noys (2014) argues, there is a risk that in dismissing bureaucracy and planning, the disorganization will facilitate power in its statist and capitalist forms, rather than challenging it (which requires an understanding of its workings, location and manifestations of power).

Generally, laws are not welcomed in the form or with the framework of inclusion that the government has proposed by participants in autonomous food initiatives. People who were part of 'illegal' markets were suspicious of the government's intention and as such saw the law as a way to force alternative initiatives to mainstream.

> "First of all, we had problems with the state because they want to integrate us together with the conventional farmers with the market traders, who produce conventionally…They want to destroy what we have here and put us with the others. And we disagree, we want to retain … to be on our own, to be autonomous" (Katerina, Organic Market board member).

In this case, the unionised organic farmers wished to remain operating as self-organised producers and not be forced to sell to merchant traders or middlemen. In essence, their engagement with policy was because they wanted the new law to fulfil their wish to be entirely legal, and wanted it to identify with their needs, but felt that in its first versions (without their input) it was not representative of them. Ultimately, some producers did successfully engage in a consultation in Athens to change the Farmers' market law to include cooperative groups with producer members. This case demonstrates that distancing from political processes, due a belief that politics is entirely ineffective and unaccountable, takes away opportunities to lobby for law change because significant numbers do not see government as able to effect change on their behalf and instead see the best way to deal with laws is to navigate them strategically. Those who do believe in the value of lobbying politicians are generally larger and more organized economic players who are politically, and/or economically, mainstream and thus more systemically enfranchised.

6.3.4   Trickle-down disdain for power

Aversion to hierarchy and authority in politics was one reason why people joined self-organised collectives attempting to make decisions through direct democratic methods, yet it has also caused people to be distrustful of their peers or of people who have (or wish to have) a public profile. For example, several participants claimed off the record, that a particular individual wanted to be an

ambassador or leader of the cooperative of SSE movement. While distrust of authority is a major factor for avoiding working with politicians there coexists an aversion to leaders based on the view that if someone has power within an initiative, then it must be out of self-interest, to become a political figurehead or to gain personal recognition. As I noted in my diary after an interview with an activist organiser on 17th March 2018, another member of the research group mentioned to a comrade that we had conducted an interview, from which the friend had solicited a warning, that we should be wary of the interviewee because "he wants to be a leader". Interestingly, this was a euphemism for either 'representative' of a movement, or a candidate for a role in institutional politics. Aversion to, and suspicion, of authority is pervasive but not dominant. Leaderlessness is not a reality, and there are indeed informal hierarchies as well as aspirations of individuals to take on leadership roles (Hardt and Negri 2018). In fact, as Bourdieu (1977) claims, having time to invest in a project is one form of power, which then accumulates once you are recognised as being a significant contributor or spokesperson, and thus the others in the collective feel beholden. This is particularly true in initiatives based predominantly on voluntarism, which is an integral part of the solidarity economy. Graeber (2004) claims that consensus decision-making spaces including 'gigantic spokescouncils' oppose the divisiveness and sectarianism of centralised radical groups.

Of course, informal hierarchies do exist. In the vein of Badiou (2018) and Hardt and Negri (2017), the distrust of anyone *seen* to be in a position of power elicits a backlash to undermine and humiliate those individuals. When organisations attempt horizontalism the resultant undermining of leaders, or assumed leaders, causes movements to become directionless or dispersed. This has implications for initiatives: How can hierarchies be acknowledged and regulated in self-organised food economies?; and in this respect what are the limits of hierarchy that can be traversed without backlash? Is it the case that those who attain informal positions of hierarchy have to reflexively self-regulate to avoid backlash?

In a similar view of informal hierarchies resulting in unfruitful dynamics in collectives, Haiven and Khasnabish (2014: 95) see that "the crisis of activist reproduction is characterised by endemic egoism and loneliness." A producer, Nikos, echoes this by referring to the attitude of 'everyone to their own'.

> "That is the basic difficulty, … with what has happened in recent years in the country, the sense of trust is lost. We have gone back to everyone on his own and doing whatever he can on his own and how ever he can live. This is the main issue that needs to be overcome".

This chimes with Kallianos' (2017) argument that legal uncertainty orchestrated by the state is a tool of control to turn subjects into "entrepreneurs of oneself in an environment that is highly uncertain", individualizing the struggle so that competition and fragmentation are pervasive. There is distrust of activists towards producers, and producer towards producers because the initiatives are perceived (and in reality are) open to abuse. For instance, false claims made for organic food production are validated by activists and other producers at informal markets, such as at Scholeio, Sinelevsi market and the organic market, by checking farms or thorough testing. Equally, when people are seen to have let down initiatives due to being individualistic, the reaction is to check people are the right people better the next time, for example, as voiced by Pantelis from Bioscoop:

> "the [previous] procedure and the criteria was not bad. But we had to be more suspicious and to try to understand exactly who is this man or this woman".

This pervasive culture of distrust manifests as suspicion of political power and allegiances - there are frequent references to not working with those with the 'wrong' politics, e.g. ex-members of Syriza (let alone current members), but also on a personal level, with those who are 'unknown'. There is a cultural anxiety, based on historical practices, that those who purport to be working in tandem, are in reality working for their own interests. Political organising in the style of institutional working is also shunned, and direct democracy favoured. Yet, alongside this aversion to representation by any figure of authority is the narrative found in these new pluralist movements that party politics influences the way that people organise, or their learned way of 'doing' politics and strategizing for the collective. For example, one reported reason for the breakdown of good relationships in Bioscoop consumer cooperative was due to the conflictual dynamics between how anti-authoritarian activists perform politics (individualistically) and the methods of rallying support associated with the old social democrats (PASOK). A member, Orfeas, explained:

> "4 out of the 9 members of the governing board that used to be on Bios last year were friends 30 year friends, or 30 years in the same political party. So, me, I just met them 4 years ago, I don't know them, and so I think that they already had a big advantage in the beginning of the conversation, so we started as individual people who have their own minds, while they start as 3 or 4 people who are never going to disagree all the years that I have known them since we started Bioscoop".

This account shows that the effect of representational governance and partisan politics is still felt today in the praxis of new initiatives, which are trying to recreate political organisation so that it is transparent and horizontal (but which in reality ignores informal hierarchies). This observation is mirrored in movements in Athens, as Morales Bernados (2017) observes "the political construction of spaces and the movements, keeping the "habitus" of hierarchical and delegative forms of organization and relationship while maintaining informal hierarchies (leadership, vanguard group…) lead[s] to persistent competition and divisiveness in the movements. The political socialization of many of the activists within traditional political parties such as the Greek Communist Party (KKE), or Syriza and the traditional trade unions, seems to have been a major cause of the persistence of these unproductive hierarchies".

Despite hoping to have overcome sectarian differences in politics, the history of political formation and culture on individual's consciousness still affects the ability of people from different strategic and political cultural backgrounds to cooperate. Whilst the self-organisation of people into collectives (whether formal or not) indicates the gathering of collective energy and potential for change, the aversion to authority which is justified in respect of governance structures, also pervades and damages interpersonal relationships through suspicion and incompatible political organising, which, as Badiou (2018) also pointed out works against the collective organisational potential.

Additonally, the size of the initiative has an impact on the internal democratic procedures. So, whilst a KOINSEP is required by law to have five members, urban cooperatives must recruit at least 200 to begin. This, as we show in the next chapter feeds into this bi-partisan nature of 'rallying' support. It also makes active participation less probable, but the members still valuable, when members become just numbers to make up the legal requirements for an initiative to exist.

6.3.5   Networking limitations due to anti-institutionalism

Representation is also a sticking point in self-organisation through direct democracy. When we presented relevant participants with the idea of setting up a network of food initiatives, they were all interested and could list benefits to their respective initiatives for creating a network - including solutions for logistics and storage, for effective information sharing on how new EU and national laws affect producers and consumers, for campaigning and to share information about people who "cause trouble" for initiatives. However, there was also hesitation from some people partly because there had been a networking attempt in the year 2014, the Open Network of Food Initiatives in Thessaloniki, and the network collapsed. The failure of this attempt deterred those who invested energy from

participating in another attempt. It also revealed differences in ideas of representation; some reported that relationships during the network attempt turned sour because the way of organising did not suit all of the initiatives. Specifically, one major obstacle was the preference of several instigators of the network to meet as whole collectives rather than using representation through delegates. Whilst assemblies can function without a designated leader, reluctance to adopt a representation for a collective has been identified as a hurdle for networking (Badiou 2018; Hardt and Negri 2017).

On the one hand, there is a disdain for hierarchies amongst some participants in the recent attempt at networking where representational politics is distrusted. An unwillingness to accept delegated organisational structures to allow for workability and efficiency, and instead to champion direct democracy and non-hierarchical ethics is a noble attempt at inclusivity, and to resist individuals being the sole 'known' representatives of initiatives. On the other hand, it is a hindrance to insist on direct democracy organising as efforts are scaled up and out. Given that urban cooperatives are legally obliged to have over 100 members, this is clearly an inefficient and ineffective way of working, as expressed by Pantelis:

"There were some people who said that the network must be an assembly of assemblies. You understand? Assembly of assemblies means that we from Bioscoop call 400 people to come to the meeting of the network. And you call another 10, and another and so on. Sorry but with that network, with all of the members, we would have to go to the sports stadium. Are they kidding? Are we supposed to do the assembly in the football pitch?"

Furthermore, the expectation of all-member participation in networks is not pragmatic, especially in the current context of volunteer fatigue, even within single initiatives. Finding individuals who could imagine committing time to networking was a challenge. All in all, the lack of a formalised food network further encourages *introvert decentralisation*, whereby initiatives concentrate on their internal politics above the politics of food autonomy in the region more generally. Expectations of benefit coming out of collaboration are lowered because of the emotional and labour toll required to participate meaningfully in the solidarity economy. The anticipated failure of collaborative relationships is symptomatic of the general feeling among actors in the solidarity economy; the prevalence of exhaustion and disappointment operates in a vicious circle of negativity. It exhibits itself in isolationism, rather than social solidarity and emancipation and is exaggerated by the continuing, and deepening, effects of austerity.

Alongside aversion to leaders and representation, a component of anti-institutionalisation is the breaking from norms associated with professional institutions. Workers, producers or volunteers who are either not used to working in a 'professional' manner or hold an aversion to professionalise, refuse to engage in practices such as paperwork, certification and finance records. In the consumer cooperative, Koukouli, the neglect of bureaucratic or business obligations caused a rift within the organisation. Members shoddily and infrequently collected receipts, did not acknowledge or properly use a transparent system for recording transactions (even internally when 'off the books'), nor did they have in place a process for following consistent standards for paying producers. When book-keeping mistakes were made during a previous period and money was unaccounted for, there were inadequate management resources to adopt and enforce necessary changes to accounting. Thus, the inconsistencies continued, as did the rift when multiple targets of blame divided the membership.

The collective endeavour relied on trust amongst members of the cooperative whereby particular members put themselves in vulnerable positions, such as volunteering to do the accounting for the cooperative but trusting others to collect the receipts, which left them open to disrepute when the communication and self-management in the collective broke down. Member(s) of the Koukouli initiative did not properly record incomings and outgoings and it was suggested by another member, that they had contempt for formal obligations. On the surface this shows lax 'overly trustful' behaviour in self-organised collectives. Otherwise viewed, responsibility and accountability are not shared across all members, and those individuals who do 'step up' can participate on their own terms, or in a role which is vulnerable to blame from peers, or even legal accountability. The situation is exacerbated because slow bureaucracy forces initiatives to rely on informal banking arrangements in the setting up stage before they are able to open an account themselves (until after a stable period of governance of over 3 months). This is a pattern in the solidarity economy in Greece, whereby, paradoxically, the need for trust in informal arrangements intensifies the crisis in trust in self-organised initiatives. This again speaks to the need to adopt norms and rules which are enacted through self-organised procedures agreed early on and revisited by all members of an initiative. These rules should be ready to be put into action when the issue occurs, and not created as the problems arise.

It also shows the propensity for the disregard for authority to cause disputes. When the principles of an initiative is seen to have been broken by 'inappropriate' or anti-authoritarian behavior, there needs to be a collectively agreed method of resolution. However, these are still developing and are not yet comprehensive. Furthermore, the self-organised 'rules' can conflict with the 'rule of law'. When the agreement is seen to have been broken in formalised structures (such as cooperatives) and justice is

sought externally to the initiative, the consequences can be serious for other individuals in the collectives, such as damage to livelihood (through court procedures). Equally, having no formal and collectively agreed mechanisms for enforcement leaves the formalised collective open to illegal behaviour of the kind which is not beneficial to the collective. The uncertainty of whether to resort to self-organised 'justice' (which is evolving through negotiation of agreements), or the rule of law, causes disagreement among members. Ultimately, the decision about enforcing the right behavior remains open to interpretation by prominent individuals, through informal hierarchies, which leave decisions open to oppressive or manipulative, if not biased, tendencies. The frequency of these internal crises in decentralised groups in Thessaloniki shows the difficulty in, and also the importance of, gaining lessons on managing and enforcing justice and retribution in self-organised economies, which is discussed further in the next chapter.

When (individualistic) acts are considered detrimental or inappropriate to the collective, the self-organised collective has to find a way to deal with it. Last year, in the Scholeio bazaar, a weekly market self-managed by producers in a social centre, a producer was accused of passing off vegetables that weren't his as his own. That producers are disingenuous about their produce is a concern among other producers in many of the markets. In this case, some members of the collective were suspicious that the producer in question was bringing more than he could possibly grow on the amount of land he has and not growing using organic methods that is a prerequisite for participation in the market. It led to the departure of this single farmer from the group, after an invitation to discuss the matter in an assembly. In this case, though, there were no mechanisms that were defined explicitly for dealing with such situations beforehand, and this caused the farmer who was being questioned to feel like his fellow members in the assembly were using unfair tactics to exclude him.

On the other hand, the producers who had been working with him felt the need to tell participants in other food initiatives that he was cheating and buying in vegetables since they felt he was undermining them and the organic movement. The rumours spread through loose networks quickly without a process of proving these claims. To those who had made the accusations, it was enough proof that he did not turn up to the assembly he was invited to discuss the issue at. Rumours as a way of spreading information about those who were perceived as not truly believing in building collaborative relationships were a method of self-selection in these initiatives, as opposed to 'formal' inquiries by the authorities in a public or corporate setting. However, this can ruin the reputation, and therefore livelihood, of individuals without proof of their apparent deceptive behaviour. It also potentially damages relationships between the minority of small producers who pursue alternative methods.

Ultimately, rumour-mongering (without sufficient investigation to gain evidence) demonstrate that a limbo exists between breaking with the old social contract and creating a new one; adopting an aversion to institutional ways of working, whilst lacking agreements and mechanisms of self-management or struggling to collectively enforce behaviour which conforms to norms without creating divisions and exclusionary practice. For instance, farmer-to-farmer support was initiated through a CSA attempt for small, struggling farmers, which incorporated farm visits (see figure 6.1).

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Figure 6.1 Farmers discuss economic and cultivation difficulties and possible solutions at a farm

The prevalence of misunderstandings and one-word-against-another situations shows that there exists a lack of communication and good working relationships between producers and activists, and this has been the case also in the failed 'no middlemen' movements (see chapter 5). This indicates that the processes of involving people in equal relationships are not being achieved successfully and that rules are communicated ineffectively or unevenly. Notably, although activists who mediate the relations between consumers and producers feel the pressure of unpaid over-work and financial risk, it is generally food producers who face the risk of repression, since they are selling illegally (unregistered seeds, unauthorised market sites, without receipts etc.) This is what happened in 2014 at the time of the eviction of the 'no middlemen' movement, when individual producers were targeted with fines by the police.

6.4   Conclusion: Autonomy and self-governance

This chapter demonstrated that attitudes of self-organised groups in Thessaloniki were overwhelmingly negative towards state governance. Primarily, the state was experienced as disabling

to experiments in food autonomy. Debilitating economic pressures from austerity policies were compounded by new regulation that repressed and marginalised alternatives seen as competition to business-as-usual, starting with the 'no middlemen' movement. This fuelled distrust in the government's agenda, since it was aligned with capitalist interests. In parallel, the state was seen to have used legal uncertainty as a tool of control, and to damage collectives by forcing individual subjects to become entrepreneurially resilient, and adaptable to bureaucratic demands. This pressure to adapt to formal rules and law-making was at times felt to pit the legal requirements of the collective against the needs of individual members, especially as monitoring of SSE intensified. The effect was to geographically and economically marginalise alternative economies in relation to dominant market players, or to remould them into the vision of neoliberal or state projects.

A strategy to avoid this state apparatus by collectives is to continue as informal groups using illicit tactics of subversion or avoidance. In this way, illegality is understood as a logical solution for small producers and activists, justifying their actions against those of the state. Tax evasion, occupation and improper or absence of documentation are present in 'legally creative' combinations of adherence and defiance to laws, adopted by individuals and condoned by some solidarity intermediaries as a means to survive or exist. When initiatives do interact with formal governance structures it is to lobby for laws which are appropriate to what are seen as legal vacuums. This distinction between those who wish to function legally and those who reject state power looks to create difficulties for informal groups who self-marginalise in a crisis context where institutionalisation is becoming a likely strategy for collectives who want economically viable futures. This is in part due to the distinction between individual anti-authoritarianism and collective self-institutionalisation, as discussed in the conceptual framework.

At the same time, even the idea that the government is disabling or ineffective under supra-state powers makes it less likely that initiatives will engage with it. The 'Leftist' government, Syriza, are viewed with disdain by many movement actors, and characterised as another of the same political parties to be distrusted (Karyotis 2015). The distancing of participants of autonomous food initiatives from institutional politics is marked by the creation of a political paradigm which attempts to strike up self-governance with new horizontally motivated social contracts. This retraction indicates a dismissal of state power, an ignoring of its effects (Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer 2010) which is typical of anti-authoritarian politics, but which bleeds into self-organised initiatives in the form of anti-institutional and anti-professional attitudes.

These attitudes have individualising effects, in that tools or initiatives seen as 'capitalist' are disdained, and instead initiatives become more introverted, fragmentary and self-selecting in fallout from conflict. This tendency, which we refer to as *introvert decentralisation*, also has negative effects on movement building because of the increasingly inward-looking nature of self-organised initiatives, self-fulfilling especially due to the need to resolve conflict – this will be further developed in the next chapter. *Introvert decentralisation* is partly a defensive strategy from the perception that project of autonomy by grassroots institutions will be captured/'recuperated' by the politics of the state. This subtly interferes with solidarity-making by creating an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion which harbours the potential for spreading of misinformation and rumour mongering (unsubstantiated claims) about issues related to produce 'quality' or cleanliness, or political credentials (including wish to be leader). It is also the process therefore of political homogenisation and separation.

In cases of conflict resolution, sometimes the bureaucratic rules of a formal entity conflict with and distract from attempts to create direct and participatory democracy. When anti-authoritarian behaviour exhibits in formal structures, such as consumer cooperatives, there is friction between those who adhere to centralised political organising strategies and those who want to leave this kind of politics in the past. Despite being dismissive of it, they are nevertheless impacted by the state, especially through the interference of law-making and the threat of repression. A resultant gap in knowledge amongst movement actors of the implications of state politics and underestimation of the reach of state power of movement actors contributes to their marginalisation. This chapter therefore argues that the radical democratic political paradigm, epitomised by grassroots non-hierarchical structures and avoidance of interaction with official institutional authorities, is not always favourable to collective autonomy.

The effect of disdain for power on self-organised groups show us how damaging to this endeavor pervasive anti-leader and anti-institutional attitudes can be if taken at their most absolute by some participants. What is needed in self-organised groups is a constructive and critical knowledge production of participatory economic democracy, through trial and error, but also with sharing of 'institutional' tools for equality and justice, which focus on collective organisation. Albert (2006) suggests that governance strategies should shift power allocation according to the decision in hand, thus accepting deeper democratic decision-making must accept hierarchy and consciously design fair and effective approaches to collective governance. Nuances of self-governance to accommodate difference is developed in the next chapter.

7 Dealing with Undeniable Difference

In the context of crisis a re-emergence of reciprocal relationships has been praised by researchers (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Miller, 2006). During the debt crisis in Greece, self-organised solidarity food economies have brought promise of democratic change. However, this article draws on two years' of fieldwork in Thessaloniki to develop Young's (1986) *Politics of Difference* in order to challenge the view of solidarity economy as wholly a process of collaboration. Thus the article overturns prevalent myths regarding the cultural ineptitude of Greek actors. In doing so it highlights the need for food movements to acknowledge the inevitable tensions which arise from structural inequalities. The article argues that overcoming these tensions requires challenging *difference-blindness* in grassroots democracy. It concludes that an acknowledgement of shifting structural inequalities, exaggerated by the crisis, must be incorporated into initiative's democratic processes alongside mechanisms for dealing with disharmony.

Angelos: The truth is that we pursued [our small farm] … but we saw how difficult it was, just the two of us who agreed with the basic rules and carried them forward.

Interviewer: Why was it difficult? What were the fundamental difficulties that you encountered?

Maria: We didn't find many young people who wanted to join us.

Angelos: And generally speaking our DNA doesn't contain collaboration, it is lacking that characteristic.

Interviewer:: Is it our DNA though?

Angelos: Definitely.

Figure 7.1 An excerpt of a conversation between a PV group interviewer and two farmers about why there's a lack of collaboration.

7.1 Introduction

Experiments in autonomous food initiatives have emerged in response to the economic failures of the conventional food system. These reflect what is more generally referred to as the 'solidarity economy', which aims to build cooperation and collective action through direct and reciprocal economic relationships (Dacheux and Goujon 2011). The solidarity economy has been welcomed by members of Greek society, their government (SSE Secretariat 2018), and intellectuals (Laville 2010; Adam 2018), as a solution to the capitalist crisis (Rakopoulos 2013). However, it is now ten years since the crisis began, and the process of building solidarity is not all hopeful (Steinfort, Hendrikx and Pijpers 2017). During the years 2016–2018, which informed the research reported in this chapter, several initiatives experienced internal organisational dynamics or financial strains that have pushed the initiatives themselves into crisis. As will be elaborated in this chapter, the experience of conflict and tension has led to a narrative that the potential of the solidarity economy is limited by the nature of people. There

is a reified cultural myth, held and perpetuated by Greek participants of the solidarity economy, that as a society they are unable to collaborate and are prone to antagonistic relations, as exemplified in the quote in Figure 7.1.

This attitude is mirrored by depictions of a devastated social fabric. During the period after the dictatorship (metapolitefsi), considered the first period of stable liberal democracy, there was said to have emerged "an all-pervasive individualistic culture (accompanied by hyperconsumerism), which led to grave impairment of the sense of collectivity and taking care of one another, as well as of community, solidarity and shared responsibility within Greek society" (Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli 2015: 5). Other scholarly work contends that a long-term corrupt and unaccountable culture of the political class has resulted in lack of interpersonal trust, purportedly demonstrated by European statistics on social trust in which Greece repeatedly comes last (Theocharis and van Deth 2015). Evoking the term "civic pathology" to refer to the endemic distrust in Greek society, which existed before the recent crisis, Theocharis and van Deth (2015) explicitly play down the effect of economic and financial crisis on solidarity relations, instead underlining cultural and political factors linked to political corruption and social distrust.

Similarly, in international commentary on the Greek crisis, the portrayal of Greek people has been overwhelmingly negative, with stereotypes of a "corrupt" and "irresponsible" society, whose immoral citizens are unarguably responsible for their own hardship (Tzogopoulos 2016; Antoniades 2013). Moreover, the anger of some Greek people at dissenting responses to draconian austerity measures is discussed as a possible attempt to evade their own responsibility and make sense of socioeconomic transformations perceived to be out of their control (Theodossopoulos 2016), facilitating the neoliberal myth of individualised responsibility for economic success or failure. This stereotype of Greek people has also been used to justify the structural adjustments forced on the Greek people by the Troika (Herzfeld 2016; Capelos and Demertzis 2018).

Based on 24 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Thessaloniki, this chapter challenges the common allegory of a fundamental cultural (or even ethnic) ineptitude to collaborate, expressed in the reference to collaboration "not being in our DNA" in the above excerpt. Using ideas from Iris Young's (1986) The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference, I develop the argument that structurally rooted conflicts are amplified by the capitalist crisis (Kantzara 2014). Additionally, I argue that the romanticisation of solidarity, in the internal and external promotion of economic alternatives, alongside the lack of a political sensibility to recognise and mediate structural difference, allows for

the glossing over of differences that are the cause of tension and divisions. Despite, and in fact possibly as a result of, efforts to create horizontal decision-making spaces, the denial of difference allows informal hierarchies to develop and power to accumulate with few individuals. The eventual consequence can be fragmentation based on exclusionary politics—a dynamic that does not sit comfortably with the concept of solidarity and therefore reinforces the problem.

7.2   Literature Review

7.2.1   The Meaning of Solidarity (Economy)

Solidarity is not a static or uniform term; it has been the subject of debate amongst scholars and activists in Greece over these years of crisis (Karyotis 2015; Rozakou 2016; Theodossopoulos 2016; Arampatzi and Nicholls 2012). Viewed as a moral act, it must be enacted outside of the family, without the intent of personal gain or profit, nor with the embedding of exclusionary practices such as soup kitchens run exclusively for Greeks (Adam 2018; Kanzara 2014). Arampatzi (2016) differentiates between the building of mutual and reciprocal relations for long-term social empowerment and collective political struggle, with one-sided humanitarian or philanthropic transactions, which reproduce vertical forms of social hierarchies. In crisis Greece, both forms exist. Emergency, direct provisions to people in need address a widening gap in the provisioning of human essentials and provide social safety nets in place of a withering state (Kantzara 2014). At the same time, solidarity initiatives act as "learning labs" for alternative forms of exchange Arampatzi and Nicholls 2012; Calvario and Kallis 2016) seen to inhabit the solidarity economy. Importantly, instead of the competitive individualist behaviour that neoliberalism encourages, the solidarity economy is seen as a practical attempt to rebuild practices of inclusivity, altruism, and collaboration, or what Miller (2010) calls "communities of cooperation".

These emergent "communities of cooperation" incorporate economic actors occupying diverse, overlapping, and shifting identities: consumer and producer, rural and urban, young and old, party affiliated and antiauthoritarian. Initiatives often incorporate new forms of decision-making such as direct democracy with the intent to implement inclusive, non-hierarchical participation and responsibility-sharing (Miller 2010). Solidarity initiatives are thus often based on an ideal of inclusivity and democracy. Currently the theoretical literature on community and solidarity economy is based on this idea that its values are in opposition to those encouraged in a capitalist system:

"While incredibly diverse, these initiatives share a broad set of values that stand in bold contrast to those of the dominant economy. Instead of enforcing a culture of cutthroat competition, they build cultures and communities of cooperation. Rather than isolating us from one another, they foster relationships of mutual support and solidarity. In place of centralized structures of control, they move us towards shared responsibility and directly democratic decision-making" (Miller 2010: 1).

Community economies are, however, not separate from a dominant capitalist cultural, political and social context (based on processes of exclusion, alienation, and othering) that gives shape, to varying extents, to solidarity initiatives. According to Young (1986: 2), positioning community as encompassing "authentic" (collective) relations in a dichotomy to the "inauthentic" (individualistic) relations of capitalist society is not only false, but also problematic, since it "provides no understanding of the move from here to there that would be rooted in an understanding of the contradictions and possibilities of existing society". In the transition to fairer food systems, models are praised as innately embodying solidarity-based relationships, free from self-interested "corrupt" behaviours (Hitchman 2012), yet at the same time they are re-creating interpersonal connections that have been "damaged" by market competitiveness (Bowles 1991) (e.g., between producers and consumers). Following Young (1986), however, these closer relationships in solidarity economies do not automatically endow collaboration, as I have shown in the previous two chapters.

Allen (2010: 10) highlights how local food systems in the US continue to marginalise some social groups through pluralist democratic organising, because asymmetrical distributions of power are being upheld, "which amplify some voices or completely drown out others". Some research in Greece has also shown disagreement and division in solidarity initiatives. Rakopoulos' (2014b) raises sources of conflict in the Greek 'no middlemen' initiatives, including tensions caused by institutionalization and its consequences for radical politics. Similarly, Calvário and Kallis (2016) point out that commitment to a solidarity initiative is negated by its dependency on volunteerism, and over time this is both socially and economically unsustainable. There is also a growing fear of co-optation (a form of homogenisation) of social movement politics in solidarity economies, particularly pertinent given the spotlight on Greece as a centre point of radical solutions to crisis, which Rakopoulos (2016) contends can give rise to romanticised accounts of solidarity economy. Steinfort, Hendrikx and Pijpers (2017) argue from a post-structuralist perspective that movements in Thessaloniki could avoid fragmentary strategizing based on identity politics by undertaking "communal performative" narratives as transformation strategies that respect antagonisms and differences. This chapter contends alternatively that conflict, and the belief that it is inevitable, is exaggerated by overlooking the importance of

structural difference in defining dynamics of self-organised initiatives. Once recognised, difference can be incorporated into food initiative strategies for solidarity-making.

7.2.2 Examining Tension, Conflict, and Difference

In contrast to this vision of a harmonious pluralistic community epitomised by community economy theories (Gibson-Graham 2006; Miller 2006), Iris Young (1986: 2) raises a critique of the political ideal of community as the alternative to oppression and exploitation that characterises a capitalist patriarchal society. Her most poignant argument against this conception is that the desire of community rests on "the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism, on the one hand and political sectarianism on the other". The community ideal is not inclusive as it is imagined, but exclusionary along identity lines. In effect, the process of creating a unified community denies difference, forces assimilation of beliefs and cultures, and thus excludes marginalised groups. Difference is defined by Young (1986: 4) as the "irreducible particularity of entities, which makes it impossible to reduce them to commonness or bring them into unity without remainder." The ideal of community, when applied using universal ideas of equality amongst individuals, serves the interests and culture of the most powerful social groups whilst marginalising others. Thus, a process of re-embedding the dominance of individuals in privileged social and organisational positions over others with less power and privilege persists through forced assimilation.

Moreover, she critiques the ideal of self-sufficient, decentralised "local" communities because they limit interaction and, thus, leave social justice aims and causes of oppression inadequately addressed. The view of community, which rejects individual competitiveness by asserting its "opposite", assumes that social mixing between different groups appeases antagonism and, Young (1986: 2) argues, "fails to see that alienation and violence are not a function of mediation of social relations, but can and do exist in face-to-face relations". Conflict is therefore possible, even probable, also in the process of direct and interactive solidarity making as a result of unequal power relations. Young's (1986) critique makes it necessary to explore the way that conflictual situations based on difference are dealt with, so as not to erase individuals, and their needs and desires, from processes of collaboration. Importantly, the non-recognition, either conscious or unconscious, of these differences that Young calls "difference-blindness" accentuates tension and can lead to conflict and fragmentation.

Fragmentation has been recognised as owing to the unacknowledged presence of difference. For example, in research on civic food networks in Canada, Anderson (2013: 117) concludes that from the beginning of group collaboration, intergroup difference should be discussed, and mutual

understanding sought, so that differences do not "perpetuate the fragmentation of rural communities and foster individualistic approaches that limit the capacity for collective problem solving". This paper focuses on Young's notions of positional or cultural differences in order to discuss the effect of difference in heterogeneous urban and peri-urban initiatives. These categories of difference, represented in Figure 7.2, "concern issues of justice…the politics of positional difference concentrates on issues of structural inequality while the main issues that arise in a politics of cultural difference concern freedom" (2005: 5).

In the remainder of the chapter, I draw on empirical findings from research to demonstrate the value of Young's (1986) Politics of Difference for understanding the development of hierarchies that lead to fragmentation within self-organised economies of food. In the analysis, I specifically emphasize points of contestation that have a particular social meaning in the changing political context of crisis and austerity. Namely, material disparities that establish unequal relationships and statuses between group members in positional variance, and differences in political cultures, political orientations, and visions of the future, which shape politics in solidarity economies. These in turn impact strategies and organisational culture in the creation of these self-governed "communities". At the same time that Young's (1986) theory contributes to the understanding of decentralised food initiatives, this case study develops an extended politics of difference that enlightens social and political power struggles related specifically to self-organisation.

"make categorical distinctions among people in hierarchies of status & privilege"

Positional Difference
(structural inequalities)

groups defined by "societal culture" e.g. religious beliefs

Cultural difference
(freedoms)
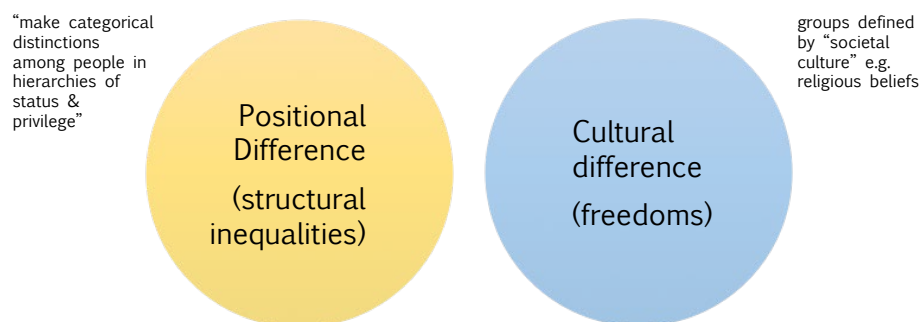
Figure 7.2 Iris Young's Categories in the Politics of Difference. Source: author's interpretation.

7.3 Findings and Discussion

7.3.1 Motivations of Solidarity-Making

Solidarity economy of food initiatives in Thessaloniki seek to address social needs of marginalised groups. Andreas, a catalytic member of the Pervolarides, a self-sufficiency solidarity initiative in the neighbourhood of Toumba, describes the long-term socioeconomic impact of building "genuine" solidarity with poorer people in the neighbourhood of their self-defined community. Active participation is encouraged, but is not imperative, since not all of those who need aid can participate.

"We don't want to make philanthropy. Let me give you an example. We have 22–30 families. Half of them cannot participate because they have serious health problems, mental problems, inside their families…But the other half, they come with us they prepare the distribution they distribute food to other people also, so it's like sharing the work, and spreading the work…We will invite them and produce with them all together, the products will be consumed by them, by us and by other people who cannot participate. We have to mobilise people, not just to provide them with food, but because we want to give them a perspective for the future".

This description of acting in solidarity in the context of crisis and chronic poverty caused by austerity politics demonstrates that incentives to participate in such "solidarity initiatives" are multiple and complexly interlinked. Some participants experience a structural inability to access food (such as limited income possibilities) and associated physical and mental health difficulties related to food poverty as well as the difficulty of living with prospectively dire and uncertain economic futures. Ethnographic observations and stories from participants showed that a significant factor affecting initiatives was poor mental health of participants, some of whom noted the damaging effect alcohol addiction had on collaborative participation since austerity began. This matched reports that economic and social insecurity impacted on social relationships, with increased tension and conflict in workplaces, related to self-isolation, social suffering, and despair (Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli 2015) alongside increases in substance misuse (Madianos 2014). In this respect, complex needs related to the crisis situation are factors that necessitate moves to include particular social groups. However, they are the very same factors that inhibited consistent and "equal" participation. Following from this, symptoms of the economic crisis and social exclusion were not always conducive to collaboration.

Moreover, in the discussion with the Pervolarides, they mentioned that there is no binding contract between the few members, but that much of the participation in the collective is trusted as individual

responsibility to the collective. In frustration of feeling let down, Andreas raises an important question that speaks to definition and enforcement of equitable cooperation in self-organised initiatives: "what happens when someone doesn't offer what they should, how does the group work then?"

The recent pattern of division in Thessaloniki's food initiatives is testimony to the need to find methods to create equitable cooperation. In fact, it became apparent from the interviews and discussions that interpersonal disputes and structural discord were perceived to exist in most self-organised food initiatives. There were numerous episodes where disagreement escalated to a scale that disrupted the functioning of a collective. Between 2015 and 2018, three cases of overt rivalry resulted in division —at Bioscoop, Koukouli, and Per.ka chronologically. In the two cases of urban consumer cooperatives, Koukouli and Bioscoop, the law was invoked to make claim to an injustice in management of funds and in election processes, respectively. In the case of Per.ka, the rift led to original members of the collective resigning their participation. Manos, a member of Koukouli describes the difficult situation in Greece's autonomous initiatives, with collaboration being a central hurdle:

"The problems we talked about, they are the same throughout Greece, whether you are within the law, or outside of it, finding understanding between each other is a bit difficult. But the conclusion weighs up in the end, which is where you will find disagreements, the resignations, but nevertheless the initiative carries on, it stood its ground, and there is a recognition today of a wide range of citizens, so to say".

Whilst seemingly contrary to the notion of solidarity economy, this widespread phenomenon of discord and conflict amongst those who were participating in the solidarity economy was in part related to the difficult economic and social context in which they acted, and the involvement of a plurality of different people. Manos describes the inclusion of plural actors as "a recognition today of a wide range of citizens", which is to be expected in food initiatives which incorporate various nodes of the food chain and which espouse solidarity. The question still remains as to how these initiatives include different actors as participants within them. Although conventions of individualistic competitiveness are being challenged through discussions of direct democracy and anti-capitalism in new economies (Steinfort, Hendrikx and Pijpers 2017), there still exists a confrontational politics within them which rests on inequitable power relations.

7.3.2 Politics of Difference in Context

The starting point for understanding a deficit in equitable cooperation is to locate where conflict manifests, and owing to what kinds of differences. This can help the collective to prepare methods to deal with conflict, avert consequences that marginalise or exclude, and to find ways to collaborate in acknowledgement of this difference.

Taking Young's categories of positional and cultural difference, visualized in Figure 7.3, I expanded them to emphasize, on the one hand, the shifting material effect of austerity alongside the embedded structural inequalities that differentiate people's socioeconomic status, otherwise understood as social capital. On the other hand, political strategies to social change undertaken in the city are connected to political ideologies. Political ideologies and organisational cultures substitute Young's emphasis on societal cultures, which largely refer to religion. In this respect, since this research is concerned with a microcosm of society, the framework gives more weight to the old and new political dynamics and identities associated with social struggle and hardship. This altered framework accepts difference-based conflict as true, at the same time as situating it within a place and time of critical—and changing—social challenges related to austerity, scarcity, and dissent.
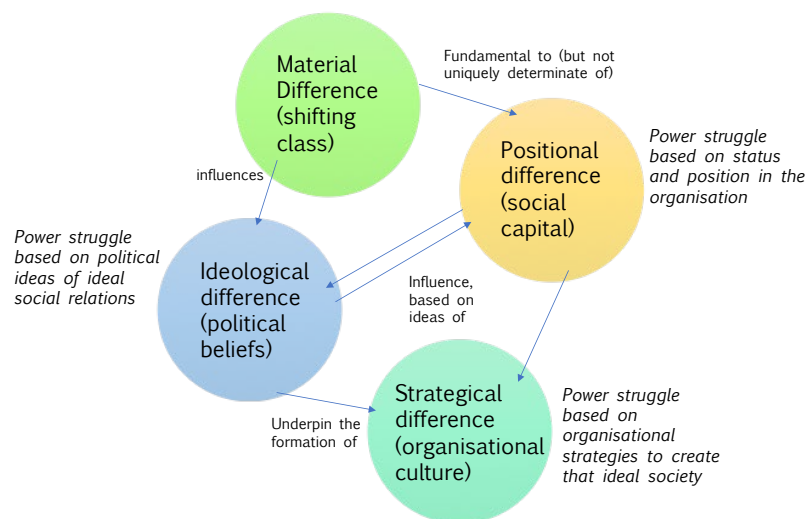
Figure 7.3 Politics of Difference in context

Material inequality, or class difference, is the foundational factor that affects societal power dynamics in that it determines relative positions of power in a collective. The fundamental link between class and oppression is expressed by Bishop (in Haiven and Khasnabish 2014: 201): "on a structural level, class is different from other forms of oppression…Class is not just a factor in inequalities in wealth,

privilege, and power; it is that inequality. Other forms of oppression help keep the hierarchy of power in place; class is that hierarchy". For this reason, I discuss material differences separate to social capital.

As elucidated below, the data on these collectives demonstrates how material inequality influences both the position and status of an individual in the organisation, and their ideological grounding informs an individual's vision of social change. The combination of the two shape the organisational strategy taken by the initiative to make that change. As relational positions of material disparity are entrenched by the crisis, economic capital and social capital unevenly distribute power to exert influence over the ideology or strategy of a collective, or part of a collective. Therefore, since politics "requires not principles that apply to all people in the same way, but a nuanced understanding of the particularities of the social context, and the needs particular people have and express within it", self-governance and decision-making should, according to Young (2005: 96), be considerate of these differences in order to reverse relations of domination.

7.3.3   Material Difference

In the context of austerity and the debt crisis, the process of impoverishment is widespread, but each individual is inflicted to a different extent, and at different rates, with some being buffered by job security or financial backup. When difference in wealth (income, assets, sustenance, land, and familial or other financial support networks) manifests, this has an impact on the particular choices available to individuals. For instance, if and when they act in the solidarity economy, and their respective reliance on it as a source of material benefit. For example, on the one hand a paid worker of a cooperative may depend on this income for their livelihood, whilst another unpaid member of the cooperative, with employment elsewhere, is involved because they wish to participate without seeking economic reward. Notably, the food initiatives do all depend on voluntary labour. Since work is rarely remunerated in the Greek solidarity economy, and in cases where it is, the pay is usually low, many individuals dedicate voluntary hours for the functioning of the collective endeavour (Steinfort, Hendrikx and Pijpers 2017). People are motivated to dedicate unremunerated hours often to put their politics into practice, or with the hope that this new endeavour may offer economic and social stability in the future—and as a result this is commonly considered a sign of virtue or a test of political credentials.

Dependency on a solidarity initiative was, therefore, a material need for some individuals to participate and not for others, but for the initiative to survive it was impossible for everyone to be materially dependent on it. Karina from Bioscoop observed that the majority of members of the cooperative,

excluding only the workers, were middle class—although she acknowledged that this was based on concepts of class before the crisis, since what counts as "middle class" is shifting as jobs and wages for both public and private sector workers have decreased. Class unequivocally differentiates people; even if participation is well meaning, an individual's own higher economic capital before entering the initiative—and resultant social capital from volunteering—can lead to an unequal division between them and their worker peers. Whilst this is not a disparity that is unique to the solidarity economy, in the context of high unemployment and job insecurity, dependency on work was felt more acutely by some in the choice to participate in the solidarity economy.

Yet, material difference is also present in initiatives that are based on non-monetary systems of production and exchange. For example, at Per.ka, the growing material needs of nearby residents of the neighbourhood coincided with an increased membership in the collective, since the original members predominantly came from more affluent central neighbourhoods. The increase in new members shifted the overall ideological emphasis of the collective membership: from the original wish to create long term self-sufficiency in food by using heirloom seeds and techniques for environmental sustainability, to more members cultivating using bought, hybrid seeds and chemical inputs. The latter was seen by those dedicated to the original ethos as an individualistic and short-term recourse to what are considered "guaranteed" yields. When subsistence is one part of material wellbeing, yields are arguably a justified priority. Inexperience in alternative methods of cultivation were common, and although technique- and information-sharing events were held regularly, they were attended almost exclusively by the already converted; this may explain the recourse to using conventional methods by new and disinterested members.

At a workshop we held in 2017 to discuss the representation of Per.ka in a participatory film, active members who attended clearly understood that a tension existed between participants in the collective and those who acted as individuals, and also recognised that over time the practices had changed as the composite of members shifted (Figure 7.6). The reason for lack of participation in the collective was recounted as a result of the visible difference in motivations, that less active members wanted to use the cultivation methods they knew despite the poor environmental credentials. They also considered that those individuals who did not participate in the assemblies had no interest in doing so because they did not have a collective spirit or had not been educated to be able to work collectively. Additionally, defying the original collectively agreed ethos of Per.ka, to respect the earth and encourage seed sovereignty, was perceived to be a result of taking shortcuts and committing "individualistic" acts, rather than being acts based on need.

Figure 7.4 Collective film screening of Per.ka film

Content removed on data protection grounds

Figure 7.5 Workshop at APAN social centre with Per.ka
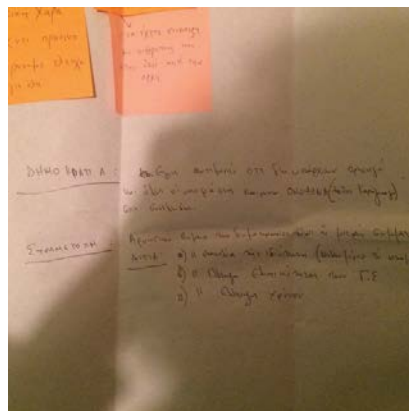
Figure 7.6 PV process and reflections from Per.ka workshop*

* Translation of text in Figure 3d: "Reasons for little active participation: (a) the ease at which individualism comes (only want to cultivate by themselves); (b) the development of elite movement in the general assembly; (c) the passing of time".

Importantly, many new members who joined were from the poorer neighbourhood in which the site was located. As such, because the belief systems of an individual are connected to social position and class (Bourdieu 1977), in reality a combination of factors related to socioeconomic status, needs, and preferences would explain the different standpoints that contributed to the rift. This also corresponds to Young's (1986) view that 'community' does not directly oppose 'individualism' and that more nuance, as well as social understanding, is needed to read motivations behind action, which does not match a specific subjective logic the analyst may have. In the case of Per.ka, although an open collective, there was a clear expectation to assimilate in adherence to the ideological grounding of the collective, which did not always correspond to the self-perceived needs or the identity of new members. In terms of "collective education"—this was an attempt to engage diverse members in collective organising as well as cultivation. However, the fact that individuals were allocated individual plots made it so that there was little incentive to engage with the wider collective if the motivations for some members was only to cultivate vegetables.

Furthermore, the rupture in the initiative was taken to a new level in early 2018 when those who refused to abide by the conditions in the statute organised themselves into a separate group. They took a rebellious stance of continuing to cultivate the land but no longer tied to the rules of the statute. It was reported that friends and family were "recruited" in the previous months to support this break-away group, the favour-for-a-favour behaviour, which retorts of clientelism. From the perspective of those who had founded the collective and the statute based on principles of long-term socio-ecological resilience, they were faced with a situation of conflict within a community that threatened these very principles. Faced with this prospect of remaining a member of a version of Per.ka, whose principles were muddied by "individualistic" actions, several long-standing members resigned their membership. It was telling that before the split there was a drawn-out period of discussion about how to rewrite the statute, which featured many disagreements and ended in a decision-making stalemate.

A sentiment that came out in the reflection after the split was that the initiative had been "too open" to participants, meaning that the membership was easily obtainable, without a vetting process which corresponded to the conditions in the statute. In other words, new members were trusted to follow the principles and to respect the function of the assembly in decision-making. Conversely, another active member had commented on their perception of the development of elitism in the general assembly that could have impacted on feelings of belonging to the collective and resentment to individuals with power. Moreover, now ex-members of Per.ka commented on the personal feud

between a member of the group that defected and a prominent active member of the original group, the phenomenon of which will be discussed later in reference to the emergence of leaders.

The fact that the procedures could not establish cohesion in the self-organised group, but instead was a cause for contention, indicated that material inequalities, which became more acute with the arrival of new members from a different socio-economic position, should be recognised as they were—structural inequalities. This recognition of class difference empathises with the belief systems and connected actions of newcomers, and can help negotiate antagonisms to eventually fairly negotiate use of valuable space for cultivation. The politics of difference, according to Young (1986: 14), does not force assimilation to the dominant practices and belief systems, but instead it recognises the need for mutual understanding and co-existence. This is complicated by the fact that Per.ka symbolizes also the struggle for recognition and praxis of agroecological cultivation methods against the hegemony of conventional methods. Still, acknowledging structural differences could help create a compassionate and deliberative approach to work side-by-side with those who did not follow the statute. This is especially important given that in the economic crisis years, those in poorer neighbourhoods have been adversely hit with destitution (Kantzara 2014) and so new categories of social exclusions are emerging (as are new categories of social class).

7.3.4   Positional Difference Influenced by Material and Social Inequalities

Directly related to the material difference is the positional difference in terms of social capital or status of individuals in relation to one another in society or within an initiative. According to Bourdieu (1977), social capital develops over time in networks through which norms and values are emulated. The establishment of connectedness enables mutual trust, and it is during this process that different relational social positions are established, sometimes at odds with one another. Needless to say, the position of individuals within these groups is infinitely different, determined by relative class, gender, ethnicity, social capital, and age. The relational basis of the food chain is of particular importance, especially in solidarity initiatives whose membership includes a combination of all or some of producers, activists, workers and/or consumers. Consumer cooperative and social cooperative enterprises (KOINSEP) are unusual in their membership diversity, especially in respect of workers. In consumer cooperatives workers are also members, and KOINSEPs hold that members can volunteer up to 16 h a week, while workers are registered as such, but can still also be members (but don't have to be). In these situations, actors are mutually interdependent in relations of economic, social and cultural power dependent on the status they occupy within the legal and organisational structure of the initiative.

We heard through interviews that a member of a cooperative who volunteers their time to the cooperative has the potential to gain social capital from the experience. This occurs through connections, media appearances, and prestige that come from being seen to be behind the pioneering solidarity or cooperative projects. Whilst the old cooperatives were financially lucrative to certain people in the old cooperative system, the new cooperatives are talked about by some as sites that allow power acquisition.

"…the old cooperative had to do with money and profits, they were profit, while we are not-for profit, so none of them has as a motivation the money, nobody gets extra money by doing what they do. Which is a basic difference. But it's the same thing, you put power and it's the same thing. There are some people who want to be in charge of the cooperative movement of Greece. They want to be in charge for different reasons, they may hope to claim better position governing cooperatives in Greece, I don't know, maybe, I am sure that some of them just want to be the number one lecturer and the number one guy when the media want to discuss with someone about cooperatives".

Participation in solidarity initiatives, therefore, rewards individuals unequally and is dependent on whether reward takes the form of economic value (or the potential thereof) or social capital. Bourdieu (1986: 22-23) views social capital as self-fulfilling, being reproduced through "a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed. It implies expenditure of time and energy and so, directly or indirectly, of economic capital…and an acquired disposition to acquire and maintain this competence, which are themselves integral parts of this capital". The narrative of this generation of cooperatives being novel is based on the idea that they are less corruptible, since they are driven by people from social movements. However, some members were under the impression that being in a position to "pioneer" such an initiative can give certain members social capital on which to elevate themselves using the success of the initiative as currency. This suggests that to build real solidarity, there is a need for self-instituted mechanisms to mitigate power acquisition.

7.3.5   Positional Differences Influenced by Ideological Differences

Another example of difference is when organisational hierarchies are influenced by a particular ideology. These hierarchies are established either by formal positions within the organisation, or they are informal and emerge frequently along lines of oppression. They can also occur when there is an imbalance of power or knowledge, including experience (age), expertise (legal and institutional know-

how), and social capital (contacts, influence inside and outside of the organisation). In the consumer cooperative, Bioscoop, workers are employed to manage the day-to-day activities of the grocery store and, on paying their EUR 150 share, adopt member status when employed. Workers attend meetings and participate in decision-making with the same weight as another paying coop member—on the basis that the procedures were intended to be flat structured. However, there existed different political beliefs on the position of the workers in relation to the general assembly. In particular, at the time when two workers were fired in summer 2016 through a referendum in the general assembly (in the second case with one vote difference), a split—which participants later reflected had been emerging for many months—suddenly became evident. It was in hindsight that the causes of the rift in Bioscoop were diagnosed by some participants, as owing to the unresolved power inequalities, embedded by non-transparent political organisational strategies and positions of the board of directors. A cause of contention was the manner in which individuals with board member influence were seen to force a decision based on what they wanted, and they used undemocratic methods to do this. Orfeas describes the situation then:

> "So all the important decisions were made in closed assemblies, without trying to decide what happened, without inviting the persons involved to give us an explanation of what they did, without trying to warn them, or give them, I don't know, just tell them, if you do this again we will fire you. So we underestimated forgiveness, cooperation and education and we worked with punishment and power. That bothered me very much and…that's the reason why many people of the board resigned, because we wanted to discuss about our problems, we didn't want like a big hammer to smash them all the time".

The tension that resulted in what came to be seen by some as unfair dismissals has its roots essentially in attitudes to workers' positionality and rights in the mixed-identity initiative. A member who has been a worker in the coop, Nikos, views that effectively, but not explicitly, the assembly is the boss of the workers.

> "You can't neglect real life and practicing of a theory. Because ok in theory [a board member] was a member of the cooperative, [a worker] was a member of the cooperative, we have the weekly assembly where everyone can participate with direct democracy, so we have no bother, but you can't keep the fact that there is also a board of directors, there is also a collective boss, so we would say the assembly, the weekly assembly is the boss of the workers, ok, the workers can

participate in the assembly and can influence things, but in the end, a decision has to be made, and some people need to comply with that decision".

Although on paper there are no bosses, a worker who was fired, Fotis, agreed wholeheartedly that bosses existed. He held this opinion because the legal system enforces a board of directors, and because some members do not willingly allow for their position of power on the board to be re-allocated. He expressed that it was worse to have many ambiguous bosses observing you than one named boss giving you orders. Conversely, another member, Pantelis, who has been on the board describes the position of workers as no different to any other member—to distinguish between them and the rest of the membership would create a hierarchy, which would go against their cooperative principles of horizontality.

> "Yes we said that there is no place for initiatives which employ employees. All employees must be workers and all members should be workers, in order to not have employees…There are people that believe that they are not equals, and they must be employees, that is let's say the right-wing approach of the cooperative work. The systemic. And some other they believe that the workers must decide for everything and the other members are just sponsors. They put just the money for the cooperative share. Wait a minute. I don't accept the idea that the workers are my employees. My employees? I am not the boss".

Importantly, workers are generally employed based on previous knowledge and connection to movements, and they are selected by the board to become worker-members on this basis. There were seven workers, paid EUR 100 a month above minimum wage, in a cooperative of approximately 420 members. Workers, too, pay the one-off membership fee for their share, so are both paid workers and paid-up members. Where he says "some others believe that the workers must decide for everything and the other members are just sponsors", Pantelis is inferring the opinion held by some members of the cooperative, in opposition to him, that workers should have more autonomy in decision-making, particularly related to the shop floor and dealing with producers, in order to acknowledge their particular knowledge of day-to-day activities. At times, there are delays in shop functions because decisions have to go through the assembly in accordance with the direct democracy practices, which is a core principle of the cooperative. Overall, they argued, the processes lacked a recourse to mechanisms to give the minority group voice and autonomy in their daily work. Hahnel's (2005) view on economic democracy can enlighten us on how direct democracy does not always work for communities making decisions together, since giving each individual one vote does not mitigate

difference. Instead, Hahnel (2005: 54) argues that decision-making power should be allocated according to the degree that individuals are affected by that decision.

When there is a positional difference, such as between worker member and volunteer member, not only do the stakes in the initiative differ in types of capital, but there is also power at play because of the non-recognition of this reality and the governance structures which embed this. That is to say, there is difference-blindness that obscures existent hierarchical relationships in an image that the cooperative works on non-hierarchical principles. Horizontal organising is an aspiration held by many cooperative members, but its current narrative can obscure inequalities, as expressed by Young (1990: 164):

> "The achievement of formal equality does not eliminate social differences, and rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression".

Pertinently, the decision as to how to "discipline" a worker was taken by the board of directors, and the vote by an assembly referendum. So, while worker members are seen as equal members, with equal rights to participate and to vote, their role within the cooperative is dependent on decisions taken by other cooperative members, and in particular board members, whose decision favours the majority (however marginal). The non-worker members of the cooperative could not be "sacked" in the same way, which is another indicator of difference. The only occasions that non-worker membership has been disputed is when an individual has been a member of more than one of the same type of cooperative in the city of Thessaloniki, which is against the law. Moreover, the recourse to reprimand for misbehaviour, or going against the interests of the collective, are still contested. Some believe that individuals should be supported and shown compassion in order that they see the impact they are having on the collective, and given a chance to change their ways. Others deem it necessary to have means to eliminate 'individualist' threats to the cooperative. Although the rivalry has settled, there is a chance that these differences will resurface if not confronted, especially since people had lost trust in the "other side" and their ideological convictions.

> "I and many other people of the cooperative think that they don't work with cooperation anymore, they don't try to build on different views in order to create the road that the cooperative will take, but they insist on their own view and they isolate all the people with different views than them, so they are more hard than they should be…, and this happens despite

them going to the media every other day and saying and declaring how democratic we are how everything is amazing and how equal everybody is. But what they say and what they do is different".

It was during this time that one non-worker member of Bioscoop described the firings as a technique to control not only the workers, but other members whose ideas contradicted the prominent members of the initiative. Whether this claim is an accurate portrayal, or skewed by bias of being on the "other side" of the rivalry, is difficult to say. However, what this did expose is that ultimately by aligning all members as equal participants and claiming that no hierarchies or bosses existed, the outcome was to erase the workers' claim to a particular position within the cooperative. The paradox was two-fold. Firstly, the wish to create a non-hierarchical organisation in reality did not reflect the power that the assembly, specifically the board members, had over the workers through disciplinary proceedings, and thus direct democracy on paper and in practice was used as a tool of disciplinary control. In this case the workers were massively outnumbered and, therefore, represented a minority interest group.

Secondly, although this erasure of difference happened because of political ideology, a vision of a better society, which held egalitarianism in the highest esteem, the consequence in practice was to entrench inequalities. This resonates with Young's (1990: 165) view on privilege and difference-blindness in liberalism, "…the ideal of universal humanity without social group differences allows privileged groups to ignore their own group specificity. Blindness to difference perpetuates cultural imperialism by allowing norms expressing the point of view and experience of privileged groups to appear neutral and universal". This power had existed but remained unchallenged, and as a consequence, power was allowed to concentrate in formal and informal hierarchies. This shows the countering effect of attempting to assume non-hierarchical organisations in the reality of material and positional inequalities. Additionally, it reasserts the question of whether each member should be allocated one equal vote on all matters, or whether there should be a decision-making process with procedures based on the politics of difference, such as those suggested by Hahnel (2005).

7.3.6 Strategic Differences Influenced by Ideological Differences

After the episode at Bioscoop exposed underlying tensions and resulted in what was referred to as a two-camp split, participants reflected on the initial years of setting up the cooperative. At the beginning, adherence or support for political parties was seen by some members as less significant, whereby plurality and cooperation was seen to have replaced sectarianism. Now, old political divisions

revealed themselves to have been present all along in the mode and manner of organising. It was at this point that previous cooperation became the subject of suspicion.

"…so we had people from let's say anti-authoritarian or anarchist movements up to I don't know the central mainstream PASOK movement, PASOK political party, but all these people used to manage to cooperate and work with each other very well, and that was the main thing that attracted me and made me participate in this effort…we were very confident the first three years, we were all believing we had strong bonds with each other, even with the two opposite sides, we were something like friends, there was big trust between us, and all of this slowly and steadily started collapsing, until we reached this point where no way I cannot trust them. And maybe them me" (Orfeas, Bioscoop).

In the case of Bioscoop, it was interesting how the political divisions were noted by the participants. The two sides (though not entirely clear cut) can be characterised by narratives (the one side about the other) as on the one hand, old socialist visionaries, soldiers to the cause, and with many connections and a particular organising culture built through years of political party participation. Leaders on this "side" initiated the bureaucratic protocol; they were knowledgeable about cooperative laws and ultimately acted to discipline the worker. On the other side, younger-on-average, non-partisan, anti-authoritarians and egalitarians constituted the majority; they were said to be more recently politicized. Members I spoke to supported the interest of workers at the cooperative as a distinct group, and one advocated their empowerment through establishment of a workers' assembly with distinct decision-making powers over shop floor activities. Splitting along ideological lines mirrors Young's (1986) theory that sectarianism is a possible consequence of forcing "community" through the denial of difference.

Whilst the adherence to political ideologies or experience with political groups was stricter amongst some participants than others, the split drew a line between those who had been involved in centralised organizing, and those who did not adhere to political parties, but were politicised in the spirit of direct democracy in recent social movements. Interestingly, though, the members of the cooperative who were later accused of being centrists were vocal advocates of non-hierarchy. Whilst the political orientation of individuals within the collectives informed their perspectives on appropriate strategies for the collective, a marked difference between the old socialists and the anti-authoritarians, was their respect of legislative bureaucracy. A member participant talked about the particular attention to legal matters that the "leaders" had in the interests of the cooperative, which he had put down to age and

experience. He would concede to their views in the beginning, but had at certain points argued for principled action. In one instance, the block on stocking products from an occupied factory, Bio.Me, for reasons of them not having documentation, was lifted. Nikos explains:

> "…when he was the leader, or at least one of the leaders in the working group of the quality and compatibility, they always stopped Bioscoop from having Bio.Me products because Bio.Me products don't have the license. And Bioscoop could have a fine because of that, but we decided that we were willing to take this risk, we need to support Bio.Me and if a fine comes, we will find solidarity, we will find a way to solve it".

The idea of solidarity here is to share risks with other initiatives who are more vulnerable in respect to the market/state. In fact, it was other solidarity initiatives selling their products for a period of time without receiving a fine that tempered the pressure on Bioscoop's decision. In the interim, though, the risk of legal punishment was a fear that prompted other members to block decisions. This example demonstrates the common ideological, legal tension that divided members of the initiative, especially between strongly principled, anti-systemic members, and members more used to working according to a long-term strategy connected to the end goal of economic longevity and reputation of the initiative.

These oppositional forces were made more concrete with the presence of separate, conflicting, decision-making, and democratic processes in cooperatives. There was a clash between the direct democracy structures of the cooperative, the structure that is associated publically with this new generation of cooperatives, of which Bioscoop is one of the first, and the board of directors that is obligatory for all cooperatives. Legally, the board's decisions surmount any decisions made by the all-member assembly. Additionally, as a basis for ensuring rights and responsibilities of the cooperative, the law can potentially be mobilised for partisan purposes, which was claimed to be happening when one Bioscoop member attempted (but failed) to dissolve the new board in a legal dispute during the period of conflict. The legal claim was that the elections of the board-members did not follow the rules stipulated by law. This shows the flimsiness of creating horizontalism in decision-making and organising, when it could be over-ridden by outside procedures. It also indicates that official state jurisdictive mechanisms could be used to upend parallel grassroots mechanisms for justice in this process of democratisation. Saying this, it is important to give consideration to circumstances where serious injustices necessitate appropriate external, judicial intervention.

7.3.7 The "Political" Becomes "Personal"

Having seen how non-recognition of difference can lead to the formation of informal hierarchies, we will now explore how this process of injustice manifested into personal rivalries. The consequence of difference-blindness is that structural inequalities can turn into personalised feelings of being the subject of an injustice, as the Per.ka example indicates. This feeling of injustice can be understood as being caused by an individual, especially if the positional differences are not recognized, and this results in what exhibits as personal rivalries. The emergence of leaders is talked about as a significant factor contributing to divisions. For example, in all three cases of major internal conflict, prominent male members of the collective were spoken about as triggering conflict by making a decision or change that invited opposition. However, an example of how "the political" turns personal is when members of an initiative react in an attempt to dislodge another member from their position of power. This echoes an observation by McAlevey (2016), that "the obsession with leadership development and not leader identification prevents all members of a movement from gaining the collective power they need and deserve". In the case of Per.ka, one possible reason for the forming of an alliance against the statute was given as personal resentment by the leader of the "opposition" towards a charismatic member of the founding group.

Although on the surface there seems to be simply a "clash of egos" between the two members, what gets uncovered in these conflicts, when investigated within their context, is that there are structural and cultural differences that set them, and other collective members, apart. At the same time, a patriarchal culture, which permeates even alternative organisations in Greek society, ensure that men predominantly reach leadership positions, and for the same reasons it is also usually men who compete with those in positions of authority. My perception was that the majority of participants in the solidarity economy were male. Given this, it is not possible to determine conclusively whether the fact that emergent leaders were mostly male was a result of strong societal presence of patriarchy, or simply a result of probability. There are, however, gender issues that have not been fully developed in this research. Although it is a concern that is strongly relevant to the politics of difference, gender did not emerge as a distinct theme from the research group, and nominal critical discussions were offered in informal conversations or interviews with members of these initiatives.

Interestingly, calamitous splits were not shaped by informal leaders alone, but were incarnated when a following was gathered in support or in reaction to the leaders. In the case of Bioscoop, the "leader" figures were said to use their comrades, firstly to achieve the minimum number of members at the very beginning, and during the last years to rally support for important decisions. This splitting into

sides mirrors bipartisan, representational political systems that the direct democracy structures of these self-organised groups are trying to surpass. Division emerging around leadership formation not only undermines democracy of the initiatives, but also threatens the survival of the initiatives. In the consumer cooperative Bioscoop, the division was acute, and reconciliation was a convoluted and exhausting process. Three years old at the "crisis" moment, the response was to focus on resolving difficulties and the internal processes that could alleviate tension, such as bringing in role rotation systems and, when the rivalry was at its most severe, an external mediator to resolve confrontations.

Another way in which personal rivalries impacted on the willingness of initiatives to engage in collaboration was connected to reputation. News of the Bioscoop events resonated throughout the city, where those connected to social movements heard about it through word of mouth. There were also social media posts that "outed" the conflict to the public and those purportedly behind it. This was compounded by a handful of public announcements by initiatives in Thessaloniki requesting Bioscoop treat its workers better. This public acknowledgement had a knock-on effect: indeed, it could have impacted income, with a significant drop in number of shoppers, perceived by members to be owing to the fact that some people from the movements lost faith in the initiative. Because some participants fear this kind of economic hit, initiatives are reluctant to show and share what are regarded as weaknesses, and therefore to learn from each other. This is especially true of larger organisations, such as Bioscoop, who rely on purchasing power and large consumer support for membership. The attitude to resolving conflict in the solidarity economy is voiced by Themis, who coordinates farmers' movements, as immature:

> "The collective spirit is a thorn in our side. Though, we are working hard to improve it. That is to say, even though we say that we are doing things collectively, we can often blow them apart with just one detail. This means that we are not mature, while we say things, we sign things, we do things too, [but] very often we dissolve things".

This can be translated as not having the collectively agreed and enforced systems in place to ensure fairness through recognising the structural difference faced by participants. Allowing processes to be shaped mostly by those who offer time and commitment leave the cooperative processes open to the whims of those who participate most and, thus, feel the most entitled (to voice, recognition and social reward). As well as not distributing responsibility on a collective basis, it (mis)places trust in few individuals who self-nominate for responsibility, which later becomes a source of resentment. Arguably, this confirms the accusation of immaturity, since self-organised initiatives have yet to

develop mechanisms to avoid individuals taking too much power or to self-organise for effective role and power sharing. As a result, self-organised configurations lack organisational know-how for dealing with crises and conflicts—which explains why collectives break down. An organisational maturity could be developed through networked learning in conjunction with other initiatives, since as we have seen, by not linking up their struggles, initiatives become politically and organisationally introvert. Equally, if lessons on democracy, inclusion, and participation are not passed from one initiative to another, the opportunity to build an interconnected solidarity-based food movement is missed.

7.4   Conclusions

The solidarity economy creates reciprocal relationships that previously did not exist because of the alienation created by competition and individualism in the capitalist system (Bowles 1991). The achievement of these new collaborative relationships is laudable. However, this paper has addressed the overly romanticised view of solidarity initiatives, by highlighting the conflicts that emerge in cases where differences are negated in an effort to create an equal community. In reality, Young's (1986) Politics of Difference reveals power inequities that set individuals within communities apart. The elaboration of this theory in the autonomous food initiatives in Thessaloniki exposed shifting material conditions and existent political cultures contributing to the uneven influence that individuals have in shaping visions and strategies of self-organised initiatives.

This research took place over a two-year period in Thessaloniki, when internal crises were "epidemic" and in a context of a growing lack of trust and of belief in collaboration amongst movement actors. The celebration of "community economies" shows that there is indeed an existing alternative to capitalism, and the claim is made with well-meaning intentions to elevate alternative economies to the realm of the possible, while maintaining their desirability in respect to capitalist relations. Nevertheless, this fieldwork supports Young's (1986) contention that to accomplish cohesion in solidarity-making processes, a collective must understand and confront integral difference to avoid unintended consequences that counteract collaboration.

Firstly, emphasising collective achievements (including both the rhetoric of new economies as oppositional to capitalism and in the public promotion of new ventures) potentially glosses over fractures and excludes more marginal individuals or groups, for instance, workers and women. The claim of direct democracy and horizontality supposes non-hierarchy; however, structural inequalities and their associated power asymmetries exist throughout society. In fact, the research showed that

assuming equality between all members can erase the power of those in more marginal groups; therefore, there is a need to first recognise both informal and formal hierarchies in order to be able to break them down. Iris Young's (1986) analysis shows alienation and violence exist in all societies with structural inequalities. These antagonisms are themselves exaggerated by the ongoing economic crisis (a time of growing inequality, austerity, and new types of exclusions, including a complex mental health situation).

The denial of difference (material, positional, and ideological) in these plural collectives allows informal hierarchies to emerge unrecognised. Although disagreements and arguments are commonly heard and felt, the end-product of an unfair decision-making procedure can force those who feel like their voice is consistently marginalised to become resentful, and it can result in conflict that forces side-taking by other members. Non-recognition of inequalities that exhibit as differences (difference-blindness) are the source of conflict, and not just the differences themselves. In this way, the attempt to create communities without an explicit politics of difference leads to division and fragmentation— the opposite of what is intended. In contradiction to the argument that political culture is to blame for social conflict, this paper shows that the capitalist crisis (and crisis of political legitimacy) contributes significantly to current dynamics, whereby clashes of political cultures and a shifting political economy have a detrimental impact on equitable collaboration.

Secondly, internal crises in solidarity initiatives can lead to fragmentation, where self-selected groups and smaller-scales are preferred for future organising. Participants close off alliances because of their personal grievances and stale interpersonal relationships. Finding the "right" people to cooperate with becomes a priority, therefore defining group membership based on common values, personal familiarity, and ability to collaborate (including processes of adopting passivity and compliance). Introverted self-protectiveness is pursued as a solution to internal difficulties and to preventing another internal "crisis" of collaboration. This indicates isolationary, decentralised practices, which limit the reaching out needed for networking. At the same time, failure to network between autonomous food initiatives is symptomatic of the combination of a breakdown of trust, which pervades movements. This perpetuates the fragmentary nature of initiatives down exclusionary lines, where principles of non-hierarchy function with less conflict in smaller assemblies. By eliminating disagreement, and with it, difference, there is a tendency for initiatives to reinforce inequalities and forms of domination. Young (1986: 19) posits another problem, which is pertinent to autonomous food initiatives in Thessaloniki:

"…surely it is unrealistic to assume that such decentralized communities need not engage in extensive relations of exchange of resources, goods and culture. Even if one accepts the notion that a radical restructuring of society in the direction of a just and humane society entails people living in small democratically organized units of work and neighborhood, this has not addressed the important political question: how will the relations among these communities be organized so as to foster justice and prevent domination?"

Thirdly, in the cases of food initiatives in Greece, the rise to prominence of a few individuals with whom power was allowed to concentrate created resentment and competition for voice. As these hierarchies were informal, they were left unchallenged. Most were male participants—with charisma, knowledge, drive, and vision that set them apart. Informal hierarchies are perpetuated by unacknowledged structural power disparities, such as experience of political organising, interacting often with age, or connections to people with power. However, self-proclaimed leaders' entitlement, which develops from dedication of time and personal efforts, propels forward a vision purportedly held by the entire collective. Visionaries, dedicated individuals with a determined "collective" mission for everyone, can also be detrimental to collective work, as they create unwanted hierarchies in the organisational culture.

Elaborating Young's theory showed that difference extends beyond usual categories of race, class, and gender to differences in organisational position, social capital, and experience in politics. Some of these relational variances are associated more with structural imbalances of power (e.g., class). Others are influenced by material injustices but manifest in power struggles because of inequitable positions of influence held by individuals in the organisation, including political practice shaping the collective's vision and strategy. These are specific to self-organised initiatives, with notable polemics made significant by the quest to build more just communities.

Moreover, because the narrative of solidarity has the illusion of cohesion, when conflict arises, it can result in disappointment and disenfranchisement amongst movement actors. Even if the initiative does not "fail" and survives the conflict, the residue of bad feeling, rivalries, and distrust reproduces the difficult task of collaborating in new self-organised groups. Equally, it propagates the idea that people are unable to work together. Rather than being a character of Greek culture, self-organised collectives are still maturing, as they attempt to develop mechanisms to deal with or avert conflict. These could be established by consciously employing a recognition of difference in decision-making implementation and mechanisms for fairly resolving conflict, as well as sharing lessons of democratic

processes between initiatives. As we have shown, in order for this to be effective, a form of democracy based on participation, which builds equity between those with power and those more marginalised, such as those suggested by Hahnel (2005), must be supported by "a commitment to anti-oppression by which movements educate themselves to understand how their internal cultures and practices might be oppressive, exclusive or exploitative" (Haiven and Khasnabish: 140). Besides this, though, more research is needed into the presence of extreme forms of exclusion and prejudice in food movements, especially given the nationalist and conspiratorial tendencies that have developed out of distrust of authority and that are now political realities in Greece (Knight 2013).

8 Whose power and representation manifests in PV when representations of what 'exists' are both multiple and exclusionary?

I present a first-person reflection that focuses on the extent to which participatory video flattens power asymmetries, encourages inclusivity and fairly represents diverse perspectives in social situations. The main insights were that attempting to resolve hierarchies between an "outsider" researcher and other participants can cause the process to be less guided to disempowering effect. PV can also unintendedly exclude groups of participants, in this case women, thus reproducing inequality in representation along lines of structural oppression. I discuss how caution should be taken when using participatory video as a tool for representing 'what exists', especially in polemical settings where disagreement manifests in multiple versions of the 'truth'. This casts doubts on the value of using video in all contexts or for all research objectives.

8.1 Introduction

This is a reflective chapter which came out of the first-person inquiry into the praxis of PV as a research tool within a PAR framework. A nine-member PV group was formed at the beginning of the research which included myself as the 'academic' researcher, with a connection to the university whence the research impetus came, and other 'community' researchers based in Thessaloniki[1]. The participatory group reflections from the 24-month fieldwork contributed to the shaping of this chapter, insomuch as they influenced my own self-awareness and reflective observations on the context and research design. This consisted of five iterative cycles from the first meeting and planning with Jenny, the co-facilitator for this project, to the PV group formation and collective film-making, and interviews and participation in events – as outlined in the methodology.

Participatory video scholarship is often 'celebratory and descriptive' (Milne 2016). Alternatively, this chapter hopes to offer some constructive insights into a decentralised, grassroots PV project initiated by an "outsider" researcher with different language and culture than other participants (Irvine et al. 2008). My position as a foreign university-funded researcher is acknowledged as of importance to influencing power-sharing, but also as a complex position to negotiate lines of cultural difference. Admittedly, my initial agenda was 'utopian', following the ideas of activating agency for social change

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in 'community economies' (Gibson-Graham 2006). Based on accounts from PV advocates (e.g. Lunch and Lunch 2006), I anticipated that the participatory video process would help participants in alternative food economies to find new common ground for collaboration. Furthermore, I didn't foresee the intensity of intra- and inter-group conflict that ensued. Thereafter, critique became a particular focus in the videos we produced, searching for answers to the 'lessons learned' or what we referred to informally as 'what didn't go well' in our group. However, since the PV process was necessarily situated in context implicated in its power asymmetries, I ask whether PV is always an appropriate tool for inclusionary and representative research.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to show that the conditions of PV must be made integral to the reflective praxis in order to democratise research, tell stories from the point of view of marginalised 'local' people – and be representative thereof. It begins by discussing the issue of 'management' of power dynamics in PV groups which implicate the facilitator, an issue which became important when attempting to accommodate the 'agency' of actors with diverse interests and motivations. Next, I elaborate on the need for "outsider" facilitators to navigate stepping back to 'allow' participation and avoid project hijacking, but with a view to step up and bring unique contributions to shaping the project when necessary. This praxis resonates with the leadership/ 'disdain of power' issue discussed in the previous analytical chapters.

The discussion progresses on the issue of empowerment in participatory group processes, emphasizing 'confidence', gender – and mental health - as particular restrictive factors on some individuals' agency in the collaborative process. I suggest that PV is a tool which must have a *specific* focus on interpersonal dynamics to successfully deal with group conflict, and must also take into account group and contextual specificities. Speaking explicitly to the 'feminist gaze' (Kindon, 2003), I then argue that PV could exclude certain groups by its very nature of 'exposing' through video, and I assert from my experience as a feminist, participatory researcher that going beyond the 'gaze' and adopting a feminist standpoint can in fact alienate other participants from the 'feminist researcher' given the reality of perpetual patriarchal dynamics. Finally, I inquire as to whether PV can deal with issues of plural representation at the same time as speaking 'truth to power' (Minkler 2004), specifically in the presence of diverse and conflicting 'truths' in polemical settings.

8.2 Literature review

Participatory Video (PV) is considered a tool for empowerment and transformation in marginal communities (Lunch and Lunch, 2006). Critique has been made, however, of the optimistic take on the process aims, such as framing the project around positive action deterministically, without factoring in unknown hurdles (Shaw, 2014). The problematic view of empowerment amongst participants who are thought to be responsible for taking 'control of their destinies', individualises the transformation process, rather than collectivising it (Walsh 2016). "[T]his seems a fundamental misread of the nature of power, and the way that neoliberalism, racism, patriarchy and colonialism function through systemic violence" Walsh (2016: 407) argues. Walsh (2014) is skeptical of participants being able to change the structural marginalisation which contains them, even if the participants do gain a feeling of empowerment from the PV process. The assumption of empowerment therefore focusses overly on possibility and neglects limitation (Shaw 2014), a trend this chapter counters. Seemingly nonconductive to empowerment, I argue that 'managing' group dynamics can be more important than attempting to dissolve the hierarchy between participants entirely.

Legitimate knowledge as a concept only exists because of the monopolisation over knowledge of privileged experts, obscuring other knowledges and the voices of the powerless (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008). Following on from this, since most research proposals emerge from "outsider" institutions founded on colonial wealth, even if the process is 'emergent' and 'iterative', what and who is researched is from the beginning dependent on these knowledge power centers (Mistry et al. 2016; Kindon 2016). The premise of PV is to subvert extractive research practices which maintain relationships of domination, so that research is done with co-participants, and researchers look nearby/with participants rather than speaking for less powerful 'others' (Bradbury-Huang 2008). This standpoint is advanced most eloquently by Kindon (2003) who argues that the feminist practice of looking opens up to multiple co-existent narratives since it distorts and reverses the direction of the gaze between, and as a result blurs the roles of, researcher and researched. This results in a destabilisation of the masculinist and colonial practice of looking, but I argue can create a dilemma about what representations are exposed and which are hidden, which casts doubts on the value of using video in all contexts.

Does this study then address the perspectives and representation of "those who suffer the gravest weight of oppressive forces" (hooks 1994: 53)? Whilst PV by default creates a visual representation in which 'giving voice' and 'representation' are principle goals (Lunch and Lunch, 2006), Walsh (2014:

407) asks "who is this representation for, and why?" ; affirming that it is important to acknowledge whose power is behind the representation, including who talks, who is seen, who is part of the process, who dominates the knowledge production process and which language is used to communicate (Olivier et al. 2012: 120). Similarly, when Mertens (2008) argues that a personal sense of agency can be gained through PV, we would like to understand whether with this particular tool, some participants gain more agency than others, at another's expense. These questions speak to confidence, gender and plural representations in the nuances of inclusion/exclusion facilitated through PV.

Recent reflections on PV have drawn attention to the lack of focus on power and the negative impact on the participatory process of neglecting to recognise and deal with it (Shaw 2016: Milne et al. 2012). Women are commonly less heard, as they are disempowered by asymmetrical gender relations prevalent at all levels of society (Mosedale, 2003). In Greece, in particular, socioeconomic subjugation of women has been confounded by austerity measures (Karamessini and Rubery: 2013). PV as a microcosm has been shown to counter this: Kindon (2003) makes the observation that using participatory video in her project was particularly emancipatory for women. Similarly, Shaw (2014) in her research with women in community development projects in the UK, observed that "women did not feel coerced and, like other participants, exerted power by moulding, subverting or refusing activities." Milne (2012) observes that participants who did not feel ownership, and therefore worth, in a project, refused to become participant, not out of apathy or passivity, but as a stand to retain or take back power through their own agency of saying "no". The assumption that PV builds agency through self-confidence as well as aiding group unity has been warned against, especially when the group is made up of participants with different backgrounds (Shaw 2014; Mistry 2014). This chapter argues that the use of PV in some contexts can, by its nature of public exposure, exclude women.

From an ontological point of view, the championing of multiple narratives in PV is based on the understanding that, unlike normative social science, there is no objective claim to truth (Pink 2011). If we take the feminist constructivist approach we can avoid relativizing representations, and instead see knowledges as situated in relation to the knowledge-holders' social position (Haraway 1988). Whilst plural representations have been discussed as a 'dialogue of knowledges' in food movements (Rosset and Martinez-Torres 2013), the marrying of representation of voice through film with a conflictual context in crisis Greece's solidarity of food makes for interesting discussion. How contradictory narratives are managed in relation to grassroots processes of conflict resolution, along with the danger of unintended and inappropriate consequences of the research on initiatives and individuals (Shaw 2016) constitutes the final part of this discussion. This is detailed in respect to using

other methodological tools to look deeper than 'what exists' on the surface, and how it can be managed methodologically.

Projects have used participatory video as a tool to discuss and resolve issues within the group conducting the research (Shaw 2016). A few have reflected on the problems of conducting participatory research on a larger scale, but usually within institutions or a network of institutions (Fine et al. 2004; Martin 2008). This chapter contributes to this body of work by examining a project that engaged with a diversity of organisations which are emergent and grassroots, as opposed to institutionalised and bureaucratic. The appropriateness of using PV to address this diversity of research aims within a self-organised project will be teased out towards the end of the chapter. I include some of my personal observations here to elucidate cultural norms and discomforts from an "outsider" perspective.

8.3 Reflections

8.3.1 Facilitating agency and representation

The participatory video research group (PV group) which undertook the research was formed based on the individuals' participation in decentralised alternative food activism. Many of the participants did not know each other beforehand, but some people were already familiar with each other through projects, and this was especially the case of connections to the local co-facilitator, Jenny (details of our meeting and co-working practice are in the methodology section). This study was experimental in terms of the internal group composite - it was unknown how the individuals would relate to one another -, and it was also ambitious in terms of the scope of the project, incorporating various opinions and stories, alongside the complexities and difficulties of including several loosely connected but distinct initiatives in the city and surrounding area. Thus, I attempt to speak to its ambition in the discussion of internal and external processes which unfolded during the project.

At the end of the second cycle of research, the PV training was the first event which brought the group together (see methodology). Here, we talked about next steps and decided on themes to focus on. From the very beginning, members of the PV group expressed that they were motivated by different aspects of the project (e.g. to help show their initiative's work, to learn to make a film for campaigning, to meet people). The diverse interests meant that people did not want to make one film output together, and neither did the process demand that they do. Instead, small 'clusters' of working groups started to form or others were recruited to 'help' realise several films – which totalled 5

amongst the whole group. Collecting and presenting unaltered voices in video side-by-side is a technique to avoid a 'hierarchy of opinions' (Corneil 2012) and it was this pluralism that reflected the 'decentralised' nature of the group, and the nature of the food initiatives themselves. This decision-making was a process of handing over agency and allowing for diverse representation to emerge from multiple standpoints, rather than 'allowing' people to 'speak for themselves' only within the facilitators' remit (Walsh 2016). The expression of participation was therefore not collectivised in these initial stages in an attempt to avoid enclosing and excluding 'voices'. This links into Walsh's (2016) idea that activating participation is a form of direct democracy, which functions on the basis of each individual having an equal amount of say in decision-making.

We agreed at this moment that if there was energy and commitment, we could pursue all films whilst always bringing ideas and issues back to the group. A few months later, when many of the films were still unfinished past the deadline we had set, we discussed next steps. Participants expressed that films were a challenge to finish because of the amount of footage they had collected in total, and resolved that it could have been more productive to have first chosen a 'pilot' film to complete as a team, with the aim of feeling more like a group in a collaborative exercise and seeing it through from start to finish. Shaw (2014: 420) discusses the fine balance between practitioner's influence in group dynamics and individual agency, but in this case, there was an evident need for facilitator intervention earlier on in order to deter demotivation of participants in what became an ambitious, convoluted and arduous process (see figure 8.1), and instead to build a collective spirit. The diversity and range of video topics selected to be covered reflects the tension between, on the one hand, the aims of marrying inclusivity and collaboration in video-making, and on the other hand, representing individual interests, connected to everyday activities of food initiatives in this study.
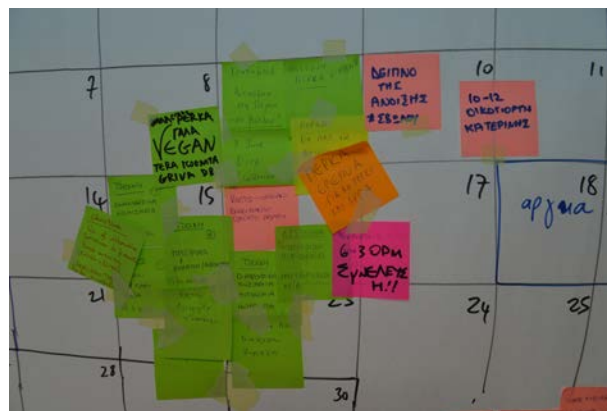

Figure 8.1 Photo of our collective calendar showing the PV group's initial ambitions

We were creating a team of academic-community researchers and the training and meetings were bilingual. Apart from one member of the group, everyone could comprehend English, and three

members of the group were fluent in both English and Greek. During the initial stages, Jenny interpreted whenever there was a presentation scenario. Jenny was a participant in the training to learn the skills needed for PV, and was tasked with making sure that the sessions were managed in terms of group work, resolving questions and issues and making sure other participants understood the tasks and objectives. Shaw (2014: 419) considers "that the relationships that develop through project interactions are a key to maximising [social] possibilities." However, the "grassroots-style" resource-poor self-organisation style of our group – though helping to equalise hierarchies by creating an informal setting – made the multitasking between more than one communicative role, such as facilitator and translator, or translator and participant (for example in the PV training), difficult to organise. This lack of distinct (or professionalised) roles is quite normal in social movements, but on reflection it posed some challenges to conflict resolution. This was highlighted when a participant who was implicated in tensions and accused of conducting themselves in the wrong way by another participant, was also trying to facilitate. We did later identify the need for separate roles, and different people stepped up to interpret, or facilitate. Anyway, the need for an interpreter slowly phased out as I became able to communicate in Greek.

8.3.2 Shaking off the leader role: balancing active with passive

The above example is demonstrative of blurring roles, whereby at times facilitators were unable to manage the group to avoid hierarchies perpetuating within it. I was implicated in the hierarchies especially because I was the "outsider" researcher who had reached out to the other participants. When we initially entered decisions about thematics and subject matter of the research, the central point of reference for the group's questions was the expectation of my research and whether what others had suggested was appropriate, and even questions like 'is this useful to your PhD?' or from one participant 'are we here to do the work for your studies?' This echoes the observations that researchers commonly, if unintentionally, have too much control over the research agenda (Mistry et al 2016; Walsh 2014), but that a pretence at egalitarianism in participatory research obscured and reinforced power asymmetries (Nygreen 2009). Overall, the mentality on ownership shifted as the group became closer and more comfortable with each other. There was still a continual balancing act for myself as a researcher between passive and active roles within the shaping of the subject matter and actions of the group, as MacKewn (2008) reflects, "sometimes facilitators need to provide structure and time boundaries; at other times, they need to flex structure and time boundaries".

On the one hand, information being relayed by people from a foreign institution seemed to appeal to some participants, because it was an esteemed and 'professional' resource to tap into. On the other

hand, 'rolling out a training programme' is commonly received negatively in participatory settings, where even if unintentionally, "professionals produce and reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and power that place them in the position of agents who know better" (Chambers in Gaventa and Cornwall 2008: 177). The association of someone with a university can affect the way that participants view the merit of what they know in relation to you, and moreover, the manner in which you discuss and plan the research can increase this feeling of lesser knowledge and create a larger hierarchy as the process goes on. In the group, this initial dynamic was difficult to shake off, with participants often looking to me for answers and not using their initiative to its full potential. I felt at the time it was necessary to speak in a manner that felt equal (such as using the pronoun 'we'), admit not knowing things and give space to learning-through-doing in order to reset the power (and knowledge) differential for the collective work e.g. open up tasks for delegation. I came to see that efforts to step back and 'allow' initiative and participation sometimes had a negative impact on the process, when I actually had a key role in overseeing the next steps and devising intentional space for constructive and participatory group work.

From this experience, the messiness of PAR combined with complexities of collective film-making with a diverse group became demotivating for me as a facilitator. This was partly because of other participants' intermittent falloff in participation (as with participating in the solidarity economy, it is difficult to maintain momentum). For example, one negative consequence of this decentralised and ground-up approach was that we realised we were continuing to collect footage – via several people - without meeting with enough time to watch it back and analyse it collectively. In contrast to the short videos and messages Lunch and Lunch (2006) recommend compiling, the interviews we collected were mostly long because we allowed open-ended talking and reflection and we interviewed a large number of people, which put constraints on how collective the editing process could be. This, we later saw as a missed opportunity to synthesize the work we were doing and discuss it critically. I argue, therefore, firstly that there can never be a complete dissolution of positions/roles in an attempt to create non-hierarchical group between the "outsider" and the rest of the participants; adopting a more 'passive' position does not necessarily hand power over to the group processes. Secondly the denial of hierarchy between them can also cause too little 'active' intervention to provide sufficient guidance to the process. Elaborating on Nygreen's conclusions on equality in PAR (2009), intending to share power completely can lead to a messier process than is conducive to active participation.

This above argument is similar to Shaw (2016) referring to "practitioners' *management* rather than *control* might avoid the discourse impasse and practical confusion that prevents practitioners acting

helpfully." The aim was to make it so participants felt ownership of the project, yet this made the later stages of editing more difficult to facilitate (preparation for paper editing), and time consuming (on-computer edit). For this reason, if the project does not hold group cohesion as a sole priority, but also values the content of the data collected, a mixed methods approach deals more honestly with the multiple demands, including other participatory methods and ethnography. Advocated by Olivier et al. (2012), this bricolage approach bridges the academic world with the grassroots and emergent methods. In doing so, it takes weight off the PV part to answer methodologically to multiple, and changing, research aims. This project benefited from the bricolage approach but would have benefitted further from having clearer aims tied to each research method; PV for group cohesion, from less participatory elements.

8.3.3   Confidence in stepping up/ back

To continue with this critique of the appropriateness of PV in all circumstances, we develop Kindon's (2003) challenge to the belief that "taking people out of their ordinary lives to do something fun" which aids *collective* reflection, analysis and action. I add that PV is actually an extension of real life and therefore the group must accept that people's anxieties and burdens are brought with them into the process. This includes what participants will enjoy and their ability to work with others. When friction between group members occurred during the second and third cycle of this inquiry, I observed that participants brought their frustrations and insecurities into the room, including a noticeable level of social marginalisation amongst several participants. As a friend remarked: "peoples' ever worsening psychology does nothing to help the [social] movements", and this is partly because they play a part in the destruction of interpersonal relations.

Some people who came into conflict with others decided not to remain in the group. Though this was problematic in that the process ultimately excluded some individuals, and for this reason I felt regret; we observed that PV was – at least for us as we were not trained nor prepared for this – not instinctively a space for psychotherapy (unless it is explicitly designed with therapeutic skills, e.g. Shaw 2016). Acute presence of deeper issues of self-esteem, social insecurity and shame – even pride - cannot be resolved by PV alone, but especially when the aims of PV are not only to encourage collaborative working relationships, but as in this case, have an external dimension. Additionally, this group was not closed, but emergent, and new members did join later. Thus, consciously understanding the power and social dynamics present in the socio-political context in which you are working is fundamental to being able to negotiate the particular obstacles to participation, as well as to find resources and methods to address difficult relations – including attending to individual psychological

needs. With careful needs-focussed facilitation directed only at interpersonal dynamics, the PV process could have been a more positive internal space for joining up and sharing personal difficulties associated with the social struggle (in this case, the crisis).

Helped by my ability to step 'outside' of the context, I observed that those who were under-confident in the group wore signs of social anxiety and mental health issues (which later on they talked about). A couple of people backed down from contributing, being more passive to others taking space, which Shaw (2012b) refers to as 'social loafing'. Meanwhile, the more prevalent characteristic was to push for space to be heard and to demand reassurance and affirmation of belonging to the group. This in part is related to the way of operating in Greek assemblies, the democratic culture that people are used to. Assemblies operate fairly similarly across the different formations of initiatives whereby non-horizontal organising allows all voices to be heard, often without a limit on length of time it takes. Culturally, as I see it, there is an attitude towards organisational design which this phrase describes best: "Ὅταν οι ἀνθρωποι σχεδιάζουν, ο θέος γελάει!" (When people plan, God laughs!).

In practice, rarely is there a facilitator who shapes the discussion besides moving participants from one agenda point to the next, and so participants of an assembly can repeat points already made without being asked to be concise or productive to decision-making. When the meeting starts late, as is often the case, and time-keeping is absent, the meeting is still going on hours later with people drifting in and out to take phone calls as there is no sign of the meeting ending. On occasions the meetings are productive, and concise, due to a good working relationship, yet, facilitation of fundamental methodological and topical issues related to group dynamics is generally under-resourced, and – importantly – lacking an explicit 'anti-oppression' focus. This local organisation culture associated with movements and direct democracy, is not entirely conductive to creating inclusive and safe decision-making and communication spaces needed in internal PV processes.

One example of where I had to choose between a passive or an active 'researcher' position within the group was during a decision on interviewing people at the peri-urban growing collective, Per.ka. Due to a particular interest in how the state is affecting the ability of initiatives to be and remain autonomous in the context of the crisis, I suggested that we ask people about the threat of the land on which it is located being sold off to the national assets fund, and about a reported bid for the land by one of the city's football teams. People at first agreed that it would be good to know where Per.ka fits within the government plans. At the next meeting, however, one of the group – who is also a member of Per.ka - requested that particular question be taken out, so as not to stir things up

unnecessarily. In their opinion, this could incite problems between PAOK fans and members who were determined to defend the space against development. In my opinion, conversely, we could contribute to creating and evidencing a collective effort to resist these threats, in echoing Walsh (2016), "these systemic features of inequality must be fought on a larger scale than that of the individual".

In this instance, though, since I was not as familiar with the context and wanted to respect the wish of someone who would be affected by the intervention I took a step back and accepted their wish, despite this affecting what I felt was an interesting direction for the research. The member who raised the concern was also generally under-confident and this was a demonstration of their feeling safe in the PV group, which I personally felt should be respected. Whilst in a non-participatory research setting, I would not have been constrained in this way, I may not have heard about the proposals in the first place, or been given background information about how it is being received by the community – since I would have not been embedded in the social movements in the same way. Ultimately, as a foreign researcher, I did not want to use the outsider's privilege of creating inappropriate consequences of exposure (Shaw 2016), or 'grassing in' to a community (Milne 2012) and then walking away; even if there was a chance of contributing to social transformation, the fact that I did not need to face the legacy of the PV project on the ground was significant.

To mitigate entrenchment of power inequalities, there is therefore a need to think creatively about how to gain an insight into participants' experiences of taking part (Shaw 2014). Therefore, we consciously included evaluation of the process, by introducing reflective sessions with an extra focus on talking about what participants were finding difficult within the group and the process. Interestingly, many of the dynamics that I observed during the PV sessions came to the surface during feedback, showing that although a new closeness was aided by the group reflection, power imbalances were still present. For example, vulnerable people who express themselves slowly and with difficulty, especially when talking about emotions, were cut off by other, more eloquent and enthusiastic group members (and possibly owes itself to the habitual style of conducting meetings). This pattern needed to be carefully facilitated so that people are reminded to speak one after the other, giving time to let people finish. This shows the value of having someone who steps back to observe the group (practitioner), and to think about ways in which to intervene or to construct meetings. Additionally, it confirms that the extent to which confident members are helped and not hindered by PV is dependent on "how practitioners inform participation choices and support people through any difficulties" (Shaw 2016). The end result of facilitating based on an assessment on ability to participate, though imperfect,

was that everybody felt they could speak and frustration (and thus conflict) with each other did not arise in the later stages.

8.3.4   PV can exclude women

PV has prided itself on reclaiming marginalised voices through their representation in shaping what happens in front of and behind the camera, thus reversing the normal dominance of typically white male voices in social science research (Waite and Conn 2012) – although this consequence of PV has recently been disputed (Kindon 2015). Even though the majority of the research team were women (7out of 9), the number of men being asked to be interviewed far exceeded the number of women, and, this was due to the much higher proportion of male participants in the alternative food economies (especially producers). Although we mitigated against only getting stories from the more known community members by approaching members of the community through our grassroots networks and contacts (Cooke and Kothari 2001), the type of people who were eventually interviewed at length were ready to be heard, perhaps with most prominent positions or status within groups, which also had gender implications. Confidence on camera is linked to self-assurance about the message you want to put across and having it associated with your image. Saying this, generally speaking, comfortable self-expression was a cultural quality, exhibited in meetings where people of all genders talked openly.

On several occasions, however, the method of interview, using a camera, created a barrier to people's expression. Interviews with a camera actually heightened hierarchies and diminished representation of a marginalised group as it put off female participants. In opposition to Kindon's (2003) observation that the PV process was particularly useful for women, it was not the appropriate tool for capturing female 'voices' in this case. Women generally shied away from featuring on film, either requesting audio recording only, asking to stop an interview part way through, or appearing noticeably uncomfortable on playback. Camera-shyness was an attribute almost exclusively experienced by women. In one instance, a female farmer delayed an interview saying "come back then, that will be a better day". When we finally sat down to do the interview, she had noticeably dressed up for the camera; she wanted to look her best. Appearance was obviously a barrier for her accepting the invitation to be filmed straight away. In another case, an interview with a female farmer, whom we approached specifically because we wanted the perspective of a woman farmer, ended up being hijacked by her husband who continuously spoke over her. Generally, he had a lot more to say than she did, caricaturing the patriarchal dynamic of women with men which manifests particularly in certain cultural subsectors of society. On a third occasion, I set a date and time to meet and interview another female participant when she had ample time. It was outdoors at an initiative. Again, very

similarly, two men interrupted with their opinions, which were uninvited. These incidences gave rise to this observation in my journal on 3rd November 2016:

> "what makes conducting video interviews in Greece easier is the readiness to speak, but this also makes it harder to engage women with space to talk of their own experiences".

Most interviews with farmers had to be taken spontaneously, after talking with them and when they had a chance to take a break in their work. Farmers lived outside the city and when they came in, it was to drop off or sell products. Additionally, these self-organised initiatives rarely had space or venues to accommodate privacy. This added to the difficulty in interviewing women autonomously. Tellingly, out of the video interviews with single interviewees, the interviews with men lasted an average of 48 mins, with the shortest being 5 mins, and the longest being 3 hrs 4 mins, whilst video interviews with women on average lasted 30 mins, with the shortest being 2 mins (cut short) and the longest being 1 hr 56 mins (with a member of Agroecopolis). The cultural manifestation of patriarchy effects 'inclusion of women' in participation. PV can unwittingly exclude less dominant social groups, even if in another project the same methodology played on the strengths of the same group; culture and the manifestation of relations of domination (e.g. patriarchal) are important factors to consider when selecting a methodology to 'include' representatives of particularly subjugated social groups.

During the second cycle, the facilitators raised as a topic in the PV group the different experiences of men and women in front of the camera. Some people in the group agreed that we should try to make it so more women were interviewed, though we acknowledged that this doesn't solve the issue of involving camera-shy women. As an alternative, we offered to use a voice recorder or turn the camera away so it didn't film them. In a public screening and discussion at Per.ka in APAN, where only two women briefly featured in the film out of eight participants and only one woman was seen whilst speaking (the other didn't want to be), the feedback on 'what is missing/what is too much?' most discussion groups, of which there were five, pointed out that children were missing, and particular (male) individuals featured too much, but only one of the feedback groups mentioned the lack of women explicitly. This was surprising for me, but showed the cultural acceptance that men have space to talk, and at the same time the lack of recognition of an important demographic being missing from the narrative.

8.3.5 Patriarchy overpowers the feminist gaze

Many female participants also felt unsure about interviewing in front of the camera, myself included. In contrast, in the case where a male member of the group went independently to interview people he knew at an initiative, he set up the camera so that he, as an interviewer, was included in the frame. Although I considered doing this, I felt too shy (amplified by being under-confident in speaking Greek and doubting what merit there would be to me being on screen). This camera-shyness was not exclusively felt by women, and neither were all women in the team camera-shy, but overall women's heightened discomfort in front of the camera was unmistakeable. What this meant, paradoxically, was that most of the shots conducted by female interviewers were taken with a camera between the interviewer and interviewees (see figure 8.2), maintaining a standard distinction between researcher and researched. Interestingly, it was partly due to our feeling of exposure that we maintained these hierarchical conventions through camera placement.

Figure 8.2 Female film-makers from the video group

Several of the group appeared in the final edited films, and the various reactions to being included accentuated the differences between group members. For some, the entire process of PV has also made it possible for people to feel more comfortable in their position in a group and in themselves. For example, one female participant who struggles with confidence, when she first went in front of the camera during the initial workshops, spoke very slowly and was evidently uncomfortable. When she switched during one session from being the on-screen interviewer to the interviewee alongside

her friend, her face lit up. On watching herself back, though, she was embarrassed about her voice and her appearance. She initially wanted the section featuring her taken out. Others in the group argued genuinely that what she says is valuable to the narrative, and another female member of the research teams made the point that 'you are one of the very few women in there!' After resolving to stay in reluctantly, on the next edit and view-back, she liked the way she sounded. In truth, the edit hadn't changed much, but her perspective on herself had; her doubts seemed to have been neutralised by group affirmation. When PV is centred on resolving inequalities and confidence issues within a small group, it can therefore have a positive effect on marginalised actors, including women; but, when the research subjects are disparate, and the process doesn't involve bonding and encouragement between every participant (due to lack of time, resources for the scale of research), then feminist ways of looking cannot resolve deeply embedded patriarchal dynamics of domination and subordination.

8.3.6   Being a foreign female researcher

As a researcher from a Northern European institution, I contended with gendered assumptions of cultural difference. For instance, I tried to raise the issue of women's power with female friends and peers. I was often met with a response which portrayed female power as resilience, unfamiliar to what I understood to be struggle against gender-based injustices, including the characteristic display of male power in radical political spaces. The resilience was expressed in opinions such as "it is difficult for women, but you can speak just the same". Strategies to deal with patriarchy differed in that I had experience of being in radical spaces in which gendered inequities were openly challenged. Speaking to friends made me realise that this was a cultural difference in political organising. Above all, I wanted to be accepted as a 'participant' and not always seen as an outsider, and to do this I wanted to prove myself as trustworthy. Within the research group I was the only outsider and I felt like I did not want to take the agenda away from others. If the issues of gender came up organically in the group, then it would be our collective agenda. How I'd be seen with this agenda upfront, especially as some people were understandably sensitive to the imperialist politics which impoverished them and their country; I feared could be counterproductive to our PV group's relationship building.

At times, I was explicitly made to feel like I was unable to live out my feminist politics (or adequately express them). For instance, I used to go along frequently to the Saturday morning and Wednesday morning organic market and chat to the producers, as well as doing some occasional interviews when they were appropriate. On one occasion, a producer approached me and offered me *mezedes* (this was commonplace at the markets, to be offered food at the table with others, or to be given free fresh food by producers I had spoken to). After a short time, he approached me again and asked: 'are you

a feminist?' to which I answered in the affirmative. Five men proceeded to stand around me to tell me about gender equality of Greece since the ancient times; they gave an example of what they called matriarchies, where women had the money in their pocket, and shared it with the men. When I tried to argue against this being a matriarchy, based on familial knowledge of working class families in Scotland, I was interrupted and they kept repeating that I need to understand Greek culture. It was an uncomfortable experience, but I didn't react as strongly as I felt, because I was outnumbered, speaking in my second language, and also wanted to maintain a good relationship with these food producers. It was through experiences like this that I got used to managing my own reaction to patriarchal behavior. Ironically, though, in the end I think I silenced myself, by trying to understand difference, I accommodated too many norms which I would otherwise have fought.

"I am used to listening not speaking, when am I going to speak up again?" (8th July 2017)

Kindon et al. (2007) refer to the powerful position of the feminist researchers, who are a dominant voice in comparison to other researchers. On the contrary, I felt that there was a need to assimilate and not pursue a 'culturally imperialist' practice in a place I was still learning about. For this reason, I accepted the gap between my principles and practice in spaces where I belong and that of a place where I was an individual outsider, as well as recognising the negative effect this had on me. I was negotiating the ideals that drive my activist research with the acceptance that the deep-set structures of power were too big to contend within this research, and trying not to jeopardise the positive relationship I was making effort to build with members of the initiatives. My story echoes Nygreen (2009: 15) when she reflects that "…the project reproduced rather than challenged the unequal power relationships I hoped it would disrupt. At times, subjugated knowledge was marginalized in favour of claims to traditional expertise." This again shows the need to struggle against structural inequalities using collective power. Therefore, I concluded that PV cannot work as a correcting mechanism for structural power dynamics, but participatory processes do need an explicit social change agenda incorporated into their practice if issues of representation and exclusion are going to be properly addressed.

8.3.7 When what 'exists' are contradictory 'truths'

Feminist ways of looking acknowledge the subjective representations of truth in their multiplicity, including diverse local knowledges (Kindon 2003; Minkler 2004). As we collected stories through interviews and chats, it became clear that multiple truths about the same event existed from different sources. This felt problematic, because what we felt should have been a singular 'truth', elicited from

participants' contradictory answers. This destabilised the search for what 'exists', which we intended to 'expose', but at the same time showed fracture lines between people at the source of these alternative, parallel narratives. This was an important insight which underlined the value of the iterative and evolving research approach this study took. As the validity of claims could not be 'verified' against one another, the PAR test of validity extended by McTaggart (1998) suggests that the research is not valid unless it is connected to social life and in that manner, must be defensible, have educative value, political efficacy and moral appropriateness. Because the contradiction told a story of deeper disharmony, we were concerned with how the use of participatory video could hide, subvert or prioritise some representations of the truth over others, and can also contribute to discord. This part of the analysis brings in reflection and analysis on video content to show how video representation is subject to our individual interpretation of truth.

Figure 8.3 Video of Agrotiko Pantopoleio. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wztx86EA_LA please type in the link and watch, selecting English subtitles.

We experienced this dilemma of representation by watching a montage of clips that I had arranged into a video sequence on the topic of the 'no middlemen' markets. In this montage, a farmer and organiser both speak about the rules of a market which had recently set up as a cooperative and whether the rules prevented farmer members from participating in other markets. Several members of the video group had discussed having heard this rumoured through the network, and one of the

members was a participant in the markets and therefore had heard it from other producer-participants. We asked this question on camera to a producer and an organiser during their interviews, recorded their answers, and included them both in the play back. See and watch video in figure 8.3.

In the first video clip, the producer says:

"No I don't go [to the other market in Kalamaria]. We don't go because our statute says clearly that we are members of the cooperative and so we only support the cooperative. We can't have a foot in two boats at the same time, we would surely fall into the sea…it doesn't matter if we can swim or not, we mustn't do it…it's the rule. From the moment I signed the statute, I, myself, am obligated to comply".

Following on in a separate clip, the organiser, when asked if this is the case, contradicts this with a logical justification:

"Of course they can participate in other markets…Besides they do participate in [official] open air markets. Many of our producers are forced to make a living by participating in open air markets, they have been given the license to do so. What are people supposed to do? They can't live from one market every other week. Therefore they do go to the open air markets. Not because things are better there but anyway they try in whatever way they can to distribute their produce either here with us or at open air markets or through shops. However they can".

When we collectively watched the footage, with these two versions juxtaposed side-by-side, we discussed collectively what we believed was true. Interestingly, the group members interpreted the film differently. One member saw the food producer as having exaggerated the rules and of demonstrating an inflated display of loyalty to the camera. Others saw the producer as speaking in good faith; he stared straight in the camera and appeared to make the statement with defiance. They also questioned why he would lie, it was more probable that the organiser, who was in a position of power in local politics, would cover the truth to maintain his reputation. Equally, some were sceptical of the organiser who mumbled when he made this statement 'of course' and because they believed the rumours that they had heard in movement circles.

This showed that individuals, depending on their view of the individual making the claim, on screen and more widely, alongside their already acquired understandings of the individual and the social

context of the story, interpreted the truth subjectively. This resonates with Engel's (2010) assertion that "any image of society depends on the perspective one takes, and the perspective one takes influences what one sees." As well as video building in specific, partial ways of seeing (Kindon 2003), representation of trustworthiness of a narrative is based on our own situated knowledge and partial perceptions as a viewer. This view of objectivity being plural does not consider all 'truths' as equal, but that ways of seeing reality are embodied by each individual (Haraway 1988). Kindon (2003: 149) thus challenges us to "be more explicit about the power involved in how we work with video, to democratise its use in ways that embrace multiple and partial ways of looking and open up new possibilities for knowledge." In this case, though possibilities were closed down exactly because we sought out multiple perspectives.

After discussion, we agreed as a group, firstly, that this clip could not go live because it does not have a coherent narrative and was too open to interpretation. We decided not to publically publish these videos until we had found out what was written in the statute of the newly formed cooperative, which we hoped would shine light onto the matter. Eventually, a member of the video group who was also a participant in the markets found a copy of the statute. There is nothing explicit about not being allowed to participate in other informal markets, only about not being members in other cooperatives of the same nature in the same region. This is a Greek law and applies to all cooperatives, but would not prohibit participation in other self-organised 'no middlemen' markets which are informal. At this point, I was considering how these narratives had diverged:

> "I wonder what rumours or talk outside of the written agreement have given some producers this impression" (Friday 21st July 2018).

However, when watching the clips a few more times alone and trying to keep an open mind, it became clear that the narrative of the organiser could be true, as well as the producer, since the former refers explicitly to conventional open air markets, and the latter is answering a question about participating in the 'other', specific, Kalamaria market. This deeper analysis made it clear that a strong contextual background knowledge alongside a sharper analytical practice would find the nuances in the narrative. Nevertheless, the location of uneven power which produced these divergent narratives was still open to interpretation. Particularly, during the interviews, this distinction was not immediately clear, and so the interviewer did not ask a follow up question. This shows the value of listening intently to meaning in narratives, but also to the difference in representation between first, surface, impressions and meanings gleaned from considering various factors in combination, including audio and visual

signifiers. This confirms the ideas of McTaggart (1998), that validity is connected to ethical considerations in their context, but shows the extra layer of complexity of collecting 'data' as a visual representation which can be shared and understood outside of their context.

Although a written account is deemed to be factual, the presence of multiple people who disagreed with this showed the power of verbal representations of this written document in influencing beliefs. This rumour emerged in the context of apparent fighting for space and hours between two markets The ubiquitous presence of rumour in self-organised initiatives demonstrates the informal mode of organising, the divisions and suspicions that emerge as a result of this, and – important to PV and other research methodologies – the researchers cannot always access truth or 'know' who holds power either, especially in polemic settings. Participatory researchers too are implicated in the shifting power relations in that "perhaps as much as any other resource, knowledge as power determines definitions of what is conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom" (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008: 122).

Not being able to discover a truth shows how sensitive the real situation could be to singular representations which take sides even if unintentionally. The risk of public exposure could be to damage an individual or initiative (either the one featured, or discussed in the footage), by the interpretation of the content as either true or false, and thus pitting some narratives against others. Another option in this case would have been to show the video to both interviewees and ask why there was a discrepancy, but, again, it felt sensitive to meddle in a relationship we knew little about. While it may appear that to participate and give permission to be filmed gave us researchers authorisation to show the video publically or amongst other movement actors, we used our authority to make a decision not to as we felt that the contradiction in the montage of voices itself made the interpretation subjective, and in this case, could have worsened conflict unless pitched in a sensitive and well-controlled discursive environment.

8.3.8   Speaking Truth to Power

In another case of conflicting stories around the same event (an internal crisis in Bioscoop), it appeared to me that neither 'side' was 'wrong' and that contrasting truths/representations are constructed by a plethora of different perspectives, interests, and ideologies (as discussed in chapter seven). Comparing two interviews of members of Bioscoop, Pantelis (145 mins) and Orfeas (45 mins), respectively, there were interesting parallels, and also direct and irreconcilable oppositions, in claims or accusations against the other side. Notably, both talked about the situation polemically, discussing what they both referred to as the other 'side'. These were deconstructed when re-watching and reading of the

transcripts alongside one another; however, it was significant that accusations in the one echoed the other. The interviews were loosely semi-structured, and so the stories which add depth to this analysis came up organically in both:

Both of the individuals featured in the videos:

- Blame one person on the other side for causing problems because they are not willing to shift from their position
- Blame the 'leader' of the other side for deliberately (maybe even forcefully/through political affinity/clientelism) forming an alliance to gain or retain power in the initiative. Because of this they say the other side doesn't work as individuals but as a predefined group, which undermines the politics of direct democracy.
- Stereotype each other's political orientations, e.g. centralist socialist troops vs. anarchist individualists
- Accuse members of the other side for being 'allergic' to participating, or being apolitical and not turning up to the general assembly (unless there's a conflict).

The conflicting versions of truths were connected intimately to the sectarian nature of Greek political and economic society where narratives are saturated with a partiality based on ideological and political differences. In initiatives too, narratives were mobilised to tell the 'truth' and to gain supporters (forcing people to 'take sides', see chapter 7). Clarke (2005), advises against falling into the trap of being 'blinded by binaries' in analysis, arguing that analysing positions separate to their social worlds mitigates the stereotyping inherent in a homogenising type of social science. This is not possible in PAR or activist research when community researchers inevitably form their views based on their relationships to other actors in the setting they share. Whilst PV allows for multiple representations, the collective researcher (the PV group) also has the responsibility to 'speak truth to power' (Minkler 2004) and to realise the way that power underpins their own interpretations of truth within the PV process.

In this case, I realised that the framing of sides could be viewed as more nuanced, and that their conflicting versions of truth came from differing ideologies and understandings of technical/mechanistic groundings for democracy (see table 7.8.1). Also, these arguments could have been used as tools for retaining/gaining control of the ideological basis of the cooperative in that moment of power struggle. Moreover, relative positions and relative amount of say in, or gain from involvement in, an initiative, can show power struggles underlying divergent narratives. So, whilst 'two

sides to every story' leaves the analysis open to accept distinctions in versions of truth, it can also disaffirm latent power which risks morphing into coercion and oppression if the representation of truth by the more powerful player is allowed to perpetuate unchallenged.

Subjectively, despite trying to not take sides, I found it hard to swallow the suspicions and distrust created in this atmosphere of rumour, and also forgo the journey to find out what 'actually' happened. If I did 'side' and deem one narrator more trustworthy, it was generally with the person who in the given scenario I felt held less power in the relationship, either due to status in the initiative or due to other identity characteristics. Haraway (1988: 583-4) warns against this natural instinct to stand uncritically on the side of the subjugated. Instead, she makes

> "…an argument for situated and embodied knowledges and an argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims. Irresponsible means unable to be called into account. There is a premium on establishing the capacity to see from the peripheries and the depths. But here there also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions. To see from below is neither easily learned nor unproblematic, even if "we" "naturally" inhabit the great underground terrain of subjugated knowledges. The standpoints of the subjugated are not "innocent" positions. On the contrary, they are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge".

This research demonstrated that 'valuing all knowledges' as equally valid in PAR can be problematic because representations and interpretations of 'truth' can be influenced by hidden power dynamics; potentially even to manipulate or mislead. This is especially true of PV where these truths are exposed and fixed as video outputs. When deconstructed and analysed these video representations can shine light on who holds power and how, although not conclusively. So, in the presence of various parallel claims, there was a perceived need to gain 'knowledge' as a research group to 'speak truth to power' (Minkler 2004), which goes against the participatory narrative of valuing multiple truths.

At this grassroots level, we showed in previous chapters that the presence of power can be neglected in an attempt to function non-hierarchically. However, power manifests in creating multiple contradictory versions of the truth, in their construction from various ideological, political and social standpoints. Thus, not analysing these narratives in respect to one another then arguably amounts to turning a blind eye to power, whilst simultaneously creating deeper rifts between people on the ground.

Otherwise, I acknowledge that these multiple conflicting narratives are a cause of and also demonstrate disharmony, distrust and conflict. These power dynamics sometimes occur across the binaries that encapsulate the conflicts and are mirrored by the 'truths', but not always. The source of conflict can be more complex and the power more difficult to locate e.g. narratives portraying a situation of competing leaders with no clear subjugation by either side.

Nevertheless, the divisive consequences of not facing power asymmetries that 'truths' expose, or rather not resolving the conflict which creates divided narratives, has long-lasting effects on communities trying to work together. Notably, we heard very similar stories of binary fracturing based on belief in different versions of events from people in other areas of Greece, not only Thessaloniki. As a PV group, we were limited in our capacity to resolve such wide-spread conflict, but the footage can be helpful. In cases where it is not enough to bring these narratives into 'dialogue' via video, it is preferable to avoid unfair representation by refraining from exposing them.

Side 1	Side 2
The leaders of the initiative appear in the media because they want power and prestige	The two who set it up are on TV and blogging etc. because they are the only ones prepared to do the public facing work.
To have one of this side become President was symbolic of the power shift and when this position was won it was important to show the old leaders they no longer held the power	The President was a meaningless position as everyone is an equal in the initiative and to declare this position publically (and to humiliate an individual from this side in the process) was a shocking act
At the time of the firings all the important decisions were made in 8 closed assemblies.	There was an accusation at the time of the firings that the general assembly swung the decision but all the important decisions are made in the general assemblies and so the votes taken on decisions in the Board of Directors don't matter.
'Herd mentality' voting is a tactic used by the other side to preserve their dominance. The dominance of the Board of Directors – which is deliberate - was reflected in the vote of the	He gathered his friends when he needed supporters against them.

general assembly. We wouldn't behave like that on our side.	
Information is manipulated by withholding what is happening from outsiders or only their version (through official channels), they care too much about image and not about politics.	Information about what was happening at the time of conflict was spread all over social media, and talked about by workers to customers, they don't have a good ideology!
The way the worker was fired was a very bad process and workers should be listened to, included in the process, be given forgiveness and education.	The worker who was fired was a troublemaker, a bully who systematically put up a fight against those he disagreed with and who was frustrated by not having his single voice heard in the assembly including on the topic of workers being able to have their own assembly. If we had known he was a troublemaker at the beginning he wouldn't have been hired.
The leaders have made it so they always get their way.	Individuals just want it their way so fight against the person who always disagrees with them

Table 7.8.1 Paraphrased narratives of Orfeas and Pantelis to show similarities between their claims to truth, albeit form their oppositional sides. This exposed the polemical nature of the situation rather than what 'exists'.

8.4   Conclusion

This chapter discussed how power manifests in participatory video processes, giving particular attention to the negotiation between individual agency and collective representation in a group of diverse membership. We first ascertained that facilitation from an outsider requires not only stepping back, but stepping up to and transparently using power to shape environments for positive relationships. Grassroots dynamics are informal which is an attribute that aids rapport-building on equitable terms (no hierarchies), but at times having a professional separation of roles such as interpreter and facilitator can aid group processes which are otherwise complicated. Nevertheless, acknowledging hierarchies can be more profitable to group processes than attempting to flatten them. This requires a transparency which comes from acknowledging the inevitable (cultural, and power) distinction between outsider 'instigator' and community researchers which can create a "hierarchy of opinions" (Corneil 2012) – echoing the need to acknowledge difference in solidarity economies in chapter 7.

Furthermore, intragroup relations, especially in circumstances which put pressure on people's daily existence such as austerity, must be a key focus of the PV, if a focus at all. In this sense, PV can facilitate internal dynamics or look to exposing external dynamics, but doesn't have the capacity to do both at once; nevertheless, other methods can accentuate multi-objective processes. What's more, loose facilitation to encourage active participation and allow for agency can amount to unsurmountable data (footage) collection. Quantity of data trumps quality of process when the commitment needed to 'deal' with the data later can be demotivating, exclusive to those who are time-rich and tedious to facilitate. This supports the argument that PV is not always appropriate for ameliorating group processes, and using PV for collective agency is also dependent on the differences and initial familiarity within a group.

Secondly, I reflect that being a cultural "outsider" has its advantage of being able to step back and noticing contextual factors which influence participants, and impact on participatory processes. For example, the political culture participants are used to may conflict with the requirements of PV, namely to dedicate time to *process* and facilitate meetings to this effect. Additionally, the structural constraints which marginalise participants, despite using PV to elicit agency for the effect of social change (Walsh, 2016), also act to undermine efforts to subvert ways of seeing. Prominently, the 'feminist gaze' (Kindon 2003) of the camera which should break down social hierarchies, in this study excluded women exactly because of the camera's gaze. We found that women self-excluded or were interrupted by men even when they had been selected based on their gender. PV enhanced men's agency, as womens' diminished. Feminist ways of looking therefore cannot resolve deeply embedded patriarchal dynamics of domination and subordination. As a female, feminist researcher, I too found the process disempowering due to the silencing effect of participatory processes (and patriarchal behaviour) on my feminist principles. Consequently, my adherence to them in the everyday was watered down so as not to become an "outsider" imperialist researcher. This resonates with Walsh's (2016) observation that PV limits itself to notions of liberal, individualising, view of social change.

Thirdly, the presence of multiple representations of the same event showed that local knowledges are multiple and fragmentary, and so exposing what 'exists' was not as simple as showing a film. Instead, this indicated that conflict exists in the solidarity economy, underpinned by asymmetries in power. When it came to making a choice to share the videos it was less straight-forward exactly because the stories were on film, which included accusations and claims aimed at other actors or initiatives. These narratives were open to interpretation and pulled viewers in different directions, echoing the rumour

mongering between polemical actors during this time. Therefore, the video research group made decisions about what to (not) show publically depending on our perceived risk of misrepresentation. We were concerned not to become embroiled in the perpetuation of potentially inflammatory 'gossip', especially as initiatives were attempting to resolve internal issues and heal divisions by their own processes. This points to the need for sensitive management of data by the PV group, or community-led reconciliation processes. Only if the individuals and initiatives implicated were prepared to use the videos for conflict resolution would they be an appropriate tool. At all times, PV needs to be carried out with acknowledgement of the axis of oppression which can – sometimes unintentionally - amplify power instead of speaking truth to power.

9 Concluding Remarks

I synthesize the discussion of this participatory research with autonomous food initiatives in Thessaloniki. I elaborated on important questions related to political and social transformation encapsulated in complex dynamics of (post-capitalist) subjectivity and collectivity in the praxis of diverse, decentralized economies of food. In particular, I drew on ideas of autonomy, some connected to anarchist theory, to tease out the contradictions of peoples' actions and their consequences on collective organisation. The timing of the study was crucial since Greek society was burdened with the effects of austerity and structural adjustment as political elites' 'solution' to a debt crisis. But equally, this was seen and felt as a moment when subjectivities could shift, creating an opportunity to fulfill hopes and desires through 'living' politics as the *politics of possibility*.

The thesis's critical edge emerged in the desire to reflect honestly on the cause of struggles and variated strategies which have created tensions, contradictions and conflict within and between autonomous food initiatives. The basis of this criticism came from a desire to deal with structural considerations. I stress here by way of example that seemingly individualistic actions or self-interest may stem from material inequity, and are exaggerated by structural or (political-) cultural differences. Whilst there are almost certainly those who exploit the situation and the goodwill of others acting in 'solidarity', a closer examination of why trusting relationships break down shows that individualism isn't simply a personality trait, a culturally embedded norm, nor a hangover from capitalist culture, but is rather determined by consequences of material hardship (or expectation thereof), inequity and contextual uncertainty.

Arguably, because the crisis (or more specifically austerity justified by crisis) exaggerates antagonisms, the context constrained real possibilities for social or subjective transformation. Reconciling solidarity relationships became more difficult, but at the same time more urgent – the stakes were high. It is in this 'extreme' situation that the causes and symptoms of capitalist contradictions are made visible along with their effects on the marginalized grassroots post-capitalist counter movements. According to Gilbert (2014: 28) we "need to acknowledge and make visible the real antagonisms at work in society, and to make possible instances of 'collective individuation' …where groups on whatever scale can (however temporarily) achieve the capacity to co-ordinate their interests, resolve their disagreements, and intervene together in the fabric of the world." This study identified those contradictions to assist in ways to reconcile them or overcome their divisive effects. In particular, with

a lack of recourse to government support or resources due to the double crisis of economy and political legitimacy, networking success to "amplify power and reach of existing alternatives" (Solnit 2010) becomes even more important.

First of all, then, to highlight the findings, I summarize the discussions on (1) collective autonomy, (2) cultivation of 'ethical' subjectivity, (3) introvert decentralization, and (4) socialist politics for collective organization. Personally, I felt it was important to understand various theories of social change in order to map them against social and political dynamics in these autonomous food initiatives. I hope to advance some theoretical understandings drawn out in the conceptual framework with empirical insights, the limits to agent-centric visions for social change; undesirable forms of decentralization for collective autonomy; and how autonomy can undermine efforts for deeper democracy. I finish by using these new understandings to give suggestions for food activism in Thessaloniki and elsewhere, gaps for further research, and methodological insights for researchers.

9.1   Summary of analysis

Chapter 5 analysed how autonomous experiments in food autonomy were pursued in the belief that alternative economies were not only possible, but necessary, to become disentangled from structures of capitalist and state domination, to rebuild solidarity damaged by capitalist relations, as well as attempting to make ends meet. These desires were encapsulated in so-called solidarity intermediaries which mediated producer, consumer, worker and activist relationships. However, crisis-accentuated antagonistic market relations marginalized farmers and the growing number of poor consumers for whom these solidarity initiatives aimed to cater. Solidarity was forced to split between the two, maintaining a "paradox of exclusivity" (Zitcer, 2015), and making identities of actors more distinct, rather than blurred (in contrast to observations in Wilson, 2013).

In a context of social inequity, there is an inherent contradiction in the autonomy project. Perpetual capitalist dynamics and austerity further embed social inequity which drive individual and collective needs apart. Individual autonomy, for self-sufficiency or material security, can be at odds with the collective autonomy project geared towards to wider social change. As much as attempts are intended to remake interpersonal relations, the collective of people in autonomous food initiatives were under continuous capitalist-state pressures. Thus, I argue, that actions which were perceived as 'individualistic' or 'exploitative' could also be survival strategies, caused by anxiety for financial security or household food security, or self-isolation due to social-psychological difficulties. Additionally,

chapter 5 showed that alternative food initiatives have the burden of accommodating these needs, but also the challenge of continually work against the individualizing effect of crisis. As initiatives swing between hope and dejection, what is seen as purely self-interested participation in autonomous food initiatives is difficult to distinguish from desperation. For this reason, the chapter points to the necessity of striking a balance between the uplifting 'crisis as opportunity' narrative, and strategic pragmatism to support increasingly marginal struggles.

When Gibson-Graham (2006) call for a disidentification with capitalism, it is for the shift in habits of the individual in prefiguration, *in opposition to* capitalist's pervasive culture. The division between producers and consumers, and exploitation of markets are seen and criticized as mimicking old competitive ways of the capitalist economy. However, since individuals are unequally constrained by capitalist relations, based on relational material-positional-cultural difference, as shown in chapter 7, some actors can put themselves in the position to transcend their capitalist subjectivity into 'ethical subjects' easier than others. If, as Gibson-Graham (2006) suggest, the trajectory of transformation is a spectrum of capitalist to non-capitalist, and individualist to collective, there needs to be an understanding of different starting points, or else the most marginalized may be labelled the worst 'culprits.' This compassionate approach fits with the social anarchist idea of mutual aid where each struggle is interwoven with another, on the basis of individual needs and capabilities. It also points to the need to carve out larger and more inclusive structures to enact possibility, otherwise constrained.

Additionally, the idea in this thesis of 'introvert decentralization' developed from chapter 5 through to 7, tied together the pressures on collaboration and demonstrates the negative impact on interpersonal relationships. Firstly, a consequence of the tension between collective and individual autonomy, and the burden of experimentation is either self-exclusion from initiatives, or breaking of collective agreement within them, as with the case of Per.ka. A growing distrust (of members seen not to have 'solidarity' aims) contributes to a process of fragmentation, whereby initiatives remaining autonomous is synonymous with projects being small and insular.

Secondly, introvert decentralization can be traced back to actors' reaction to the authority of the state. In prefigurative arrangements that emerge from social movements are distinct antiauthoritarian traditions and practices, including informality, 'legally creative' survival strategies, rejection of institutional politics and reframing of new horizontal political paradigms. There can be a tendency to dismiss state power and thus not understand its hegemonic reach. At the same time these strategies are marginalized due to the state structures they oppose, and their real or perceived agenda of

repression, cooption or undermining. Even if the state retracts from its social contract to society, it continues to influence their strategies, and limits collective agency. When at the heart of emancipatory post-capitalist politics, exhibiting 'negative' agent-centric power I argue can be counterproductive to aims of collective autonomy.

Thirdly, whilst political paradigms in these autonomous food initiatives embody deeper democratic politics, horizontalism can at once encourage difference-blindness, which subdues marginalized voices to the more dominant and allows informal hierarchies to breed unacknowledged. This makes conflict more likely because power (manifesting in leaders, visionaries, exploiters etc.) goes unchecked by the collective. Exclusionary practices can be reproduced through introvert decentralization, because conflict fragments and causes people to seek out the 'right' people to collaborate with – principally those they know and trust politically. Although these initiatives include a diverse political and economic membership, conflict has tended to cause side-taking, which echoes the bipartisanism of liberal democracies.

Decentralizing politics which emulates "political purity" can be beneficial to the preservation of a radical politics, particularly in the context of an intervening state, as elaborated on in chapter 6. Horizontalism is an organizational and decision-making norm in assemblies, whose members rewrite the terms of participation based on equality (one person one vote) and deliberation, thus defining, and claiming, power through a newfound agency. Autonomous food initiatives are a platform for political action amongst diverse 'actors' where previously in 'market relations' there was a democratic void. Decentralisation can therefore be positive, and necessary since it reconstructs relations from the bottom up.

What is wrong, then, with introvert decentralization? In short, the critique of post-structuralism, that it doesn't acknowledge the "significance of structural power to struggles for social change" (Glassman 2003: 679). This acknowledgement is important in order to (a) challenge it through collective autonomy, and (b) prevent the reproduction of exclusions along old lines of oppression (radical politics not always the most transformative). Structural differences when not recognized feed conflict. The politic of difference (Young 1986) applied in this case show that one-person-one-vote is applying a false egalitarianism in a non-egalitarian world, so that the pretext of ideals are assumed to exist when they are not yet reality.

The effect of *introvert decentralisation* is a concern to anarchist utopian thinkers who warn against 'escapist utopias' (Clark 2014) and poststructuralist thinkers who advocate pluralistic, and not homogenizing, 'being-in-common' (Gibson-Graham 2006). Beyond this, with which I agree, my argument takes a rather more structuralist stance, along with Young's critique of an 'ideal of community':

"… functioning as autonomous political entities is both wildly utopian and undesirable. …[a] model of a transformed better society must in some concrete sense begin from the concrete material structures that are given to us at this time in history" (Young 1986: 18).

Politics of difference is explicitly defined by and recognizant of structural injustices and lines of oppression. Pluralism without this tends to favour dominant group's beliefs, which subordinate groups must assimilate to. This is complicated, though, by the fact that by their very nature radical stances against the state, capitalism, or conventional agriculture, are societally marginalized. While at the same time these food initiatives must necessarily accommodate difference: consumers-producers; urban mentalities-rural traditions; old socialist politics-new antiauthoritarian politics. Paradoxically membership to autonomous initiatives based on a radical political paradigm (which in itself can create new binaries which homogenise unintentionally) can thus neglect to take into account the cultural and structural difference which give rise to varied opportunity to have adopted those alternative 'common senses', and to 'live' them politically.

The marginal radical actors holding a strict horizontal decision-making only viewpoint misses the point that especially in food initiatives with necessarily eclectic membership, the bar is set higher for some than others, and that this should be adjusted accordingly (Hahnel 2005). For example, chapter 6, demonstrated the detrimental effect on movements of actors not wanting to adopt 'capitalist' behaviours such as professionalizing, institutionalization, which alienated them from each other through prejudiced ideas of political radicalism, but also from livelihood opportunities. Young's analysis thus limits the *politics of possibility*.

In order to accommodate a different kind of decentralization, let's call it *extrovert decentralization* it must negotiate between autonomy and democracy. In a similar argument, Gilbert (2014: 28) calls for "collective individuation" through instituting politics, resolving differences, and coordinating diverse interests. This idea of instituting implies recognizing and resolving differences as expressed by Young thus:

"A politics of difference lays down institutional and ideological means for recognizing and affirming differently identifying groups in two basic senses: giving political representation to group interests and celebrating the distinctive cultures and characteristics of different groups" (Young 1986: 202).

In Thessaloniki, because of these many interlocking differences in groups which make up these autonomous food initiatives, there is a need for a process of self-institutionalisation – advocated for in collective autonomy. This draws on Wright's (2010: 132) advocacy for "mechanisms for subjugating state power to the power of the civil society" through broader and deeper (economic) democracy discussed in the conceptual framework. To do this, a clear distinction must be drawn between the process of self-institution and bureaucratic institutions.

Besides non-acknowledgement of difference, therefore, I would contend that the fragility of new 'agreements' between the collective and the individual inhibits equitable collaboration. Self-organisation according to the oppositional political paradigm requires a break with the old social contract. Agreements which replace this though are contested from within, and are not adequately, nor fairly, enforced and fragmentation or exclusion happen without collective agreement. There thus seems to be a disconnect between means and ends of prefigurative social transformation whereby creating the world in the vision of the new, and in direct opposition to the existing, participants are alienated from others, but also from the realistic ability to achieve their vision. Again, there is a need for mutual aid which preserves a sense of individuality, but does not promote individualism to provide stability and assurances, and endow trust.

The radical learning that social movements create cannot be underestimated, but these are learnings that can be pooled and brought forward, based on existing understandings of institutions. In cases where participants of an initiative do want to take power for their own interests, there must be adequate collectively agreed mechanisms to mitigate against this happening. If self-governed food economies have their own agreements, which go above and beyond statutory requirements of cooperative legal forms (but which are continually deliberated on based on experience), this could better cultivate a culture of democracy, collective work and responsibility.

The balancing between individual and collective needs in initiatives, and the observation of splitting over political difference points to the need to combine ideas across socialist traditions in order to cultivate a radicalism which is not exclusive, but allows for democratic and collective responsibility for

achieving social justice. Those who offer a radical uncompromising standpoint on authority, which doesn't concede to political compromises perhaps unintentionally can facilitate an individualist rather than collective theory of change. Communitarians and social anarchists – as well as other ideas such as democratic confederalism (Öcalan 2017) all see subjects and their subjectivities as relational in self-governed systems which critique the existence of the state. As such, they hold a philosophy corresponding to collective autonomy, which favours intuitions and building upwards in networks and through some sort of representation. Harvey (2017) attempts this political reconciliation in his essay, and Miller (2015: 364) argues against splitting activists (themselves) into centrist or a postmodern subject (and thus represents a poststructuralist blurring of political identities). Instead he advocates "increased engagement with two key domains of praxis: cross-sector organizing and the critique of capital." On the ground, too, activists can find ways to bridge their approaches and strategies, instead of what tended to happen which was that political orientations, and associated cultures, remained (unspoken) differences that created division in political organizing for economic democracy.

9.2   Possible ways forward for decentralized food initiatives

Autonomous food initiatives risk further isolation or co-option due to the burden of experimentation, coupled with the consolidation of state power over alternative forms of economy. On the ground, suspicion of others can feel like the right way to protect radical projects from state/market capture, and also self-interested 'capitalists', but there is a risk here of self-marginalisation which destroys chances of survival of autonomous initiatives. I foresee that their collective autonomy chances would be stronger with a common strategical vision which looks to:

1. *Accept contradictions and resolve them collectively – own structures that resolve contradictions*
2. *Deepen and broaden economic democracy*
3. *Combine a 'politics of difference' with a 'politics of possibility' accepting structures, but with hope and empathy*
4. *Build and co-ordinate tools and structures for knowledge sharing*

Firstly, the message from this research is to accept transition as imperfect because of the structural constraints. For Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer (2010) the autonomy project is ongoing, and because this study shows it demands a fraught reconstruction of collectivity, so is the struggle for just and democratic food systems. Each initiative and each participant sit politically and economically on the transition spectrum, where their 'post-capitalist credentials' are not necessarily of their own choosing. But what sets people apart in inequitable contexts, is also important in the process of reconciliation,

since it highlights the contradictions which need to be collectively overcome, including the inevitability of 'paradoxes of exclusivity', or unidirectional solidarity. Thus, it places decentralized initiatives in a post-capitalist context where they are pieces of the same 'collective autonomy' puzzle. Since these solutions are small, overcoming contradictions in the food system requires first a shift in narrative: one solidarity intermediary which supports small farmers is not at odds with anti-hunger kitchens, they are two sides of the same coin for social change, and encounter many of the same structural challenges to equitable collaboration.

There are tools out there which instill more trustful relationships and encourage dialogue for the expression and recognition of needs and interests, as mentioned in chapter 5, e.g. CSAs, PGS, GAS. These models address different interests, but must be adapted based on local pressures. For example, CSAs which wish to provide shares to those who are intensely food poor would require a subsidization model, or external funding. This indicates that reaching out to international funding streams, or negotiating positive relationships with more on-side municipalities would be beneficial. Alternatively, with more networked connection between initiatives, it could be possible for cooperatives which become financially sustainable to support more grassroots projects such as CSAs, or capital for PGS initiatives (in order to incorporate social inclusion objectives which benefit the same farmers who are stocking their cooperative stores). Equally, more networked coordination can help support and sustain informal economy as a positive part of political resistance and livelihood strategy, with less risk of isolation or vulnerability of individuals.

Secondly, following Albert (2006) and Hahnel (2005), I propose that instead of assuming direct democracy and ideas of non-hierarchical organizing as default, decision-making should acknowledge difference by incorporating – transparently - anti-oppression politics and mechanisms for economic democracy. This emphasis on justice and mechanisms to ensure collectivity (and enforce it) also drive home the importance of structures which are self-instituted. Especially when there exists a culture of suspicion. Hierarchies arise inevitably, and therefore, it would be more beneficial in the long term for initiatives' self-governing structures to endorse and manage leadership in some way, through role creation, rotation etc., and variation in decision making. This raises questions necessary for initiatives resisting hierarchies – especially those of a larger scale: in what form are hierarchies allowed to exist (legal alongside informal, symbolic or with special powers?) and how are hierarchies regulated, by whom (or what – the assembly?), for what purpose do they exist? Importantly for extrovert decentralization, efforts to reach out to others and work in tandem require a discussion about representation in collectivity. But if internal assemblies address the existence of hierarchies first it

could lead to less conflict and more energy to be able to become 'extrovert' and reach out. Also, transparency and discussion is needed in legally creative formations to acknowledge how 'rule of law' influences the parallel political organization in the initiatives, because sometimes there is a conflict between deeper democracy aims and legal requirements of a cooperative form.

Thirdly, anti-oppression politics (honesty and reflection on power) through facilitation tools and process-focused workshops would aid the process of naming and owning up to power, and maintain the political radicalism on which these initiatives are founded. This reflexive learning and process-focus is already happening in the aftermath of conflict in some initiatives, but could aid conflict prevention too, not through false harmony, but with acceptance of difference. This can be helped by the politics of possibility framing of post-capitalism as a spectrum, so as to understand individual and collective choices in their autonomy project if seen as 'too capitalist' e.g. institutionalization, professionalism, etc. as defined by different material and cultural constraints. Building up 'community' resources such as facilitation and co-ordination strategies, legal support and online data tools is also happening, but coordination, e.g. through the new NGO would enable the more effective spread and sharing. Dealing with difference and avoiding outright conflict can also mitigate against eliciting emotions in movements which are antithetical to change: despair, disappointment, cynicism, burnout, social paralysis, which have indeed shown corrosive effects on collective organization in Thessaloniki.

As a final suggestion, holding a 'council of interests' as a precursor to a grassroots network, or a people's food policy council, could also air contradictions and frustrations and lay the foundations for another attempt at movement building. It would also bring together producers and consumers who are involved in various initiatives to share knowledge and experience, or 'lessons'. A council of interests would of course need to endorse representation in the process which would be a challenge to anti-institutional politics amongst movement actors, as would facilitating such a council in order to draw out common recognition of what the struggles are for. As Orfeas described, he learned more about cooperative working than he could have learned at a university when he felt despondence at having experienced a breakdown in working relationships. This reaffirms the need to be open to admit perceived mistakes and share difficulties and for knowledge networks to transmit/centralize knowledge. Establishing knowledge exchange networks, more generally, could resolve issues based on misunderstandings and promote an openness to new members, building in honesty and trust, and understanding, and hopefully resolving some of these political identity divisions. Despite post-structuralist limitations, Gibson-Graham's (2013) theories of breaking down conceptions of identities for a more meaningfully diverse movement building process could be helpful tools here.

What can we take away from this for the food sovereignty movement? I think the lessons here are two-fold. Firstly, those who are involved in the movement need to understand decentralized limits when there is a disavowal of appealing to or participating in state mechanisms. Secondly, these anti-capitalist strategies may be left out of movements because of the intensity of local struggles. I contend that these post-capitalist experiments in alternative modes of exchange nurture food sovereignty principles and a particular radicalism based on the sovereignty having shifted away from the assumed de facto state and towards the urban grassroots. The relative invisibility of informal grassroots movements in Greece, due to their informality and the fact they are burdened by local pressures, make it difficult to reach them. Equally, the attitudes to representative politics may make it so that activists or initiatives do not *want* to belong to a 'movement of movements'. Nevertheless, there is plenty to learn from movements which aren't a part of the internationally networked movement, such as this study begins to address. Equally, the focus on linking food autonomy to wider struggles and to social justice aims, would be ameliorated within an international support network. This could help to unite small producers and consumer activists in their efforts – which has been a sticking point for the movements in Thessaloniki.

9.3   Methodological learnings

A participatory practice could be a tool for internal processes in autonomous food initiatives. A need to focus on collaborative internal processes, adapted to make conducive to equitable participation, and discussion on how initiatives fit into a larger struggle make the intentional iterative processes of PAR (moving between 1st, 2nd, 3rd person inquiry) useful real-world tools to these initiatives. Cycles of observing, reflecting and acting to move with or against structures emulates a practice of balancing between structure and agency and the negotiation of uncertainty in autonomous food initiatives. Embracing uncertainty as possibility is only a collective option if these vulnerabilities to change are accommodated collectively through interpersonal relationships, mutual aid and accommodation of difference, which draws on questions of methodological interest: self-reflexivity, group dialogue and analysis, facilitation, acknowledging power and hierarchies, and tailoring tactics to avoid reproducing structural hierarchies.

My position as a researcher between these modes of enquiry resulted in tensions, which I attempted to navigate communicatively and reflectively. At the beginning, I set the activist and radical tone of the research by introducing Gibson-Graham's feminist economics through workshops. I also

participated in events and integrated into the alternative scene of Thessaloniki, and learned to accept that the local cultural understandings of politics were different to my own. I nevertheless brought to the field a set of values which I felt were sometimes compromised by my positionality within the project and the nature of the participatory-driven research in patriarchal settings. Although I felt involved with action in Thessaloniki in many respects, I maintained an 'outsider' distance due to my identity as a foreign researcher. It was with reluctance that I returned to the UK to write up the majority of this thesis; at the same time this distance from the field gave me reflective space and time to read theory which helped me to frame findings. I also retained an advantage of viewing the tension and conflict from a distance. For this reason, the theories which were eventually used in this study were drawn on mostly by me, even though the 'empirical' work and on-the-ground understandings were consistently discussed with and between other members of the PV research group. At times, the disconnect between these modes of enquiry forced by institutional requirements frustrated the task of finding the balance of meaningful participatory work, especially given our vastly different needs and identities. Yet, through this imperfect process we have made lasting connections and will continue to work together.

However, the research showed that PV is not appropriate in every context, due to the structural differences that advantage some people's agency and representation over others – in this case women tended to be excluded. This acknowledgement of exclusion comes with the adoption of a view of structural oppression within a politics of difference. From this perspective, too, PV echoed the wider analysis in the thesis that managing group dynamics (accepting hierarchy) can be more important than attempting to (completely) flatten hierarchies between participants, and facilitator. The PV aim to empower by showing what 'exists' from multiple voices (without a reflective *process*) may accentuate antagonisms or complicate relationships by continuing to obscure power relations underpinning divergent narratives. There can also be a challenge of speaking 'truth to power' when working with grassroots movements containing multiple truths, which shows the necessity for participants themselves to engage deeply with initiatives' contradictions in order to reconcile them – and thus the need for participatory practices.

This research has important implications for navigating contradictions for collective autonomy and movement building in an increasingly crisis-prone and disaster-ridden world. The EU may have made an example of Greece, but debt-based capital accumulation continues. The consequences are unpredictable, but understanding the hegemonic effects of the capitalist state, and previous experience of austerity will better prepare movements to carve spaces for inclusive possibility and to resist. Where

strategic appeals to policy-makers is impossible, collective power for food autonomy must come from the grassroots. Engaged activist-research can locate and resolve tensions and build connections between collectives which are an important part of the post-capitalist undertaking.

9.4   Further research

Following the in-depth study into autonomous food initiatives in Thessaloniki, I suggest that further studies would complement and deepen the understanding of transformation gained in this thesis:

- More (action) research on how to connect insular grassroots struggles to movements with institution-oriented strategies, such as food sovereignty, may help to find way to bridge learning and knowledge of autonomous struggles in contexts where the most radical democratic politics are marginalized and thus made less visible by the intensity of their political struggle.

- Although the autonomy lens allowed us to unpack contradictions and causes for conflict, there remains a gap in how to accommodate and make more visible the continued subjugation of reproductive economies by the productivist narrative also present in solidarity economies.

- This research made a point of the potential alternative food initiatives –- to reproduce, condone (or create new) exclusions. Especially in times of austerity when there is a crisis of social reproduction (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). There is therefore a need to investigate how marginalized economies accommodate and confront exclusionary politics which embody racist or misogynist views.

- Equally, more research is needed into how austerity, and its detrimental effect on individuals' mental health acts to influence collective strategies for post-capitalist transformation.

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11 Appendices

11.1 List of Acronyms, Abbreviations & Greek Names

AK   (Αντιεξουαστική Κίνηση) Anti-authoritarian Movement of Greece
APAN   (ΑΠΑΝ – Αυτόνομη Παρέμβαση Νεαπολιτών) 'Neapoli Autonomous Intervention'
Bio.Me   (Βιο.Με) Self-occupied Workers' Factory in Thessaloniki
CSA   Community Supported Agriculture
CAWR   Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University
CNT   Confederación Nacional del Trabajo – Spanish confederation of anarcho-syndicalist
            labour unions
DEH   (ΔΕΗ) Greek Public Power Corporation
EC   European Commission
ECB   European Central Bank
EU   European Union
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GAS   Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale (IT) - translation of SPG
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
IMF   International Monetary Fund
HRADF   (ΤΑΥΠΕΔ) The asset fund set up as a condition of debt relief
KKE   (KKE) Greek Communist Party
SSE   Social Solidarity Economy (ΚΑΛΟ – Κοινωνική και Αλληλέγγυα Οικονομία)
KOINSEP   (ΚΟΙΝΣΕΠ) Social Cooperative Enterprise
PASOK   (ΠΑΣΟΚ) Greek Socialist Party
SPG   Solidarity Purchasing Group – translation of GAS
PAR   Participatory Action Research
Per.ka   (Περ.κα) Περαστική Καλλιέργεια - Peri-urban Gardening
Syriza   (Σύριζα - Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς) Coalition of the Radical Left
PGS   Participatory Guarantee System (self-certified organic producers network)
PV   Participatory Video
Troika   Trio of ECB, EU and IMF charged with managing financial bailouts

11.2 List of videos available with English subtitles

Agrotiko Pantepoleio -   https://youtu.be/Wztx86EA_LA   (Corresponds with figure 8.3)

KOINSEP Perisyllogi -   https://youtu.be/n4WPZZCQJbg
                             https://youtu.be/t10tpsFhV5M

Per.ka's Autonomy -   https://youtu.be/K0Gir3i1MEE

Scholeio Bazaar -   https://youtu.be/3Wbe-kGcgxk