

CRISIS AS OPPORTUNITY?

An ethnographic case-study of the post-capitalist
possibilities of crisis community currency
movements

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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-

June 2017

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of scholarship suggests that capitalism is not inevitable and that moments of crisis provide an opportunity for critique and social transformation. Yet literature on social movements employing direct-action tactics to unmake capitalism and challenge austerity is still lacking. It has neither adequately dealt with non-capitalist practices, nor has it substantiated claims of efficacy in social change.

This thesis uses a novel research approach and presents new empirical evidence to deal with these shortcomings. It addresses the timely questions of whether and how these social movements support life despite-yet-beyond the recession. It thinks with, yet beyond, a practice-turn in social movement scholarship to break new ground for literature on non-capitalist practices, alternative economies and social movements. Specifically, the thesis provides a multi-sited ethnographic case-study of three Athenian crisis community currency movements. This informs the first study of community currencies dealing with the nitty-gritty of practicing the alternative economy. In so doing, it outlines what happens when emancipatory ideas of using alternative currencies to support everyday practices come into contact with the realities of modern-day Athens. It details a process of experimentation, learning-in-practice and contestation that both underlies and undermines the emergence of non-capitalist practices.

This approach enables an enlightened response on whether – and how – living despite-yet-beyond austerity is possible. The findings suggest that community currencies are only partly successful in enabling non-capitalist practices. And yet, the research uncovers a side of Athens as a crucible of creative resistance that would otherwise go unnoticed. If this is accepted, the thesis concludes with a novel conceptual model and an agenda for future research on non-capitalism. This will play-out both to the benefit of scholarship and society alike, as it promises to conceptually advance the field and to further corroborate the non-capitalist imaginary – enhancing faith in alternatives to austerity and capitalism.

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PREFACE

'I want no more dirges

I want no more verbs belonging to the non-combatants

I need a new language, not pimping

I'm waiting for a revolution to invent me

Hungering for the language of class war

A language that has tasted insurgency

I shall create it!' (Khaleed 2016, 157)

This thesis represents an in-depth account of whether and how the ongoing Greek economic crisis might transform into an opportunity for radical social transformation from the grassroots. This is, above all else, a hopeful thesis – written at a time when finding hope is more essential than ever. Between the completion of this research project and the writing of this manuscript, I have been incessantly exposed to a stultifying discourse around a world that has become a problem. This is the moment of crisis and, as such, proliferating understandings focus on the seismic disturbance of the fixed nature of our habits in a world that manifests itself anew in all its dysfunction and discontinuity (e.g. Chatzidakis 2014; Gounari 2014).

Nonetheless, this thesis is the product of a hopeful language that has tasted insurgency. Of a language that breaks away from proliferating accounts of the Greek economic crisis putting forth deeply disturbing images of 'the rolling apocalypse of contemporary history' (Williams 2012, 17) that 'reveals unbridled capitalism [...] in all its brutality and its extreme injustice' (Wieviorka 2012, 96). For this thesis seeks to document words that do not speak in the mainstream media (see Mylonas 2014).

In putting forth this language of hope and possibility, this thesis departs from the Greek myth of Pandora's creation (see Athanassakis 2004). For the same imagery of Pandora's Box contributing to a doomsday understanding of the ongoing crisis is also potentially liberating. On the one hand, the research process

that culminated in this thesis unfolded in an era reminiscent of the ancient Greek myth of Pandora and its focus on a dystopic reality. For the almighty god of Hesiod's myth has, once more, acted against a class of allegedly lazy and corrupt Greeks living beyond their means by inflicting an unprecedented economic crisis and associated austerity politics that have opened, once more, Pandora's box (e.g. Knight 2013; Mylonas 2014). On the other hand, and as the Greek myth reminds us (see Athanassakis 2004), the same god seeking to punish humankind did not seek to annihilate humanity – giving them instead the resources of hope to help them survive or possibly even flourish in the midst of adversity. Hence, this thesis finds its inspiration in the potentially emancipatory concept of hope that remains within Pandora's Box – of hope that persists against all odds at a moment in time when manifold evils keep flying out of Pandora's Box.

This is, at core, the backdrop against which this research project unfolded. Before we delve into the in-depth examination of crisis community currency movements documented in this thesis, I set the scene by telling you, the reader, how I came to write this particular narrative. For the personal project of seeking a language of insurgency and possibility has a long history and varied starting points. First, my Greek upbringing guaranteed my immersion into a culture celebrating the power of the weak and the insurgent capacities to transform any Greek "drama" into a Greek "success story". Second, my academic upbringing in the School of Environmental Sciences of the University of East Anglia informed my immersion into the irreducible complexity of social change and into actually-existing alternatives to proliferating mainstream cultures and institutions. Through ongoing discussions with by Dr Gill Seyfang, Dr Tom Hargreaves and Dr Noel Longhurst, I discovered the importance of otherwise mundane daily practices in delivering social change, and how grassroots innovations might contribute towards the re(production) of life despite-yet-beyond an otherwise all-pervasive capitalist mainstream. How there exists immense possibility for making other economies possible (Gibson-Graham 2006). Third, and finally, my accidental discovery of Roumeliotis' (2012) journalistic documentation of grassroots innovations for life without the Euro in the wake of the Greek economic crisis uncovered before my eyes a side of Athens I had not come across in the past. For up until this accidental discovery I had an overwhelming sense of a Greek society that was only the victim of the unfolding crisis – either fatalistically accepting the new realities or simply

protesting under the threat of police violence. Hence, from these starting points, the inspiring yet uncorroborated idea of hope that persists within Pandora's Box transformed into a life project of finding the right tools to make largely invisible alternatives to capitalism and austerity more visible.

This thesis constitutes the culmination of these life events and inspirations. However, it is also the product of my disillusionment with the nature of scholarship on actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity. For this research project did not only have to face and challenge hegemonic discourses claiming that there-is-no-alternative to capitalism and austerity, but also a strikingly underdeveloped research field. Disparate ideas on periodic socio-systemic crises inspire the exploration of the moment of crisis as a moment of critique and an opportunity for social change, but remain incapable of providing an understanding of how individuals seek transformation on the ground. Similarly, whilst scholarship on everyday activism celebrates agential capacities for emancipatory action, it simultaneously remains ill-equipped for paying sufficient critical attention to the processes and contradictions of everyday activism. Hence, this thesis aims to tell a hopeful story by charting some new ground in research on actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity politics.

Over the course of my PhD studentship, my approach has incessantly shifted – following different leads as they arose in response to different prompts and observations. For when I began this PhD in October 2012, I faced the challenge of starting with extremely ambiguous ideas around the aims and focus of this research. Even upon deciding to focus on crisis community currency movements or even as late as returning back to the academy following my ethnographic study of such movements, I explored a variety of conceptual toolkits that would help in telling this story of insurgence. This thesis can, thus, only be understood as the product of an odyssey into uncharted waters.

And yet, upon completing this leg of the journey, I recognise that I have not reached a “final” destination – and Ithaca. For the manuscript you now hold in your hands is only a first intermediate stop in the long journey of uncovering actually-existing alternatives to austerity and capitalism. Nonetheless, I hope and believe that the analyses and conclusions documented in this thesis provide fertile grounds and a novel conceptual tool-box for further scholarly journeys. Without

wanting to suggest that there is an ultimate destination point to this odyssey, I look forward to re-commencing this hopeful journey of discovery – guided by this newly-found knowledge. I hope that others will also follow. For the tentatively optimistic story of hope persisting and enabling living despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity documented in this manuscript remains but a small drop in an ocean of stultifying narratives.

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Norwich,

June 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is an oxymoron that a PhD that is concerned with seeing another “hidden” side of recession-laden Athens and “hidden” alternative economic practices is, itself, founded upon the unseen support of so many others. Hence, before delving into the scholarly accounts of crisis community currency activism documented in this thesis, it is important to uncover the individuals and communities making this thesis possible.

First, and foremost, I am grateful to the academic communities at the University of East Anglia and beyond and, particularly, to my supervisors – both for providing comments throughout this research and for their moral support. Gill Seyfang and Tom Hargreaves have been with me from the onset of this PhD studentship and have done their best to support a sometimes confused and stubborn student in turning many people’s “hidden” experiences, opinions and idiosyncrasies in performing the alternative economy into one cohesive narrative that sheds light on the processes of transforming the moment of crisis into a moment of social change. I am very grateful for your warmth, encouragement, perseverance, critical comments, encyclopaedic knowledge of (sociological) literature and exceptional intellectual guidance throughout the project – especially in light of my ever changing conceptual focus that repeatedly forced you to step outside of your comfort zones. Thank you also to Noel Longhurst for going beyond the call of duty in introducing me to scholarship on actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and for always being a good sounding board for new ideas. I have also more generally benefitted from being part of the *Science, Society and Sustainability (3S) Research Group* with its inspiring research culture, reading groups and discussions, and its constant provision of humour and rapport.

A great deal of thanks must also go to my friends and family who have been consistently supportive over the course of this PhD and, especially, during the difficult final weeks of writing-up this thesis. Thank you for your moral support, your encouragement and quiet but total confidence in my abilities, for enduring the prolonged gestation of this thesis with unbelievable patience, grace and fortitude and for being my best sounding boards. Special thanks must also go to my sister, Maria, for her quick turnarounds and sharp eyes in helping me with the

proofreading of this thesis manuscript.

Last but not least, I would like to offer my deepest thanks to the members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS who took part in this project: for their time, support, critical comments, and for their remarkable insights into crisis community currency activism. One of the greatest delights of this thesis has been working with these people – many of whom I am now privileged to call my friends. In hoping that some activists might be able to identify themselves in this manuscript in spite of considerable effort to anonymise all insights, I would like to extend special thanks to Hypatia, Leontios, Kallisto, Euthalia, Hera, Lysistrata, Pandora, Roxane, Thalia and Zoe. Throughout my fieldwork, you were always eager to lend a helping hand, to share your thoughts and your personal experiences with me, and to make me feel like an integrated part of the respective movements. There would be no thesis without you, so thank you so very much for giving me both the opportunity and the challenge of telling your stories of everyday activism despite-yet-beyond capitalist and austerity politics. Above all, though, I thank the broader groupings of community currency activists – those I worked with and those I never met – for your drive and refusal to fatalistically accept the crisis and associated austerity politics, your vision of life despite-yet-beyond capitalist and your commitment to making it happen, and for granting me the opportunity and inspiring me to become an academic-activist myself. Thanks for introducing me to another, non-capitalist world that is already in existence!

1 INTRODUCTION

Crisis has transformed into the modus operandi of modern society – shaping the everyday lives of people around the world who are forced to live at the interface of an unfolding economic crisis that has brought severe social dislocations, and an ecological crisis destroying the natural ecosystems that sustain us (see Wright 2010). Arguably, ‘these crises are not unhappy accidents of an economy that is simply out-of-balance’ (Burke and Shear 2014, 129). Rather, one could easily construct a long list outlining capitalism’s inherently dark side and crisis-prone nature (see Parker et al. 2014; Wright 2010).

Nonetheless, as Morin (1993) reminds us, crises also open up possibilities for new desires and revolutionary politics. As such, in sharp contrast to proliferating accounts of the social catastrophe brought about by the (Greek) economic crisis (e.g. Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014), it is also being argued that:

‘The present economic crisis opens up a social opportunity to ask fundamental questions. Managed well, this may be the best, possibly last and only chance to change the economy and [our] lifestyles’ (Schneider et al. 2010, 511).

Exploiting the unique scholarly prospect for empirical investigations afforded by the Greek economic crisis, this thesis seeks to provide timely empirical insights to such inspiring yet relatively uncorroborated claims. Specifically, it builds on the core claim that ‘our normative commitments to freedom cannot but begin in the wake of crises’ (Allen 2015, 5). It focuses on how the crisis might constitute a moment of ‘lifeworld pathologies’ (Cordero 2016, 69) and unmade routines (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; 2000), whilst simultaneously affording a unique opportunity for rupture from the prevailing capitalist status quo (Morin 1976; 1993). For in the face of crises people on the ground – either organising in social movements or as

individuals – decide to take matters into their own hands, push for social change or even enact grassroots projects delivering new counter-cultural practices for life despite-yet-beyond the crisis and capitalism (Noys 2011; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017). Hence, the topic of inquiry is the creative, post-crash critical-practical activity of trying to become autonomous – an exploration informed by the following overarching research aim:

***Research Aim:** To explore whether everyday activism might help transform the Greek crisis into an opportunity for social change.*

In addressing this aim, this thesis directly responds to recent calls to rethink neoliberal capitalist crises through emergent forms of grassroots activism (e.g. Derickson et al. 2015; Featherstone et al. 2015). Such calls raise the core claim that scholarship has, thus far, focused on the macro-economic effects and impacts of the ongoing crisis (e.g. Harvey 2012; Peck et al. 2013), rather than on the ways it is being subverted through concrete grassroots activism on the ground (Arampatzi 2016; Featherstone et al. 2015).

In seeking to make the most of this unique opportunity to further scholarship on the moment of crisis and to put forth a language of possibility that, nonetheless, escapes the pitfalls of uncritical celebration, this research starts from the need for:

- i. An in-depth *empirical exploration* of creative resistance to the crisis;
- ii. A novel *conceptual approach* supporting timely critical insights on attempted grassroots reconstruction of everyday life in the moment of crisis;
- iii. A *methodological approach* capable of accounting for and uncovering how the crisis is simultaneously experienced and contested through everyday activism.

Informed by these understandings, this thesis aims to explore large questions such as: What are the relationships between the crisis, non-

capitalist ideas and everyday behaviour in the wake of the crisis? How do individuals attempt to live despite-yet-beyond austerity and capitalism? What role might everyday activism play in supporting novel everyday practices despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity? How far can we regard the present crisis as an opportunity for non-capitalist social change? Specifically, through an empirical account of Athenian post-crash activism, this thesis addresses three core questions:

Q.1: What drives everyday crisis activism?

Q.2: Can (novel) non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about?

Q.3: What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism and how do they impact efforts to enact non-capitalist practices?

But what is the rationale, empirical context and expected scholarly contribution of this exploration? In setting the scene for this thesis, this chapter starts in Section 1.1 by placing the research in its broader context of economic hardship, austerity politics and counter-austerity resistance. Section 1.2 then highlights how this research seeks timely new answers to an old question on crisis as opportunity (e.g. Morin 1993; Noys 2011). Section 1.3 then uncovers how this thesis puts forth a promising new agenda for the study of actually-existing alternatives to austerity. Finally, this chapter concludes by outlining the thesis structure and how it attempts, chapter by chapter, to build a narrative of crisis as a possible opportunity for social change.

1.1 The evolving Greek “tragedy” and a counter-narrative of the crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social change

When Greece joined the Economic and Monetary Union in 2001,

Greece's inclusion in the core of European economies was expected to 'act as a catalyst to accelerate its real convergence with the advanced European countries at both the economic and social level' (Centre for Culture Research and Documentation 2014, v). Unfortunately, and as the ongoing government-debt crisis highlights, these expectations have far from materialised.

The chronology of the Greek crisis presented in Fig.1.1 thus uncovers a series of deeply-seeded misfortunes of (Greek) capitalism responsible for this crisis. Specifically, according to the most popular narrative of the Greek crisis, this constitutes a 'national disease' (Centre for Culture Research and Documentation 2014; Mavroudeas and Paitaridis 2016). In this view, economic growth might have been strong prior to the outbreak of the crisis, but this was solely led by domestic demand and the non-productive use of resources (ibid.). This involved extensive borrowing without any adjustments in the national production-base, a proliferating culture of corruption, economic extravagance, and the overlooking of EU legislation (Knight 2013). Hence, against the backdrop of declining economic competitiveness, deteriorating external deficit and historically high levels of public debt, the Global Economic Crisis of 2007-8 found Greece incapable of coping with the changed international economic environment of repetitive recessions – being unable to borrow from the private bonds market, and facing an unsustainable public debt (ibid.). This triggered the implementation of a multiannual programme for financial support from the EMU and the IMF and associated austerity politics designed to reduce the fiscal deficit and to carry-out extensive structural reforms (Centre for Culture Research and Documentation 2014; Lapavitsas 2012).

Almost a decade into the crisis, there remains considerable disagreement with regards to its causes – with three distinctly different narratives emerging (see Fig.1.1). Nonetheless, analysts are in agreement when it comes to defining the moment of crisis as a moment of social dislocation. Emerging accounts uncover how the proletariat have been

caught-up in a vicious cycle of impoverishment and dispossession of crucial public resources and welfare provisions that secured their social reproduction (Harvey 2012; Peck et al. 2013). For instance, according to official statistics (Government of Greece 2015), between 2010 and 2014: a) the average wage has fallen by more than 38%, and b) there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Greeks living below the poverty line (from 27.6% in 2010 to 34.6% by the end of 2014). Subsequently, qualitative accounts paint a depressing picture of a country that has ‘ceased being a normal country altogether’ (Kouvelakis 2013). For once well-to-do Athenians currently approximate Europe’s “disqualified” consumers— unable to define themselves either in terms of what they consume or in terms of what they produce (Chatzidakis 2014).

The response to the crisis (see Fig.1.1) has, undoubtedly, exacerbated its impacts. First, there is now some consensus that austerity politics and associated relief funds do more harm than good to the economy – entrapping Greece into a vicious cycle of ‘debt-servicing through debt-generation’ (e.g. Laskos and Tsakalotos 2012; Lapavitsas and Flassbeck 2015). Second, the persistence of austerity seemingly forecloses any possibility of transforming the moment of crisis into an opportunity for emancipatory social change. For hegemonic rule has maintained its coercive power – furthering the gains of those on the top at the expense of those at the bottom experiencing the impacts of austerity in their everyday lives (Laskos and Tsakalotos 2012) and even undermining the anti-austerity agenda of SYRIZA (Hart-Landsberg 2016). In this light, Gounari (2014) has every right to describe austerity as a ‘neoliberal experiment’ in ‘social necrophilia’. For Athens has, allegedly, transformed into ‘a cemetery for the living’ (ibid. 187) – with Athenians reduced to “human waste” as their social practices are being repressed (Chatzidakis 2014).

Nonetheless, the entrenchment of hegemonic rule, the spiralling down of the economy and the vicious cycle of debt-servicing documented above are only part of the Greek crisis saga. The economic crisis has also

inspired critical-practical activity whereby everyday activists challenge the mainstream and austerity politics by attempting to enact novel systems, social relations and practices to support unconventional forms of living (e.g. Arampatzi 2016; Leontidou 2015; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017).

For instance, as claimed by the Solidarity for All Network (2015, 16):

'The solidarity movement has emerged as a positive social experiment within the ruins of the crisis. It outlines a political culture, which through its own infrastructure creates the conditions and potential practices of commons to address public needs. A movement organised around everyday needs, which highlights the importance of addressing the humanitarian crisis as a field of political resistance and suggests a new kind of social relationship and collective subject.'

Specifically, as the timeline of the Greek economic crisis (see Fig.1.1 overleaf) suggests, 2011 was a critical turning point in the evolving crisis – with a mass “Squares Movement” of Indignant Citizens becoming the main agent of social resistance to austerity by both demonstrating against memoranda and by becoming committed towards self-empowerment despite-yet-beyond austerity and capitalism (Simiti 2014). Whilst the police destroyed mass-scale demonstrations and square occupations by August 2011, debates on the preconditions of direct democracy and emerging working groups organized for self-help, mutual aid, solidarity and collective action set in motion a lasting political change (ibid.; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017). This is defined by an unprecedented number of people moving away from traditional forms of social movement organisation to citizen-led, horizontal networks that engage in forms of everyday activism by resisting the consequences of the crisis and creating alternatives to the incumbent democratic and economic model (Arampatzi 2017; Leontidou 2015; Pantazidou 2013).

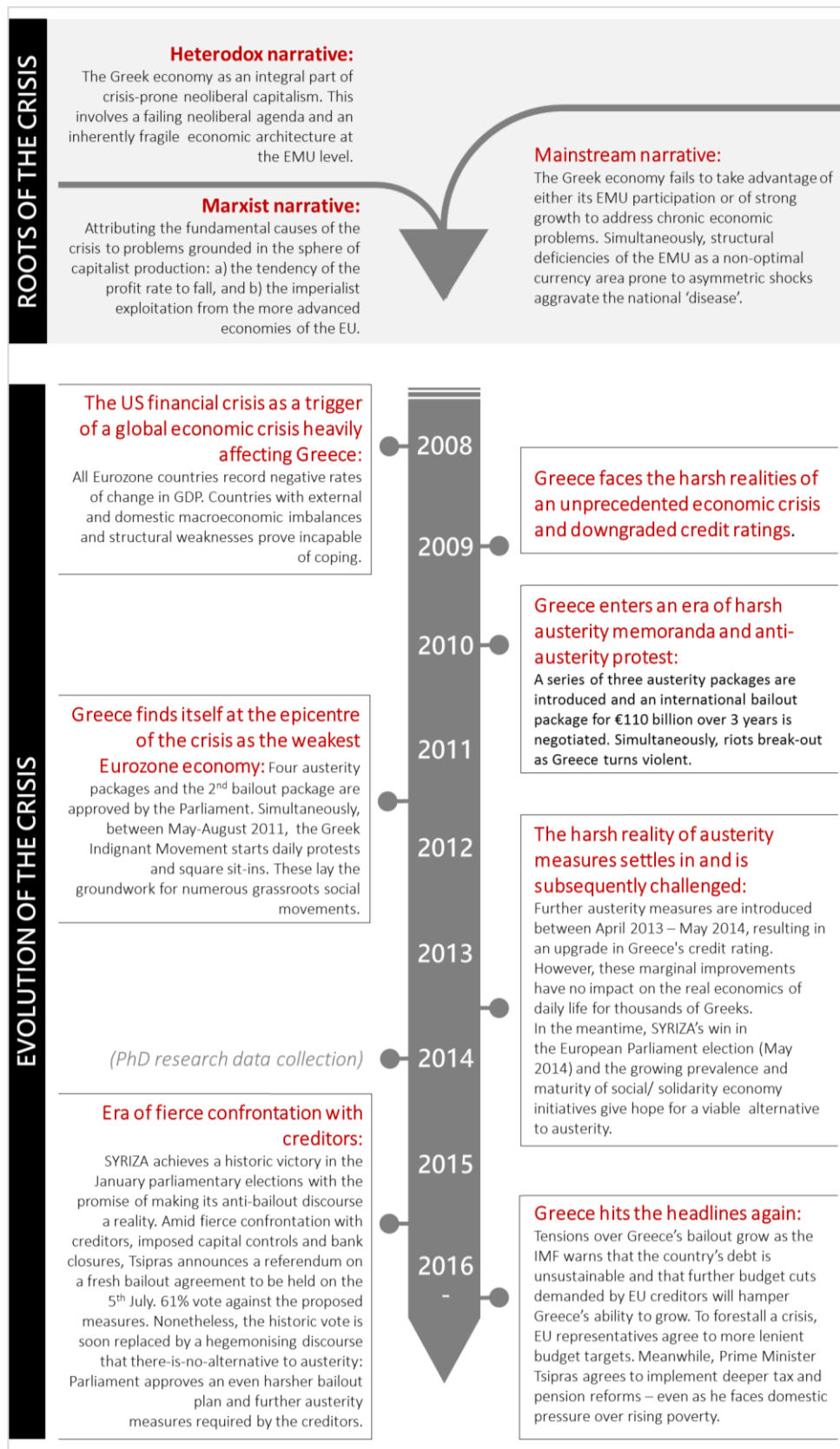


Figure 1.1: Chronicle of the Greek crisis (Drawing on material from: Centre for Culture, Research and Documentation 2014; Council on Foreign Relations 2017; Lapavistas 2012; Mavroudeas 2016)

The nature and ethos of such forms of crisis activism is particularly inspirational – confirming my core understanding of the moment of crisis as an opportunity for radical social transformation. According to Hadjimichalis (2013), what distinguishes Athenian resistance to austerity politics is their more comprehensive politicised character: a clear indication of an unfolding unmaking of previously unquestioned realities and beliefs. Emerging evidence thus highlights how a range of post-crash grassroots innovations – from workers’ self-management practices (Kokkinidis 2015) to alternative food distribution movements (Rakopoulos 2014) and solidarity economy projects (e.g. Petropoulou 2013) – are not just coping practices of the poor. Rather, they are also explicitly conceptualised and practiced as a broader anti-capitalist social movement engaging in the transformation of the self and the everyday (ibid; Arampatzi 2017). For this crisis and the coming together of Greeks gave birth to a series of new imaginaries, discourses and subjectivities and to a struggle to acquire political hegemony over everyday life – opening-up a new space for politics exactly because many Greeks have escaped the language of those who have the power to define politics (Leontidou 2015; Hadjimichalis 2013; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017).

This novel anti-austerity politics thus helps reconsider Athens not as the epicentre of the unfolding Greek tragedy but, rather, as a crucible of resistance – an effervescent counter-cultural heterotopia (Leontidou 2015). Hence, in seeking to provide timely empirical insights to inspiring yet relatively uncorroborated claims on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, it appears paramount to empirically ground this research in Athens – a potentially critical case of post-crash activism in that conditions on the ground for emancipatory struggles appear particularly ripe. Enthused by emancipatory activist claims and struggles on the ground, this thesis thus aims to offer an understanding of Greek society as agents who are potentially capable of living despite-yet-beyond austerity and capitalism (e.g. Bailey and Bates 2012; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017).

This strong assertion is the running thread of this thesis – politically

committed as it is to both criticisms of the capitalist mainstream and to a discourse of diverse economic possibility that exists despite-yet-beyond capitalism (see Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). Seeking to explore how people break free from capitalism and austerity, it closely follows Touraine's (1976) call to focus on those dynamics of transformation led by social movements in place of exploring the dysfunctionalities of crises. To explore the crisis 'not [as] as a frozen concept but [as] an open field of practical struggles through which actors mobilise normative ideas, historical experiences and political expectation that may have transformative [...] effects in social life' (Cordero 2016, 16).

1.2 Seeking new answers to an old question

Whilst empirically novel – with only a handful of researchers uncovering dimensions of social reconstruction in the Greek crisis (e.g. Arampatzi 2017; Leontidou 2015; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017), the exploration of the ongoing crisis as an opportunity for activism and social change documented in this thesis only represents the latest phase of scholarly interest in crises. Moments of crisis have been explored from at least as far back as Marx's anti-capitalist manifesto that focuses on the crisis-prone nature of capitalism ultimately expected to culminate in a proletariat capable of overturning capitalism (e.g. Marx 1973; Derber 2015). As such, numerous scholars have left their mark in a rich and diverse body of scholarship viewing crises as opportunities for social change (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Habermas 1997; Cordero 2016; Marx 2000). Furthermore, there is now a large body of scholarship exploring the non-monolithic nature of capitalism that allows for actually-existing interstitial alternatives (e.g. Wright 2010; Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham et al. 2015; Holloway 2010). Consequently, emerging anti-capitalist scholarship conceptually argues or empirically validates that it remains possible to live despite-yet-beyond austerity or capitalism in the present (e.g. Castells et al.

2012; Holloway 2002; 2010; 2014).

Nonetheless, the message we are getting loud and clear is that we have not paid adequate attention to the core concern of the ongoing Greek crisis as an opportunity for social change. A lot of ink has been shed analysing the crisis, its causes and impacts (e.g. Lapavitsas 2012; Laskos and Tsakalotos 2012). However, the overarching question of non-capitalist possibility has been posed and responses have been sought in a constricted way. At core, whilst inspiring non-capitalist manifestos (e.g. Holloway 2002; 2010) rest on the premise that it is possible to enact non-capitalist spaces and socio-economic relations without rupture from the mainstream (*ibid.*), there is a lack of scholarship on how critical discourses come to have a hold on potentially emancipatory everyday practice.

First, contemporary scholarship on popular resistance tends to focus on visible moments of protest (e.g. Della Porta 2015) and ignores covert forms of everyday activism defined by an ethos of creativity truly possible of unleashing the social reconstruction potentials of the civic sphere in the wake of the crisis by delivering new opportunities to enact alternative livelihoods (e.g. Day 2004; Kokkinidis 2015; Arampatzi 2016). Second, and as the Greek case suggests, such forms of everyday resistance have mainly received negative attention – being open to the empirically unsubstantiated charge that they constitute ‘irrational’ signifiers of leftist ‘populism’ (Mylonas 2014). Third, and finally, whilst some empirical accounts of social movements contesting the crisis through direct-action tactics have emerged (e.g. Arampatzi 2016; Castells et al. 2012; Wieviorka 2012; Sotiropoulou 2011; Leontidou 2015), this scholarship falls significantly short of understanding the ways in which the crisis and austerity are being practically contested and subverted to enact novel lifestyles.

Important advances have, of course, been documented – with a burgeoning body of scholarship uncovering spaces of resistance and grassroots experimentation and their trans-local spatialities (e.g. Arampatzi

2016; 2017; Gialis and Herod 2014), theoretically (re)considering their role in enacting grounded utopias (e.g. Leontidou 2015), or documenting the values and aspirations invested in such grassroots innovations (e.g. Sotiropoulou 2011; Thanou et al. 2013). Nonetheless, important questions regarding the heterodox understanding of the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social change remain unaddressed: How do activists try to unmake the crisis through their creative capacities? How do they negotiate pre-existing and routinized practices that are under threat because of the mere unavailability of (monetary) *capital* to support them? How do they try to replace their failing capitalist practices with novel (non-capitalist) practices that do not depend on mainstream *capital* for their enactment? To the best of my knowledge, the only studies moving beyond a bird's-eye view of everyday crisis resistance are Kokkinidis' (2015) account of workers' self-management in the wake of the Greek crisis and Varvarousis and Kallis' (2017) exploration of communing against the crisis. Unfortunately though, these accounts are also marked by significant shortcomings – most prominently their failure to account for how pre-existing (capitalist) practices are negotiated over the course of everyday activism.

Hence, this thesis seeks to overcome these silences. Specifically, in exploring Athens as a crucible of critical-practical non-capitalist activity, this research draws inspiration from Holloway's (2010, 250) core claim that 'we are the [true] crisis of capitalism'. For: a) the creative agential capacities of our societies escape capture from the social synthesis of a proliferating capitalist mainstream (Hardt and Negri 2009; Gibson-Graham 2006), and b) capitalism and its associated neoliberal policies are not self-sufficient in that they depend on our disciplining and labour power (Holloway 2002; 2010). In so doing, this thesis rests on and seeks to critically explore whether the ongoing economic crisis carries within it the seeds for non-capitalist social change – as 'everything seems pregnant with its contrary' (Marx 2000, 368).

Most importantly, perhaps, this thesis seeks to pose the question of

the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social change at a particularly timely moment. First, in drawing on ethnographic data collected in 2014, this thesis is uniquely situated to document critical-practical activity despite-yet-beyond austerity and capitalism in a relatively mature stage. According to Varvarousis and Kallis (2017), it would be misleading to assess the potential of emerging anti-austerity grassroots innovations to set in motion forces of progressive social change at a liminal state. Instead, exploring such forms of direct action circa two years after they were initially negotiated and established over the course or in the aftermath of the Indignant Squares Movement of 2011 (see Fig.1.1) enables consideration of whether liminality and effervescence have given their place to more permanent structures and non-capitalist spaces. From Varvarousis' and Kallis' (2017) point of view, the legacy of the Squares Movement currently lives on rhizomatically – embodied within individual activists who have, allegedly, been able to open up a new spectrum of possible alternative futures by redefining their needs and by adopting heterodox values and novel heterodox practices and routines despite-yet-beyond capitalism. However, given that such claims are poorly evidenced, there is a pressing need to critically explore whether everyday crisis activism genuinely has a lasting transformative potential at the micro-level.

Second, I contend that an emancipatory 'language that has tasted insurgency' (Khaleed 2016, 157) is presently more necessary than ever. As the succinct timeline of the unfolding Greek crisis presented in Fig.1.1 suggests, we are currently witnessing a moment of cultural retreat: almost universally gloomy analyses (e.g. Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014) and waning belief in actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity (e.g. Worth 2013). As Noys (2011, 46) indicatively asserts, we are witnessing a moment whereby activists lack any agential power to transform their disillusionment vis-à-vis a failing mainstream and an interrupted social existence into emancipatory practice on the ground. According to an emerging popular claim, the Squares Movement was a waste of time and

effort since it did not stop austerity (Kaika and Karaliotas 2014). Furthermore, the documented failure of SYRIZA to deliver its anti-austerity manifesto (see Fig.1.1) might be seen as the final nail driven in the coffin of progressive politics in the wake of the crisis. Finally, with emerging accounts outlining a number of challenges faced by grassroots forms of everyday activism (e.g. North 2016; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017), it remains difficult to maintain faith in everyday crisis activism as a vehicle for micro-level social transformation in the wake of the crisis.

Therefore: Are persistently struggling activists misinformed mavericks refusing to face the bleak realities of their activism? Might they still be capable of transforming the moment of crisis into a moment of non-capitalist creation? Might it simply be that we have not uncovered much activist potentiality as yet simply because our scholarship has not focused adequately on forms of everyday activist struggle? These are the key silences this thesis seeks to address. In so doing, it does not only seek new answers to the old question on the moment of crisis as a moment of opportunity, but also a new approach for studying actually-existing alternatives to austerity and capitalism. Section 1.3 details these original starting points.

1.3 Seeking a new approach for studying actually-existing alternatives to austerity and capitalism

Whilst politically motivational non-capitalist manifestos and understandings of the crisis as an opportunity for social change provide the inspiration for this thesis, the conceptual tool-box available for this empirical exploration is, unfortunately, poor. First, as Cordero (2016, 148) concludes, standard social theories may discuss the concepts of crisis and critique, but their understandings of social change remain under-developed. Furthermore, scholarship on actually-existing interstitial alternatives is

undermined by a series of conceptual misfortunes. Decades of research and theorisation on social movements has ignored those social movements adopting direct-action tactics of interest in this thesis – as evidenced by scholarship on anti-austerity or anti-capitalist movements emerging in the wake of the crisis (e.g. Della Porta 2015). Consequently, traditional social movement scholarship remains incapable of rising-up to the challenge of understanding the ‘newest’ forms of social movements inspired by more radical, anarchist understandings when adopting direct-action repertoires (Day 2004) and attempting to turn everyday life and its habits into the battleground against forms of oppression (e.g. Haenfler et al. 2012). And, finally, the progress made by scholarship focusing on direct-action tactics has been somewhat illusory. Whilst accounts from the likes of Holloway (2010) and Gibson-Graham (2006) manage to break-away from both a monolithic framing of capitalism, they remain conceptually ill-equipped for understanding the processes, dynamics and rhythms of interstitial non-capitalist doing (e.g. Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012).

In aiming to make an original contribution to scholarship dealing with the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, this thesis attempts to find new resources to explore the interlinked concepts of crisis-critique-chance (e.g. Noys 2011). These form the basis of a promising novel research agenda on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change. Specifically, this exploration begins from three original starting points – *empirical, conceptual and methodological*.

First, from an *empirical* point of view, this thesis focuses on three community currency movements developed in the wake of the Greek economic crisis – namely the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo Local Exchange and Trading Scheme (LETS). At core, these alternative currencies designed by civil society groups to be utilised alongside or instead of formal (national) currencies constitute ‘an agreement to use something else than legal tender as a medium of exchange, with the purpose to link unmet needs with otherwise unused

resources' (Lietaer and Hallsmith 2006, 2) – particularly in the context of economic hardship and crisis (e.g. Pearson 2003; Gomez 2009). Above all, though, they constitute effective yet understudied resistant micro-political tools challenging the stultifying claim that the lack of mainstream money equals to social immiserating and suffering. For in representing practical manifestations of an unorthodox sociology of money dealing with economies as sets of social relations and nexuses of everyday practices that can change in response to social stimuli (Dodd 2014), they act as alternative economic spaces, materialise on non-capitalist cultural codes, and enable the realisation of alternative livelihoods despite-yet-beyond capitalism (North 1999; 2007). Hence, I contend – and fully detail in Chapter 2 – that they represent a form of everyday crisis activism: a grassroots social innovation capable of changing how everyday social practices unfold by providing new forms of non-capitalist capital to support everyday life despite-yet-beyond capitalism (following Avelino et al. 2013).

Subsequently, I assert that these empirical case-studies help open-up questions about how crises are contested in everyday lifestyle arenas, and add a layer of empirical detail and conceptual rigour to the non-capitalist imaginary – thus further corroborating the language of proliferating non-capitalist possibility (e.g. Gibson-Graham 2006). For I contend, and fully explore in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4), that (crisis) community currency movements constitute: a) a conceptually powerful, and b) an empirically critical case-study of how austerity and capitalism are being contested on the ground with the hope of transforming the crisis into an opportunity for social change.

Second, this thesis makes an important *conceptual* contribution by putting forth a novel conceptual agenda grounding the interlinked ideas of crisis, critique, and change on everyday activist practices. Specifically, it develops a conceptual framework inspired by Holloway's 'crack capitalism' (2010) manifesto that draws heavily from Bourdieu's practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1990). This might seem an odd choice – not least because Bourdieu's

work is rarely, if ever, called upon to engage with either economic processes (Adkins 2011) or the enactment of novel practices and processes of social change (e.g. Alexander 2000; King 2000). However, this thesis finds fertile ground in Bourdieu's claim that during moments of crisis everyday habits and unquestioned beliefs are unmade and challenged (e.g. 1977), and in burgeoning scholarship extending Bourdieu's insights to explore how novel practices and habits develop in the first instance (e.g. Noble and Watkins 2003; Yang 2014). It, thus, breaks new ground in exploring processes of micro-level social transformation in the wake of crises that are currently under-explored by literature on crises, everyday activism or community currency movements. For this research seeks to document and understand the processes, dynamics and conflict-laden nature of attempts to enact non-capitalist practices through crisis community currency movements in the face of an otherwise capitalist mainstream and proliferating 'capitalocentric' cultures (Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). As such, this thesis hopes not only to destabilise fatalistic understandings of capitalism as the end of history (DeAngelis 2007), but also to offer a voyage of theoretical discovery potentially laying the foundations for a novel approach to the study of community currencies and everyday activism. While this thesis cannot hope to provide final answers on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, it thus aims to incite new understandings about the potential of everyday activism to challenge the crisis at the grassroots.

Third, and finally, this thesis makes a *methodological* contribution in the field through the first insider ethnography of crisis community currency movements. Whilst this approach limits my ability to reach many generalizable conclusions on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, the in-depth insights and conclusions on everyday activism it will inform will, hopefully, enable scholarly and activist reflection. In particular, through the first 'activist ethnography' (Routledge 2009) of crisis community currency movements, this thesis hopes to uncover the messy complexity of non-capitalist change as it unfolds in practice while activists use community currencies, talk about and reflect about this.

Social movement scholars have developed detailed methodological guides for the study of activism (e.g. Melucci 1989; Touraine 1981) that have also informed research on community currency movements (North 2006). Further, questionnaire surveys and interviews have been widely adopted by current literature on community currencies (e.g. Collom 2011; Sotiropoulou 2012; Thanou et al. 2013). Nonetheless, in adopting a practice-based understanding of community currency activism, such approaches prove a misfit. Rather, shifts in the understanding of social movements have opened new research avenues – paving the way for locating the research within an ethnographic tradition. This methodological approach hopes to contribute to an in-depth understanding of how people contest neoliberal crises from the grassroots – providing a dynamic story that uncovers practices of contestation enacted in multiple materially embodied manners.

1.4 An outline of the thesis

But how exactly does this thesis aim to provoke such novel understandings and debates? At core, and as Fig.1.2 suggests, this thesis intends to explore whether everyday activism might help transform the Greek economic crisis into an opportunity for social by:

- i. Outlining a novel conceptual and methodological approach to inquiry;
- ii. Providing an empirical grounding for the discussion around the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change;
- iii. Highlighting the implications of this research in terms of what the novel research findings and approaches to inquiry might offer to the exploration of the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change.

Specifically, the first part of this thesis uncovers my approach to inquiry. In seeking to explore everyday activism as a possible source of social reconstruction in the wake of the crisis, the next chapter (Chapter 2) sets this study within its theoretical context. Departing from the core assertion

that disparate ideas on the moment of crisis cannot adequately account for how social transformation unfolds at the moment of crisis (Cordero 2016, 148; Noys 2011), it turns to an alternative school of thought on everyday activism that focuses on issues of grassroots micro-level transformation. Nonetheless, as this chapter also identifies a set of critical knowledge gaps and under-researched and under-theorised questions, it concludes with: a) a novel conceptual framework, and b) with a novel empirical focus on crisis community currency movements designed to guide the broader exploration of how non-capitalist practices might emerge in the wake of the crisis.

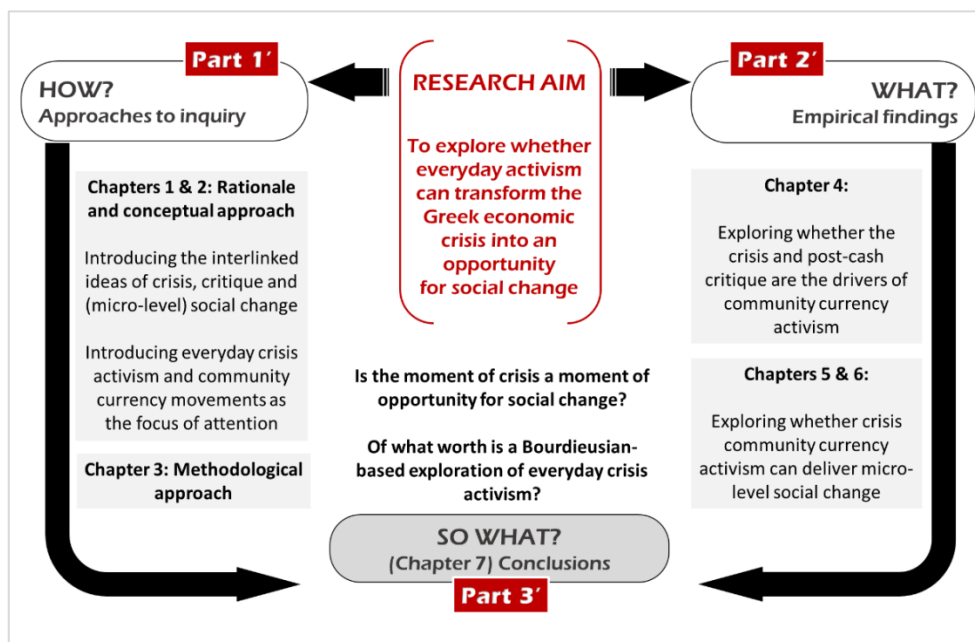


Figure 1.2: Schematic outline of the thesis

Having established my conceptual approach to inquiry, Chapter 3 then moves on to detail the methodological protocol implemented to address the core research aim of exploring forms of crisis activism and its capacities to transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for social change. Specifically, informed by the conceptual model presented in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 describes and justifies: a) the multi-sited, insider

ethnographic approach of three Athenian community currency movements adopted, b) complementary sources of data, c) the case-study selection approach and selection criteria, and d) the practicalities of undertaking ethnographic research and analysing the data to construct a narrative of crisis community currency activism.

The second part of this thesis then represents an insider ethnographic investigation of community currency activism as it unfolded in the three community currency movements considered in this study. Chapter 4 kicks things off by addressing the first research question around drivers of crisis community currency activism. Specifically, it introduces the three case-studies – applying insights from Bourdieu’s practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1990) to explore whether post-crash critique and unmade capitalist practices are they drivers of community currency activism.

Chapter 5 then addresses the second research question on whether and how novel non-capitalist practices emerge through crisis community currency activism. It explores the practical enactment of non-capitalist practices – thus aiming to uncover the social reconstruction dynamics of the present and ongoing crisis. In so doing, it focuses on providing rich narratives on how community currency activists attempt to remake their everyday practices outside the mainstream market. Hence, the chapter helps inform the first study of community currencies dealing with the nitty-gritty and heterogeneous nature of practicing the alternative economy and, thus, of trying to enact non-capitalist practices through involvement in such movements.

Chapter 6 then completes this empirical trilogy by taking a more critical stance vis-à-vis the central research question of whether the economic crisis constitutes an opportunity for social change. For it addresses the third and final research question on barriers to community currency activism and their impacts on attempts to enact non-capitalist practices. In so doing, it seeks to explore and explain – in Bourdieusian

terms: a) a stark discrepancy between non-capitalist values and aspirations and concrete practices on the ground identified through my ethnographic research, and b) the possible future of community currency activism in light of the aforementioned challenges.

Chapter 7 then draws the final curtain to this thesis by addressing each of the research questions and the overarching research aim of the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change directly. At its core, it suggests that the economic crisis is only partly a blessing in disguise enabling life despite-yet-beyond capitalism and social change. Simultaneously, though, it concludes on how a Bourdieusian-based approach has manifested itself as a particularly powerful conceptual lens for studying actually-existing alternatives to either austerity or capitalism. If this is accepted, it argues that the implications of this thesis far exceed the detailed responses to the overarching research question. For this thesis also lays the groundwork for further work to corroborate Gibson-Graham's (e.g. 1996; 2006) and Holloway's (2002; 2010) inspiring non-capitalist imaginary in a crisis context.

In a nutshell, these accounts open up a timely conversation on the moment of crisis and how to best explore and reconsider it as a moment of opportunity. This is the moment of crisis. Yet this is also the moment of – at least some – hope. The chapters that follow uncover this heterodox narrative of crisis as opportunity.

PART I

APPROACHES TO INQUIRY

2 CONCEPTUALISING CRISIS AS OPPORTUNITY

This is the moment of crisis: a moment of “unavoidable” austerity (e.g. Knight 2013) ‘capitalist barbarisms’ (Muehlebach 2016, 359) and ‘social catastrophe’ (Hill 2012, 4). But could this also be a moment of social change? This is the core question explored in this thesis – seeking to maintain a vigilant eye with regards to assertions that crises constitute moments ripe for challenging the status quo (e.g. Cordero 2016; Holloway 2010, 250; Noys 2011).

To initiate this exploration, this chapter outlines the conceptual rationale and empirical focus of this research on crisis community currency movements. As this chapter aims to uncover, this is far from a straightforward process. For persistent knowledge gaps in existing scholarship documented in this chapter call for a rather unconventional approach to the study of whether the moment of crisis is also a moment of critique and social change. Specifically, Section 2.1 introduces how the interlinked ideas of crisis, critique and opportunity for social change (what I label as the *crisis-critique-change triplet*) have been conceptualised in socio-political scholarship dealing with moments of rupture. Nonetheless, in reviewing this body of scholarship, this first section of the chapter concludes that disparate ideas on the moment of crisis are unable to account for documented experiences of non-capitalist social reconstruction in the wake of the Greek crisis. However, in being inspired by both theoretical assertions made by this body of scholarship and activist claims on the ground, Section 2.2 introduces a body of scholarship on everyday activism that reconsiders the *crisis-critique-change triplet* – attributing immense agential capacities to individuals to live despite-yet-beyond the mainstream. But despite being better equipped at addressing the research questions posed by this thesis on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level change in everyday social practices, this body of scholarship also remains ill-equipped

for a rigorous exploration of post-crash activism – especially in light of its many uncritical and under-theorised claims. To overcome these shortcomings, Section 2.3 thus introduces a novel agenda linking Bourdieu’s practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1984) and scholarship on everyday activism. Finally, Sections 2.4 and 2.5 respectively link these conceptual understandings to empirical research on the ground. Section 2.4 introduces crisis community currency movements as a critical yet neglected case-study of post-crash activism, whilst Section 2.5 details how my three research questions aim to contribute towards a novel understanding of these movements.

2.1 Introducing crisis scholarship

Whilst the moment of crisis has been dealt with within different scholarly traditions, most bodies of scholarship remain loyal to the Greek origins of the word ‘crisis’ (deriving ‘from the Greek *“krinein”*: to sift, to decide’ (Starn 1971)) and focus on the concept of crisis as a critical ‘turning point’ in human history (O’Connor 1981, 302). Not surprisingly, then, many scholars such as Sorokin (1992) and traditional Marxists (e.g. O’Connor 1981; Korsh 1981; Noble 2000) are quick to attach a series of teleological claims to these meanings – putting forth understandings around societal transitions predominantly driven by systemic crises. For instance, according to Sorokin (1992), society repeatedly passes through a ‘crisis-ordeal-catharsis-charisma-resurrection’ continuum. Furthermore, Marxists treat capitalism as an inherently crisis-prone system, and its periodic crises as cauldrons of revolutionary social movements (O’Connor 1981; Korsh 1981; Noble 2000). Finally, scholarship emerging in the wake of the current economic crisis asserts that the collapse of financial capitalism delivers an opportunity to think of and develop alternative visions of the good life. As Korten (2009, 1) indicatively asserts, this crisis is ‘our best chance to build a new economy that puts money and business in the service of people and

the planet and not the other way round’.

Nonetheless, for the most part of the 21st century, we have witnessed the renouncement of the previously interlinked concepts of crisis, critique and social change. First, an abolitionist line of thought deposits the concept of the exceptionality of crises itself to the ash heap of history. For postmodernists (e.g. Beck 2002; Roitman 2014), crisis is the de-facto *modus operandi* of a society where crises are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. The concept of an ontologically discrete moment of crisis is, thus, incapable of accounting for the new world-order of the ‘global risk society’ (Beck 1996; 2002; 2005) – giving its place to a sociology asserting that ‘being at global risk [is] the human condition’ (Beck 2006, 330). From this perspective, reflexivity seems to have become habitual (e.g. Adams 2006; Decoteau 2015; Sweetman 2003), whilst Bourdieu’s (1977; 2000) understanding of moments of rupture defined by the questioning of otherwise pre-reflexive habits is allegedly obsolete. Hence, as Schinkel (2015, 38) highlights, ‘today, no use of “crisis” carries such deep connotations of change’. Rather, the concept has ‘shifted from its original Greek meaning of “decision” to something more akin to indecision – to a perpetuation of what is’ (ibid.).

Whilst evidently less abolitionist, an alternative school of thought informed by recent concern regarding natural and man-made disasters uncovers a significant shift in the conceptualisation of crises that incorporates the core idea of adaptive capacity and “bouncing back” following a disaster (Cote and Nightingale 2012; Cretney 2014). These concepts might refer to the patterns of behavioural change and to capacities to learn from and store the lessons from crisis situations on the one hand, but, critically, they put forth claims of maintaining a system within the parameters of critical thresholds on the other (ibid.). Indeed, even ‘revisionist’ Marxists themselves (e.g. Bernstein 1975; Townshend 1998, 181-3) question the expected collapse of capitalism, the unavoidable proletarian revolution and its historical necessity (see also O’Connor 1981,

320). The argument that a proletarian inevitably ‘comprehends that under capitalist production he [sic.] is degraded to the status of a mere object [...] and ceases to be a commodity, an object, and becomes a subject’ (Avineri 1971, 148) is understood to suffer from naïve determinism (O’Connor 1981). Rather, contemporary thinkers put forth a more fatalistic claim around disaster events as moments encouraging alternative approaches to economic growth within a capitalistic society (e.g. Arrighi 1978; Cordero 2016). In this view, politics in the wake of crises serves as a form of capitalist reconstruction delivering new opportunities (ibid.). Naomi Klein (2007) thus puts forth the concept of ‘disaster capitalism’ in an attempt to capture how the moment of crisis has always been an integral element of capitalism – with disasters opening up new grounds for the development of novel policies designed to support the proliferating capitalist mainstream.

A key element of this post-crash politics of bouncing back to capitalism is the use of an exceptionality framing to establish a context in which democratic politics can be suspended and progressive alternatives side-lined (Cretney 2016). As the succinct overview of the current and ongoing Greek economic crisis presented in Chapter 1 uncovers, this constitutes a dominant feature of politics in the wake of the crisis. For as Mavroudeas (2016) contends, the framing of the Greek crisis as a ‘national disease’ and not as a failure of global capitalism has led to the hegemonic persistence of austerity politics that largely forecloses any possibility of transforming the moment of crisis into an opportunity for emancipatory social change. For hegemonic rule has maintained its coercive power against all odds – furthering the gains of those on the top at the expense of those at the bottom experiencing the impacts of austerity in their everyday lives (Laskos and Tsakalotos 2012). Rather than discrediting neoliberalism, capitalists use its nostrums to ensure that the system is both saved and moves forward (Nikolopoulou and Cantera 2016; Crouch 2011; Mylonas 2014). Cordero (2016, 2-3) thus uncovers a ‘politics of normalisation’: a ‘therapeutic [austerity] discourse’ framed as “painful” but “unavoidable”

decisions' that will allegedly take the country out of the crisis of growing national and public debt and deliver a more resilient mainstream (Knight 2013; Arampatzi 2017; Crouch 2011; Hart-Landsberg 2016; Wolfson and Epstein 2013).

And yet, against this backdrop, socio-political theorists have recently sought to revive theorising around the critical importance of the moment of crisis (e.g. Cordero 2014; 2016; Cordero et al. in press; Cretney 2016; Noys 2011; Osborne 2010) – albeit avoiding teleological assumptions. For as Cretney (2016, 2) indicatively asserts: 'to conceptualise neoliberal capitalism following disaster as without alternative is to reproduce the hegemony of the construct without attention to other forms of being and acting in society'. Indeed, the unfolding Greek tragedy also uncovers how crises might also 'provide a fervent ground for forms of hope, possibility and resistance' (Cretney 2016, 4). For the message we are getting loud and clear is that there is momentum to transform the moment of crisis into a grassroots struggle for social change.

Accounts of Athens as a "zombie-scape" of unmade practices (e.g. Kiess 2014; Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014) suggest that the challenges faced in the wake of recession and austerity are far greater than the omnipresent risk of the 'risk society' (Beck 2002). This implicates broad social criticism and reflexive negation (Cordero 2016; Cordero et al. in press): an unprecedented rise in anti-capitalist/ anti-austerity sentiment, critique and aspirations (e.g. Rudig and Karyotis 2013; Psimitis 2011). Indeed, Hadjimichalis (2013) and Varvarousis and Kallis (2017) highlight how the crisis and austerity politics gave rise to a 'new political subject' (ibid. 128): people who did not previously share anti-capitalist dispositions who are now disillusioned by both the mainstream and traditional forms of political representation. Most importantly, though, many Greeks have attempted to transform such "sterile" critique into critical-practical action on the ground – transforming many areas of Athens into 'vineyards of activism' (Arampatzi 2017, 51). In this light, Petropoulou (2013) and

Kokkinidis (2015) note respectively that solidarity-cooperative economy initiatives and worker self-management practices developed in the wake of the Greek crisis are not only aimed at meeting pressing material needs, but also at setting the groundworks for a quasi-utopian society despite-yet-beyond capitalism, its malaises and its prevailing cultures.

In this context, sub-section 2.1.1 conceptually locates this thesis in a diverse body of scholarship re-gaining traction in the wake of the Greek economic crisis. For against the pessimism of much critical sociology that everyday life is a closed book and moments of crisis are necessarily catastrophic for society (Lefebvre 1991), this disparate body of scholarship celebrates non-closure and post-crash possibilities for radical social transformation. Indeed, “crisologists” continue to claim that crisis also has an optimistic dimension of possibility for social reconstruction (e.g. Wiewiorka 2012; Morin 1976; 1993). In so doing, this research adopts the emancipatory perspective of Gibson-Graham (1996; 2006) and their call to engage in a scholarship that undermines the dominance of capitalist ideology and stultifying understandings of capitalism as a monolithic, inescapable economic system. Specifically, in applying Gibson-Graham’s (ibid.) understanding of diverse economic possibility despite-yet-beyond capitalism, and in acknowledging that non-capitalist alternatives to austerity already exist, I argue that: a) there is potential for a radically hopeful non-capitalist politics to occur during the Greek crisis, and b) that it is our academic duty to uncover these alternatives and construct a language of diverse economic possibility (see ibid.).

2.1.1 Introducing the interlinked ideas of crisis, critique and change

Moving beyond both teleological and abolitionist understandings on the moment of crisis, Morin (e.g. 1976; 1993) puts forth “*crisology*” as a scientific discipline that treats crises as events that both reveal and have a

profound impact on social life. On the one hand, crises inflict self-reflection – uncovering, for instance, capitalism in all its cruelty and unfairness (Wieviorka 2012). On the other hand, in constituting events that have an effect on social life, crises do not only set in motion forces of social decomposition, but also forces of social reconstruction (Morin 1976; 1993). For as socio-technical systems that previously contributed towards the enactment of everyday practices cannot be relied on anymore, the moment of crisis constitutes an imperative incentive to invent something new (ibid.).

These basic-level understandings have recently been advanced by three distinct bodies of scholarship. First, scholarship on natural and man-made disaster management typified by the work of Solnit (2009) claims that people inevitably come together in the face of adversity for cooperative disaster relief – thus regaining control of their own lives upon recognition of collective agential capacities for action. Second, community psychologists outline a general crisis theory postulating that general emotional distress and disorganisation in light of habitual problem-solving responses that prove inadequate in the wake of crises dictate working through the crisis: dealing with feelings and identifying and mobilising external and/or internal resources to resolve the crisis (see Slaikeu 1990).

Most importantly, perhaps, critical theorists elevate the break from normality brought about by outbursts of crises to critical turning points in human history. Specifically, whilst there is an argument around recurring systemic disequilibria, this body of scholarship celebrates those moments when the objective manifestations of crisis at the systemic level also generate impacts on individuals in the form of an ‘identity crisis’ (e.g. Benhabib 1986, 224-53; Habermas 1988; 1991). For when these tendencies have a direct impact ‘and harm symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld by calling forth conflicts and reactions of resistance there’ (Habermas 1991, 385), then ‘society turns itself into an object of reflection’ (Cordero et al. in press). As Prince (1920, 20) characteristically puts it:

'Life becomes like molten metal. It enters a state of flux from which it must reset upon a principle, a creed, or purpose. It is shaken perhaps violently out of run and routine. Old customs crumble, and instability rules.'

In particular, the moment of crisis is understood to deliver a unique opportunity for society to act upon itself – making full use of a post-crash 'reflexive centre where it builds up a knowledge of itself in a process of self-understanding' (Habermas 1997, 359). For the moment of a 'social-lived crisis' (Benhabib 1986, 224-53) 'brings the undiscussed into discussion' (Bourdieu 1977, 168-9): norms, systems and otherwise durable and pre-reflexive ways of being and doing (ibid; Cordero 2016; Marx 1986; Osborne 2010; Habermas 1988, 15). The notion of crisis thus becomes an indicator of a new awareness capturing both the anxieties of society, but also its emancipatory hopes (Koselleck 2006). It is only at this moment whereby our habits depart from "normality" (Kouvelakis 2013; Bourdieu 1984; 2000; Habermas 1997) that a 'breach in meaning and established practices that we cannot simply bypass' opens (Cordero 2016, 1).

The moment of crisis and critique thus leads many individuals into a struggle of remaking an everyday despite-yet-beyond the crisis through a creative critical-practical activity of becoming autonomous (e.g. Castoriadis 1997; 1997a). For people on the ground decide to take matters into their own hands, to push for social change or even to embark on grassroots projects that deliver new counter-cultural practices (e.g. Castells et al. 2012). Critical theorists thus suggest that the challenge of established constellations of political power and explorations of concrete alternatives are largely dependent on this crisis consciousness (e.g. Cordero 2016; Habermas 1997, 379-81). As Habermas (1997, 379-81) asserts, post-crash critique is highly significant in reconfiguring both the rules of the game and popular discourses on what is desirable and/or possible (see also Karatani 1995; Marx 2000; Habermas 1997, 379-81).

These claims conceptually corroborate the rationale of this thesis to

explore the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change. And yet, this diverse and inspiring body of scholarship comes with an important warning: the moment of crisis should not be uncritically celebrated. Rather, as Walker and Salt (2012) highlight, radical social transformation in the wake of crises is dependent upon: a) social preparedness to change, b) the availability of options for change, and c) the agential capacity for change. For whilst 'crisis seems to be the right place for critique to flourish' (Cordero 2016, 52), critique is oftentimes 'completely ineffective' (Geuss 2010, 185). Critique mainly produces a 'virtual fracture' (Foucault 2000, 450). It remains 'impotent to autonomously improve and initiate "something new" in the world' (Cordero 2016, 121; see also Noys 2011, 46). Thus, 'crises are not fate', but simply 'a reflexive moment for social actors to be able to put into question the norms and institutions that govern the present organisation of society' (Cordero et al., in press, 4).

Subsequently, I contend that this ongoing debate on the moment of crisis and its importance makes the empirical exploration of the ongoing Greek economic crisis all the more important. For, collectively, these ideas suggest that the moment of crisis and experienced lifeworld pathologies can under no circumstances be reduced to a general theory of crisis as opportunity. Simply put, crises are 'not an unequivocal sign towards the imminent collapse of capitalism' (Cordero et al. in press). Instead, the concept refers to 'a particular situation of condensation of contradictions' with 'outcomes [that] cannot be a priori determined but have to be historically observed' (Poulantzas, 2008, 299-300). In fact, late Marx himself (1976, 93) was forced to abandon teleological claims to argue that the moment of crisis may not necessarily 'signify that tomorrow a miracle will occur' (ibid.) but, rather, how society might transform into an open site of struggles (Marx 2000, 368; see also Marx 1976, 93; Cordero 2016; Arendt 1990, 192). We may even argue that Marx's (e.g. 1976; 2000) concept of crisis does not refer to a single event but focuses instead on four distinct faces of crisis. Namely: a) crisis as the mode of appearance of structural

contradictions of the capitalist project, b) crisis as a moment of technocratic management to achieve temporary solutions to social contradictions and restore normal cycles of accumulation, c) crisis as the mechanism through which capitalism reinstates 'the terms of the contradictions that gave rise to the crisis in the first place', and d) crisis as an opportunity for potentially emancipatory civic action (Osborne 2010, 20).

This well-rounded conclusion seems to suggest that disparate ideas on the moment of crisis can inform a rigorous empirical research that both helps uncover and maintain a vigilant eye with regards to claims around agential capacities for social change in the moment of crisis. It is in these tentatively optimistic terms that I seek to explore Athens, Greece, as a crucible of anti-austerity and anti-capitalist resistance. Specifically, following Noys (2011, 46), I argue that particular attention must be paid to whether agents on the ground actually possess the necessary resources and agential capacities to transform their disillusionment with the mainstream and their critique of previously unquestioned practices into emancipatory practice.

Nonetheless, I contend that the disparate crisis "theories" introduced in this section only *suggest* that social transformation through grassroots activism is either possible or challenging – without really: a) exploring how critique transforms into concrete action, b) paying attention to small-scale processes of critical-practical activity that seeks to deliver micro-level change, or c) providing much – if any – empirical corroboration of the claims raised. Indeed, as Cordero (2016, 148) concludes, standard social theories may discuss the concepts of crisis and critique, but their understandings remain under-developed. For they simply attempt to introduce the notion of fragility in social life instead of making their arguments work towards a general crisis theory capable of understanding processes of social transformation (*ibid.*; see also Noys 2011).

To overcome this problem, Section 2.2 introduces what I regard as a comfortable conceptual home for this research: scholarship on everyday

activism. In searching for new conceptual tools to explore the moment of crisis as an opportunity, this research follows Cretney's (2016) call to reconsider the moment of crisis by drawing on the works of the likes of Gibson-Graham (2006) and Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) – thus focusing on emerging forms of everyday politics that aim to deliver micro-level social change through shifts in values, subjectivities and ways of being and doing in society despite-yet-beyond the capitalist present. Specifically, the research turns to Negri's (1981, 54-5) understanding of 'social labour-power as the potentiality for crisis' (see also Holloway 2010, 250). This cryptic yet politically inspiring claim promises new resources that will help conceptually re-link and empirically explore what I label as the *crisis-critique-change triplet*.

2.2 Introducing scholarship on everyday activism

Twentieth century theorisation on 'cycles of contention' (defined by 'heightened conflict across the social system' (Tarrow 1998, 142)) and on 'relative deprivation' (focusing on protest behaviour in the face of subjectively perceived lifeworld expectations that go unmet (Davies 1962; Walker and Smith 2000)) has made a triumphant come-back in the wake of the crisis. Emerging scholarship widely explores anti-austerity movements and their protests in these terms to uncover a new social cleavage constituting of normally passive individuals (e.g. Della Porta 2015; Rudig and Karyotis 2013). These developments signify and corroborate how the moment of crisis is also a moment of critique.

However, such protest activity has recently been denounced. For anarchist tactics have become increasingly influential on movement practice (Day 2004; 2005; Barker et al. 2013). Contemporary scholarship in line with Holloway's (e.g. 2002; 2010) inspiring manifestos suggests that: whilst struggling for social emancipation, social movements engaged in a politics-

of-demand fall foul of actually reproducing the same conditions of capitalist enclosure they are struggling against (Holloway 2010). This kind of politics can, at best, change the content of structures of domination, but not their form (Day 2005; Holloway 2010, 3).

As such, in searching for conceptual tools to help address the central research aim of exploring the crisis as an opportunity for social change, this thesis focuses on an altogether different approach to anti-capitalist and anti-austerity mobilisation in the wake of the crisis that is, allegedly, capable of transforming critique into concrete emancipatory action. For amidst critiques of classical social movement scholarship and tactics emerged an alternative approach that focuses on autonomist/interstitial social movements renouncing centralised power in attempting to build non-mainstream alternatives in the interstices of capitalist society (e.g. Callinicos 2003; Wright 2010; Holloway 2002). This sub-section thus locates this thesis within a contemporary body of scholarship typified by the work of Holloway (e.g. 2002; 2010; 2014) on social movements engaging in everyday activism.

This heterogeneous body of scholarship has allowed and informed the exploration of how critique directed against the status quo transforms into emancipatory practice. Its alternative perspective to non-capitalism puts forth a radically optimistic claim that attempts to change our understanding of the capitalist mainstream – highlighting its weaknesses and the plethora of alternatives existing beyond the assumed capitalist monolith (e.g. Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006; Holloway 2010). This scholarship departs from a moment of radical critique and questioning of the status quo in response to the experienced malaises and/or crises of a capitalist society (e.g. Noys 2011; Osborne 2010). For critique is instrumental in preserving the moment of crisis ‘as the moment of its own realisation’ (Cordero 2016, 73) – with social actors ‘[f]orming projects of the will’ (Arendt 1990, 192) that inform ‘a micro-cosmos of evolution’ (Morin 1993, 5). However, the focus is neither on the moment of crisis nor on critique per se. Rather,

scholarship focuses on social change and agential capacities for transformation. This idea is captured through Holloway's (2010, 250) claim that 'we are the crisis of capitalism': an understanding that sees individuals and anti-capitalist social movements as the crucibles of critique, crisis and change (e.g. Barker et al. 2013; Holloway 2002; 2014).

Specifically, Holloway's work focuses on society's capacity for practical negativity: the ability to say no to existing forms of power and domination (2010, 21; see also Negri 1981). Most importantly, though, these accounts focus on agential capacities to transform this negativity into potentially emancipatory practice on the ground. For instance, Gibson-Graham's (2006; see also Gibson-Graham et al. 2013) conceptualisation of a non-capitalist politics in the present puts forth calls "to exit" or "take back" the economy – both escaping from the discursive hegemony of the claim that there can be no alternatives to capitalism, and exercising collective power to govern alternative economic spaces towards different ends.

There is, thus, a core claim that the social body contains within it the seeds for change – that society's creative capacities for emancipatory social change remain intact (e.g. Holloway 2002; 2010; Vatter 2009). For instance, Castoriadis' (1998 [1975]) thought starts off with the premise that all norms, laws and institutions are social constructions forming part of a social imaginary and, as such, members of society can potentially unmake them by freely questioning, creating and modifying their existing institutional structures. Most importantly, in departing from a critique of Marxist approaches that challenges the 'capitalocentric' theorisation of capitalism as an all-encompassing entity that dominates everything (Gibson-Graham 1996), this emancipatory body of scholarship puts forth an understanding claiming there exists a variety of class processes – that the capitalist enterprise where surplus value is produced, appropriated and distributed on the basis of waged labour, property rights, market production and financial markets is not inevitable or inescapable (ibid.). There is a sharp distinction between 'abstract labour' (Holloway 2010, thesis 25) or 'surplus

value' (Vatter 2009) on the one hand, and concrete 'doing in-against-and-beyond abstract labour' (Holloway 2010, 178) or 'surplus life' (Vatter 2009) on the other. A distinction between the core idea of individuals that have been reduced to pawns in the hands of the mainstream labour market on the one hand, and an omnipresent 'resource' of 'expanded productivity' that 'can never be eclipsed or subordinated to any transcendent measure of power' on the other (Hardt and Negri 2009, 38; see also Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). An understanding of capitalist markets whose only power is external labour power that can easily be transferred by the individual possessing it to non-capitalist endeavours (e.g. Holloway 2002; 2010; 2010a; 2014). Hence, as human agency and labour are capable of enacting actually-existing alternative socio-economic relations, the capitalist mainstream can only be understood through the 'iceberg metaphor' of Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) showing that capitalist relations are but a small visible portion of economic life – with a whole range of actually-existing or possible alternative relations lying hidden in invisibility below water.

These understandings are, thus, inseparable from notions of power that is located and comes from everywhere (Foucault 2000) – as captured through Holloway's (2002; 2010) distinction between 'power over' and 'power-to' (Holloway 2002; 2010). 'Power over' represents a relation of power over others – specifically of the capitalist power prison-house over individuals (ibid.). This form of power typically turns the activist capacity-to-do against capitalist enclosures into incapacity-to-do (Holloway 2002, 19). But, for Holloway (2002a, 18), power represents, in the first instance, a can-ness – a power-to-do. As such, society represents a constant internal antagonism (Holloway 2002, 23; Holloway 2009, 21): people simultaneously being controlled by the capitalist mainstream but also being able to struggle for autonomy insofar as they appreciate their power to re-direct their labour in non-capitalist endeavours. Consequently, Holloway sees emancipatory struggle as the development of power-to-do despite-yet-beyond power-over (Holloway 2002, 238).

Arguably, this novel non-capitalist politics-of-the-act (see Day 2004; 2005) is a core feature of recession-laden Greece. For the Indignant Movement of 2011 managed, through its lasting legacy, to move beyond a politics-of-demand-making (see Day 2004; 2005) and inspire and prefigure alternative forms of production and social reproduction. In the context of the current and ongoing Greek economic crisis we have witnessed the proliferation of numerous alternative formations challenging neoliberal capitalism and austerity at the grassroots (e.g. Daskalaki 2017; Castells et al. 2012). For many individuals and social groups have responded to their violent impoverishment in the wake of the crisis by trying to make the most of their uneclipsed capacity for labour and action despite-yet-beyond the proliferating capitalist mainstream – aiming to reconfigure the creative forces of society to enact alternatives and enhance their potential for micro-level social transformation and for the realisation of alternative livelihoods less dependent on the capitalist market (e.g. Daskalaki 2017). Whilst austerity dismantles the dreams, certainties and regularities of many Greeks who are now being forced to live ‘de-identified’ (Varvarousis and Kallis 2017, 137), Varvarousis and Kallis (ibid.) argue that the borders of a fixed identity have been opened to make acting in common despite-yet-beyond the capitalist mainstream possible – as evident by emerging liminal alternative economies and practices attempting to produce new forms of living in common (ibid.). Such novel socio-spatial formations allegedly produce ‘a temporary space of social engagement in which participants’ interactions produce affects, values and practices that can bring about new modes of being’ (Daskalaki 2017, 2). These include: worker’s occupied factories, alternative economic spaces and currencies, self-organized collectives, squats and alternative eco-communities (e.g. ibid.; Solidarity for All 2015; Kokkinidis 2015).

But what are the practical implications for non-capitalist struggle? How might this body of scholarship help us account for how post-crash activism seeks to transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for

social change? Sub-section 2.2.1 below explores these questions.

2.2.1 Implications for practicing everyday activism on the ground

In practical terms, the activist tactics adopted by interstitial movements of interest in this thesis move beyond 'hard-nosed political realism' and a concern with integration into political society (Scott 1990, 116) typical of highly organised social movements engaging in a 'politics-of-demand-making' (Day 2004; 2005). In so doing, they fall outside the conceptual scope of a multi-faceted classical social movement scholarship exploring struggles for integration through: a) resource mobilisation (e.g. McCarthy & Zald 1977; McAdam et al. 1996), b) the exploitation of political opportunities (e.g. Tarrow 1998), and c) finding the best ways to package and present ideas in order to get others on board (e.g. Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 1986). Indeed, contemporary social movement scholarship contends that classical definitions and theories of social movements remain under-developed. They are 'too narrowly focused on political action and protest events' (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005, 38), they neglect 'cultural and discursive tactics' (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004, 267-8) and, finally, they are incapable of appreciating the innovative practices and ideas being undertaken by many anti-capitalist movements (Shantz 2009).

Rather, theorists have recognised the importance of a 'new' way of acting politically (e.g. Day 2004; Holloway 2002; 2010; Hardt and Negri 2001) – a wave of 'new anarchism' (Lynd and Grubacic 2008; Epstein 2001) as these new movements set about winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy despite-yet-beyond capitalism (Graeber 2002; Holloway et al. 2009, 5). Hence, there is a new typology of social movements that are 'dispersed, fragmented and submerged in everyday life' (Melucci 1989, 60): people identifying with 'communities of meaning' (Cohen 1985) as they attempt the 'politicisation of the self and daily life' (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 117). This 'lifestyle politics' (Giddens 1991; Bennett 1998; Haenfler et al. 2012) is

in sharp contrast to a politics-of-demand-making (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: The politics-of-the-act Vs the politics-of-demand (Day 2004; 2005)

Type of activism:	POLITICS-OF-THE-ACT: Social movements and individuals pursuing lifestyle politics	POLITICS-OF-DEMAND: Social movements demanding policy change
Focus:	Making use of agential capacities and/ or providing resources to enact alternative livelihoods.	Struggling for social change through policy.
Nature of involvement:	Ongoing involvement – encouraging the integration of movement values into a holistic way of life.	Episodic participation – defined by ‘cycles of protest’ (e.g. Tarrow 1998).
Nature of decision-making processes:	Horizontal praxis: Collective movement practices or management (where appropriate) follow a logic of affinity.	Hierarchical organisation – accepting that coercion is oftentimes necessary to bring about effective political change.

Specifically, as Table 2.1 suggests, everyday activism involves ‘social self-determination in and through organizational forms of resistance that anticipate in their method of organization the purpose of the revolution: human emancipation’ (Thwaites 2004, 21–2). For autonomists, the most emancipatory thing one can do is to strive to create new everyday practices and social relations despite-yet-beyond capitalism (e.g. Castells 2003; Graeber 2002; Holloway 2002). Accordingly, everyday activism involves non-pure revolutionary subjects taking back domains of everyday life or economic relations through a creative process of negation and experimentation (Holloway 2002, 46) that unfolds in a ‘non-confrontational’ and ‘typically habitual’ manner over the course of daily practice (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 37; Demetriou 2016). By unpredictably struggling for and creating an ‘in-between’ space in the interstices of capitalism, individuals transform into political actors and find partial freedom from capitalism (e.g. Arendt 1990) – transforming into its true crisis (Holloway 2002; 2010, 250; Negri 1981, 54-5). For the real forces for social change are located within daily interactions and practices constituting the basis of life (Arendt 1990; Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; Holloway 2002; 2010). Consequently, adopting novel practices should also be generative of non-

capitalisms (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 488).

Hence, this vision celebrates the 'infrapolitics' (Scott 1985, 1989, 1990) of seeking 'tacit, de facto gains' in place of 'recognition of these gains' (Scott 1989, 34) – excellently captured through Scott's (1989, 49) simile of 'polyps [c]reating willy-nilly [...] a political and economic barrier reef of their own'. This implicates a focus on 'power-to' (Holloway 2010) as a micro-level process of change as opposed to a fully blow-out rebellion against the state (Dhaliwal 2012, 269; Barker et al. 2013; Graeber 2002; Epstein 2001). Through a coupled process of 'negation' (combining anti-capitalist critique and a discursive refusal to subordinate to the logics of the capitalist market) and 'creation' in response to capitalist pressures and systemic crises, the result would be a non-capitalist logic of 'doing' and general feel for living – 'an other-doing [...] not determined by money' (Holloway 2010, 3).

Working against capitalism is, thus, the project of a 'working utopia' (Crossley 1999) – a 'lived' (Mattiace 2003, 187) or 'real utopia' (Wright 2010). Interstitial spaces that: a) are beyond the immediate control of capitalist interest, b) achieve some degree of concrete realisation of some emancipatory ideals, and c) are, nonetheless, working utopic models – working sites of practice, negation-and-creation and trial-and-error that give real meaning to what practising anti-capitalism entails (Crossley 1999; Wright 2010). Interstitial milieus, 'hope movements' (Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012) and individuals that: a) refuse to see the world as being 'full of fixed, even perfected facts' (Bloch [1959] 1986; 196), b) 'scream' (Holloway 2002) at the unfairness and injustice of the status quo, c) possess an anticipatory consciousness of the 'not-yet-become' (ibid. 11-2), and d) transform their hope into concrete action in seeking to enact the 'Real Possible' (Bloch [1959] 1986, 196-7; Levitas 1990; Mendes-Flohr 1983).

Specifically, such resistant spaces emerge as milieus of 'heterogeneous affinity' (McFarlane 2009, 563) creating the conditions for the creation of new practices and novel socio-spatial arrangements

(Routledge 2003; Boggs 1977). In constituting 'lived utopias' (Mattiace 2003, 187), they invite individuals to experiment with provisional selves and practices, different modes of belonging, to reflexively reconfigure activities to overcome any difficulties (McFarlane 2009). In so doing, they serve as spaces of social learning that 'can become a catalyst for the formation and transformation of resistant assemblages' (Daskalaki 2017, 12). For as Holloway (2010, 13) asserts, 'the learning of a new language is a hesitant process, an asking-we-walk'.

Clearly these principles are also defining features of everyday activism in the wake of the Greek crisis. Specifically, as Arampatzi (2017) contends, this everyday politics serves: a) as a survival strategy for making ends meet despite-yet-beyond the mainstream market, b) as a challenge to practices of charity that preserve unequal power relations, and c) as a working model of another world despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity whereby passive recipients of support transform into active agents struggling for micro-level social change. For the intense politicization of the Squares Movement has dispersed across Athens – with the various grassroots initiatives introduced in the wake of the crisis 'creating spaces of active participation which tend to shape alternative ways of belonging and living together' (Vaiou and Kalandides 2016, 468; see also Arampatzi 2017). These act as 'concrete utopias' (Dinersteinn 2015, 114) prefiguratively modelling social change through 'a collective performance: an "event" that produces [...] a temporary space of social engagement in which participants' interactions produce affects, values and practices that can bring about new modes of being' (Daskalaki 2017, 2). Further, these emerging interstitial spaces function as 'educational laboratories' (Arampatzi 2017, 53) contributing to a form of 'political education' (Rakopoulos 2014, 97) for participants who engage in a process of informal learning-in-practice to solve common problems (ibid.).

These ideas are, perhaps, best captured through Leontidou's (2015, 69) conclusion that the debt crisis 'paves the way for a grassroots version of

the Smart City’ – a crucible of non-capitalist experimentation and emerging non-capitalist spaces and social relations (e.g. *ibid.*; Arampatzi 2016; 2017) that is fully defined in Table 2.2. Specifically, as Table 2.2 suggests, recent developments in Greece help reconsider the crisis as a generative moment holding the potential for micro-level social transformation.

Table 2.2: The emerging narrative of the ‘Smart City’ in the wake of the crisis Vs the mainstream narrative of the Greek crisis (adapted from Leontidou 2015, 69)

	Heterodox narrative of the ‘smart city’ emerging during the crisis	Mainstream narrative of the moment of crisis
Experienced realities:	Social reconstruction and transformation: Post-crash eutopias, empowerment and grounded utopias of agential possibilism	Social deconstruction: Post-crash dystopia, vulnerability and structural limits to action
Proliferating discourses:	Counter-hegemonic discourse of non-capitalist possibility and grassroots solidarity	Hegemony of austerity and neoliberal policies
Organization:	Dispersed spontaneity, porosity and experimentation	Centralized organization and planning

Undeniably, these insights uncover a body of scholarship that is capable of accounting for: a) empirical cases of grassroots resistance to capitalism and austerity inspiring this research, and b) how critique in the wake of the crisis might transform into an everyday struggle for emancipation. And yet, whilst scholarship on everyday activism provides a conceptual home for this exploration, it is far from a comfortable one. Sub-section 2.2.2 thus outlines a series of conceptual setbacks to bear in mind.

2.2.2 Everyday activism: A body of scholarship in crisis

At a moment of cultural retreat (Crouch 2011), disheartening analyses (e.g. Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014) and waning belief in actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity (e.g. North 2016; Graham-

Harrison 2015; Thanou et al. 2013), studying post-crash everyday activism also necessitates the maintenance of a vigilant eye with regards to the assertion that such forms of counter-conduct can deliver life despite-yet-beyond capitalist and austerity. Unfortunately, the inspiring body of scholarship on everyday activism introduced above does not stand-up to the challenge of providing the insightful accounts needed. Four core conceptual shortcomings outlined in this sub-section corroborate this argument.

First, ‘these critical conceptualisations are deliberately designed to be politically motivational’ (Noys 2011, 52-3). They construct at ‘the abstract ontological level’ the ‘metaphysics of change’ and the ‘myth of “Life” as permanent excess’ – ‘[a]scribing even more supernatural creative power’ to humankind (ibid.) without paying ‘sufficient critical attention to the difficulties and contradictions of sustaining’ everyday activism (Reedy et al. 2016). Indeed, central criticisms of these interstitial understandings include: a) how they downplay or ignore the immense contextual or cultural challenges faced by the interstitial politics-of-the-act such as lack of access to staple resources and pre-existing habits, b) the fact that they make an abundance of unsubstantiated claims that give the impression that the end of capitalism is around the corner (Susen 2012), and c) how they attribute largely positive elements to humanity and downplay the power of capitalism to reinvent itself out of crises (ibid.; Cordero 2016; Sutherland et al. 2013). In other words, they ignore how capitalism has a strong self-preservation tendency and tends to monopolise (De Angelis 2007). Small-scale alternative experiments are, thus, most likely doomed to be defeated by political conservatism, frictional associations with prevailing mainstream cultures and systems, or will simply find it impossible to compete in a market with larger, more “efficient” capitalist businesses (Samers 2005; Kovel 2007). Thus, as Arendt (1990, 275-6) reminds us, these ‘oases in a desert’ cannot prevent the social world from becoming a suffocating totality imprisoning individuals in a life without alternatives.

A review of key theories in the field testifies to this silence. For Scott

(1989), all that matters is an actor's conscious intent for resistance. For Holloway, there is an intentional socio-ontological idealism that fails to detail what 'power-to' looks like – how people 'deeply enmeshed in [capitalist] fetishism [can] liberate themselves from the system' (Löwy 2002). For Das (2012) and Day (2004; 2005), there is the uncritical celebration of the politics-of-the-act expected to transform an 'eventual everyday' (Das 2012, 145) through the internalisation and habituation of radical anti-capitalist rules of behaviour. Finally, for Gibson-Graham (2006), there is a focus on engaging in a 'politics of language' that solely constructs non-capitalist possibility as a discursive space inspiring alternatives. Hence, as bringing about novel behaviours cannot simply depend upon persuading individuals of the possibility of actually-existing alternatives to capitalism (e.g. see Shove et al. 2012), Gibson-Graham's scholarship remains equally problematic.

Of course, this is not to say that such theorists have simply provided naïve and romanticised insights. For instance, both Holloway (2010) and Gibson-Graham (2006) acknowledge how everyday activism may face significant obstacles. However, in their view, it is important to stress capacities to act in spite of these difficulties – with obstacles being (re)considered as 'things to be struggled with, things that present themselves as more or less tractable obstacles in any political project (ibid. xxv). However, leading practice theorists (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Shove et al. 2012) developing rigorous conceptual models for the study of everyday life and practices of interest for scholars of everyday activism warn us that challenges can be detrimental to social practice. In their view (ibid.), novel practices can only ever emerge and establish themselves as embedded parts of daily routines in "ideal" situations whereby a whole spectrum of constituent practice ingredients align synchronically. In other words, it is a real misfortune that this body of scholarship has not drawn from Sztompka's (1991, 177) sophisticated theory of social becoming suggesting that radical social change necessitates both a conducive macro-level field

and a 'fertile soil' of competent and willing actors seeking to achieve change through their agential actuality and potentiality. As such, these accounts leave us with an important question of whether and how we might regain control of our lives (e.g. Noys 2011).

Second, there is very limited scholarship on the lifestyle practices of everyday activism. There is a strong argument that activism has a solid impact on both the political and personal lives of individuals (e.g. Demerath et al. 1971; Edwards 2014; Cherrier 2007). Furthermore, the 'way of life' (Touraine 1988) and 'regular', 'scattered' and 'semi-conscious' social practices (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 37; Demetriou 2016) are understood as the focus of everyday activism. But to what extent are activists able to live despite-yet-beyond capitalism? What matters in and what undermines a successful politics-of-the-act? To what extent can activists retire practices associated with a capitalist *field* and adopt novel forms of everyday doing? How might alternative practices establish themselves as part of a repertoire of appropriate or even habitual ways of living despite-yet-beyond the crisis? How is the omnipresent resource of human creativity nourished and cultivated in practice? What other (material) resources might be needed to make everyday activism possible? Unfortunately, no adequate answers can be afforded here from available literature. What is particularly absent from this emerging body of literature are accounts of the necessary negotiations and challenges of trying to engage in non-capitalist doing: of how activists try to enact non-conformist practices and habits against a backdrop of enclosure in a capitalist world and pre-reflexive capitalistic dispositions (Bourdieu 2000). To the best of my knowledge, the only empirical investigations of this issue are the practice-theory inspired accounts of Crossley (e.g. 1999; 2001; 2002) and Haluza-DeLay (2008) who suggest that such movements can play a role in transforming collective and individualised movement action when they manage to embody their dispositions into the habits of their participants. Yet, these studies do not focus on anti-capitalist movements nor on forms

of post-crash activism.

Third, I argue that work in the field (e.g. Leitner et al. 2008; Juris 2008; Routledge and Cumbers 2008; Doherty et al. 2007; Yates 2015; Crossley 2002) still retains a bias to the collective everyday politics – ignoring the more individual moments of activism important in lifestyle movements (Haenfler et al. 2012). Specifically, key theorists like Melucci (1989) assert that social movement organisers use collective identity – ‘an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution’ (Polletta & Jasper 2001, 285) – to construct grievances, to foster and sustain commitment, to demarcate symbolic movement boundaries (e.g. Gamson 1997; Staggenborg & Taylor 2005), and to enable individuals to do ‘collective action on their own’ (Edwards 2014, 143). This collective identity may provide a layer of meaning to individual action by connecting individuals to something greater than themselves (Polletta & Jasper 2001). However, personal identity is equally significant as participants reconcile their own identity with that of the movement (Reger et al. 2008) – something this scholarship ignores (Haenfler et al. 2012). I contend that the relationship between collective and personal identity is particularly important to movements struggling in the domain of lifestyles. In such movements, personal identity too becomes a “site” of micro-level social transformation as individuals engage in identity work to become everyday activists (following *ibid*; Ibrahim 2015; Grigsby 2004).

Fourth, and finally, by focusing on the core ideas that ‘we are the crisis of capitalism’ (Holloway 2010, 250), work in the field downplays the importance of moments of systemic crisis. Scholarship (especially Holloway 2002; 2010; 2014) makes the assumption that grievances and non-capitalist values are omnipresent (e.g. Lowy 2002) – asserting that alternative doing ‘growing out of necessity’ at moments of crisis is but one of possible drivers of activism (Holloway 2010, 3). Yet, as Lee (2006, 420) warns us, ‘once particular social relations have begun to take place, those engaged and

benefiting from them have an interest in ensuring that they may be extended and sustained'. In a world where social life has a "pre-logical" character (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Wacquant 1989), constituted of tacit un-reflexive operations (social practices) which are at the root of routinized everyday life – where habits adhere unconsciously to the rules of a capitalist field and where (neoliberal) capitalism and its norms are not questioned (Bourdieu 2000) – how might we account for omnipresent critique and progressive social change and, thus, celebrate actually-existing alternatives? Moments of crisis and associated scholarship could play an important role in dealing with this impasse – perhaps providing the only possibility for micro-level social change through everyday activism (Lee 2013, 70). Emerging theorisation on moments of crisis suggests that anti-capitalist critique is usually associated with post-crash crisis consciousness (e.g. Habermas 1997, 357-72; Cordero 2016, 72-3). For it is in the moment of 'lifeworld pathologies' (Cordero 2016, 69) – when individuals fully grasp the misfortunes of capitalism and directly experience the effects of a crisis (ibid; Memos 2014, 119) – that critique becomes truly possible (Cordero 2016).

Consequently, the uncritical celebration of everyday activism, the lack of attention to everyday practices and their enactment as well as uncorroborated faith in the power of critique outside moments of crisis outlined in this sub-section suggest that: it might be inspiring to think of post-crash everyday activism as the true crisis of capitalism, but relevant scholarship still leaves us empty-handed. For what is needed is a conceptually rigorous approach capable of exploring the (im)potentialities of everyday activism, and of accounting for the apparent rise in anti-capitalist sentiment and critique in the wake of the crisis in considering whether this also leads to emancipatory everyday practices. As such, the remainder of this chapter outlines a promising yet controversial conceptual tool-box for studying everyday (crisis) activism. Specifically, it puts forth an exploratory novel understanding of everyday activism drawing on Bourdieu's practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1984).

2.3 A novel agenda on everyday crisis activism

The literature review presented in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 above established the shortcomings of existing scholarship exploring ideas of crisis, critique and grassroots social transformation. On the one hand, it established that existing scholarship on moments of crisis leaves very little room for exploring the ongoing Greek crisis as an opportunity for social change. On the other hand, it asserted that even scholarship on everyday activism that takes a very different stance when suggesting that ‘we are the crisis of capitalism’ (Holloway 2010, 250) is also incapable of raising up to the challenge of studying crisis activism – particularly if one seeks to maintain a vigilant eye with regards to their practical significance.

Arguably, emancipatory yet sufficiently critical understandings of everyday crisis activism are, presently, more timely than ever. For emerging in-depth accounts of commoning against the crisis do not only treat them as effervescent spaces of experimentation with other lives (e.g. Arampatzi 2017; Leontidou 2015), but also as endeavours facing significant challenges – including, inter alia, unavoidable internal conflicts, stagnation, an unsupportive institutional structure, and the ever present risk of capitalist co-optation (Varvarousis and Kallis 2017). In light of these challenges, Varvarousis and Kallis (2017, 145) pose the key question of whether these projects are in any way successful. In their view:

‘This begs for a definition of success. Most projects do sustain and reproduce themselves. Yet they remain marginal, providing for a very small part of the needs of Greek society. In that sense they are very far from materialising a systemic change’ (ibid.).

Against this backdrop, I contend that it is critical to adopt a conceptually powerful lens for the study of everyday crisis activism. Specifically, in seeking to counteract the significant limitations of scholarship on everyday activism, this section aims to introduce Bourdieu’s (e.g. 1977;

1984) practice theory as a conceptually sophisticated lens for exploring crisis activism – both considering a diverse array of issues that shape social practices above-and-beyond motivations for action (e.g. social selves, conventions, routines, *capital* availability, influences from the “external” world within which practices unfold, etc.), as well as their interactions and synchronicities.

To establish the case why a Bourdieusian-based understanding is well suited for studying everyday crisis activism, I will address three areas. First, I present the major principles of practice theory and outline the basic elements of Bourdieu’s take on social practices to uncover the conceptual rigour afforded when compared against under-developed understandings of everyday practices within scholarship of everyday activism (see Sub-Section 2.3.1). I then consider why Bourdieu’s practice theory might seem a controversial choice at first but is, nonetheless, conceptually powerful in when exploring everyday crisis activism (see Sub-Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). Finally, I will attempt to articulate a novel exploratory model on post-crash activism seeking to uncover how novel non-capitalist practices might be enacted and routinized in the wake of the crisis (see Sub-Section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 Introducing (Bourdieuian) practice theory

Becoming the true crisis of capitalism (Holloway 2010; Negri 1981) entails resistance that transforms into a normal part and way of life (e.g. de Certeau 1984, 26; Mihelich and Storrs 2003; 419; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013) – into a ‘regular’, ‘scattered’, ‘non-dramatic’, ‘non-confrontational’, ‘typically habitual’ and ‘semi-conscious’ social practice (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 37; see also Demetriou 2016). Nonetheless, scholarship on everyday activism has not developed an adequate understanding of everyday practices – being simply designed, as Reedy et al. (2016) contend, to unmake the illusion of an all-pervasive capitalist monolith.

In contrast, the long and varied tradition of social practice

scholarship moves beyond paying lip service to the concept of social practices, their habitual enactment or even changes in habit. Indeed, a lot of ink has been shed defining social practices – with some theorists even claiming that social practices make up the entire fabric of social life (Bourdieu 2000). For ‘the basic domain of study of the social sciences [...] is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time’ (Giddens 1984, 2) – ranging from mundane everyday actions to ‘highly structured activities in institutional settings’ (Rouse 2006, 499).

On the one hand, there is a general consensus amongst practice theorists that practices: a) are ‘embodied sets of activities’ (Postill 2010, 1), b) unfold within and create social spaces (Bourdieu 1977; 1984; Dougherty 2004), c) consist of several elements (e.g. Shove et al. 2012; Reckwitz 2002, 249; Bourdieu 1977; 1984), and d) are the outcome of ongoing contextually situated interactions between agency and structure (Giddens 1984; 1991; Bourdieu 1977). Hence, relevant scholarship offers a ‘more balanced approach’ to either approaches focusing on agential capacities for social change which neglect the ‘profound influences of...systems of provision shaping and sometimes pre-configuring the choices and behaviours of individual[s]’, or structural approaches which ‘deny or at least underrate... the crucial role of human agents in the processes of social change’ (Spaargaren 2011, 815).

In this light, activist actions in the wake of the crisis are not the result of individuals’ attitudes and beliefs – as new social movement theories would put it (e.g. Melucci 1989) – but are, rather, constrained by contextual ‘barriers’ embedded within social practices (Warde 2004). However, as Spaargaren (2011, 815) states: ‘[l]ooking ‘beyond the individual’ does not [...] imply reverting to the systemic, structuralist perspective which tends to forget agency and subjectivity’. Rather, by drawing on practice theories to explore everyday crisis activism, both interactions occurring between individuals and social structures can be

understood. Crucially, then, to make sense of social life in the wake of the crisis and to attempt to bring about new forms of doing and living despite-yet-beyond capitalism, it is not the analysis of attitudes, values and decisions of individuals or examination of the operation of formal and informal institutions that is needed. Instead, the analysis of practices and the ways in which they connect and can change their composition, performance and organisation is required.

Clearly, this balanced and holistic understanding of everyday practice allows us to overcome the pitfalls of uncritical celebration of the moment of crisis and of forms of everyday activism as documented above, whilst simultaneously preventing us from resorting to a stultifying discourse that there can be no alternatives to capitalism and austerity. Rather, in line with Walker and Salt's (2012) claim that radical social transformation in the wake of crises is dependent upon social preparedness to change, the availability of options and structural possibilities for change, and the agential capacity for change, a practice-theory-based account helps provide critical insights with regards to the emancipatory claims inspiring this thesis.

On the other hand, however, there remains a significant challenge of identifying the most suitable conceptualisation of social practice amongst a plethora of different theoretical frameworks. Specifically, scholarship on social practice has developed in three conflicting waves. First, the work of Bourdieu (e.g. 1977; 1984; 1990) laid the foundations for the structure-agency positioning of the theory – with a series of significant scholarly advancements complementing Bourdieu's understanding of how social practices emerge in the first instance (e.g. Davey 2009; Yang 2014; Strandbu and Steen-Johnsen 2014). Second, the literature was further developed by the work of Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (e.g. 1996) who produced their own versions of practice-theory. Third, and currently still ongoing, is the simplification, reconsideration and application of these theoretical concepts as part of an emerging understanding of everyday life and social change, with the work of Shove et al. (2012) putting forth the core claim that

changes in social practices may be challenging, but they are far easier to achieve than previously envisioned – evolutionary unfolding and changing across the space-time continuum.

Inevitably, then, there is an ongoing debate concerning the accurate definition of practices. Some theorists focus on what binds practices together (e.g. Warde 2004). Others focus on the bridging position of practices between individual lifestyles and socio-technical systems of provision (e.g. Spaargaren 2011). Finally, whilst a third version or practice theories explores practices as multi-elemental constructs (e.g. Reckwitz 2002; Shove et al. 2012), there still remains considerable disagreement with regards to what these constituent practice ingredients are. For instance, Schatzki (1996, 89), puts forth an understanding of routine social practices as a nexus of doings including: a) ‘shared understandings’, b) ‘explicit rules’, and c) ‘teleo-affective structures’ that collectively guide behaviour and levels of emotional engagement. Alternatively, Reckwitz (2002, 249) argues that: ‘a practice is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge’.

Evidently, recent scholarship interested in social practices has tended to apply insights from Shovian practice theory (e.g. Shove et al. 2012) to uncover the messy and complex of social change in domains such as pro-environmental behaviour change and sustainability innovation (e.g. Hargreaves 2011; Hargreaves et al. 2013; Sahakian and Wilhite 2013; Watson 2012). Whilst not dealing with forms of everyday crisis activism, such empirically rich insights are transposable to the unexplored domain of interest in this research – in terms of highlighting the irreducible complexity of attempted social change. Clearly their version of practice theory which focuses on three elements that influence a practice – namely competences, meanings and social expectations, and physical or tangible objects –

provides a simple and accessible understanding of how practices are performed and organised (Shove et al. 2012, 15).

However, for reasons that become clear in sub-section 2.3.3, in exploring everyday crisis activism, this thesis revisits the first wave of practice theory and, particularly, Bourdieusian practice theory. Specifically, Bourdieu (1984, 101) claims that social practices constitute the combined effect of three constituent ingredients detailed in Table 2.3 – namely: *habitus*, *capital* and *field*. Hence:

'(Habitus) (Capital) + Field = practice' (ibid.)³.

Whilst Bourdieu's conceptual corpus promises an exploration of everyday activism that maintains a vigilant eye with regards to the core crisis-critique-change triplet informing this research, my choice will raise a few eyebrows. As sub-section 2.3.3 outlines, this is clearly a controversial choice in that Bourdieu's practice theory has been widely criticised – especially in light of its alleged inability to account for processes of (grassroots) social transformation. Nonetheless, as sub-section 2.3.2 details, we find an unlikely ally in Bourdieu when seeking to explore forms of post-crash activism. For Bourdieu's practice theory offers significant advantages over and above either alternative practice theories or conceptually lacking scholarship on everyday activism. For: a) Bourdieu's approach has already been applied in the study of social movements and activism and reconfigured accordingly to account for forces of progressive social change (e.g. Walter 1990; Crossley 2003; Ibrahim 2015; Haluza-DeLay 2008), b) many of Bourdieu's concepts were developed to explain facets of systemic crises of interest in this thesis, and c) a Bourdieusian theory of practice enables attention to the difficulties of breaking free from capitalism.

³ This represents a general practice identity rather than a formula on social practices – used by Bourdieu (1984, 101) to convey the multi-component meshwork of ingredients and associations co-shaping practices. At core, it seeks to convey how the interactions of capital availability and habitus within a given social field produce social practices.

Table 2.3: Constituent practice ingredients and their relevance to research on everyday crisis activism (following Bourdieu 1977; 1984)

	Definition and relevance to research:
Practice	<p>Definition: Routine actions and behaviours arising by linking constituent practice ingredients.</p> <p>Key issues considered in the research: Synchronic (un)availability of key practice ingredients enabling/restricting the enactment and routinization of key activist practices despite-yet-beyond capitalism.</p>
Habitus	<p>Definition: ‘Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu 1977, 72) enabling individuals to navigate everyday life in a relatively unquestioned manner that are, nonetheless, occasionally open to partial change – e.g. during crises, in periods of disillusionment, or when an individual enters a novel practice field.</p> <p>Key issues considered in the research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-existing dispositions for action enabling or undermining novel activist practices in the wake of the crisis. - Unmade beliefs and values in the wake of the crisis inspiring everyday activism. - First-hand experience of everyday activism enhancing fundamental faith in everyday activism and contributing towards the development of novel <i>habiti</i>.
Capital	<p>Definition: More than monetary or material resources at the disposal of an agent within a given social <i>field</i> that variably enable the enactment of practices according to relative degrees of possession. These include: a) <i>social capital</i> (i.e. relationships or group membership ‘providing each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital’ (Bourdieu 2007 [1986], 88)), and b) <i>cultural capital</i> (i.e. ‘long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body’, tacit or professional knowledge, and readily available ‘cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)’ (ibid.).</p> <p>Key issues considered in the research: Availability of <i>material, social and cultural capital</i> enabling key activist practices.</p>
Field	<p>Definition: The external world of objective conditions within which practices unfold (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 16) that is, however, internalised, embodied and incorporated within individuals and their <i>habiti</i> as a general ‘know-how’ or ‘feel for the game’ (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 16).</p> <p>Key issues considered in the research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objectively or subjectively favourable conditions within the alternative spaces of activism. - Facilitative or frictional interactions between activist spaces and the proliferating capitalist <i>field</i>.

2.3.2 Uncovering the key criticisms of Bourdieusian practice theory

Given the central role of practice theory in addressing the research aim of exploring the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, it is pertinent to acknowledge the widely documented criticisms of Bourdieu’s approach. While I contend that Bourdieu has, to some extent, been

criticised unreasonably, this section aims to uncover how I do not intend to uncritically apply Bourdieu's insights to the study of everyday crisis activism. This section thus outlines the four most relevant shortcomings of Bourdieu's practice theory for the purposes of this thesis.

First, the most pertinent criticism of Bourdieu's practice theory concerns his apparent lack of focus on agency for social change (e.g. Alexander 1995; Archer 1995; Jenkins 2002; Wacquant 1993) – even viewing (neoliberal) capitalism and the practices supported through the mainstream market as unquestioned realities of life (e.g. Bourdieu 2000). For the *habitus* signifies, according to De Certeau (1984), a 'prison-house'. Specifically, the core concept of the *habitus* represents a 'structured structure' (Bourdieu 1977, 72): internalised structures that 'encourage us to behave in ways that reproduce the existing practices and hence the existing structure of society' (Elder-Vass 2007, 327). This conditioning is so effective, that individuals 'rarely have a true strategic intention as a principle' (Bourdieu 1998, 81) in that action is primarily governed by sub-conscious dispositions (Bourdieu 1990, 56). For the *habitus* persistently shapes an individual's practices – being both 'durable' and 'transposable' to different social fields (Bourdieu 1977, 72; see also Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). As such, social practices can only ever unfold through 'a kind of socially constituted instinct' that rules out the 'unthinkable' (Bourdieu 1990, 161).

Second, whilst some room is left for radical activity, it is still being treated as an inefficient exception in a society of conformity to neoliberalism (Crossley 2003, 45; Lovell 2000, 33). Bourdieu fails, Crossley (2003) contends, to account for the lines of continuity between social movement struggles. He fails to account for how many individuals have been socialised and have gradually acquired a '*radical habitus*' pre-disposing them to act in non-conformist ways (ibid.) – unless a violent rupture of social order contributes in the unmaking of deeply embedded *habiti* (Girling 2004; Landy 2015, 259). Rather, Gartman (2007, 387) asserts, Bourdieusian practice theory entraps us into a nearly unbreakable 'social trajectory'

(Bourdieu 1984, 112; 1977, 86) defined by 'fatalistic dispositions which lead members of the dominated classes to put up with objective conditions that would be judged intolerable or revolting by agents otherwise disposed' (Bourdieu 2000, 217). A trajectory of 'symbolic violence' that is 'exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 167) – as unbearable situations are treated as the natural order of things (Samuel 2013) and a qualitatively better future as an impossibility (Atkinson 2013).

Third, and contra contemporary practice theorists (e.g. Shove et al. 2012; Pantzar and Shove 2010) viewing social practices as ever-evolving entities, Bourdieu's oeuvre seems ill-equipped for understanding how social practices develop in the first instance. This thesis builds on the central assertion that novel practices can emerge through activism in the wake of the crisis. However, as Strandbu and Steen-Johnsen (2014), Jo (2013), Noble and Watkins (2003), Davey (2009) and King (2000) contend, Bourdieu's scholarship or contemporary scholarship drawing on his insights does not explain how *habiti* might transform – seemingly overlooking how 'no-one begins as a masterful player' (Noble and Watkins 2003, 527; see also Butler 1996, 116-8). This is not to say that Bourdieu made no attempt to theorise social change. Rather, he showed interest in '*implicit pedagogy*' '[o]perating beneath the level of discourse and consciousness' (Wacquant 2001, 183) – as 'a practical mimesis [...] which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an imitation that would presuppose a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an utterance or an object explicitly constituted as a model' (Bourdieu 1990, 73). However the problem, as critics argue (e.g. Garnham and Williams 1980, 222; Swartz 1977, 554; Wacquant 1987, 81; Brubaker 1985, 759), is this: as the *habitus* is the product of history – determined by objective field conditions – then individuals would simply reproduce these conditions by repeating the same practices over and over again. 'Since the *habitus* imposes itself upon "willy-nilly"', King (2000, 427) concludes, individuals can 'never construct new

strategies for new situations because they are not aware of their *habiti* and, therefore, cannot begin to reinterpret them'. Indeed, whilst Bourdieu puts forth a reflexivity thesis, he unfortunately restricts it within the ivory towers of academia rather than framing it as something lay individuals might also do in enacting novel practices (Chandler 2013; Fowler 2012; Yang 2014).

Fourth, and finally, Bourdieusian practice theory appears to challenge the *crisis-critique-change triplet* this thesis seeks to explore. Whilst acknowledging moments of rupture and their inevitable impact on habitual ways of being (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; 2000), Bourdieu's account is marked by a delusion of social change (Crossley 2003). For an 'unspecified principle or agency', reason and reflection only overtake the habitus momentarily until field conditions enable the return to pre-crash, 'ordinary', ways of being (Bourdieu 1977, 52-8). Specifically, through a '*hysteresis effect*' of stubbornly resistant practices that are not adapted to the 'changed [crisis] context and function à contre-temps' (Bourdieu 1980, 105; translation my own), Bourdieu's only intention is to put forth an equilibrium-based understanding of society that can only ever see change as a temporary 'break in equilibrium' (Bourdieu 1988, 156; 166-7).

And yet, against these widespread criticisms, this thesis conceptually posits that the overarching criticism of determinism is based on a superficial exploration of Bourdieu's conceptual corpus (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) – especially ignoring recent advancements complementing the core of his work. As Bourdieu suggests: 'there is also change' (Bourdieu 2000, 19). Sub-section 2.3.3 thus uncovers the unlikely capacities of Bourdieusian theory to account for social change in the wake of the crisis.

2.3.3 Uncovering the unlikely capacities of Bourdieusian practice theory to account for social change in the wake of the crisis

Against the backdrop of widespread criticism of Bourdieu's

conceptual corpus, this sub-section claims that Bourdieu's scholarship both withstands charges of determinism and enables a vigilant exploration of everyday crisis activism. Specifically, this section outlines three core reasons as to why Bourdieusian-based account can help in exploring emancipatory social change in the wake of the crisis: a) its capacity to account for changes in social practices, b) its capacities for exploring crisis activism – and especially how critique might transform into an emancipatory praxis on the ground, and c) the promise it offers to maintain a critical eye with regards to actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity.

First, Bourdieusian practice theory and subsequent complementary theorisation on processes of *habitation* can help account for the *crisis-critique-change triplet* informing this thesis. For Bourdieu, individuals customarily live by a 'modus vivendi': a way of living rather than by a rationally derived ethic (Bourdieu 1990) defined by the common-sense knowledge of what "works" and by 'reasonable expectations' within respective social fields of action (Bourdieu 2005, 214). From this perspective, most people would be described as orthodox economic actors (ibid.) and, thus, social change seems impossible (e.g. Lau 2004; Mesny 2002; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 167). Consequently, as Crossley (2003) highlights, the main challenge of applying Bourdieu's theorisation of social practices is his insistence on socio-systemic closure that does not permit us to see social movements as game changers. Nonetheless, according to Bourdieu (2000, 19), in moments of crisis otherwise enduring routines are suspended and give way to critical-practical actions: 'People can find that their expectations and ways of living are suddenly out of step with the new social position they find themselves in [...]. Then the question of social agency and political intervention becomes very important'. Further, 'times of crises, in which the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted' constitute, for Bourdieu (in conversation with Wacquant 1989, 45), 'circumstances when indeed 'rational choice' often appears to take over'.

In simpler terms, Bourdieu (1990; 2000; 2005) highlights that moments of crisis break the links between the constituent ingredients of practices (see also Pantzar and Shove 2010 on ex-practices) – thereby shocking people into a more critical attitude (Swedberg 2010). He even goes on to perceive the effects of periodic crises as a general questioning of otherwise unquestioned – or *doxic* – norms, assumptions and beliefs guiding social life (Bourdieu 1977). Finally, and perhaps more importantly, *habitation* processes deliver the potential to overtake the inertia of pre-existing *habiti* and transform critique into emancipatory praxis – insofar as emerging dispositions, available *capital* and *field* conditions are conducive of alternative doing by setting the groundworks to enable novel practices to exist in a pre-routinization state (Yang 2014). Indeed, given an emerging argument around the gradual development and evolutionary routinisation of novel practices through everyday familiarisation, learning-in-practice, implicit and explicit pedagogy, and reflexivity (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Davey 2009; Haluza-Delay 2008; King 2000; Noble and Watkins 2003; Yang 2014; Strandbu and Steen-Johnsen 2014), we can easily extrapolate a ‘Bourdiesian change mechanism’ (Yang 2014, 1536).

Whilst such claims are at the core of scholarship on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social transformation (e.g. Cordero 2016; Morin 1993), they fall beyond the scope of alternative versions of social practice theory. For instance the ‘elemental’ approach of Shove et al. (2012), ‘is unusual in provisionally de-centring the human actor’ (ibid. 22). In this view, it is practices-as-entities – comprising of stuff, images and skills – that are of interest, and not practitioners themselves (ibid.). In this practice-centric view, practices exist as entities independent from their practitioners – capable of transforming as one element changes without the active involvement of agents (ibid.). For as Reckwitz (2002, 256) asserts: ‘the social world is, first and foremost, populated by diverse social practices’. Conversely, an account of everyday activism in the wake of the Greek economic crisis necessitates bringing practitioners centre-stage –

accounting for practices that are practically forbidden, their impact on activist dispositions and, critically, for the interactions between *social fields* and individuals that are beyond the scope of Shovian practice theory. For in line with scholarship on the moment of crisis introduced in Section 2.1 (e.g. Cordero 2016; Morin 1933), such an exploration dictates paying sufficient critical attention to how the crisis has affected individuals and how they might respond to it through critical-practical activity – issues that can be rigorously explored using Bourdieu’s conceptual corpus.

Second, whilst Bourdieu himself did not have any faith in social movements for social change outside of situations of systemic crisis (Crossley 2003, 44; Girling 2004), an emerging scholarly niche finds a powerful conceptual lens in his scholarship when exploring contemporary movements (e.g. Crossley 2002, 2003; Haluza-DeLay 2008; Husu 2013; Ibrahim 2015; Landy 2015; Samuel 2013). For while traditional social movement theories have increasingly dealt with questions of culture and the everyday as the battleground of social movement struggles, movement students adopting insights from Bourdieu assert that: ‘the scholars associated with these approaches have, most of the time, neglected how culture, everyday life, identity-formation, and habits might not only be resources, instruments and aspects of society that are transformed as a result of mobilisation, but the very focus of movement activity’ (Tugal 2009, 427). Especially pertinent are Crossley’s (2003, 56) claims around the capacities of social movements to enact a novel ‘*radical habitus*’.

Indeed, an emerging body of scholarship evangelises that the criticism of determinism is based on a partial reading of Bourdieu (e.g. Baxter and Britton 2001; Horvat and Davis 2011; Lee and Kramer 2013; Jo 2013). On the one hand, scholars extending on Bourdieu’s work claim a central role for reflexivity and learning-in-practice for a certain group of practices that are not yet routinized and can, thus, not operate on a pre-reflexive fashion because of their immaturity in the hands of novice practitioners (e.g. Sweetman 2003; Chandler 2013; Mouzelis 2008; Sayer

2010; Yang 2014; Noble and Watkins 2003). On the other hand, the *habitus* itself can also be seen as a mechanism capable of generating novel practices. For Bourdieu (1990, 53) demonstrates that whilst *habitus* is a 'structuring form of structure', it still permits agency and creativity. For *habitus* dispositions are not 'determinisms', but 'tendencies' (Grange 2009). As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, 122) assert, the *habitus* is ontologically different from pure habit – defined as an entirely mechanical response – because it includes a 'generative (if not creative) capacity inscribed in the system of dispositions as an art' (see also Bourdieu 1977, 95). In this light, Swartz (2002, 635) postulates that: '*individuals do not simply conform to the external constraints and opportunities given to them*' but, rather, '*adapt to or resist, seize the moment or miss the chance, in characteristic manners*'

I contend that, at core, these insights afforded by Bourdieusian practice theory have largely gone unnoticed because of Bourdieu's biased focus on determinism. Paradoxically, though, I contend that Bourdieu's emphasis on determinism delivers a third key advantage for scholarly research on actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity. Specifically, I argue that Bourdieu's practice theory helps maintain a vigilant eye with regards to celebratory claims around actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity – thus breaking free from the abstract 'metaphysics of change' and the 'myth of "Life" as permanent excess' of scholarship on everyday (crisis) activism (Reedy et al. 2016). For whilst practice theorist such as Shove et al. (2012) put forth understandings of social practices as identities that can change relatively easily as one practice element changes, a critical understanding of everyday crisis activism necessitates paying sufficient attention to the idea that social stasis and social change dynamics co-exist in an intricate meshwork of (im)possibility indicative of Bourdieu's multiple and conflicting definitions of social practices (Potter 2000).

Specifically, whilst not explicitly drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Holloway's (2010) otherwise hope-centric manifesto on everyday activism

also hints to these complex dynamics. For Holloway's conceptualisation of non-capitalist practice is heterodox: a misfit in a capitalist world as our assumptions and everyday life habits are integral components of the social synthesis of capitalism (ibid.). Indeed, a key obstacle encountered by non-capitalist projects are our own field-specific subjectivities – thus indicating how everyday activism entails 'a struggle against [our]selves' (Gibson-Graham 2006, xxxv) and 'against a culture of thinking (that has socialised us as well as others) that makes capitalism very difficult to sidestep or give up' (ibid., 3). In Bourdieu's (1977, 72) terms, this *capitalistic habitus* thus conveys 'the principles of the generation and structuring of practices' of the capitalist *field* (Bourdieu 1977, 72) – an understanding that falls beyond the scope of alternative practice theories (e.g. Shove et al. 2012) that do not specify a *field* element that is both "external" and internalised within individuals and their *habiti*. Subsequently, in reflecting Holloway's (2010) assertion that cracks clash with the social synthesis of capital, I contend that the concept of a '*field of struggle*' (Crossley 2002) within which cracks are embedded conceptually aids in making sense of the possibilities and challenges faced by attempts at the politics-of-the-act. Indeed, Bourdieu's account (1960; 1979) of the transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist economy in Algeria highlights the difficulties Algerians – with their pre-capitalist *habitus* – had in adjusting to the new capitalist field.

Bearing these insights in mind which collectively uncover the suitability of a Bourdieusian-based approach in critically exploring the *crisis-critique-change triplet* of interest in this thesis, the following section (Section 2.3.4) details a novel exploratory model designed to guide the analysis of crisis community currency movements.

2.3.4 Crisis-Critique-Change: A novel conceptual model guiding the investigation of everyday crisis activism

The review of Bourdieu's theory offered in the preceding sections of

this chapter has uncovered the conceptual power of this approach in exploring the *crisis-critique-change triplet* whilst maintaining a vigilant attitude with regards to society's capacity to break free from the habits of a lifetime. These are, undeniably, insights that could not be afforded by either crisis theories or by emerging scholarship on everyday activism – two rich bodies of scholarship which, nonetheless, remain ill-equipped for studying the processes of everyday (practice) transformation.

And yet, contra this promising starting-point, developing a Bourdieusian-based understanding of crisis activism requires a leap of faith. For the idea of novel *habiti* and practices emerging from the ashes of capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis remains empirically and theoretically unexplored. Bourdieu argues that “blips” in the *habitus* in the wake of crises do not only generate a need for rational and critical thinking, but also a need for adjustments in enduring *habiti* themselves (Bourdieu 2000, 149; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 131). But the *crisis-critique-change* chain Bourdieu suggests remains an enigma (Jenkins 2002, 79). As Crossley (2001, 117) argues: whilst Bourdieu is ‘by no means oblivious to the question of reflexivity’ during crises, ‘the nature and possibility of reflexivity are something of a mystery in his work’ (ibid.).

Moreover, in spite of considerable advancements in developing detailed understandings of *habituation* as an evolutionary process initiated by practical experience, learning-in-practice and reflexive evaluation, this progress has been illusory. First, scholarship has been busy producing theoretical accounts that, unfortunately, remain empirically uncorroborated (e.g. Davey 2009; Yang 2014; Noble and Watkins 2003). Second, the few empirical studies exploring change in habits focus on tangential issues. They explore changes primarily associated with social mobility when entering novel educational *fields* (e.g. Jo 2013; Lee and Kramer 2013) – thus falling short of accounting for moments of crisis of interest to Bourdieu himself (e.g. 1977; 2000). For instance, the only theoretical account exploring crises and change is Dalton's (2004) attempt to suggest that creative, non-habitual

action takes over during crises as a distinctly separable episode of action. Third, by focusing solely on evolutionary transformation upon entering novel and autonomous social *fields*, accounts fall short of apprehending possible *field* interactions that may influence attempts to enact novel practices (e.g. Davey 2009; Yang 2014; Noble and Watkins 2003). Insofar as activist *action-fields* operating despite-yet-beyond the capitalist mainstream are necessarily hierarchically nested within the broader economic *field* (drawing on Fligstein and McAdam 2012, ch.3), this study cannot afford to ignore the ‘gelatinous suction’ of capitalism (Holloway 2010, 51).

These conceptual silences pave the ground for the original contributions to scholarship this thesis seeks to make. Specifically, this thesis puts forth a novel model on everyday crisis activism reflecting the *crisis-critique-change triplet* (see Fig.2.1). This model constitutes the culmination of my non-deterministic reading of Bourdieu, fruitful yet lacking scholarship on *habitation* processes and, most importantly, of the desire to develop a powerful conceptual tool-box in trying to uncover actually-existing alternatives to austerity and capitalism. Furthermore, it constitutes the outcome of a more creative reading of Bourdieu’s conceptual corpus – one that responds to King’s (2000) call to think with-yet-beyond Bourdieu. In particular, whilst acknowledging that alternative versions of practice theory are fundamentally different to Bourdieu’s scholarship (in terms of their understandings and assumptions – see sub-section 2.3.1), and in light of Bourdieu’s (1979) open invitation for scholarship that complements his own understanding, I argue that certain insights from alternative practice theories might be successfully adapted to make better sense of micro-level social transformation in the wake of the crisis. Specifically, my conceptual approach includes adapting:

- i. Shove et al.’s (2012) and Pantzar and Shove’s (2010) concept of ‘*proto-practices*’ to conceptualise the beginnings of novel practices in the wake of the crisis – i.e. how practices that can be objectively constructed due to conducive emerging dispositions or *field* conditions and available

- capital* might look like in a pre-formation state before becoming an integrated part of daily routines.
- ii. Schatzki's (1996) concept of *practices-as-entities* to complement understandings of 'explicit pedagogy' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Yang 2014, 1533) – whereby individuals might be educated into a novel *habitus* through the discursive communication of what alternative practices might look like, what their constituent elements are, and how to perform them.
 - iii. Crossley's (1999) complementary understandings of how activists might remain committed to their struggle to enact non-capitalist alternatives in an attempt to make sense of how possible setbacks are negotiated.

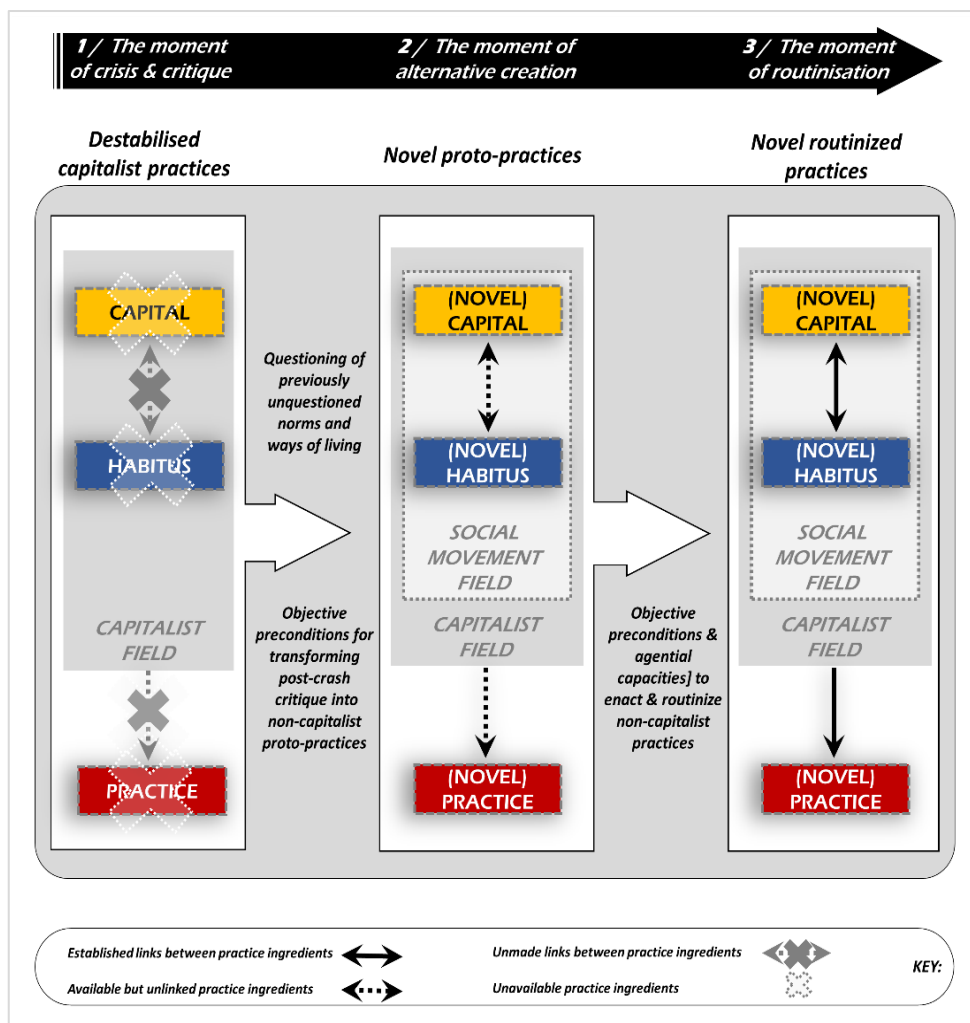


Figure 2.1: Conceptual research model on emerging non-capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis

At its core, though, this novel model puts forth an understanding of ‘power-to’ become the crisis of capitalism (Holloway 2010). It postulates a non-capitalist logic of ‘doing’ and general feel for living – a non-conformist activity that emerges through a coupled process of ‘negation’ (combining anti-capitalist critique and a discursive refusal to subordinate to the logics of the capitalist market) and ‘creation’ in response to capitalist pressures and systemic crises (see Holloway 2010).

Specifically, the model (see Fig.2.1) draws on Bourdieusian practice theory (e.g. 1977; 2000) to schematically represent practices as the combined outcome of interactions between available forms of *capital* and *habiti* (see double-ended arrow connecting *capital* and *habiti*) within a given *social field*. As such, it first (see Fig.2.1, Stage 1) details moments of crisis when there is a mismatch between expectations and objective conditions for the enactment of capitalist practices (Bourdieu 2000, 162). Drawing on accounts of how everyday life has been unmade in the wake of the Greek economic crisis (e.g. Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014), this stage captures declines in the constituent ingredients of practices and, thus, unmade links and practices. For neither can the mainstream economic *field* support practices and provide the necessary (monetary) *capital* for their enactment, nor can dispositions operate effectively as a *habitus*.

Second, this model postulates the impossibility of an enduring ‘*hysteresis effect*’ (Bourdieu 1988, 156) defined by stubbornly resistant practices. In the midst of a prolonged crisis individuals inevitably have to face the post-crash reality of declining objective conditions and opportunities to meet their pre-held expectations. Furthermore, an inevitable *doxic* crisis ‘brings the undiscussed into discussion’ (Bourdieu 1977, 168-9). Finally, effective forms of everyday activism are expected to offer the objective opportunity to either re-construct unstable social practices or to enact novel non-capitalist practices by: a) creating novel spaces to host non-capitalist doing (following Vaiou and Kalandides 2016), b) providing alternative forms of *capital*, c) making use of unexploited forms

of *capital* embedded within individuals, and d) by educating individuals into a novel *habitus*. Nonetheless as *habituatio* is an evolutionary process that takes time (e.g. Davey 2009; Noble and Watkins 2003; Strandbu and Streen-Johnsen 2014), such alternative economic spaces are originally expected to exist in a liminal state – setting the groundworks to enable novel practices to exist in a pre-formation state (see Stage 2; Fig.2.1 – especially the dotted arrows conveying how the links between practice ingredients have not been made as yet). These are, subsequently, expected to gradually become parts of daily routines as enduring links between the constituent components of social practices are established (see Stage 3; Fig.2.1).

Nonetheless, this novel model does not take the *crisis-critique-change triplet* for granted. Instead, in seeking to overcome the uncritical insights provided by either crisis theorisation or scholarship on everyday activism (see Sections 2.1.1 and 2.2.2 respectively), it reflects Noys' (2011, 48) core assertion that the classical Marxist teleology viewing crises as the 'real movement which abolishes the present state of things' (Marx and Engels 1845) has been suspended. Specifically, it suggests that non-capitalist practices can only emerge if certain key preconditions are met. As such, in further detailing the conceptual model of this research, the following sub-section outlines these preconditions necessary for a radical praxis.

2.3.4.1 *Necessary pre-conditions for non-capitalist practices*

Given both Noys' (2011) and Bourdieu's (2000) assertions that the moment of crisis can only transform into an opportunity for social change insofar as individuals have sufficient agency to act despite-yet-beyond the capitalist mainstream, the novel conceptual informing this research (see Fig.2.1) also lays bare the preconditions for the moment of crisis to transform into an opportunity for social change. Specifically, drawing on emerging scholarship, this sub-section outlines five key conditions that collectively act as the stepping stones to non-capitalist practices. Namely:

- i. A post-crash critical discourse that is favourable to everyday activism.
- ii. Pre-existing dispositions convincing individuals that activism is a rational alternative to participation in the mainstream market.
- iii. Social movements that set the groundwork for non-capitalist practices as '*proto-practices*' (Pantzar and Shove, 2010; Shove et al. 2012, 25).
- iv. '*Explicit*' and '*implicit pedagogy*' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Yang 2014, 1533).
- v. Enduring faith (*illusio*) (Bourdieu 1984) in everyday activism as a game worth playing.

First, whilst Bourdieu contends that *doxic* assumptions (i.e. unspoken and pre-reflexive assumptions of social order) are unmade in the wake of crises and, subsequently, that *habiti* undergo modifications (Bourdieu 1977; 2000, 149), he asserts that not all forms of post-crash questioning are necessarily emancipatory (Bourdieu 1977, 168). Specifically, whilst some individuals may adopt heterodox discourses (thus occupying the 'heterodoxy' end of the *doxic* crisis spectrum), others may adopt more orthodox understandings – questioning social reality without challenging it to the extent that they become abolitionist (hence occupying the more fatalistic 'orthodoxy' end of the *doxic* crisis spectrum). Bearing this in mind, I contend that for everyday activism to become possible, the questioning of previously unquestioned norms of life that comes with crises (see Bourdieu 1977; 2000) has to radically challenge what Cordero (2016, 2-3) refers to as a 'therapeutic [austerity] discourse' of "'painful" but "unavoidable" decisions' (see also Knight 2013).

Second, and given Bourdieu's assertion that the *habitus* is the 'generative principle of regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu 1990a, 57) that commands non-habitual responses in the wake of crises (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989, 45; Swartz 2002, 645), and informs social movement participation (Crossley 2003), I contend that pre-existing dispositions need to convince individuals that activism is a rational alternative to participation in the mainstream market. Specifically, Wood and Neal (2007) argue that

through regular past experiences with a particular type of situation, individuals become used to and develop a “taste” or predisposition for behaviours associated with such situations. Such behavioural templates would thus represent readily available action and moral models that could be triggered contextually (ibid.).

Third, as Bourdieu (e.g. 1977; 1984) views practices as multi-component entities, I assert that the crisis can only transform into an opportunity for social change insofar as interstitial social movements provide all the ingredients necessary for the enactment of social practices. Specifically, Pantzar and Shove (2010) and Shove et al. (2012, 25) trace the beginnings of social practices in what they refer to as ‘*proto-practices*’. This pre-formation state of social practices represents, at core, a fertile *field* where practice ingredients can be found ready for practitioners to cultivate them in establishing practice-forming links. In principle, interstitial social movements could represent such *proto-practice fields*. Not only does membership in such social groups entitle individuals to plentiful *social capital* (Bourdieu 2007 [1986], 88), but they also represent practical manifestations of an omnipresent agential ‘resource’ of ‘expanded productivity’ that ‘can never be eclipsed or subordinated to any transcendent measure of power’ (Hardt and Negri 2009, 38; see also Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). However, it remains important that such movements also deliver further practice-making ingredients. They should develop as *fields* defined by stability and shared understandings of the stakes and rules of activism without being undermined by the capitalist mainstream *field* (drawing on Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Furthermore, they should be in a position to draw from other forms of *capital* (e.g. *cultural capital* embedded in individuals) or pre-existing *habiti* and dispositions to further their projects.

Fourth, activists need to be able to establish the links between these unconnected *proto-practice* ingredients. Specifically, drawing on emerging theoretical accounts on the dynamics of *habituation* (e.g. Davey 2009;

Noble and Watkins 2003; Strandbu and Streen-Johnsen 2014; Yang 2014), we can distil three processes expected to culminate in the development of non-capitalist practices. Non-capitalist practices would first have to be constructed as practices-as-entities (Schatzki 1996): i.e. as idealised entities enabling novice activists to understand how to perform everyday activism – what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) refer to as ‘*explicit pedagogy*’. Further, emerging practices would undoubtedly benefit from a dynamic process of ‘*implicit pedagogy*’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 47) or learning-through-practice (e.g. Pantzar and Shove 2010, 448; Brown and Vergragt 2008, 112) unfolding through the imperceptible familiarisation and increasing virtuosity in performing the everyday activism the more one experiments with his/her provisional self (Archer 2003). Finally, there is a need for ongoing ‘ordinary reflection’ (Noble and Watkins 2003, 531; Giddens 1984, 4-7) ‘all the way through until a secondary [...] *habitus* is constructed’ (Yang 2014, 1533). This could involve: a) an intra-personal ‘thought and talk’ process (Archer 2003, 167), b) personal or ‘autonomous reflexives’ vis-à-vis one’s specific life circumstances (ibid.), and c) ‘meta-reflexivity’ (ibid.) involving a critical questioning of one’s self and practices. In these key ways, such movements are expected to transform into *habitus* creators (Haluza-DeLay 2008) – helping their members develop context-specific dispositions and tacit knowledge as well as moral-emotional connections with activist praxis (Poletta and Jasper 2001, 285).

Fifth, and finally, I draw on Crossley (1999) to argue that non-capitalist practices can only arise if activists maintain faith (*illusio*) (Bourdieu 1984) in everyday activism as a game worth playing. Specifically, Klandermans’ (2004) and Crossley’s (1999) social movement accounts suggest a dynamic of disengagement in the face of objective barriers to action, insufficient gratification and disillusionment. I extend these arguments to suggest that: given the provisional nature of emerging non-capitalist practices and the need for timely ‘*field-work*’ (Carolan 2005) to gradually enact them, it is critical that activists do not become disillusioned by possible setbacks or

failures (e.g. Levitas 2007) – thus bringing their activism to a halt. For novel non-capitalist practices depend as much on agential potentialities to enact them sometime in the future (i.e. once a novel habitus and field conditions are appropriate), as they do on the present agential actualities of community currency activists (following Sztompka 1991). This is particularly important vis-à-vis the inevitable clash with capitalist practice nexuses and the inherent problems of practicing alternative forms of organisation (e.g. emerging power relations, schisms, unproductive debates, etc.) that could divert members away from movements (e.g. Reedy 2014; Zald and Ash 1966; Sutherland et al. 2013).

Marres and McGoey's (2012) distinction between '*restrictive failure*' and '*generative failure*' are useful conceptual tools in understanding this issue. I argue that for activists to surpass or even learn from their failures and, thus, become energised to rectify set-backs (i.e. '*generative failure*'), failure must not result in losing faith in the alternative and, inevitably, in their exodus from the movement (i.e. '*restrictive failure*'). This involves adopting the Blochian (cited in Richter 2006, 51) principle of 'hope [that] does not surrender when setbacks occur' – culminating in what has recently been described as "hope movements" (Dinerstein et al. 2012).

In conclusion, these understandings highlight how this research refuses to pay lip-service to uncritical and underdeveloped understandings of moments of crisis and forms of everyday activism (see Sub-sections 2.1 and 2.2.1). By laying bare a novel conceptual understanding of post-crash habituation processes (see Fig.2.1) that suggests that certain critical pre-conditions are required for transforming the crisis into an opportunity for social change, it is only tentatively optimistic when exploring the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social change.

But how might these understandings inform research on the ground? What case-studies of everyday crisis activism might help in empirically exploring these novel understandings? Section 2.4 below starts considering these

practicalities of research on the ground – introducing literature on community currency movements to claim that they represent a critical access point into everyday crisis activism.

2.4 Exploring everyday activist practices through community currency movements

A study informed by the understandings detailed above and by the overarching research aim of exploring whether everyday activism might help transform the Greek crisis into an opportunity for social change necessitates the detailed examination of a limited number of examples: a case-study approach. As Greek society has vociferously responded to the crisis by attempting to provide the material bases for social reproduction by means of solidarity outside the capital/state complex (Varvarousis and Kallis 2017; Solidarity for All 2015), there are numerous candidates for this exploration. These include:

- i. “Without middlemen” groups collaborating with farmers to distribute their produce outside official market circuits.
- ii. Self-managed factories building an alternative model of production on the basis of the collective and democratic management of resources.
- iii. Commons movements aiming at the re-appropriation and sharing of social resources beyond the state/market dichotomy.
- iv. Free-share bazaars established to enable the exchange of goods and services outside the mainstream market.

Nonetheless, as a way to enter the world of post-crash activism, this thesis focuses on crisis community currency movements. On the one hand, this decision has been made in an attempt to shed light to a now dominating form of everyday crisis activism. Specifically, Sotiropoulou (2011) identifies 33 community currencies, whilst my own desktop research identified more than 47 such movements in operation across recession-

laden Greece (see Fig.2.2).

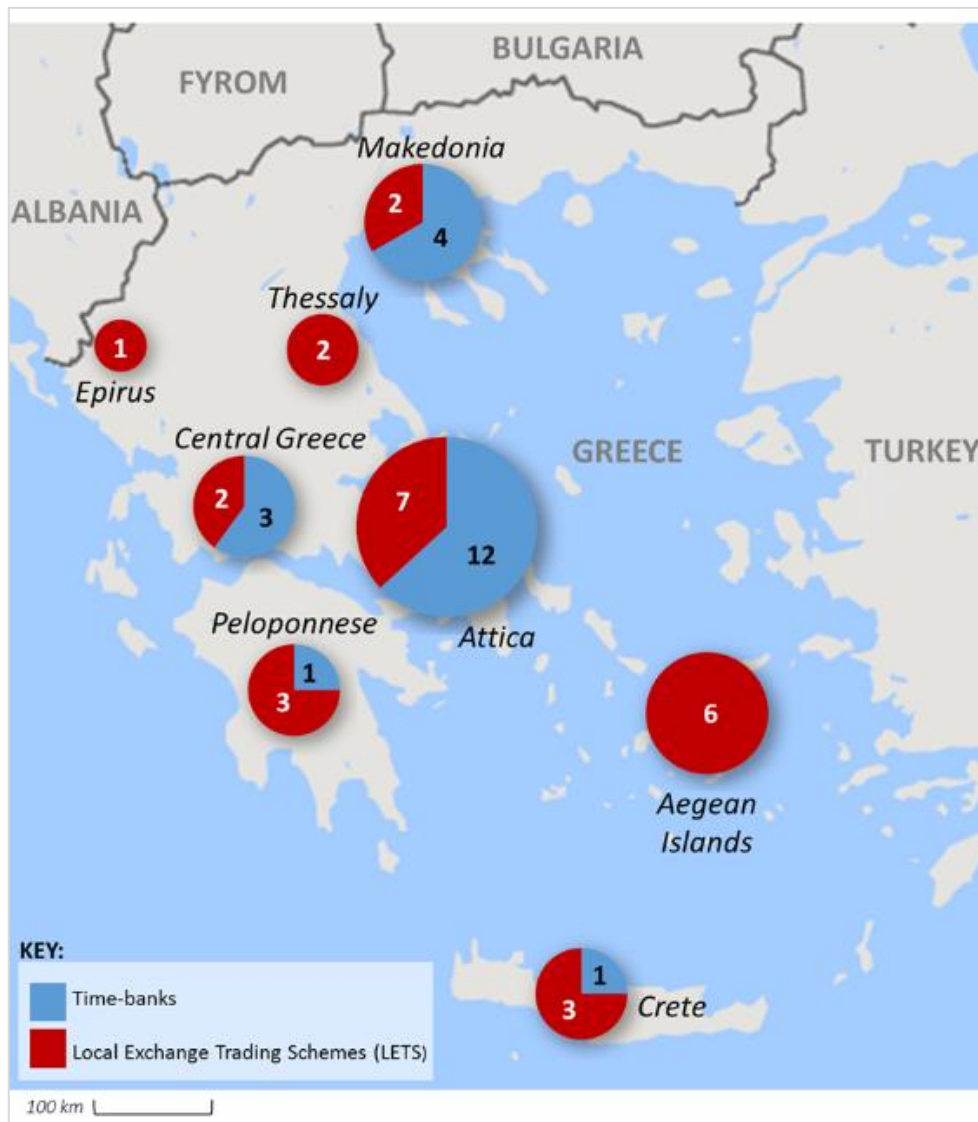


Figure 2.2: Map of crisis community currency movements by region and type

As the map of crisis community currencies presented in Fig.2.2 highlights, these comprise of two distinct types of alternative currency (see Seyfang 2001):

- i. Local Exchange and Trading Systems (LETS) supporting trades of goods or services within a defined pool of members. These invite their participants to advertise their 'needs' and 'offers' for either goods or services in an online directory and then contact each other to arrange

their trades. These exchanges are subsequently recorded in an individual's account in terms of a purely notional LETS unit that is not backed by a central authority but is, instead, generated by the act of exchange itself within the system – and is, thus, backed by goods and services.

- ii. Peer-to-peer time-banks based on Cahn's (2000) time-dollar model that seek to rebuild supportive community networks by inviting their members to voluntarily work for an hour offering a skill or a service for another member and receiving, in exchange, an hourly credit that can be subsequently used to obtain another service for personal use⁴.

Drawing on insights from extant scholarship, this widespread proliferation of crisis community currencies is, possibly, telling of the nature of such schemes – with the solidarity economy constituting 'another area of economic activity beyond the competitive economy that can complement employment and tackle unemployment and hardship of those who have too little income' (IMKO, 2012). Specifically, there is a widespread claim that alternative currencies complement the mainstream economy and its failures by constituting accessible counter-technologies for meeting everyday needs for exchange (Seyfang 2000; North 1996; Lee 1996). Indeed, there is compelling empirical evidence that many community currencies are developed through economic necessity to meet needs for exchange that cannot be met through the mainstream market – either in times of crisis (e.g. Pearson 2003; Gomez 2009), or because of financial exclusion in areas suffering from economic restructuring and financial divestment (e.g. Williams 1996; Lee 1996; Seyfang 2001a, 989).

However, I do not solely focus on community currencies movements

⁴ Seyfang (2001) also specifies a third community currency model: locally issued notes or tokens circulating freely among businesses and individuals in an area. These are fully backed by and convertible, usually one-to-one, to mainstream money due to their legal status which is equivalent to retail vouchers. However, there is currently no evidence of such currencies operating in Greece – largely due to the lack of a legal framework that would enable management of liquidity and circulation by a central authority and, thus, the printing, free circulation and convertibility of such currencies (Thanou et al. 2013).

because of their growing prevalence in response to financial insecurity. Rather, I have intentionally chosen to focus on community currencies because they represent resistant social movements enabling activists to actualise grounded economic utopias (following North 1999; 2006a; 2007). Hence, in seeking to set the scene for the remainder of this thesis, the following two sub-sections fully outline this unorthodox reading of community currencies.

Prior to that it is, nonetheless, important to highlight how this framing and scholarly exploration of community currencies as a form of everyday crisis activism is thoroughly unorthodox. This research moves beyond accounts of Greek community currencies that either superficially map the field and its aspirations, or only pay lip service to the idea that they constitute a form of micro-political resistance to the crisis (e.g. Sotiropoulou 2011; Thanou et al. 2013; Petropoulou 2013). Furthermore, it moves beyond scholarship on community currencies that has not explored the messy everyday rhythms as community currency users negotiate forms of doing and living despite-yet-beyond capitalism. To the best of my knowledge, most research consists of broad overviews and evaluations. For instance, the multiple reports produced by Seyfang (e.g. 2006a; 2006b; 2002; 2009) are representative of this trend. Moreover, work building on the multi-level perspective and dealing with community currencies as socio-technical niches (e.g. Seyfang and Longhurst 2013a; Seyfang and Longhurst 2016) focuses on issues including niche-development activities and project-to-project networking, shared learning and innovation diffusion success. Furthermore, even North's (2006) pioneering account of community currencies as social movements focuses on issues beyond the immediate interest of students of everyday activism: a) the heterogeneous yet heterodox values invested in them, and b) the collective politics of community currencies as a social movement sector attempting to widen usage of alternative currencies by persuading institutional actors and businesses of their benefits.

Against this backdrop, sub-section 2.4.1 discusses how community currencies represent a discursively powerful case-study of critical-practical activity in the wake of the crisis. Sub-section 2.4.2 then builds on these claims to suggest how community currency movements might also represent a critical case-study of post-crash activism.

2.4.1 Community currencies: A discursively powerful case-study

In an era where finance has become a central theme of discussion, money is increasingly being depicted as the source of all evils for many indebted citizens (e.g. Chatzidakis 2014; Gounari 2011; Rakopoulos 2011). This is far from surprising. For the overall tone of leftist writing on money is, no doubt, abolitionist. First, amongst (neo)Marxists, there is a common claim that money can never transform into an object of protest – constituting, instead, the gelatinous force that keeps us entrapped in capitalism (Holloway 2010; Jameson 2007). Second, there is also a claim around money as a ‘cultural acid’ (Dodd 2014, 270). For money: a) encourages society to be morally lax and thoughtless (Simmel 1991, 24-9), b) erodes commonality (ibid.), and c) ‘invades even the more intimate aspects of our daily life’ (Simmel 2004, 459).

Nonetheless, in dealing with community currency movements as a form of potentially emancipatory everyday activism, I draw on an unorthodox line of thought. As Zelizer (2011, 370) argues, all these understandings exaggerate the moral dangers of money. They rely on a series of flawed assumptions around money that exists in a sphere of its own in the market economy – isolated from either symbolic meanings, non-pecuniary and non-instrumental values and everyday practices (ibid.). Instead, in Zelizer’s (e.g. 1994; 2011) view, culture is not exogenous to money: all forms of money are shaped by the social practices and cultural values of their users (e.g. Zelizer 1994; 2011). In practical terms, this results,

first of all, in the possibility of incorporating monetary values in social relationships without corrupting them (Zelizer 2007). Second, it suggests that cultural codes and social practices can modify money – thus, resulting in the proliferation of “multiple monies” or monies with internally heterogeneous meanings and rhythms (Zelizer 2011). Third, and most importantly, this understanding advocates the radical and incisive possibility of producing novel monies or of transforming various objects into monetary media through relational work (ibid.). These give, in turn, rise to (novel) monetary circuits configured around shared economic activities, schemes of moral valuation, shared understandings and practices (Zelizer 1994; 2011). Consequently, there exists a fragmentary world of diverse economic practices and possibilities that ought to be uncovered (e.g. Gibson-Graham 2006). Indeed, as Zelizer (2011, 304) herself highlights, the multiplicity of contemporary economic arrangements – such as ‘internet peer production, microcredit arrangements, barter groups, local currency systems, gift-exchange communities, investment clubs, corporate work teams, mutual aid associations, garage sales, and more’ – can only ever be understood through this latter unorthodox understanding of money.

Crucially, this world of economic possibility also consists of ‘images of Utopia defined not by money’s absence but rather by its radical transformation’ (Dodd 2014, 314). There is, of course, a claim that community currencies ‘are complementary to neoliberal concerns about reducing the role of the central state and offloading problems onto local institutions’ in that ‘they do not seek to challenge the primacy of capitalist money or the logic of the capitalist system’ (North 2010a, 33-4). From this perspective, crisis community currencies have not been challenged by the incumbent mainstream as they temporarily help address capital and labour market failures. Nonetheless, I conceptualise the majority of crisis community currency protagonists as activists aiming to create resistant money to practically challenge the capitalist mainstream (e.g. North 2006; 2016). Alternative currencies are, thus, not just abstract utopian concepts

confined to theory or discourse but, rather, grounded utopias of our everyday life emerging because of the Zelizerian (2011) possibility for multiple monies.

Specifically, this thesis builds on the central claim that crisis community currency movements are an integral part of a grounded utopia and, hence, that their exploration constitutes a discursively powerful challenge to the stultifying discourses proliferating in the wake of the crisis regarding the socially destructive nature of money. Whilst community currencies developed in the wake of the Argentinean economic crisis were simply designed to meet needs for exchange unmet through the mainstream market (e.g. Gomez 2009; Pearson 2003), I contend that Greek community currencies manifest profound crisis consciousness and critique. For instance, Petropoulou (2013, 81) asserts that ‘the need that creates these movements and puts them into action is both material (practical production and reproduction of life) and poetic (creation of new everyday life relations)’. Furthermore, through my own desktop review of the websites of many Greek initiatives, I uncovered a strong anti-conformist ethos, resentment and/or radical critique of a failing mainstream and capitalist cultures, and a desire for creative resistance and social change (following Holloway 2010) – as exemplified below:

The action and participation in these collectives has shown to all of us that another world is not just possible but real. A world in which market laws and the current economic system of exploitation of human labour for profit collapse, and in which human relationships become meaningful again. Misery and marginalisation imposed on us in the name of crisis and development are addressed through collective creation and solidarity (Fest4SCE 2012).⁵

This resistant ethos of emerging crisis community currencies is far

⁵ Translated extract from press release for the 1st edition of the Athens Festival for Solidarity and the Alternative Economy (Previously available online at: <http://www.festival4sce.org/category/press-releases/> - Retrieved 10/01/2015).

from surprising. For although not aiming to claim state power, alternative monetary protagonists can be understood to challenge fundamental elements of the incumbent capitalist regime – putting forth visions of more liberated forms of living by constructing economic systems defined by strong community ties and ecotopian aspirations (North 1999; 2010). For ‘a radical conception of civil society [as offered by community currency movements] is not aimed at facilitating neoliberalism, but at the development of a polity that is deeper, more inclusive and more conducive to fulfilling human happiness than a veneer of elite pluralism upon on a neoliberal economy with the inequalities, wasted lives and environmental degradation this implies’ (North 2006, 32).

Indeed, there is an abundance of research claiming that alternative currencies are informed by a series of heterodox values and motivations. Attempts to enact economic alternatives can be traced back to Owen who established labour exchanges in the 1830s as a bridge to the new co-operative commonwealth (North 2007). More recently, emerging research claims that many community currencies have been developed either as a response to globalisation by individuals looking to regain more control over economic life (North 2014, 248-9; Blanc 2011), or as political projects that link participants with specific political claims in order to inform reimaginings of life despite-yet-beyond capitalism (e.g. Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Williams 1996; Lee 1996). Most prominently, community currencies have been described as strategic tools seeking to materialise on sustainable development aspirations – including, inter alia, the need to: strengthen local economies and communities, reduce ecological footprints, and to further new conceptions of work, wealth and progress (e.g. Douthwaite 1996; Seyfang 2001a; Seyfang and Longhurst 2013; Seyfang and Smith 2007). Indeed, as Seyfang (e.g. 2006; 2009) claims, community currencies represent “new economics” socio-technical systems: alternative forms of social infrastructure enabling ‘motivated individuals to exercise consumer sovereignty and transform markets through the minutiae of daily purchasing

decisions' (Seyfang 2006, 1).

Nonetheless, this emancipatory claim around activist potential to enact alternative monies against the stultifying claims around no alternatives to capitalist money and austerity only captures part of the rationale for focusing on crisis community currency movements. Whilst this provides a springboard for thinking money otherwise, simply considering how money is a social construct actively (re)created by its users is a step too short. For I contend that it is equally, if not more, important to also consider how these novel forms of money might actively (re)create everyday social practices. For this thesis does not seek to make 'a simplistic assertion that we can think ourselves out of the materiality of capitalism' (Gibson-Graham 2006, xxxi) without considering whether these alternative currencies actually enable the enactment of alternative livelihoods despite-yet-beyond-capitalism (following North 2007; Jonas 2010). In other words, it is also important to consider whether these new currencies act as novel forms of *capital* and as alternative economic *fields* supporting the realisation of livelihoods despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity through trading. Hence, Section 2.4.2 details how crisis community currencies do not only constitute a discursively but also a practically powerful case-study of everyday crisis activism.

2.4.2 Community currencies: A critical case-study of everyday activism

The first reaction to the claims raised above is a realisation that we have heard similar assertions in the past, but actually-existing local money networks have, thus far, failed to change the world. For instance, whilst Dittmer (2013) outlines the endorsement of community currencies as concrete actions for sustainable degrowth, his meta-analysis paints a gloomy picture of the field. This is far from surprising. For alternative economies oftentimes constitute 'impossible spaces' – structurally limited

heterotopias that can only be celebrated with regards to their effervescent creativity rather than for their practical significance in enabling the realisation of alternative livelihoods (North 1999, 73). Whilst they constitute ‘spaces of hope’ of radical break from capitalism (Harvey 2000), they are concurrently ‘drenched in mainstream conventions’ (Lee et al. 2004, 609) as they cannot materialise on their heterodox values and enact concrete alternative practices due to manifold challenges (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Key obstacles to community currency activism

Key obstacle	Exemplifying evidence
Significant capital limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large skills gaps making it difficult to access staple services (e.g. Seyfang 2001; Williams et al. 2001; North 2006; 2007). - Significant limits set by a lack of ownership of means of production or of primary resources (e.g. Cahn 2000; North 1996; 1999; Lee 1996).
An enduring capitalocentric habitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Society’s conditioning into deeply-rooted capitalist cultures, codes of conduct and norms that render alternative economic practices alienating or incomprehensible (North 2007). - Enduring social relations and conditions acting as a break on the possibility to imagine economic alternatives (Lee 2006, 420; Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006).
Infertile field conditions and inter-field interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited resilience in light of activist burnout, lack of commitment, and unsustainability of funding sources (North 2007; Schroeder 2015). - Legislative misfits exemplified through the inability to print and circulate alternative currencies to link consumers and businesses in Greece (Thanou et al. 2013). - General unwillingness to participate in light of incompatible day-to-day practices and cash costs that cannot be covered in alternative currencies (e.g. Aldridge et al. 2001; North 1996).

Perhaps, then, such alternatives to capitalism and austerity constitute ‘irrational’ signifiers of leftist ‘populism’ as a proliferating contemporary discourse claims (Mylonas 2014). Perhaps such economic alternatives are, indeed, a ‘chimeral game’ (Marx; in Levitas 1990). Perhaps modern-day pioneers of the idea that it is possible to enact actually-existing economic alternatives are in the wrong – ‘[f]ailing to acknowledge the power of global dynamics and the force of political conservatism that could squash alternative economic experiments’ (Gibson-Graham 2002, 25-6). For they allegedly remain ‘dwarfish’ in the face of hegemonic state power (Marx

1974) and fail to produce actors capable of social change (Harvey 1992, 54).

Yet this thesis builds on an altogether different understanding inspired by manifestos on everyday activism (see Holloway 2002; 2010). This view 'approaches economy as an inseparable part of social life and not as its autonomised ruler' – asserting that 'we can develop anti-capitalist economic relations with pre-imaginative content alongside the capitalist ones' (Varkarolis 2012). Subsequently, the second key reason for focusing on community currencies is the fact that they can represent a critical case-study of everyday crisis activism. For in direct response to Gibson-Graham's (2006, xxxi) for a scholarship that focuses on the 'possible' and not on the 'probable', I argue that crisis community currencies might – against all odds – transform into a form of everyday activism enacting and routinizing non-capitalist practices.

Specifically, my information-oriented selection aims to maximise our broader understanding of the post-crash politics-of-the-act. It, thus, follows Flyvbjerg's (2006) normative definition of critical case-studies as cases which permit logical deductions for this type of social movements in general. At core, and from an everyday activism point of view (see Holloway 2002; 2010), there is scope for treating community currencies as a 'most likely' critical case-study (Flyvbjerg's 2006) of everyday crisis activism: If this form of activism is not capable of supporting novel non-capitalist practices in the wake of the Greek crisis, then there is little hope for conceiving everyday activism as a viable strategy for alternative livelihoods anywhere.

Crisis community currency movements are, at least in principle, ideally equipped to transform critique into emancipatory praxis. On the one hand, this is due to certain unique characteristics of the emerging alternative economic *field* that buffer them from numerous potential challenges. First, a long tradition of self-organization, mutual support and money-less exchange across Greece renders the otherwise novel phenomenon of alternative currencies familiar (Petropoulou 2013) and,

subsequently, suggests that Greeks have certain habitual pre-dispositions enabling them to practice the alternative economy. Second, and as suggested by the websites of various schemes⁸, there are concerted efforts to transform local community currency movements into something bigger, with access to more resources – as evident by: networking over the course of the ‘Festival for the Solidarity and Cooperative Economy’ and through the ‘Solidarity for All’ network, attempts to reach-out to primary producers, etc. Finally, against the identified obstacle of *social capital* limitations (e.g. Seyfang 2003; North 1996), the centrality of ‘commitment-building mechanisms’ in the day-to-day life of these movements (involving, amongst others, numerous social events) suggests an easy route to reciprocal trading – building relations of trusts and reciprocity, providing activists with social connections and, thus, delivering an expectedly large pool of *social capital*.

On the other hand, I also contend that community currency movements might also afford the greatest rupture from capitalism practically possible (according to interstitial non-capitalists). Holloway (2010) asserts that the capitalist labour market constitutes the ‘great enclosure’ of capitalism as our doing becomes abstracted into abstract labour. Par contraire, community currencies allow their participants economic re-subjectification – providing them with both the *capital* (alternative currencies) and the ability to work and exchange goods and services outside the mainstream market. As all social practices entail a moment of consumption and are, thus, tightly knit to the capitalist *field* (Bourdieu 1990), being able to consume despite-yet-beyond capitalism has an emancipatory potential.

To be clear, I acknowledge that crisis community currencies may face certain challenges identified by both critics of everyday activism and by scholars exploring community currencies. Amongst others, I contend that North’s (1996, 69) assertion that they are ‘restricted by exclusion from the access to economic resources beyond participants’ private ownership or

⁸ See: www.votsalo.org; www.time-exchange.gr; www.trapezaxronou.weebly.com

control' is particularly topical – especially vis-à-vis Holloway's (2002; 2010) failure to grasp the importance of having access to staple resources. Nonetheless, I argue that the time might now be ripe for community currencies to flourish – with relevant critiques of alternative currencies being less relevant in the context of contemporary Greece. For the combination of critique in the wake of the crisis, unmade everyday practices, the unique characteristics of Greek community currency movements, and the provision of alternatives to legal tender promising to support consumption outside the mainstream, may culminate in an ideal situation of people being able to transform critique of the austere state into emancipatory praxis.

Clearly, this assertion is open to contestation. Hence, this thesis attempts a critical exploration of crisis community currencies on the basis of the sophisticated conceptual research model put forth in Section 2.3.4. Drawing on this novel understanding, Fig.2.3 attempts to schematically communicate how community currency movements might enable the realisation of novel practices. This draws on the core claim that what changes with social innovations like community currencies are 'social practices, comprising new ideas, models, rules, social relations and/or services' (Avelino et al. 2014, 16). Specifically, as Fig.2.3 postulates, by emerging as novel economic *fields* that co-exist alongside the mainstream economic *field* that is currently in crisis, community currency movements are expected to: a) provide individuals with the forms of *capital* (e.g. alternative currencies, goods and services, social connections and increasing competence in trading), and b) to educate their users into a practice-oriented and context-specific *habitus* for performing the alternative economy. As such, in raising from the ashes of unmade capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis and from an inevitable questioning of previously unquestioned *doxa* of everyday life (Bourdieu 1997), they are expected to act as 'working utopias' (Crossley 1999) supporting the enactment of a range of practices that do not depend on mainstream money.

Therefore, what remains is to empirically test this novel conceptual understanding – posing the key question of whether contemporary community currency movements can truly make the most of the opportunity afforded by the economic crisis to inform non-capitalist praxis. Hence, in concluding this chapter, Section 2.5 details exactly how I intend to explore community currency movements as crucibles of resistance whilst addressing the three research questions introduced in Chapter 1.

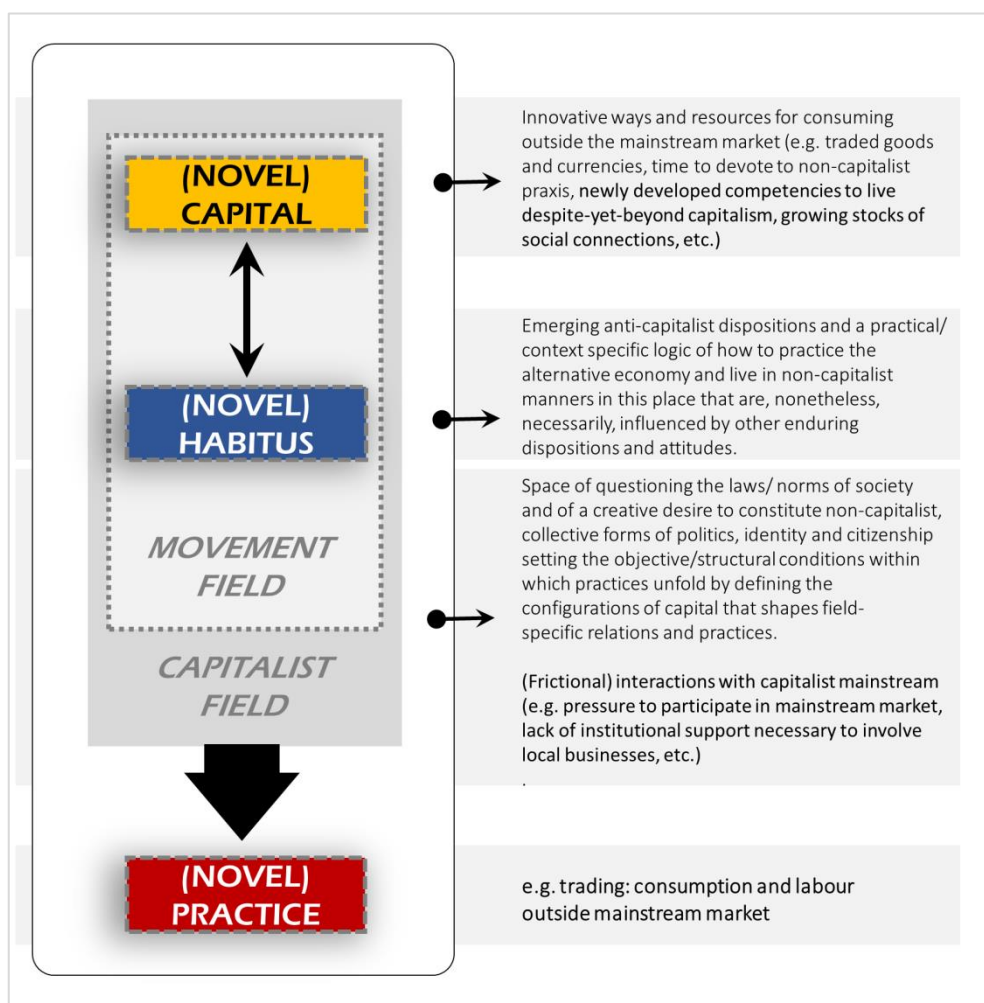


Figure 2.3: Conceptual representation of alternative economic practices

2.5 Summary and research questions

The core assertion of this chapter is that existing understandings of

crises and forms of everyday activism resisting such challenging circumstances are inadequate for a vigilant exploration of the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change. For crisis theories and emerging accounts of everyday activism face significant shortcomings when dealing with processes of social transformation and the challenges they might face. Against this backdrop, Bourdieu's practice theory offers a sophisticated framework to help analyse whether the *crisis-critique-change triplet* informing this thesis holds true with regards to crisis community currencies. Drawing on these conclusions, this section details how I intend to explore these movements as crucibles of resistance whilst addressing each of the three research questions introduced in Chapter 1.

Q1: What drives everyday crisis activism? (See Chapter 4)

To begin with, in dealing with the first research question concerning the drivers of everyday crisis activism, this research seeks to move beyond existing crisis scholarship that raises a series of uncorroborated claims on how post-crash critique is instrumental in preserving the 'crisis [...] as the moment of its own realisation' (Cordero 2016, 73). Drawing on the Bourdieusian-based understanding of everyday crisis activism put forth in this chapter, Chapter 4 will attempt to apply these insights in the hope that it will offer a sophisticated understanding of why and how everyday crisis activism emerges.

Specifically, I deal with the first research question through Bourdieu's (1977; 2000) assertion that crises might afford an opportunity to challenge practices and otherwise unquestioned norms, but certain pre-conditions must also be met for activism to become possible. As such, Chapter 4 explores core dynamics informing community currency activism. First, it explores how the crisis might have resulted in the questioning of previously uncontested beliefs and habits – and, ultimately, in community currency activism in an attempt to enact novel non-capitalist practices. Second, it considers whether there are any further prerequisites for

engagement in community currency movements – as assumed pre-conditions for activism (i.e. pre-existing *habiti* and a post-crash critical discourse that is favourable to everyday activism – see Section 2.3.4.1) might also play a role.

Hence, bearing in mind key pre-conditions for novel non-capitalist practices distilled from current scholarship (see Section 2.3.4.1), this exploration begins with and critically explores two logical deductions:

- i. The questioning that comes with crises must favour non-capitalocentric ideas (e.g. Gibson-Graham 1996). This involves community currency activists: a) seeing themselves as significant economic actors (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, xix), b) breaking-free from the habitual normality of capitalism and the idea that neoliberal capitalism is the best and only show in town (e.g. Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006), and c) seeing the economy as a ‘plural space’ of immense opportunity for creative action (ibid. 13-20; Deneulin and Dinerstein 2010).
- ii. Activist biographies might also play an important role in triggering community currency activism. Specifically, I contend that previous experience of either organised or informal economic transactions/activities outside the capitalist market (e.g. reciprocal labour, informal exchanges, widespread history of creative resistance (Petropoulou 2013), etc.) is likely to make individuals appreciate community currency activism as a rational course of action in the wake of the crisis (drawing on Bourdieu 1984).

Q2: Can (novel) non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about? (See Chapter 5)

The theoretical review presented in this chapter has revealed a pressing need to understand everyday crisis activism and its transformative social practices. Thus far, research in this area has neglected the micro-processes of social transformation – constructing at ‘the abstract

ontological level' the 'metaphysics of change' and the 'myth of "Life" as permanent excess' (Reedy et al. 2016). For the idea of enacting novel practices through everyday activism has, thus far, largely been dealt with in abstract theoretical terms, outside the context of crises, and without focusing on non-capitalist practices in an otherwise capitalocentric world.

Specifically, in seeking to further explore currently uncorroborated claims on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for micro-level social change (e.g. Cordero 2016, 73; Arendt 1990; Morin 1993), this second research question deals with the core of the novel conceptual research model introduced in this chapter (see Fig.2.1). Hence, in challenging conceptually under-developed claims on the moment of crisis, this account will help explore, for the first time, the processes of radical micro-level transformation in the wake of the crisis. In so doing, and on the basis of the literature reviewed in Section 2.3.4.1, particular attention will be paid to whether certain key pre-conditions for action enable the development of non-capitalist practices. Namely: a) community currency movements that set the groundwork for non-capitalist practices as '*proto-practices*' (Pantzar and Shove, 2010), b) '*explicit*' and '*implicit pedagogy*' when trying to enact and routinize novel practices (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Yang 2014, 1533), and c) sustained *illusio* (Bourdieu 1984) in the alternative economy as a game worth playing.

Q3: What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism, and how do they impact efforts to enact novel non-capitalist practices? (See Chapter 6)

Drawing on assertions regarding the challenges of breaking-free from capitalism and transforming the moment of crisis into an opportunity for social change introduced in this chapter – and especially on scholarship documenting the manifold obstacles to community currency activism – this final research question has been introduced to explore Noy's (2011, 46) claim around a crisis-laden society where 'the strategic elements that would articulate and link critique to change [...] appear to be lacking'. In so doing,

Chapter 6 seeks to explore the veracity of emerging challenges on otherwise inspirational manifestos on everyday activism which, allegedly, ascribe ‘supernatural creative power’ to humankind (Noys 2011, 52-3) without attending to the challenges of everyday activism (Reedy et al. 2016). Specifically, it seeks to make full use of the insights afforded by Bourdieu’s scholarship – considering whether community currency activists possess or encounter: a) the necessary practice ingredients, and b) the necessary pre-conditions (see sub-section 2.3.4.1) for trying to enact and routinize non-capitalist practices through their activism.

In dealing with such shortages as barriers to non-capitalism, this question thus allows us to explore their impact on attempts to turn the economic crisis right on its head: is the ongoing economic crisis a moment in time when ‘the old is dying but the new cannot be born’ (Gramsci 1971, 276)? In this quest, Bourdieu’s (e.g. 1984) concept of the *illusio* is put to full use – exploring whether objective barriers to non-capitalism might lead to disillusionment and, thus, to non-participation and the long-term impossibility of trying to enact novel non-capitalist practices. For a core assumption is that activist agency does not only reflect the *actuality* of enacting (or not) non-capitalist practices. Rather, it also conveys activist *potentiality* to revert challenges sometime in the future as long as the alternative economy does not discursively transform into a worthless endeavour (following Sztompka 1991).

Perhaps the only methodological approach that is capable of addressing these questions and, thus, of offering a rigorous exploration of crisis community currency activism and attempted micro-level social transformation is ethnography – an assertion detailed in Chapter 3.

3 PERFORMING RESEARCH

Being problem- rather than method-oriented, social movement studies are defined by the ‘absence of methodological dogmatism’ (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002, xii). As such, Della Porta (2014) celebrates the methodological pluralism of the field – inexorably linking it to major advances in our understanding. Undeniably, the location of my theoretical framework within the emerging social practice-theory approach to social movement studies dictates the embracement of this fruitful methodological openness. For whilst social movement scholars have developed detailed methodological “cook-books” for their study (e.g. Melucci 1989; Touraine 1981) that have also informed research on community currencies (see North 2006), these approaches are ill-equipped for studying everyday activist practices. Against a backdrop of methodological approaches (e.g. structured focus-groups and interviews) that remain incapable of grasping the embedded rhythms of performing the alternative economy, I assert that contemporary shifts in the understanding of social movements have opened a productive new avenue for this research – paving the way for my wider approach to research, purpose and, subsequently, potential impact in how movements emerging in the wake of the crisis are understood and studied.

Specifically, my conceptual focus on social movements employing direct-action tactics dictates an in-depth qualitative insider inquiry – locating the research within an ethnographic tradition: a ‘research process based on fieldwork using a variety of (mainly qualitative) research techniques but including engagement in the lives of those being studied over an extended period of study’ (Davies 1999, 4-5). In my case, and as this chapter details, this involved using participant observation in combination with semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. This diverse methodological toolbox was employed to gain rich insights into ‘what

people do as well as what they say' (Crang 2002, 650).

This chapter begins by outlining the research philosophy underpinning this thesis and how I arrived at a multi-sited 'militant ethnography' (Juris 2007) of Athenian crisis community currency movements (see Section 3.1). It then outlines how I undertook this ethnographic research. Section 3.2 provides details of how I found my case-studies. Section 3.3 then moves on to outline the practicalities of conducting this research on the ground. Section 3.4 outlines the complementary data collection methods implemented. Section 3.5 then describes how I analysed the data collected. Section 3.6 then moves on to comment on the ethical considerations pertaining to the research. Finally, Section 3.7 outlines some concluding remarks on how I make use of the empirical material to provide a rigorous yet partial narrative of changing and emerging non-capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis.

3.1 An ethnography of everyday activism

By focusing on everyday activism in the wake of the economic crisis, this research aims to understand how activists construct ideas about the problems of capitalism and ways of living despite-yet-beyond the status quo, and how they set-out to incorporate them into their routine practices. Thus, if many of the transformational and re-naturalising practices central to everyday crisis activism are embedded in everyday ecologies of materials, bodies, *habiti* and practices (following Bourdieu 1977; 1984) what might this mean for academic research?

In addressing this question, the principal methodological aim of this research is to produce understandings of community currency movements from the inside, in the context of grounded activist activities (following Cook and Crang 1995; Dwyer and Limb 2001, 6; Parr 2001). I contend that only

through attention to these details can we start crystallising our understanding of interstitial non-capitalism. In particular, this involves: a) studying specific contexts and how they (co)shape everyday activism (Stake 2000), b) providing detailed insights on the ‘little things’ of everyday behaviour (Flyvbjerg 2006, 238), and c) seeing and interpreting social life ‘from the point of view of the people studied’ (Hammersley 1992, 165; see also Cook and Crang 1995).

Although this approach may restrict the ability to make universal generalizations, it leads to in-depth and contextually sensitive accounts of action that, whilst more modest, might be more valuable in moving beyond persistently abstract accounts of everyday (crisis) activism (following Flyvbjerg 2001; 2006) – being generalizable to powerful theoretical propositions regarding community currency activism in the wake of the crisis in place of being generalizable to universes⁹. For I contend that any attempt to understand everyday activism is inseparable from a critical realist research philosophy: accounting for the multi-faceted interpretations and meanings of objects, subjects, and the very nature of reality (Madill et al. 2000). For whilst we can measure and describe some notion of a material ‘reality’ influencing everyday activism, it would be a travesty to ignore how these emerging social realities are negotiated and interpreted by individuals who are a product of a variety of social institutions and discursive and objective structures that evolve over time (Archer 1995; Bhaskar 1998; Guba and Lincoln 2000).

Specifically, in focusing on the embodied and subjectively experienced realities of everyday crisis activism shaping practices, this research responds to Bourdieu’s ethnographic invitation (Blommaert 2005). For as Bourdieu insists, the *habitus* constitutes the product of the subjective embodiment of “reality”, rules and collective histories (Holt 2008) and, thus, we can only possibly conceive these dispositions through direct observation (Bourdieu

⁹ Following Easton’s (2010) defence of case-study research from a critical realist perspective.

2000a, 18). Furthermore, if practices are shaped by an unconscious *habitus* (e.g. Bourdieu 1990, 53), we cannot pragmatically expect to uncover these practices through methods like interviews and focus-groups widely adopted in the study of social movements (e.g. Melucci 1989; Touraine 1981). For such techniques would only offer ‘words about worlds’ (Crang 2003) – hence preventing me from developing an adequate understanding of activist praxis on the ground.

Yet as ethnography is far from a unified epistemological and methodological field, I argue that this research dictates three specific approaches to ethnographic inquiry: an insider, ‘militant’ (Juris 2007), and multi-sited exploration. First, I contend that insider ethnography is the most appropriate approach for grasping the logic of activist practice (Routledge 1996). Specifically, my commitment to becoming an insider ethnographer implicated that I was aiming for what Cook and Crang (1995, 21) describe as ‘immersion of the researcher’s self into the everyday rhythms and routines of the community’. In so doing, my investigation allowed me to better grasp activist praxis as it unfolds: a) understanding the nitty-gritty of performing actually-existing alternatives and the complex ways in which activists imagine and enact non-capitalist values and practices, b) uncovering areas of contradiction and opportunity, and c) recognising intertwined relations between capitalist and non-capitalist doing and tangled relations of power implicated in changing practices (see Burke and Shear 2014, 135; Taylor 2014). This claim is premised upon the realisation that social movement knowledge is inherently situated – with a certain materiality and with an oftentimes hidden nature (Brem-Wilson 2014; Chesters 2012). From this perspective, ‘active engagement and identification is considered necessary to bridge the divergent positionality of researcher and movement’ (Brem-Wilson 2014, 119). For an insider yields data about activism that would otherwise be unavailable (Santos 2012).

Second, my fieldwork attempted to adopt a ‘third space’ approach that collapses boundaries between activism and academia: an ethically

motivated and politically active form of research whereby engagement in activist ethnography would both improve my research outputs and my activism would become part of a process of giving back to the social movements (e.g. Juris 2007; Routledge 1996; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Mason 2007). At core, my approach allowed an interweaving of roles undertaken within the groups: one that was fluid enough to break down the barriers between theory and practice and also between the roles and responsibilities I had to various groups and to the university. In seeking to be useful beyond the ivory tower of the academy, it combined my academic identity with that of an activist committed to giving something back to the communities with which I worked – developing solidarity, supporting movement activities and attempting to insert emerging knowledges into the movements in accessible manners in order to enhance their potential of micro-level social transformation (see Chatterton et al. 2007; Taylor 2014).

Third, and finally, the almost total lack of attention to processes of enacting an unorthodox praxis, the lack of understanding of how *doxic* beliefs might be challenged following the outbreak of the economic crisis, and understandings highlighting how political distinction impacts practices of the alternative economy, highlighted the need for my study ‘to maximise what we can learn’ (Stake 1995, 4) about everyday activism in the wake of the crisis. Hence, in addressing the central question of whether crisis community currencies offer an opportunity to adopt non-capitalist practices and *habiti*, I felt it was crucial to explore a variety of movements. In line with Flyvbjerg’s (2006) claim that carefully selected case-studies can overcome the pitfalls of producing unrepresentative insights into a class of phenomena, I elected to study a set of ‘*maximum variation cases*’ (Flyvbjerg 2006, 230) within the critical *field* of Greek crisis community currencies. In so doing, I followed Bourdieu’s lead (see Wacquant 2004), and aimed to obtain rich insights on the influence of various local circumstances on the procedures and outcomes of community currency activism. By deploying the same instruments of observation and pursuing kindred questions across

divides of context and disposition, several cases jointly contribute to a better understanding of the emerging crisis community currency *field* – allowing for more informed conclusions on whether the conceptual model proposed in Chapter 2 holds true and, thus, on whether the economic crisis is, indeed, an opportunity for social change (following Creswell 2007; Silverman 2005; Stake 1995; Wacquant 2004).

But how exactly did I go about ethnographically studying crisis community currency movements? Section 3.2 below starts uncovering these issues pertaining to the practicality of research on the ground by detailing the messy process of finding and becoming involved in community currency movements.

3.2 Finding and introducing the case-studies

Having elected to undertake a multi-sited insider ethnography of community currency movements, the first challenge I faced was finding suitable case-studies. This included paying attention to a key theoretically-driven selection criterion: the research should include case-studies that were defined by a heterodox ethos whilst simultaneously being variably invested in creating a radical *habitus* (following Flyvbjerg 2006). In so doing, my case-study selection was informed by Jonas' (2010) warning that alternative economies should not be examined irrespective of how alternative they are with regards to the mainstream. As such, I decided to exclude what Fuller and Jonas (2003) label as alternative-substitutional currencies that have only been developed to 'allow people to survive under extreme economic and social circumstances' (ibid. 63). Instead, I only considered a class of alternative-oppositional currency movements that are actively and consciously alternative – incorporating the 'different' in terms of function and values, while also denying mainstream trends (Fuller and Jonas 2003, 67; Jonas 2010). In so doing, I was, nonetheless, attentive to not produce false dualisms between alternative-substitutional and alternative-

oppositional currencies – realising that the above-mentioned categories need to be understood in terms of a grading scale of alterity (Lee 2010). For my early desktop research of crisis community currencies in Greece indicated how the class of alternative-oppositional schemes was internally diverse – with some movements being more radically alternative than others.

Specifically, I performed extensive desktop research informed by available lists of Greek community currency movements (e.g. Omikron Project 2014; Roumeliotis 2012; Sotiropoulou 2011; Thanou et al. 2013) – using the websites of respective schemes as an initial information point regarding their value-systems. In selecting case-studies, the content of available publications and websites was analysed following standard qualitative techniques – using a combination of data-driven and theory-driven coding schemes derived from extant scholarship on the multi-faceted motivations and aspirations of community currency activism (e.g. Seyfang 2009; Dittmer 2013; North 2006).

Here, my ethnic background as a Greek-Cypriot who closely follows news stories on the evolving crisis from either popular Greek media, social media platforms, or through regular conversations with native Greek friends, extended family or activist acquaintances proved invaluable. First, I was aware of many community currencies movements established in the wake of the crisis, of attempts to document such initiatives in online directories, and of their oftentimes heterodox yet heterogeneous nature and ethos. Second, I was capable of easily, hastily and accurately analysing available material to select my case-studies without having to rely on any external help for translation. These emerging analytical themes are fully detailed in Table 3.1 overleaf.

An analytical quantification framework was subsequently developed to allow cross-case comparison and to facilitate the process of selecting case-studies. This involved drawing on the material available to derive

metrics for the emerging thematic categories. As Table 3.2 highlights, each primary theme was individually scored according to the prevalence of a claim. The overall degree of alterity of each movement was thus quantified using a scoring system that provided an aggregate score of ‘relative alterity’ – with alternative-substitutional currencies (Jonas 2010) assigned lower and alternative-oppositional currencies assigned higher alterity scores.

Table 3.1: Emerging codes on rationales for community currency activism

Primary codes	Secondary codes
Support the realisation of alternative livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help in obtaining services/goods not afforded. - Help in obtaining services one could not perform by him/herself. - Make full use of previously unaccounted labour, skills and/or voluntary activities for “economic” benefit. - Achieve (greater) self-sufficiency in meeting everyday needs.
Promote individual wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help meet individual psychological needs through social interaction. - Help individuals develop new skills/ talents.
Promote collective wellbeing and/or social integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help build relations of trust, mutuality and reciprocity. - Help build (economic and other) relations governed by equality. - Enthuse working for the common good. - Help (isolated) individuals become part of the local community. - Help individuals spend more time with like-minded people. - Help individuals give back to people in need. - Help empower socially excluded groups.
Promote stronger local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help strengthen the local economy. - Contribute towards the development of local <i>social capital</i> as a safety net against [economic] crises.
Promote work with a human face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help build convivial/cooperative alternatives to the labour market. - Reward work that is neither stressful nor unfulfilling (e.g. previously unaccounted skills and talents) or labour that would not necessarily be rewarded economically in the wake of the crisis.
Promote a greener economy which reduces footloosness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help individuals partake in a reuse market for unwanted goods. - Help in embedding economic exchange within ecological limits. - Enable pro-environmental behaviour through the development of a market for environmentally friendly goods. - Help re-link consumers with primary consumers without intermediaries.
Challenge orthodox cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenge the multi-faceted crises of capitalism (economic, social, and environmental). - Challenge the stultifying discourses of no alternatives to austerity/ capitalism. - Voice opposition to consumerism, materialism, and/or individualism. - Voice an ecological critique against modern financial institutions/ the mainstream growth-based economy. - Voice opposition to hierarchical power relations. - Challenge the doxa of the capitalist monetary system.
Promote social change in the long-run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partake in a form of prefigurative politics/ everyday activism. - Help in developing “another world” of life despite-yet-beyond capitalism. - Be part of a multi-faceted struggle for social change.

Table 3.2: Metrics of relative alterity (per theme)

Alterity score (per theme)	Explanation	Prevalence in available material
0	No evidence this constitutes a driving ideal/ motivation for creating and participating in a community currency movement	None
1	Limited evidence this constitutes a driving ideal/ motivation for creating and participating in a community currency movement	Limited frequency of appearance (< 5 counts) – especially in non-core sections of the website
2	Extensive evidence this constitutes a driving ideal/ motivation for creating and participating in a community currency movement	A recurring theme – considerably developed and acting as a key framing discourse (frequency: > 5 counts)

A close examination of the outcomes of this scoring exercise (see Fig.3.2, p.114) revealed a number of possible case-studies that could be classified as alternative-oppositional (see Jonas 2010) in general terms but, nonetheless, remained variably oppositional to the proliferating mainstream. Further, and as suggested by Fig.3.2, this indicated that community currency movements in Attica lend themselves to a logistically simple multi-sited ethnography: not only does Athens provide a window to a dense cluster of movements that could easily be accessed via the well-developed transport network of the Greek capital, but also to schemes that are variably oppositional. Yet moving from this open scoping of the field towards a selection of cases presented a major challenge with regards to gaining access. Sub-section 3.2.1 thus documents how I eventually arrived at an ethnographic study of three crisis community currency movements.

3.2.1 Uncovering the challenges of recruiting research informants

Guided by both the sampling strategy outlined above and by a number of practical considerations (such as frequency of meetings and events I could attend and observe), I contacted eight Athenian movements that were variably alternative-oppositional (see Table 3.3) – outlining the nature of my project in an initial information email.

Table 3.3: Shortlisted cases

Scheme	Alterity Score	Scheme	Alterity Score
Mesopotamia time-bank	4	Dytiko Perasma LETS	7
PE.LY.KOI.A LETS	6	Holargos-Papagos time-bank	9
Athens time-bank	6	Ermis time-bank	13
Exarchia time-bank	6	Votsalo LETS	15

In contacting these movements, I was keen to highlight how I was interested in establishing reciprocal exchange with the movements through extensive participation. This was not only because of my feeling that this might increase my chances of getting a positive reply. Rather, it was because of my own interest in ideas of ‘militant’ ethnography (Juris 2007) – seeking to produce work with and of benefit to those seemingly external to these processes (e.g. Burke and Shear 2014). Specifically, and as the information letter included in Appendix 5 suggests, in approaching these movements I was eager to highlight how my research had the potential to produce contextually-relevant knowledge and uncover possible barriers to community currency activism and, thus, inform a fruitful discussion on how future activities might be re-designed for maximum effectiveness. For whilst I have looked at performing solidarity research without including activists in the initial design of the research (Brem-Wilson 2014), my positionality as someone committed to nourishing non-capitalist possibility ensured that key elements of my research would also benefit alternative economic praxis on the ground (Burke and Shear 2014; Juris 2007). Subsequently, in discussing my research, activists themselves were quick to identify how my findings could help their activist struggles. For instance, during Skype conversations with members of the Votsalo LETS, they discussed how:

- i. It would be useful for them to understand the various drivers and motivations of community currency activism across the whole spectrum of their members in an attempt to engage in activities that concerned everyone – and especially non-active members.

- ii. Possible accounts of members who gradually adopt non-capitalist practices could be exploited to convince struggling activists how this is all worth it in the end.
- iii. An in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by all movement activists would provide fresh insights into the realities of community currency activism and inform a timely evaluation of the movement and the subsequent reflexive development of novel action repertoires.

As exemplified below, sharing these aspirations in detail through my email and phone exchanges was what essentially secured me access. For the responses I received emphasised how community currency activists and organisers were unpaid volunteers whose time was precious and who had participated in previous research projects with no real benefit:

We have been approached by a number of researchers in the past, but we always got the feeling of being “exploited”: of being forced to spend our limited time supporting researchers without really getting anything out of it. But what you propose is entirely different – I am confident that everyone will welcome you into our movement. [...] I am confident you will prove to be a valuable asset for us all! (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member; from email dated 15.03.2013).

Arguably, though, my Greek identity was also critical in securing access. First, and as my email exchanges and Skype conversations with members of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank uncovered, they had previously been reluctant to contribute towards research projects led by foreign researchers – being daunted by the task of communicating in a language they were not competent in. Second, my communications with members of the Votsalo LETS uncovered a deeply-seeded distrust of foreign researchers. For in realising that a common public discourse abroad attributes the beginnings of the crisis to a class of lazy and corrupt Greeks becoming a burden to the Eurozone (see Knight 2013; Mylonas 2014), they were *truly concerned of how they [i.e. foreign researchers] might discuss the*

movement – biased as they are against Greeks’ (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member, Skype communication: 17.03.2013). Instead, they felt that a ‘Greek-Cypriot who is both committed to such non-capitalist alternatives, has experienced the impacts of the crisis himself, and genuinely understands the Greek psyche would be in a much better position to provide a balanced, insightful and critically constructive account of Greek alternative currency movements – even being able to discuss findings and give advice in a language that is accessible to all members’ (Pandora, Votsalo core member, Skype communication: 17.03.2013).

Nonetheless, in light of some initial exchanges that led to dead ends – with a lack of desire to commit to a research project, or a breaking-off of interest – it is also critical to acknowledge that the process of my case selection ‘happened to me’ in as much as I happened to it (Flyvbjerg 2006, 231). Whilst my selected case-studies were shortlisted on the basis of a series of conceptual demands, these requirements soon became entangled with pragmatic considerations around accessibility and support (following Stake 1995; Kawulich 2010; Hoggart et al. 2002). Eventually, my selection was limited to four movements: the Athens, the Horargos-Papagos and the Mesopotamia time-banks and the Votsalo LETS. I was subsequently forced to reject the Mesopotamia time-bank because of a scheduling clash with the only radical community currency movement that showed interest in my research – namely the Votsalo LETS. Hence, the empirical chapters that follow document the narrative of everyday crisis activism as this unfolded in these three alternative economic spaces. Prior to that, though, Fig.3.2 geographically plots these case-studies on the map of Attica, whilst subsection 3.2.2 provides a succinct overview of the three movements and their defining features.

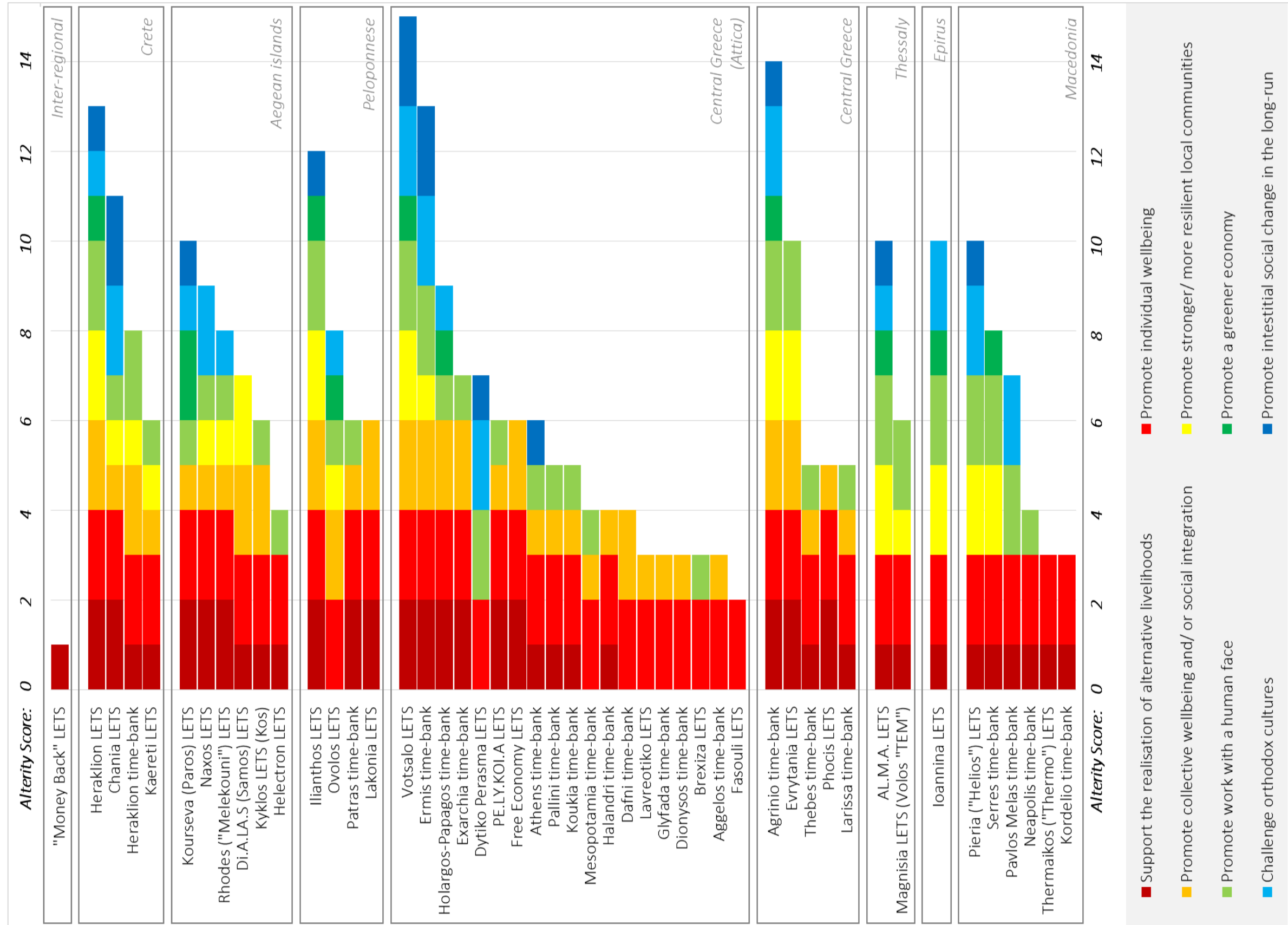


Figure 3.1: Classification of Greek crisis community currency movements

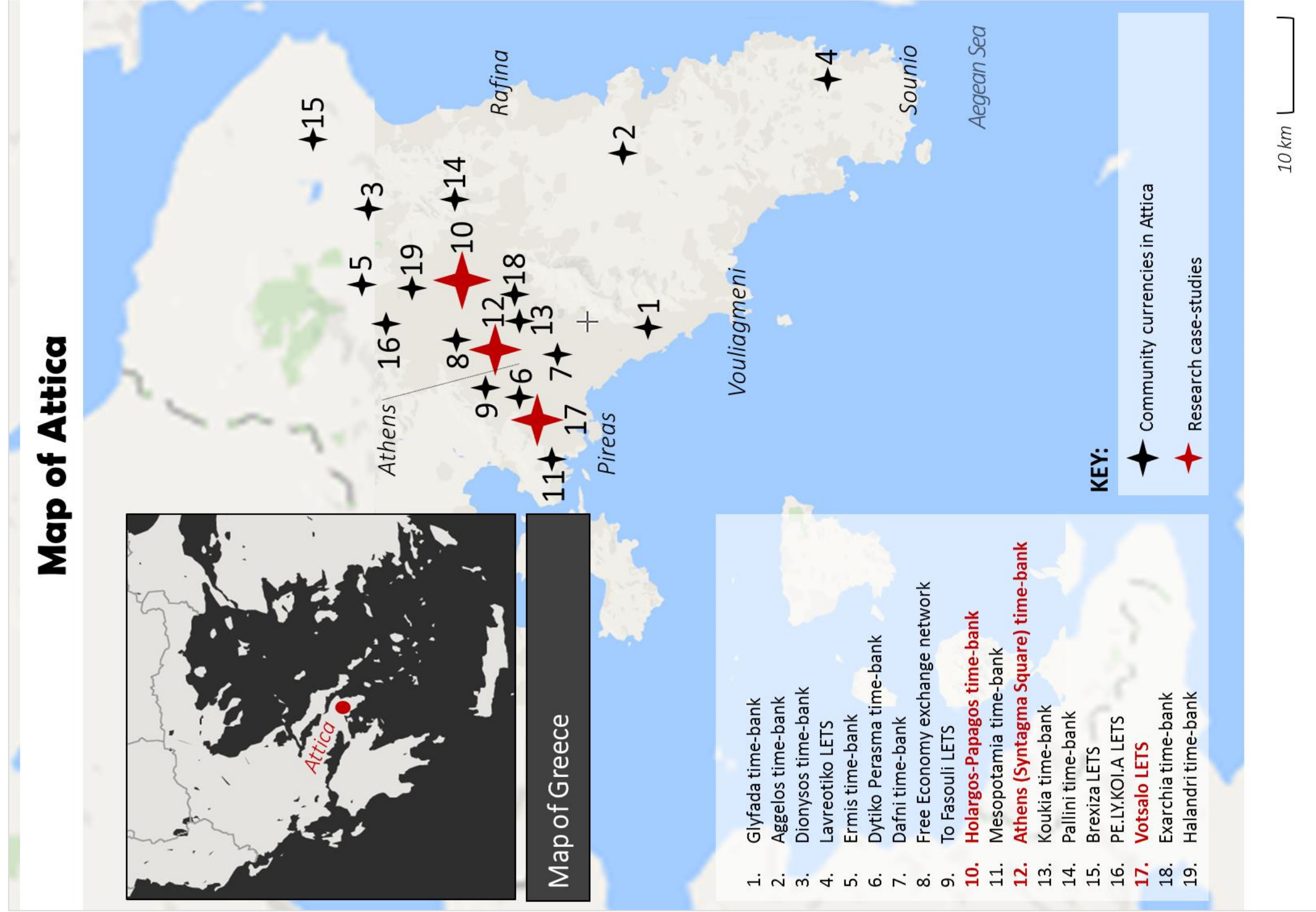


Figure 3.2: Case-studies geographically plotted on the map of Attica

3.2.2 *An insider ethnography of the Athens and Holargos-Papagos time-banks and of the Votsalo LETS*

The three case-studies informing this exploration of crisis community currencies afford unique insights to the emerging Athenian alternative economic scene. For as the pen portraits of these movements presented in Tables 3.4-3.6 overleaf reveal, these case-studies capture both the resistant ethos of the emerging alternative economic *field* in Greece, as well as its diversity and its idiosyncrasies when compared against other community currency movements documented in extant scholarship.

First, the pen portraits of the Votsalo LETS and the Athens and Holargos-Papagos time-banks uncover the plethora of idiosyncrasies of these movements when compared against “typical” LETS and time-bank schemes (see North 2010 for a recent overview). On the one hand, and aside a number of unique principles for stimulating trading, their function and operational features are much in line with other similar schemes – following the typical peer-to-peer time-banking and LETS approach to trading and scheme management (e.g. see *ibid.*; Amanatidou et al. 2014). Simultaneously though, their day-to-day operation is unmistakably defined by activities that have not been previously recorded in relevant scholarship:

- i. There are continuous efforts to enhance the potentiality of community currency activism by reaching out to other activists and networking.
- ii. ‘Commitment-building mechanisms’ (North 2014, 190-1) are central and not simply add-ons to the day-to-day life of these movements – involving, amongst others, numerous social events expected to increase stocks of social capital and, thus, to facilitate trading.
- iii. There is heavy investment in the principle of co-production (Cahn 2000) – devolving responsibility and authority to members and encouraging self-organisation through frequent general assemblies and volunteering working groups rather than relying on direction from above.

Second, whilst these schemes are alternative-oppositional to

variable degrees, they collectively provide insights into a highly politicised *field* (see Petropoulou 2013). On the one hand, and as both the aims and member profiles documented in Tables 3.4-3.6 uncover, economic need and the associated desire to enact alternative livelihoods less dependent on mainstream money constitute key priorities. With the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2017) setting the at-risk-of-poverty threshold at €9475/year per household¹¹, there is no denying that many of the members of these schemes are below this threshold. Hence, the websites of the respective schemes make explicit reference to community currencies as a tool for survival. As the website of the Athens time-bank indicatively asserts, *'Time-banking is a new form of solidarity with the main objective to combat alienation and the effects of the crisis affecting our society'*¹².

Nonetheless, the way the schemes are being discussed suggests that they are also collectively involved in a process of political contestation by facilitating the construction of grounded utopian spaces – aiming not only at helping meet needs for exchange, but also at challenging the capitalist mainstream, its cultures, or even envisioning to contribute towards interstitial social change in the long-run. Clearly, then, they constitute a par excellence example of everyday crisis activism, with their everyday politics envisioned to serve: a) as a survival strategy for making ends meet despite-yet-beyond the mainstream market, b) as a challenge to practices of charity that preserve unequal power relations, and c) as a working model of another world despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity whereby passive recipients of support transform into active agents struggling for micro-level social change (following Arampatzi 2017).

They are, thus, fundamentally different from alternative community currency movements developed in the context of economic hardship – echoing instead a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental

¹¹ Set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

¹² Translated extract from the website of the Athens time-bank (www.time-exchange.gr/pilambdaetarhoomicronphiomicronrhoiotaepsilonsigma.html - Accessed: 01/03/2013).

sustainability aspirations that have been invested in community currencies by academics and practitioners alike (e.g. see Seyfang 2006; 2009; Dittmer 2013). In so doing, they also appear more radical when compared against typical LETS and time-bank schemes operating beyond crisis contexts – neither primarily responding to a desire to reconnect to community (Seyfang 2001b; Williams 1996), nor simply aiming to help people dependent on limited financial resources (e.g. *ibid.*; Gregory 2009). As the Votsalo LETS indicatively claims: *‘The movement might have been formed in response to the currency [economic] crisis, but it is far more than that: it challenges the existing models of economic development and the lifestyles put forth that can only lead to an impasse’*¹³.

This is far from surprising in that the origins of these movements can be traced back to other activist struggles and widespread post-crash critique. On the one hand, both the Votsalo LETS and the Athens time-bank emerged out of the Indignant Movement of 2011 – thus validating claims that these protests planted the seeds for an enduring politics-of-the-act whereby activists attempt to facilitate the (re)production of livelihoods despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity politics (see Varvarousis and Kallis 2017). On the other hand, whilst the Holargos-Papagos time-bank did not emerge from this anti-austerity struggle, its origins are equally politicised – emerging from a leftist grassroots social movement *‘addressing a range of economic, social and environmental problems in the local community’* and *‘aiming to embark on a struggle for social change!’*¹⁴.

But how exactly did I go about studying these movements? I deal with this issue in the remainder of this chapter. First, I introduce my specific methods of enquiry. Then, I discuss the practicalities of undertaking the ethnography, and gathering and analysing the data to produce a coherent thesis narrative.

¹³ Translated extract from the website of the Votsalo LETS (<http://votsalo.org/δίκτυο-βότσαλο-είναι/> - Accessed: 12/03.2017).

¹⁴ Translated extract from the website of the Holargos-Papagos Citizen’s Network (<http://www.dipoxo.gr/poioieimaste.php> – Accessed: 10/01/2017).

Table 3.4: Pen portrait of the Athens time-bank. (Drawing from website material, informal communication with core activists and from complementary sources of data (see Section 3.4))

History	The first alternative currency developed in the wake of the crisis through an Indignant open assembly – with the lead of a working group of local and international activists dedicated to exploring possibilities for creative resistance to the crisis and for contextually appropriate social and solidarity economic projects.
Function	Members exchange services for time credits – recorded as credits and debits in online balance accounts. Upon registration, members post the services they offer and require for everyone to see – ‘tagging’ them accordingly. This enables the matching of requests and offers between members – with relevant emails sent automatically to stimulate members to independently contact each and arrange for an exchange. Time credits are generated by the act of exchange itself: all members start with no credits in their accounts. In order to stimulate trading, members are able to store up to 200 units in their accounts and be indebted by up to 30 units.
Operation	Informal union of persons – without court approval or legal presence – operating according to a self-developed rulebook defining transaction rules and a code of conduct for the members. Organised on the principles of direct-democracy – with all members participating in regular general assemblies, a majority voting approach for decision-making, and a series of work groups of volunteers responsible for running, managing and developing the time-bank. No external funding received – with running costs covered through donations or from social events designed to generate income.
Trades	Wide range of services on offer, including: private tutoring, translations, alternative therapies, household repairs, gardening, baby and pet-sitting, and IT-related services. Valuing the services exchanged is based on the principle of equality: one hour of services offered or received equals an hour of another service.
Other activities	Networking and trans-local solidarities in Greece and abroad – especially through the extensive involvement of core members in the ‘Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy’, and through the informal exchange of tacit knowledge in various social movement scenes across Athens. Wide range of events organised to cover running costs, enthuse members, stimulate trading through the development of interpersonal relations, or to support other resistant social movements.
Aims	The promotion of: a) greater individual and psychological wellbeing as a panacea to a paralysing crisis, b) collective wellbeing and higher degrees of social integration, c) alternative livelihoods outside the mainstream market, d) work with a human face – less stressful and more fulfilling, and e) interstitial social-change in the long-run.
Priorities	To overcome identified challenges such as activating inactive members. Further networking and establishment of the ‘Athens Integral Cooperative’ – bringing a range of actors and initiatives and all the elements of an economy in a scheme utilising its own alternative currency for exchanges.
Novelties	Generally more radically politicised when compared against other time-banks. Centrality of networking and events/socials. A number of idiosyncrasies in trading. E.g.: a) encouraging the exchange of second-hand goods and handicrafts by permitting members to value items through estimates of how long it took to make something or to organise the sale, and b) permitting the donation of time-credits to members in shortage.
Members	240 active members of a total of 2420 who have not carried-out any exchanges. Mixed aged distribution: 47% of members aged 18-45, 35% between 46-55 years old, and a minority of 18% of members aged 56-65. Mixed indications regarding the economic profile of members, with a majority of 31% of households being on low or no income (between €0-6000/annum) – and, thus, allegedly, driven by economic need – and a significant 23% of members’ households appearing much better off – with annual incomes of €20001- 30000.

Table 3.5: Pen portrait of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank

History	Established in 2013 – following discussions with members of the Athens time-bank and the Greek segment of the European Women’s Network by the Holargos-Papagos Citizen’s Network: a grassroots social movement seeking to address a range of economic, social and environmental problems in the local community. The idea for establishing the time-bank originated from a public consultation uncovering a desire to help cover needs for exchange outside the mainstream market.
Function	Following the typical peer-to-peer time-banking model. However, certain unique tactics to stimulate trading have also been implemented. First, members start with 10 credits in their accounts to avoid the misconception that needed services can only be obtained once something has been offered. Second, members are able to store up to a maximum of 100 units and be indebted by up to 100 units. Third, no member is entitled to request any time-intensive service (defined as any service provided for 15 or more hours), unless (s)he has provided an equally intensive service.
Operation	Informal union of persons – without court approval or legal presence – operating according to a self-developed rulebook defining transaction rules and a code of conduct for the members. Managed by an annually elected steering group that meets weekly. Monthly general assemblies where all members reach, through majority voting, important decisions regarding the operation of the time-bank. Work-groups organising events and educational seminars for the benefit of the local community in exchange for time-credits. No external funding – with running costs covered through donations.
Trades	Wide range of services on offer, including: private tutoring, translations, health and beauty related treatments, gardening, provision of legal or tax advice, baby and pet-sitting, IT services. Routine group activities provided by professional members (e.g. theatre workshops, choir training, self-defence, yoga and group therapy) paid for in time-credits stand out.
Other activities	Wide range of events organised to either enthuse and activate or educate their members whilst building a sense of community. These include: socials, regular excursions, educational seminars and workshops, etc. Supporting, through volunteering work, numerous vulnerable groups and the local community. Some networking with other social and solidarity economy initiatives in Greece and abroad – and especially with the Athens time-bank.
Aims	Seeking to promote: a) individual and collective wellbeing, b) the realisation of alternative livelihoods, c) work with a human face – less stressful and more fulfilling, d) the (re)localisation of the economy (in terms of service provision), and e) heterodox cultures.
Priorities	To make a contribution towards an alternative cultural model of social and economic organization based on the principles of sustainability, equality, solidarity and cooperation. To overcome identified challenges such as low levels of trading.
Novelties	Centrality of events, socials and commitment-building mechanisms in the day-to-day routines of activists. Allowing members to either: a) charge (in Euros) for certain costs that cannot be covered through time-credits, or b) donate time-credits to members in shortage.
Members	28 active members of a total of 78 individuals who have registered in the time-bank but have not carried-out any exchanges as yet. Mainly individuals over 46 years of age: 48% of members 46-55 years old, 40% of members at 56-65 years of age. Mixed indications regarding their economic profile, with a majority of 37% of members on incomes between €10001-20000 per annum, and a further 20% of members on incomes between €6001-10000 and €20001-30000 per annum respectively.

Table 3.6: Pen portrait of the Votsalo LETS

History	Founded in 2013 – following discussions during the Indignant Citizens protests of 2011 and during the operation of the local Squares Movement in Korydallos, Athens, and with important inputs from local and foreign community currency activists.
Function	Exchanging goods and services using virtual credits (“Votsala”). Members of the scheme provide their contact details and list ‘offers’ and ‘wants’ in an online directory. They are then invited to independently search for goods or services they require and/or to respond to any calls for requested goods/services as they see fit. They then contact each other directly to make the necessary arrangements and to fix a “price” for the transaction – payable online via a transfer of credits. To avoid the risks of over-charging for goods/services in high demand, of hoarding credits, or of running out of credits, members have agreed on: a) a limit of 20 “Votsala” per good/service on offer, b) an upper limit for the number of units that can be stored at any given time at 300 “Votsala”, and c) being indebted by up to 150 units.
Operation	Informal union of persons – without court approval or legal presence – operating according to a self-developed rulebook defining transaction rules and a code of conduct for the members. Organised on the principles of direct-democracy – with members adopting a consensus decision-making approach in their weekly general assemblies, and sharing the management workload on a roster basis. Running costs covered through regular private donations.
Trades	Range of services and goods on offer including: private tutoring, health and beauty treatments, household and clothes repairs, IT services, arts and crafts goods, homemade organic cosmetics and cleaning products, homemade sweets and wine, unwanted second-hand goods, etc.
Other activities	Extensive networking (e.g. involvement of core members in the ‘Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy’, informal exchange of tacit knowledge in various social movement scenes, etc.). Educational seminars and workshops (e.g. workshops on making homemade bio-cosmetics and cleaning products) aiming to increase stocks of tradable goods and services in the scheme. Wide range of events organised to enthuse (prospective) members, stimulate trading, generate funds, and to support other social movements.
Aims	The promotion of: a) greater individual and collective wellbeing, b) the realisation of alternative livelihoods, c) work with a human face – less stressful and more fulfilling, d) the ecologically motivated re-localisation of economic activity, e) stronger/ more resilient local communities, f) heterodox cultures, and g) interstitial social-change in the long-run.
Priorities	To promote greater self-sufficiency by overcoming identified challenges, and by involving primary producers in the scheme. Further networking and establishment of the ‘Athens Integral Cooperative’ – bringing a range of actors and initiatives and all the elements of an economy in a scheme utilising its own alternative currency for exchanges.
Novelties	Generally more radically politicised when compared against other LETS. Centrality of networking and events/socials. Allowing members to: a) charge (in Euros) for certain costs that cannot be covered with “Votsala”, or b) to donate “Votsala” to members in shortage.
Members	24 active members of a total of 81 individuals who have registered in the scheme but have not carried-out any exchanges as yet. Mixed aged distribution: 28% of members between 18-35 years old, 23% of members between 36-45 years old and a minority of 30% of members aged between 46-55. Mixed economic profile – with a generally equal number of participants distributed between the €0-6000, the €6001-10000, the €10001-20000 and the €20001-30000 annual household income bands

3.3 Undertaking the ethnography

Electing to undertake an ethnographic study implies extensive participant observation. However, Robson (2011, 143) describes ethnography as ‘very much a question of general style rather than of following specific prescriptions about procedure’. Hence, as outlined though Table 3.7 below, my ethnographic study draws on a mixture of methods – namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and surveys.

Table 3.7: Methods of inquiry and their contribution to our understanding of everyday crisis activism

Method of inquiry	Duration of data collection	Contribution to knowledge
Participant observation (see sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2)	06/04/2014 – 30/12/2014 (and via Skype for a number of meetings thereafter)	Primary method of inquiry – providing detailed insights into the collective and individual practices of the alternative economy and into the dispositions informing them.
Semi-structured interviews (see section 3.4.1)	01/06/2014 – 30/12/2014	Complementary information on the dispositions and biographies shaping the <i>habiti</i> of individual activists.
Questionnaire survey (see section 3.4.2)	15/09/2014 – 15/11/2014	Complementary quantitative data on alternative economic practices. Access to non-active members, their dispositions and practices. Informing recruitment of interviewees.

Each data collection method presented in Table 3.7 above and detailed in the remainder of the chapter offered access to different aspects of my research questions. Specifically, in employing this set of data collection methods I move away from the conventional logic of triangulation whereby the aim is to enhance the validity of research findings (e.g. Denzin 1978; Bell 1997; Seale 2004). Drawing on recent critiques of triangulation, and especially a critical realist perspective highlighting how triangulation problematically ‘treats the relationship between methods as relatively unproblematic’ (Atkinson and Coffey 2003, 115), I re-consider the notion of

triangulation following the likes of Hammersley (2006), Modell (2009), and recent scholarship on social movements (Ayoub et al. 2014). For the diverse results obtained are seen 'like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that provide a full image of a certain object' (Erzberger and Kelle 2003, 461).

Subsequently, having provided a conceptual rationale for this research and outlined the methodological tools employed, I now turn to detailing the specific steps and experienced realities of conducting the fieldwork. As such, the following sections aim to provide some degree of transparency and honesty to the reality of carrying-out my research on the basis of the above cited methods on the ground.

3.3.1 Undertaking participant observation: Evolutionary dynamics of a changing positionality

My interest in everyday activism meant that participant observation was the main means of accessing the routinized practices of everyday activism (following Silverman 2005; 2006). The method allowed for an in-depth understanding of context-sensitive activist performances of the alternative economy. It helped access the counter-cultural, "hidden", world of community currency activists – providing insights into social movement life (and the practices, routines and relations within them), as well as on the everyday practices of individual activists (following Valentine 2001).

Yet beyond broad explanations of my commitment to militant ethnography and participant observation, the reality of conducting research is far more complex and challenging. First, against my commitment to becoming an insider activist, the reality of entering the respective fields was very different – following instead Junker's (2004, 223) theorised roles for fieldwork. Specifically, as Fig.3.3 suggests, I entered the three community currency movements holding the complete observer position (see Stage 1, Fig.3.3) – being relatively objective, detached and, thus, simply empathetic

to community currency activism.

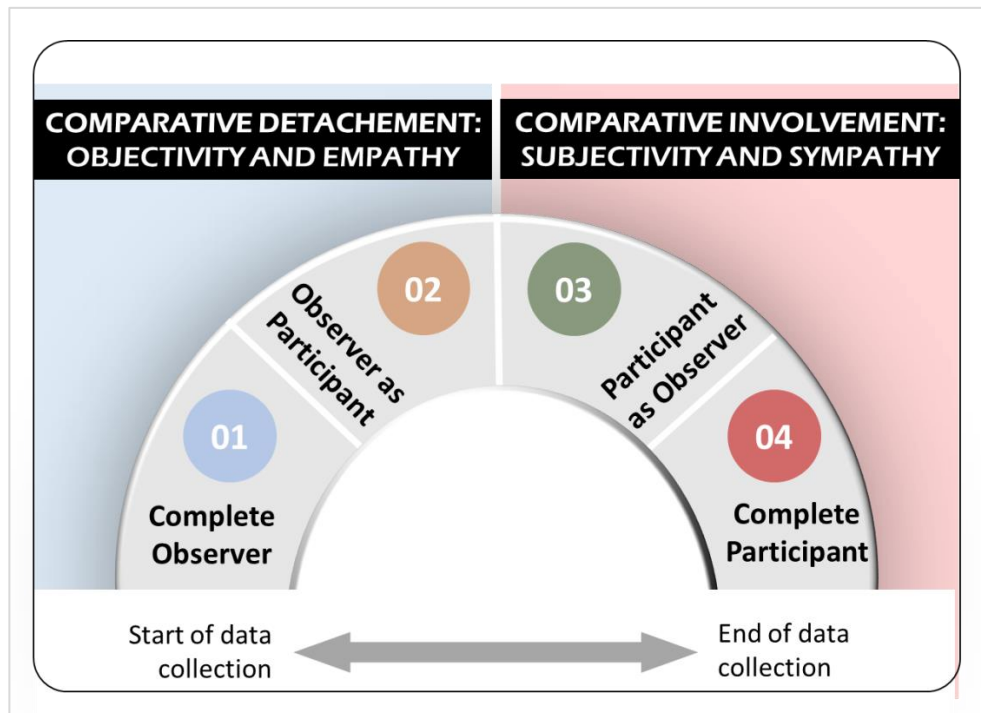


Figure 3.3: My evolving positionality (Adapted from Junker 2004, 223)

Clearly, my fluency in Greek (slang) and my in-depth knowledge of Greek culture, politics and contemporary developments in the wake of the crisis ensured that I was in a position to avoid the many documented pitfalls of conducting ethnographic research in a non-native language – and especially the risk: a) of distorting what was going on because of linguistic misunderstandings, and b) of disturbing the natural rhythms of movement life by having to rely on external interpreters (e.g. see Gibb and Iglesias 2017; Winchatz 2006). Yet whilst being a Greek with leftist aspirations ensured that I could easily follow discussions and developments and sympathise with the quest to enact non-capitalist, I still remained an alien to the cosmos of Greek community currency movements. Activists often used certain context-specific “native” terms and categories I was not familiar with, continued their ongoing discussions on relatively unfamiliar themes and issues and whilst making reference to activists I had not encountered,

and even unwittingly avoided discussing problematic aspects of their activist praxis over the first few weeks of my ethnography in fear that I would develop a mainly negative understanding of their movements as Pandora, a core member of the Votsalo LETS, confessed to me prior to my departure from the research field. Most importantly, linguistic competence and empathy was not sufficient to enter the 'psychic space' of community currency activists and see the world from their point of view (Churchill 2005, 5). At this early stage I thus put myself into the position of an 'acceptable incompetent' (following Lofland 1971, 100). By observing, asking questions and formulating hypotheses, I steadily developed a good understanding of the settings, begun to understand the activists culture(s) and gradually gained acceptance.

Nonetheless owing to my ease with conducting research in Greek, and as suggested by Fig.3.3, I soon attempted to become an integrated part of social movement life – increasingly letting go of my comparative detachment by becoming more involved, sympathetic and, allegedly, less objective. I gradually transformed from a complete observer (see stage 1) to an observer as participant (see stage 2) and, ultimately, to a participant observer (see stage 3) whereby I was primarily participating in these movements as an activist and relatively less as a researcher – at least in terms of not conducting the research and making ethnographic notes in an explicit manner. Specifically, having read into the importance of: a) appearance, b) reciprocity, c) pure sociability, and d) my personal characteristics in shaping relationships with people in the field (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, ch.4), I increasingly attempted to: a) start dressing more like the participants – letting go of the slightly more formal attire I had in the first meetings, b) take on duties and offer my skills for the benefit of the group, c) engage as much as possible in socials and small talk, d) highlight my similar unorthodox political convictions and ethical and political commitment to challenging austerity politics and furthering the alternative economy, and e) become involved in trading and core social movement

activities. I, thus, gradually built trusting relations – as evident by the growing willingness of activists to involve me in movement management, the budding importance of my involvement in assemblies, and by their growing and unprompted readiness to share personal experiences, critical opinions and understandings that diverged from the mainstream claims of the movement. At instances, I even transformed into a complete participant (see stage 4, Fig.3.3) – heavily engaged in the activities of the movements and completely letting go of my researcher role. Hence, I reinvented myself in the discourses of members from *'Phedeas, a PhD researcher'* to *'a dear friend'*, *'our comrade'* (e.g. FD 20/10/2014; 22/12/2014).

McConnell (2007) argues that, in addition to being a process of giving back to the community, this insider positionality can act as a means of gaining access to the community and as a way of 'being' in the field. All three dimensions are relevant to my experience in Athens where, as a consequence of my activism, I gained knowledge and an understanding of the research field that would have been impossible to acquire as an 'external' researcher. Through active engagement and identification I was allegedly capable of bridging the divergent positionality of researcher and movement – yielding data uncovering the situated nature of movement knowledge, the materiality of movement praxis and the sometimes 'tacit' or 'hidden' elements of the alternative economic field and activist lives that would otherwise be unavailable (following Chesters 2012; Hale 2006). In so doing, I was able to enter the mind-sets of those being observed and to adopt the native "dialect" without feeling a sense of strangeness and distance. In return I have contributed my time, knowledge and skills to the initiatives. This ranged from the mundane of helping distribute promotional leaflets, helping sort out newsletters and mailing lists, to becoming a representative of the groups in meetings for the Athens Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy, being in charge of organising the volunteers over the course of the Festival, etc.

Arguably, though, my eventual ability to perform insider

ethnography mainly came down to my commitment to conducting research with and for the three social movements to the extent possible (see Chatterton et al. 2007). Dialogue with activists became a key methodological and ethical principle in my research – both sharing research findings and relevant advice in accessible ways, as well as inviting members of the respective movements to facilitate my access to movement knowledge (e.g. see Brem-Wilson 2014; Hale 2006). At core, I was committed to bringing movement interests into my knowledge production process – endorsing considerable theoretical openness and allowing activists to influence each phase of the process, from the re-conception of the research emphasis to data collection, verification and dissemination (following Hale 2006). Hence, whilst it was clear to all activists that I would be the main beneficiary of this rendition of their experiences into an academic publication, they did not feel they were being exploited, nor did they see by research as a burden to their busy activist lives. Instead, they were eager to endorse me and my research as an integrated part of their social movement cosmos in terms of: a) accurately representing their experiences and worldviews, b) them having unofficial “co-authorship” of the thesis manuscript with a fellow comrade, and c) producing results that could also be of practical use to the movements themselves.

On closer inspection, though, it becomes apparent that my changing research positionality was less of an evolutionary and more of a spiral process – balancing between the activist and academic roles and making ad-hoc decisions and, thus, adopting all roles schematically presented in Fig.3.4. First, not only was it impossible to maintain the same “insider” status with all members, but undertaking semi-structured interviews reinforced the fact that I was primarily a researcher. I, thus, placed emphasis on developing close affinities with my conversation partners – either in previously agreed interviews or in ad-hoc discussions whilst in the research field (following Kawulich 2010, 61). My semi-structured conversations almost always followed prior encounters in meetings or

public events. This naturalistic approach to informant recruitment seemed to gain a positive response – facilitating access and stimulating conversations particularly where people were tired of researcher attention (*e.g. Hera, Athens time-bank core member – FD: 02/10/2014*). Perhaps it also enabled me to gain better insights to activist practices – with the rapport between myself and fellow activists allegedly creating a facilitative atmosphere whereby individuals were enabled to ‘work through the reasons behind certain everyday actions’ (Hitchings 2012, 66).

Second, I often found it very difficult to maintain an insider participant role – constantly having one eye and ear open to interesting comments or behaviours which connected with my developing areas of interest. For an ethnographic research entails ‘a series of processual social situations, in which all kinds of unexpected and unplanned events occur’ – consequently obliging researchers to ‘make innumerable small decisions at every twist and turn’ (Moeran 2007, 16). Indeed, Wolcott (1999, 48) highlights that there is a ‘need for the fieldworker to move back and forth between involvement and detachment’. Hence, there are numerous examples where my involvement in the social movement scenes I was researching and my subjective interpretation of community currency activism were influenced by both the rhythms of my research and those of the social movements themselves. For I constantly found myself debating whether: ‘*Should I be helping, observing or taking notes?*’ (*FD: 10/10/2014*).

Yet (activist) ethnography is more than just “joining in”, giving back to the research subjects and leaving the field. Rather, it necessitates the vigilant collection and interpretation of data (following Watson and Till 2010). I deal with this challenging issue in the following sub-section.

3.3.2 The ‘where’, the ‘when’ and the ‘what’ of participant observation

Having moved to Athens in March 2014 I was, within days, invited to

attend my first meetings of my respective case-studies, meaning that I could start collecting data for my case-studies in tandem. In total, and as highlighted by Table 3.8, I gathered field notes over 147 occasions.

Table 3.8: Meetings and other activities over which participant observation was conducted

Instances of participant observation	Total No. of events attended	Start – end dates	Total page No. of field-diary notes
1 <i>Holargos-Papagos Time-Bank: weekly coordinator meetings</i>	35	10/04-18/12/2014 (and via Skype on 15/01 and 21/01/2015)	168
2 <i>Holargos-Papagos Time-Bank: monthly member meetings and events</i>	8	06/04- 28/12/2014	50
3 <i>Athens Time-Bank: weekly member and coordinator meetings</i>	30	06/04- 21/12/2014	98
4 <i>Athens Time-Bank: events</i>	4	15/06- 15/12/2014	20
5 <i>Votsalo Network: weekly member and coordinator meetings</i>	36	08/04- 23/12/2014 (and via Skype on 20/01; 27/01; 03/02/2015)	194
6 <i>Votsalo Network: events/ bartering bazaars</i>	4	29/06- 29/11/2014	47
7 <i>Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy: Prep meetings</i>	7	09/06- 09/10/2014	45
8 <i>Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy: Evaluation meetings</i>	4	24/10- 28/11/2014	70
9 <i>Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy: events and speeches</i>	1	10-12/10/2014	45
10 <i>Service and product trades</i>	15	15/09- 14/12/2014	19

In the first instance, I was overwhelmed by everything I wanted to record – as I adopted Wolfinger’s (2002) ‘comprehensive note taking’ strategy in religious obedience to warnings that ‘if it’s not written down, it never happened’ (Waddington 1994, 109). In light of my competence in Greek, I wrote pages and pages of field notes – trying to observe anything and everything about my meetings (*e.g. FD: 10/04/2014; 19/04/2014*). Hence, I spent hours typing up my field notes on the morning after the

meetings – trying to remember any missing details and synthesizing the post-it note scribbles from over the sleepless nights of agonising whether I was being a good observer. Nonetheless, this approach soon raised challenges. Most meetings lasted between three to four hours and were usually followed by socials – meaning that I could not attend with the same care in noting down everything going on, nor spend that long typing-up notes. Subsequently, I soon realised that ‘ethnography cannot proceed without purpose’: broad questions that help in ‘initiating an enquiry’ (Wolcott 1999, 69). I, thus, decided to develop a ‘generative question’ informing my data collection (following Strauss 1987, 17):

***Generative Research Question:** In what ways is the alternative economy practiced and with what (un)ease?*

Mentally carrying with me this broad question at all times helped focus observations on ‘sensitizing concepts’ (Charmaz 2006, 16). Whilst omitting almost nothing, the theoretical concepts I had in mind helped me pay equal attention to the issues of agency, structure and culture in place of getting lost in very minute details of a single sensitising level that would prohibit me from developing a broader understanding of community currency activism. Following LeCompte (2002, 28) I, thus, argue that such sensitising concepts were an inevitable, if not crucial, aspect of my ethnographic exploration.

Nonetheless, to overcome the risk of developing ‘theoretical blinkers’ (Bell & Newby 1975, 63) I was cautious of developing a systematic way of separating my observations from theoretical thoughts (see Appendix 1 – field-diary extract). In conducting the research and making field-notes in Greek whilst simultaneously engaging with theoretical concepts I was mainly capable of exploring in English, my “trans-languaging” in field-diary entries clearly enabled me to keep in-situ observations separate from provisional analytical categories. Whilst necessarily messy, relatively unstructured and moving back and forth between different languages, my approach to note-

taking thus resembled Lofland's (2004) method – including four distinct forms of entries. Namely:

- i. *Running descriptions* complemented with *previously forgotten* observations in Greek;
- ii. *Personal, in-situ impressions and feelings* in Greek;
- iii. Separated *analytic ideas and inferences* (mainly in English) to which I returned with a critical eye as my understanding of the field evolved;
- iv. *'Instructions to self'* (in both Greek and English) to explore additional issues or analytic thoughts.

Informed by this systematic approach to note-taking, I conducted three forms of ethnographic observation. First, I participated in and observed routine and extraordinary movement assemblies (see Fig.3.4).



Figure 3.4: Votsalo LETS – weekly assembly (02/12/2014)

Whilst this 'focused participant observation' only covered 'significant moments' (Styaert & Bouwen 1994, 137) of community currency activism, it produced ample data on social movements life (in terms of power relations

and how novel practices of collective activism and decision-making were being experimented, implemented, negotiated and/or contested) and individual members. Members often shared: views, experiences of trading, tacit knowledge, reflections on the challenges faced in trying to reconstruct their everyday practices through community currency activism, etc.

The second form of observation was more ad-hoc. By participating in volunteering tasks (e.g. in accompanying activists to 'start-up' briefings to new members), in trading goods and services, as well as in the occasional events organised, I gained valuable insights into the routine practices of the alternative economy, its rhythms, norms and challenges. In total, I became involved in 15 trading occasions (providing IT support, assisting with home-repair chores, receiving haircuts, etc.), was present at numerous exchanges and group activities paid for using alternative currencies, and became involved in 10 public events – including trading bazaars and presentations to the community by the Votsalo LETS (e.g. see Fig.3.5) and parties organised by the Holargos-Papagos and the Athens time-banks. Here, I encountered well over 120 members from across the three movements – providing me with ample opportunities for unstructured conversations and a vast amount of data on the practices of the alternative economy.

The third and final form of observation involved participation-observation in activities and events with a long duration and of critical importance (see Fig.3.6 and Fig.3.7). Specifically, I became actively involved in organising and preparing for the 3rd 'Athens Festival of Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy' which offered the unprecedented opportunity to gain insights into inter-group solidarities and (in)formal networking practices, the sharing of knowledge, and into attempted cooperation (see Fig.3.6). Furthermore, by participating in a week-long summer camping trip organised by the Athens time-bank (see Fig.3.7) and in two daily excursions organised by the Holargos-Papagos time-bank, I was granted the chance to observe and make notes on a massive amount of naturalistic and unconstrained conversations, on practices and their meanings, and on the

dispositions, *habiti* and political biographies of the activists involved.



Figure 3.5: Handmade products on “sale” at the 4th Trading Bazaar of the Votsalo LETS (29/06/2014)



Figure 3.6: Networking assembly at the 3rd Athens Festival of Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy (11/10/2014)



Figure 3.7: Annual camping trip of the Athens time-bank (02/08/2014)

These forms of observation are indicative of how recent ethnographic work has been testing the limits of ethnography. My approach involved multiple sites of observation-participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the lifeworld and the system (following Marcus 1995):

- i. By observing participants as they gathered for meetings and made their way to social and other activities, I performed an ethnography predicated on *'following the people'*.
- ii. By participating and/or observing trades of goods and services I was *'following the thing'*: the commodity chain enacted through community currencies and involvement in these movements.

By making observations over meetings and during the Festival and camping trips I was performing a *'strategically situated ethnography'* – gaining invaluable insights from occasions over which the cosmos of the movements “travelled” to a single site (following *ibid.*).

Furthermore, each form of observation came with its own norms and challenges in making field notes. In routine weekly meetings many

members took notes themselves. Hence, as I could have my field-diary in front of me without looking out of place, I was able to make notes on almost everything that occurred. I was even invited to keep and circulate the minutes of the meetings. This: a) ensured that both sides could reap the immediate benefits of my data collection, b) further “legalised” my involvement in these meetings, and c) directly benefited my research by allowing members to comment on and develop on issues highlighted in the minutes circulated.

However, this form of note taking was not always possible. I often had specific tasks to do and, was aware that I should try to eliminate as much as possible disrupting the normal flow of these events. Thus, my observations became more fragmented, short and messy – resembling ‘jottings’ made by conventional ethnographers (Emerson et al. 1995). Most notes were made in a pocket-sized notebook or on my mobile phone as I could easily and discreetly carry them around at all times. Further, I occasionally developed what Cook and Crang (1995, 35) refer to as ‘ethnographer’s bladder’ whereby I took unnecessary toilet trips to make scribbles. Thus, in such occasions I relied heavily on complementary ex-situ notes and spent considerably more time tidying and typing notes up and reflectively developing provisional analytical asides.

Yet regardless of the level of detail on everyday activism captured through participant observation, using participant observation on its own would have run the risk of neglecting: a) activist’s own subjective interpretations of their involvement in community currency movements, b) the understandings and practices of non-active participants or members not encountered in the field, and c) a host of descriptive metrics of the levels of trading activity and participation that would help in the thick description of everyday activism. As such, Section 3.4 overleaf outlines the complementary data collection methods informing this thesis – namely in-depth interviews and a questionnaire survey.

3.4 Complementary sources of data

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

As my fieldwork progressed, I conducted many short, informal and ad-hoc interviews as I discussed my research and what was going on in the community currency movements with individual members prior to or after meetings and events. However, I frequently felt that these chance conversations were not providing the depth of engagement and insights a more formal interview could provide. Members started sharing rich insights of how they became involved in the movement, of the challenges they faced, of their political dispositions and convictions and understandings of the crisis, etc. Nevertheless, we were always abruptly interrupted as the meetings had to start (*e.g. FD 11/11/2014*) or the bus to get home had finally arrived (*e.g. FD 23/06/2014*). Because of this, I sought semi-structured interviews with both core and non-core members of the movements – providing activists the chance ‘to construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words’ (Valentine 1997, 111).

Whilst such qualitative (semi-structured) interviews are, undeniably, treated as non-representational engagements with the world, this does not make them useless for studying everyday activist practices (*e.g. Crang 2003*). Specifically, following Atkinson and Coffey (2003), I argue that ethnographic observation of what is done whilst practicing the alternative economy should not enjoy primacy over unuttered activist opinions, understandings and claims. As Hitchings (2012) asserts, individuals are capable of commenting and critically reflecting on how and why they perform practices of everyday life – thus granting, through their discursive constructions of practices, researchers the opportunity to ‘understand complex or little known issues’ (Hoggart et al. 2002, 208-9).

Specifically, whilst I was concerned not to create ‘wordy worlds’

about everyday activism (Crang 2003, 501), I was also interested in accessing the 'words and meanings' employed by 'practitioners of everyday life' (Holstein and Gubrium 2003, 73). By getting detailed personal stories of life and engagement in the alternative economy, by encouraging reflection on their experiences of practicing everyday activism, and by inviting reflections around the *field conditions, capital, habiti* and ideas that shape life and everyday activism in the wake of the crisis, these semi-structured conversations helped me piece together a coherent narrative regarding the performance of the alternative economy. In particular, this added an additional layer of depth to my data – providing insights into the political biographies and activist dispositions of activists that could not be captured easily through participant observation. Thus, they were pivotal in constructing a narrative regarding political distinction in seemingly identical practices of community currency activism.

The first step in conducting these interviews was to recruit interviewees, and I used a variety of sampling approaches to accomplish this. With core and highly active members/ coordinators I frequently encountered in the field it was straightforward – simply asking them in person. However recruitment was harder with non-core members, and especially inactive members (i.e. members who did not attend any meetings and/or events and/or were not actively involved in any trading) – having to resort to a combination of recruitment strategies. First, I used a 'snowballing' strategy (following Valentine 1997) – asking core members if they could think of other activists who would be happy to talk to me. Second, I recruited activists opportunistically out of those I met in-situ and by sending out invitations to participate in my research through the social media accounts and mailing lists of the movements. Finally, I embraced a 'theoretical sampling' approach (following Glaser and Strauss 1967) to include activists who could offer distinct and potentially valuable perspectives. Through a questionnaire survey (see sub-section 3.4.2) that also invited people to share their opinions and narratives in more depth

through one-to-one interviews, I attempted to recruit members who were either inactive, disillusioned, or who seemed to share beliefs and motivations for participation I had not previously encountered on the ground.

The second step in this process was to produce an interview schedule. Whilst my interview conversations gathered around a number of relatively unrestrictive themes – ‘without imposing much structure on the interaction’ (Davies 1999, 94; see also Crang and Cook 2007) – I developed five ‘grand tour’ themes using insights from my field-diary as prompts (following McCracken 1988). These focused on: a) type and extent of involvement, b) motivations and triggers of involvement, c) the critical significance of the moment of crisis, d) impacts of the alternative economy on everyday practices, and e) evaluations and reflections on the movements (see Appendix 2 – interview schedule). While I referred back to the same interview protocol with all interviewees, I seldom stuck to it. Instead, I engaged in conversations on a number of further and/or complementary issues – being informed from preparatory mining of my field-diary (see Appendix 3 – exemplifying interview extract).

Interviews were undertaken at the convenience of the interviewee. Most were undertaken in familiar settings – including homes or coffee shops where members of the movements frequented. All interviewees were asked if they were willing to be digitally recorded. The interviews that were recorded were transcribed using some standard conventions. On some occasions, the interview was combined with other tasks, including the trading of goods and services, and formed more of an ‘ethnographic’ conversation than a sit-down interview. The length also varied: some interviews were extensive (up to 2.5 hours) while some were short (30 minutes or less) and focused on a specific issue. I stopped conducting interviews when the same themes reappeared persistently – thus leading me to feel that I had reached ‘theoretical saturation’ (Strauss 1987). In total, I conducted 57 interviews (see Table 3.9) and a number of follow-ups where

I felt there was a need for further discussion.

Table 3.9: Overview of coordinator interviews (All names are pseudonyms)

	Holargos-Papagos time-bank	Athens time-bank	Votsalo LETS
Coordinators	Hypatia Neokleous (20/05/14; 13/12/14)	Hera Papa (21/05/14; 30/11/14)	Lysistrata Varnavas (23/07/14; 19/11/14)
	Leontios Agathonos (02/10/14; 23/12/14)	Aristotle Giannakakis (21/05/14; 14/12/14)	Pandora Kyriakopoulos (19/06/14; 22/12/14)
	Kallisto Styli (11/09/14)	Cleitus Monos (19/10/14)	Roxane Kitsou (01/08/14; 12/11/14)
	Agape Stavridi (16/10/14)	Euphoria Stamati (03/11/2014; 10/12/2014)	Alexanda Palaiologou (01/08/2014; 21/10/14)
	Isidora Aggelou (17/10/14)	Eirene Vathou (11/11/14)	Sappho Vagianas (23/12/14)
	Eutychia Vera (22/10/14)		Sophia Nikita (20/12/14)
	Euthalia Katsarou (23/10/14; 01/12/14)		
Eudocia Neou (05/12/14)			
Non-core members	Nike Rasouli (11/10/14; 27/12/14)	Eugenius Chronopoulos (15/09/14)	Solon Theodorakis (12/06/14; 30/09/14)
	Alexandra Andreou (08/09/14)	Dion Bogdanos (16/09/14)	Thalia Kalfagianni (10/06/14; 17/12/14)
	Menodora Dikaiou (10/10/14; 15/12/14)	Isidora Tsolaki (16/09/14; 22/11/14)	Zoe Rizopoulou (27/10/14)
	Nymphodora Stai (17/10/14)	Merope Filippou (15/12/14)	Gaiana Koutalianou (28/10/14)
	Phoibe Droumas (18/10/14)	Hector Mikros (15/12/14)	Theodora Petrou (28/10/14)
	Rhode Kaplanis (19/10/14)	Helena Markeze (16/12/14)	Eupraxia Baldazi (01/11/14)
	Timothea Demou (20/10/14)	Demetra Iskra (11/11/14)	Aikaterine Andreou (09/09/14; 18/12/14)
	Erriketi Drakos (20/10/14)	Kallisto Kosta (12/11/14)	Anastasia Kalogerakou (05/11/14)
	Xenia Spyraiki (08/12/14)		
Agnes Zilfidou (08/12/14)			
Inactive members	Antigoni Savva (11/12/14)	Lycurgus Dimou (29/09/14)	Chloe Menoikou (01/10/14; 22/10/14)
	Apollonios Boulas (13/12/14)	Helectra Nikaki (01/12/14)	Chrysantos Vorgias (29/11/2014)
	Artemis Aggeli (15/12/14)	Myrrine Kalas (01/11/14; 02/12/14)	Euvanthe Demas (29/11/14; 28/12/14)
	Anthousa Isidorou (10/10/14; 27/12/14)	Myron Kazis (03/12/14)	Demetrius Rodopoulos (02/11/14)

3.4.2 Questionnaire survey

Whilst both participant observation and semi-structured interviews constituted the backbone of this research, a survey was also administered in an attempt to develop a better understanding of activist praxis – particularly with regards to members of the three movements I had not encountered in the *field*. Such surveys have been widely criticised on a number of grounds – most relevant of which is their incapacity to study everyday life as it unfolds (Popper 2004). For they are prone to recording distorted opinions and are inappropriate when understanding human beings and their actions – turning a blind eye to contextual influences, subjective discourses and meanings and, generally, to the complexity of everyday life (e.g. Popper 2004). Indeed, as Modell (2009) highlights, the statistical techniques usually associated with surveys can rarely provide more than surface depictions. For they are incapable of providing causal explanations in keeping with critical realism: they may provide statistically significant insights into what people think and do, but they cannot account for the messy processes of enacting or contesting social practices of interest here (Sayer 2000; 2004).

Nonetheless, questionnaire surveys have been implemented in either ethnographic studies or in research on social practices. Here, however, a survey was not used as an instrument to triangulate and validate the ethnographic results (Schensul et al. 1999, ch.8), or as a primary method for developing partial maps of social practices (McGillivray et al. 2005). Instead, a questionnaire survey was implemented in a coupled ‘exploratory’ and ‘explanatory’ design (Ayoub et al. 2014, 69): the results obtained were both used after an initial phase of qualitative exploration, as well as in attempting to further inform the core qualitative data collection respectively. On the one hand, a self-administered questionnaire survey was used as a means of gaining further insights into aspects of participation in community currency movements – including descriptive metrics of the levels of trading activity and participation in collective movement activities that would help in the thick description of everyday activism. These help: a)

construct a more detailed narrative of the extent to which members become involved in and adopt alternative practices, and b) overcome many of the challenges of having to rely on unreliable online trading platforms which frequently crashed, provided false statistical data, or were simply outdated in that a number of members routinely forgot to log their trades.

On the other hand, however, the questionnaire survey was also used to inform sampling. Over the first months of my field study I realised that I was developing a monolithic account of each community currency movement as I primarily came across homogeneous clusters of people and only occasionally encountered activists with opposing or alternative understandings, values and backgrounds. I was, thus, eager to explore whether different kinds of activists and activist practices remained hidden and, subsequently, to try to find ways of gaining rich ethnographic or interview data from such members. This is precisely why: a) the final section of the questionnaire survey invited participants to an in-depth interview, and b) I became invested in carrying-out exchanges with members other than those encountered in the field as a means of gaining insights into their trading practices and dispositions.

At core, the questionnaire survey enabled access to members of the respective movements I did not come across while in the field. For in preparing for my data collection and over the course of my field study I encountered a difficulty that has troubled many researchers: studying social movement activists not encountered in situ. Indeed, McAdam (1986) notes that there is a real risk of missing out many activists who are active in the movement of interest but do not partake in organisation activities. This is particularly important when dealing with community currency movements as members are being invited to practise activism by consuming and living despite-yet-beyond capitalism in their everyday lives rather than through organised collective struggles. Furthermore, from the onset of my research, I was well aware of the large number of non-active members in community currency movements. As such, in exploring whether it is possible to adopt

an unorthodox *habitus* and praxis despite-yet-beyond capitalism, I felt that these non-active and/or non-present participants would offer invaluable insights into the reasons preventing engagement in the alternative economy: Were they inactive because of disillusionment with their respective movements and the alternative economy? Might other life circumstances exercise a limiting influence on their activism?

Specifically the electronically administered surveys (see Appendix 4) distributed to all members of the movements via respective mailing lists through the ‘Qualtrics’ platform included 17 questions covering all themes relevant to engagement in a community currency movement and non-capitalist practices – including, but not limited, to motivations and drivers of involvement, extent of involvement and outcomes of this activism. Table 3.10 details the core research themes partially explored through this survey.

Table 3.10: Questionnaire survey themes (see Appendix 4)

	Item	Question
i.	Items about the members that would help me locate them in a wider social context (i.e. gender, age, socio-economic status, political profile and activist biographies).	3.1–3.5
ii.	Items to map members’ dispositions to, motivations and views of everyday activism in order to develop a partial map of their <i>habiti</i> .	2.1, 2.2, 3.4
iii.	Items to map some notion of <i>field</i> by gaining further insights into members’ sense of and dispositions in relation to the capitalist field in crisis and the emerging social movement field – especially with regards to the core concern of whether there was <i>doxic</i> faith in the alternative economy and whether non-participation was an outcome of disillusionment.	2.1, 2.2, 2.4
iv.	Items to map some notion of <i>capital</i> : how the crisis had affected their capital and the extent to which the alternative economy provided alternative forms of <i>capital</i>	2.1, 2.2, 2.3
v.	Items to map type and level of involvement, focusing on factors impeding involvement and trading – particularly with regards to whether alternative economic practices are a misfit in a capitalist <i>field</i> .	1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6

In designing, administering, circulating and collating data from these questionnaire surveys, I followed standard protocols (e.g. de Vaus 2014), paying particular attention to:

- i. Ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation;
- ii. Creating a simple and visually appealing format;
- iii. Piloting the survey on a number of members I was particularly close to;
- iv. Designing a user-friendly questionnaire that could be completed in circa 15 minutes by ticking selections and indicating opinions on Likert-scales;
- v. Including a series of open-ended questions requesting textual responses and, thus, allowing respondents to detail, qualify and/or justify their personal experiences and dispositions;
- vi. Implementing means of enhancing response rates through frequent reminders.

3.5 Data analysis

Having collected a plethora of data from either interviews, surveys or through participant observation, the final stage of my research included analysis of the data. This was, undeniably, a challenging feat. For on leaving the research field, I was faced with 348 completed questionnaire surveys, a 756-page field-diary of digitised participant observation notes, and almost 80 hours of interview recordings that were subsequently transcribed (in Greek, with extracts translated verbatim whenever necessary)¹⁵. This presented me with an overwhelming array of data to analyse. As the following paragraphs show, I used a variety of analytical approaches to achieve this.

As already suggested, preliminary analysis occurred in the process of collecting a large portion of the data. For given my fluency in Greek and my

¹⁵ The exemplifying quotations included in the empirical chapters of this thesis to corroborate my claims and analyses may occasionally appear overtly articulate, well-structured or pre-rehearsed. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that: a) certain terms or phrases that would not normally appear in speech in English are commonplace in Greek, and b) the moment of crisis is also a moment of profound questioning of otherwise unquestioned norms of life (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Cordero 2016; Noys 2011) – something that has most definitely been captured in both my interview transcripts and in field-diary entries.

Greek ethnic background, I could easily manage both recording data in my field-diary and simultaneously reflecting on them – having to spare little effort to understand what activists were talking about, their mannerisms and body language. My field-diary from participant observation and interviews was, thus, a rich yet messy depository of theoretical asides and analytical ideas developed and contested whilst collecting the data – both during participant observation and interviews. From the onset of my study, initial themes began emerging, including both sociologically constructed and in-vivo codes – the latter being ‘taken from or derived directly from the language of the substantive field: essentially the terms used by actors in that field themselves’, and the former ‘based on a combination of the researcher’s scholarly knowledge and knowledge of the substantive field under study’ (Strauss 1987, 33-4).

Thus, while coding is intended to avoid the ‘temptation of jumping to premature conclusions’, in reality it was very difficult to consider the data ‘without simultaneously reflecting on the theoretical premises or conceptual issues that led one to undertake the research’ (Jackson 2001, 202). However, I contend that this did not play out at the detriment of uncovering the social movement cosmos from the perspective of their activists (see Brem-Wilson 2014, 120). For I argue that my relative theoretical openness and the provisional nature of the emerging themes ensured that I could still capture the knowledge and experiences of the respective movements without risking the imposition of ‘strictures’ (see Chesters 2012; Graeber 2009; Casas-Cortes et al. 2008).

Nonetheless, while all themes were open to change in place of seeking to impose certain theoretical perspectives, these emerging codes and ideas ultimately influenced the ways in which I observed everyday activism and interviewed members of the movements respectively. Over the months, it became apparent that these annotations or areas of interest could be grouped and given codes. This was the start of an initial basic coding, whereby provisional codes ‘reflect emerging ideas [...], help the

researcher examine the data and ask analytic questions about it' (Eaves 2001, 657). As such, in working towards supervisory meetings, and through discussions with my supervisory team, other colleagues, or even with community currency activists themselves, I periodically drafted 'theoretical memos' exploring 'ideas about the data, codes, categories or themes' (Eaves 2001, 659; see also Strauss 1987).

In so doing, I achieved three significant advancements towards the construction of a cohesive thesis narrative. First, in creating a depository of key issues that were emerging and how they related to the literature, this exploratory thematic analysis informed a funnelling process (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) whereby the most relevant theoretical ideas were taken forward and ideas were linked to form a coherent whole making sense of the detailed yet unstructured field data. Specifically, at this early stage, the most important observation was how the three community currency movements were internally heterogeneous – implicating that the alternative economy was not practiced in different ways from movement to movement but, rather, between individuals who appeared to have heterogeneous dispositions. This meant that, from this point onwards, I was confident that looking for similarities and differences between the movements was inappropriate – focusing instead on practices and how such political distinction exercises an influence on them.

Second, these emerging themes enabled me to start placing the various pieces of the puzzle together – considering the narrative that was emerging from data collected through the variety of data collection techniques employed (following Erzberger and Kelle 2003, 461). Specifically, this provisional analysis informed my application and understanding of standard descriptive statistics to the surveys that were returned to me. For the hybrid structure of the survey (including both multiple choice and open-ended questions) provided flexibility to adopt a more qualitative analytical approach that spoke directly to the thematic analysis of participant observation and interview data. At core, I looked for the recurrence of

certain key themes derived from my field-diary – including, inter alia: limitation of alternative *capital*, anti-capitalist dispositions, opportunistic motivations, misfit with capitalist mainstream, etc. Subsequently, looking at how these issues mapped onto the broader practice nexuses of the alternative economy, and combining them in groups, allowed the identification of high-level analytical themes – thus eliciting a narrative that was not strictly prescribed by the design of the survey questions and that could complement findings from interviews and participant observation. In so doing, I was informed by claims around the incompatibility of statistical models and analyses with a critical realist research philosophy (e.g. Cook and Crang, 1995; Dwyer and Limb 2001, 6) – despite the fact that the 348 complete questionnaires that were returned ensured that the samples from across the three community currency movements were large enough to ensure a relatively high degree of statistical significance (see Table 3.11).

Table 3.11: Questionnaire samples

Alternative currency movement	Population size			Respondents			Statistical significance		
	Total	Active	Inactive	Total	Active	Inactive	Aggregate	Active members	Inactive members
Holargos-Papagos time-bank	78	28	50	46	28	18	95% (ME: ±9%)	>99% (ME: ±0%)	90% (ME: ±11%)
Athens time-bank	2420	240	2180	244	130	114	95% (ME: ±4%)	90% (ME: ±6%)	90% (ME: ±8%)
Votsalo LETS	81	24	57	58	18	40	95% (ME: ±7%)	90% (ME: ±10%)	90% (ME: ±7%)

Third, and finally, embarking on this provisional analysis ensured that my return to the academy was a relatively smooth process. For I returned with considerably more than a vague idea of how I should approach the vast amount of data collected. My experience concurs with Lofland's (2004, 234)

suggestion that tentative pieces provide a ‘foundation’ for systematic analysis. For as sub-section 3.5.2 goes on to detail, my systematic data analysis upon returning to the academy was, largely, about ‘working out analytic themes that already exist[ed]’ (ibid.) in a provisional state.

3.5.1 Coding and making sense of the data

Upon returning to the academy, and having completed all transcript, the digitisation of my field-diary from participant observation, and my provisional thematic analysis of the findings from the questionnaire survey, I turned to the systematic coding of my participant observation notes and interview transcripts using ‘NVivo 10.0’ – combining grounded theory (following Charmaz 2006) and ‘thematic narrative analysis’ (Riessman 2008, 53). While I tried to let the data speak for itself (following Charmaz 2006), I coded in ways that also spoke to the literature and the broad mental maps I was developing (i.e. a process of etic coding (Strauss 1987; Crang 1997)). In so doing, I tried to strike a balance between paying close attention to the data and organising it ways that would support a theoretically informed narrative of crisis community currency activism – thus going beyond the participant’s own understandings to capture the broader processes at play (following Halkier 2001). This implicated a more creative approach to data analysis whereby I tried to make sense of the data by linking parts to the whole, rather than simply tidying up the data up into discrete open codes.

The inception of these broader themes acted as a way of forming coherent nexuses of ideas (following Robson 2002) – ranging ‘from the mundane to the earth-shattering epiphany’ [...] after which nothing is the same’ (ibid. 488-9). Indeed, it was only at this moment that I reached ‘closure’ – realising that I was now capable of ‘giving [my] field experience the shaping form of the narrative’ (Baszanger and Dodier 2004, 21). I came to realise that the thematic codes I was uncovering spoke directly to Bourdieu’s (e.g. 1977; 2000) theorisation of social practices – thus revealing

how the under-theorised accounts of Holloway (2010) and other students of everyday (crisis) activism were too weak to narrate in full detail and analytical rigour what was going on.

Meanwhile, a theme around political distinction became prominent. From early on in my data collection I realised that the main differences in the way that the alternative economy was being practiced did not relate to which movement I was considering but, rather, to the fact that the three community currency movements were internally heterogeneous. I began to understand that members with different ideological backgrounds engaged in the alternative economy in distinctly different ways. I thus felt that by breaking-up the data from either interviews or from participant observation in thematic categories without annotating the names of members I would be missing the important dimension of political distinction between individuals. The data analysis therefore also involved a great deal of reading 'across' the data for individual members to develop over-arching themes capturing the dispositions of individual members.

Analysis of this set of data was undertaken by first creating a 'discursive map' in order to 'establish links and tensions between chunks of talk' (Kneale 2001, 143). Such a system facilitated 'a deeper understanding of the interviewee's thinking, as every comment is thought about, noted and categorised' (Bedford 1999, 77). Strauss suggests that such diagrams 'work wonders' in enabling novice researchers to get the gist of their data (1987, 149). Indeed, I found that by comparing my diagrams on conjunction with returning to and re-evaluating my theoretical memos, I could better conceptualise the data and identify the major categories.

Furthermore, I started using the 'matrix approach' to thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994) (see Table 3.12 overleaf). Specifically, for each individual, a matrix was developed to summarise interview and other data from participant observation related to dispositions and (political) biography in a form of in-vivo thematic coding (Cope 2003) –

inviting activist validation where possible. Once the matrix had been populated, it was possible to read ‘down’ to get a summary of the whole dataset for a particular respondent or ‘across’ to explore the different ways in which respondents addressed specific topic areas. This ‘tactic’ permitted ‘source triangulation’ that drew out key themes, commonalities and differences between respondents and allowed the data to ‘speak’ (Miles and Huberman 1994). In so doing, four distinct, yet partially overlapping identity tags were developed and assigned to each individual – namely Anarchist, Humaniser, Instrumentalist and Reformer. Subsequently, by assigning this code to each individual and grouping the relevant data accordingly, I was then able to trace back the involvement of each type of member and identify their distinct practices.

Table 3.12: Simplified extract from activist ‘master matrix’

Activist	Pandora (Votsalo core member)	Lycurgus (Athens time-bank non-core member)
Activist ID	(Nouveau) Anarchist	Instrumentalist
Triggers of involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material need/ unmade practices - Realisation of diverse economic possibility - Activist biography and pre-dispositions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material need/ unmade practices - Realisation of diverse economic possibility - Opportunistic lifestyle and pre-dispositions
Critical discourse in the wake of the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disillusioned with the politics-of-demand-making - Deeply anti-statist - Unmaking the unquestioned leftist nomos regarding the necessity to abolish money - Appreciating the possibility of enacting cooperative economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subordinating to symbolic power of capitalism/ austerity - Challenging hedonism - Accepting a new civic role to substitute a failing mainstream in dealing with the crisis - Appreciating the possibility of alternative economies
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heavily involved in movement management - Management situated within a broad framework of prefiguration - Trading practices as a small-scale prefiguration of a hoped-for future of emancipation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absent from movement management - Trading practices as a novel way of filling in the voids left behind by a mainstream in crisis
Meanings invested in trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An act of everyday activism - An act of living a hoped-for future at the present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A novel way of filling in the voids left behind by a mainstream in crisis
...

Ultimately though, the final stage of the analysis was what really helped create a narrative of community currency activism. Using post-it notes (following Hargreaves 2008) I attempted 'semiotic clustering' (Crang 2001, 226) to bring together overlapping categories and thematic codes from across the datasets. By continuously exploring and (re)sorting these notes, I developed analytical meta-categories that reflected Bourdieu's conceptual elements and, ultimately, developed an 'operational diagram' (Strauss 1987, 149). As shown in Fig.3.8, this was a coherent narrative of everyday activism grouped around the meta-categories of: a) routinized (capitalist practices), b) rethought routines and practices, c) novel/ modified practices, d) contested practices, and e) political distinction. Each of these meta-categories is then further sub-divided in mid-level categories. For instance, 'Novel Practices' breaks down into 'Emerging *Habitus*', 'Novel *Capital*' and 'Heterotopia (*field(s)* of non-capitalist praxis)' – i.e. the constituent components of practices according to Bourdieu (1977; 1984). Finally, each of these consists of the individual coded themes themselves.

Crucially, in spite of the sociological jargon shaping this narrative, in developing these analytical themes I did not slip into an "ivory towers" conception of the academy – co-producing instead the narrative with activists in place of devaluing their knowledge (following Gillan et al. 2012). In making the most of my Greek background, I continuously shared my emerging ideas in an accessible language with a number of activists and sought their input which was occasionally pivotal in shaping the final thesis narrative. For instance, many activists I spoke with were adamant about not denying the future potentiality of their movements – in spite of a horde of barriers to action. Hence, they played a pivotal role in helping develop the concept of impossible practices that could be made possible sometime in the future in light of activist commitment to timely "*field-work*" (see Fig 3.8 – especially themes around 'hope/future perspective' and 'knowledge practices').

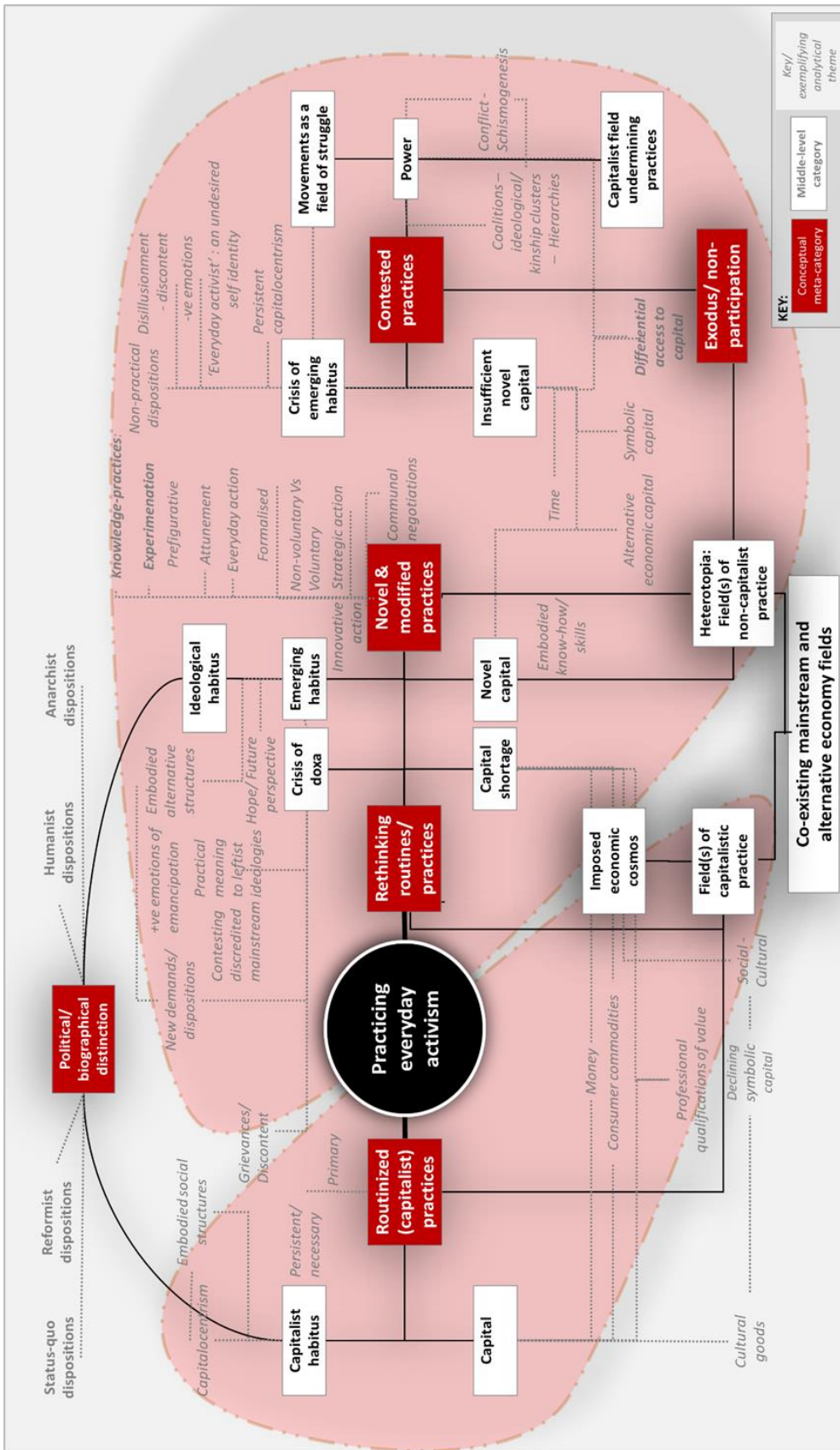


Figure 3.8: Computerised and simplified operational diagram

In short, this account highlights how my approach to analysis was simultaneously rigorous and systematic, as well as fuzzy, untidy, creative and collaborative (e.g. following Riessman's 2008; Gillan, Pickerill et al. 2012). While I am sure that this is not the only possible interpretation of my data (following Strauss 1987, 11), I hope it supports an insightful and coherent narrative of alternative economic activism.

Yet the practicalities of conducting research on crisis community currency activism do not only concern the steps followed in trying to produce an academically rigorous exploration of the ongoing Greek crisis as an opportunity for social change. Rather, this research was also informed by a series of further considerations that are pivotal in trying to produce research that is not only scholarly significant, but also ethical. Section 3.6 thus details the ethical considerations underlying the scholarly exploration documented in this thesis.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Alongside being informed by methodological and conceptual protocols, this research was also informed by necessary ethical considerations (cf. Kelly and Ali 2004). On the one hand, this included adopting commonplace ethical protocols.¹⁷ To begin with, I was overt about the focus and scope of my research from the onset by: a) securing informed consent, and b) discussing my evolving ideas and reminding activists about my research and my developing focus (following DeLyser 2001). Furthermore, I followed the scholarly convention (see Bell and Newby 1975, 79) of using pseudonyms throughout to ensure that individual activists are not recognisable. Moreover, I built relationships in which evenly distributed power dynamics were in place. For instance, I adopted an informal conversation style in interviews: a) allowing the participants to choose a

¹⁷ See Appendix 5: Consent and release forms

familiar and comfortable location, b) reminding them that they could freely choose to terminate the interview at any time, and c) empowering my research informants by being courteous and by focusing in detail on what they were saying and asking them impromptu questions around their personal narratives and opinions (following Riessman 2008, 24).

On the other hand, however, in adopting an academic-activist stance, the ethical concerns informing this thesis are 'about much more than bureaucratic checklists' (Gillan, Pickerill et al. 2012, 139), and are greatly influenced by Milan's (2014) tips for ethical research design and fieldwork in social movement research. First, having solely authored the final thesis this raises ethical dilemmas with regards to ownership. As Routledge (1996, 402) postulates, there is 'a gap between the time of solidarity and the time of writing': the 'former is marked by docility and gratitude toward one's hosts, while the latter reveals the institutional affiliations, and the intellectual, professional, and financial profit for which this hospitality is objectively the means' (ibid.). In writing this thesis I essentially reproduced this dichotomy. Nonetheless, my primary collaborative strategy involved maintaining communication with my fellow activists – incessantly encouraging input into my research process and analyses and 'respondent validation' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This created a multidimensional conversation enabling me to delve deeper into particular aspects of everyday activism that remained vague and to ensure that certain views and events were accurately recorded (following ibid.).

Second, a militant or activist position involves an 'ethics of struggle' (Routledge 1996). I have looked to active engagement in the community currency movements as a vehicle for [...] solidarity with resisting or struggling "others" (Chatterton et al. 2007). For me this has meant a focus on participation and action through acts associated with mutual-aid rather than solely following a research agenda. This often meant taking on roles and responsibilities that were closely associated with academic work, workshop facilitating and advocacy, but often roles were unrelated but

more central to the movement dynamics. Therefore, a subtle ethical balance was found between inviting activist input in my research project and being attentive to and respectful of the pressures, commitments and demands of community currency activism. In so doing, I followed Routledge (2004, 86) and Maxey (1999) who suggest that ethics in ethnographic research can only be achieved through reciprocity, solidarity and empathy.

Third, there was an impetus to perform research that was productive to the groups (following Bevington and Dixon 2005; Juris 2007). By focusing on the mundanity of daily practices, I was at the unique position of developing an understanding of both the challenges and success-stories of everyday activism and, subsequently, felt that my research could make an impact beyond academia. As such, I was committed to conveying research findings in accessible and meaningful ways. While in Athens I existed in a 'space of betweenness' (Katz; in Aitken 2001, 79): my academic activism was not only shaping my academic work but also social movement practice (following Routledge 2004). For instance, I transformed into the "mouthpiece" of individual members, communicating with the movement assemblies and/or coordinators what seems to work and what does not – thus making my findings part of an activist discussion on how non-capitalist practices might be supported. Finally, my practical and moral commitments to my participants and to the alternative economy in general, prevent me from simply exploiting activists through 'hit and run' fieldwork that is of little benefit to activists on the ground (see Delyser 2001). For upon completing this research project, I will make every effort to avoid the paradox of producing a piece of insider activist research that never escapes a dusty library shelf. Not only does my conclusion include some practical recommendations for everyday activism, but I also intend to hold dissemination workshops, and to communicate my research findings into accessible formats and distribute them via mailing lists, blog-posts and at activist gatherings.

At core, this account highlights how I attempted to conduct a

thoroughly ethical research. Nonetheless, the realities of conducting research on the ground were often far from ideal. First, in reflecting Bell and Newby's (1975, 79) assertion that anonymity 'is very difficult to achieve' in practice, (ibid.), I understand that pseudonyms may not be entirely effective in preventing some members from recognising what they or their fellows have said. For only findings gathered through the questionnaire survey can ensure full anonymity. Second, whilst I was overt about my research, "blurry" ethnography is what actually took place on the ground. For: a) it proved unrealistic to incessantly seek formal consent, and b) the balance between overt and covert continuously shifted (see Norris 1993) – inevitably collecting different kinds of data to those envisioned initially as research themes emerged organically (following Parr 2001; Fountain 1993).

Perhaps most importantly, my close proximity with activists raises the final dilemma of how critical one can be without undermining the movements studied. Routledge's (2004, 88) advice for activist researchers is that 'we cannot let our ethical dilemmas immobilize us' or 'prevent us from conducting research that can make very real contributions to movement progress'. Norris (1993) describes this as situational ethics whereby the researcher must make ethical choices over the course of the project according to context – guided by his/her knowledge of the activist communities studied and his/her moral and scholarly commitments (ibid.). I hope and believe that the empirical chapters and conclusions that follow will, indeed, remain loyal to this academic-activist impetus of being constructively critical.

3.7 Concluding remarks

The accounts presented in Sections 3.1-3.6 above collectively paint the picture of a research project unfolding through an intricate meshwork of good intentions, abstract and idealised research plans and inevitable practical challenges and setbacks. Nonetheless, this is not to say that the

accounts that follow lack in scientific rigour. Baxter and Eyles (1997, 506) suggest that rigour is commonly understood to mean the 'satisfaction of the conventional criteria of validity, reliability and objectivity within quantitative research.' They argue that in order for qualitative research to stand-up to evaluation and to be deemed rigorous, there is a need for transparent criteria against which the research can be measured. Hence, following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for rigorous scientific research, Table 3.13 overleaf indicates those strategies that have been adopted in this research.

Specifically, as summarised through Table 3.13, a number of strategies have been adopted – including recording data mechanically, maintaining a research journal, etc. Arguably, though, the most important strategies of scientific rigour informing the research documented in this thesis have been my attempt to secure member validation where possible and to provide a thick description of the practices of the alternative economy with traceable links to my field-notes. In so doing, my aim has not been to present a conceptually tidy research report that will convince everyone of either its scientific rigour or of the value of the arguments raised, but instead to convey the complexity and multi-faceted nature of being and doing despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity politics – representing activist experiences as faithfully as possible.

Whilst I would argue that there is a complexity, richness and depth to this particular inquiry and the subsequent narrative presented, I am also conscious that it is still only one interpretation of events and one that remains partial. Hence, I fully acknowledge that the account of community currency activism documented in the following chapters fails to meet the criterion of disciplined subjectivity (see Table 3.13). Nonetheless, rather than deny my personal influence upon the research, I accept that researchers 'are part of the social events and processes we observe and help to narrate' (Atkinson and Coffey 2003, 120) – how the accounts that follow constitute, at core, my personal and subjective 'bricolage' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) or 'translation' (Churchill 2005) of various stories of crisis

community currency activism.

Table 3.13: Criteria for evaluating qualitative research and my approach to carrying-out a scientifically rigorous research (following Lincoln & Guba 1985)

Criteria	Definition	Strategies to satisfy criteria
Credibility	Faithful depiction of the research field	Purposeful sampling; Prolonged engagement; Persistent observation; Member checking; Triangulation; Disciplined subjectivity; Peer debriefing; Negative case analysis; Referential adequacy
Transferability	Findings that can hold up to scrutiny within contexts outside the research focus	Purposeful sampling; Thick description
Dependability	Minimisation of idiosyncratic interpretations	Mechanically recorded data; Participant researchers; Peer examination; Triangulation; Inquiry audit; Low inference descriptors; Multiple researchers
Confirmability	Extent to which researcher biases affect subsequent explanations	Thick description; Journal/ notebook; Autobiography; Audit trail products

**Strategies for scientific rigour adopted in this study appear in bold red*

In demystifying the inevitable subjectivity informing the empirical accounts that follow, I draw on Davies (1999, 21) assertion that a critical realist stance ‘requires a continuing reflexive awareness [...] without allowing such awareness to blind us to the existence of a reality beyond ourselves which provides a legitimate basis for the production and critique of theoretical abstraction’. Consciously acknowledging how our position, internalised structures and beliefs distort or prejudice our objectivity in scientific research (Bourdieu 2000). There is, however, a catch: of falling into the trap of producing discussions ‘that seem to be more about the ethnographer than the people being studied’ (Davies 1999, 16-7). I attempt to stay of the right side of the ‘line between reflexivity as rigorous contextualization of qualitative data and narcissistic, emotionally motivate navel gazing’ (Ley and Mountz 2001, 245).

Three key sources of possible bias influencing the analyses that follow are worth noting in the interest of demystifying the research process informing this thesis. First, my decision and eventual success to go “native” whilst studying these movements have clearly influenced my analysis of community currency activism. For whilst Davies (1999, 193) asserts that leaving the research field involves ‘a degree of intellectual distancing from the minutiae of ethnographic observations in order to discern structures and develop theories’, this was exceptionally hard to achieve. Returning to the academy at the end of my fieldwork did not allow me to place intellectual and emotional distance between myself and the data I had gathered – finding it difficult to ‘have enough empathy/sympathy to understand the narratives of the research subjects, but not so much that I would get lost in their perspectives’ (Schiellerup 2005, 125). For in becoming a full member of the respective movements I was faced with the problem of not being able to separate myself enough from the groups to gain a degree of objectivity (Churchill 2005, 9). Ultimately, though, my absence from the research site, the imposition of English as the principal language in data analysis and dissemination, and my re-immersion into the academic *field* and its rhythms and *habitus* and relevant scholarship on the topic of everyday (crisis) activism helped me gain *some* distance. I, thus, hope and believe that this has enabled me to produce an academically rigorous narrative of crisis community currency movements – ‘[u]nderstanding from the inside’ whilst ‘describing from the outside’ (Schiellerup 2005, 125).

Second, the research documented in this thesis is undeniably influenced by my own ethnic and ideological background that played a pivotal role in enabling me to conduct an insider ethnographic study. For, arguably, a foreign researcher – either partially competent in Greek or relying on an interpreter – would find it impossible to secure access, enjoy an insider status without disturbing the natural rhythms of community currency activism, or even to understand Greek culture and the inherently positive view that there is always a silver-lining to any cloud (following Churchill 2005; Gibb and Iglesias 2017). Most importantly, though, my

positionality as a Greek-Cypriot invested in challenging both claims around Greeks as lazy and corrupt individuals who are a burden to the Eurozone (see Knight 2013; Mylonas 2014) as well as discourses arguing that there-are-no-alternatives to capitalism and austerity, implicates a more sympathetic analysis of crisis community currency movements. Indeed, my research is, in multiple ways, the product of engaged scholarship for non-capitalist political ecologies: a) seeking to change our capitalocentric reading of the economy and of this moment of crisis by uncovering through textual representation actually-existing alternatives, and b) attempting to contribute towards the development and re-configuration of activist praxis on the ground (following Burke and Shear 2014; Juris 2007).

Third, and finally, I draw on Bourdieu's (2000, 99) contention that 'to each of the *fields* there corresponds a fundamental point of view on the world'. It is this unconscious of the *field* that must be interrogated to acknowledge my 'scholastic point of view' (Schirato & Webb 2003, 545). For each academic *field* produces its own research-influencing subjectivities: 'both a potential impediment and a condition (almost necessary) of the production of reflexive knowledge' (ibid.). Hence, my own academic upbringing at the University of East Anglia – and, specifically, my long immersion into the scholarly cosmos of social practice theory – is understood to have resulted in a theory-heavy narrative that sees social change as a complex process. For whilst I am ideologically invested in challenging capitalocentrism, my academic upbringing inevitably made me more critical with regards to inspiring assertions that social transformation is around the corner.

As a remedy to these sources of bias, I methodologically draw on ethnography, hoping that a thick description (Geertz 1973) will let the data speak for itself and only introduce theory to weave together my partial narrative. In so doing, I believe that only my tentatively optimistic discussions can raise a few eyebrows. For I aim to expose community currency practices 'without reducing their particularity' (ibid. 14). As a nexus

of case-studies – ‘an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context’ (Yin quoted in Robson, 2011, p. 136), the aim of the following three empirical chapters is to create a ‘virtual reality’ where ‘[r]eaders will have to discover their own path and truth inside the case’ (Flyvbjerg 2006, 238).

PART II: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

CRISIS COMMUNITY CURRENCY ACTIVISM IN ATHENS, GREECE

4 CRISIS COMMUNITY CURRENCIES: AN OUTCOME OF THE ONGOING CRISIS OR MANIFESTATIONS OF AN ENDURING *HABITUS*?

Chapter 2 suggested that Bourdieu's practice theory offers a superior lens through which to study everyday crisis activism than those currently used by "crisologists" or students of everyday activism. The next three chapters will begin to test these assertions with reference to the empirical data collected during my ethnography of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS. To start with, drawing on Bourdieu's work on the *habitus* and crisis circumstances that lead to the questioning of previously unquestioned norms (*doxa*) of life (e.g. 1977; 1984), this chapter deals with the first stage of the conceptual research model presented in Chapter 2 (see Fig.2.1). In so doing, it addresses the first question of this research:

Q.1: What drives everyday crisis activism?

In addressing this question, this chapter moves beyond existing scholarship on the moment of crisis and everyday activism that rarely offers much detail on what triggers everyday crisis activism. On the one hand, this chapter deals with the coupled ideas of crisis and critique (Cordero 2016) – exploring whether crisis community currency movements represent practical manifestations of 'crisis consciousness' (ibid. 72). It explores Cordero's (2016, 73) core assertion that post-crash critique preserves the 'crisis [...] as the moment of its own realisation' (Cordero 2016, 73) by culminating in the formation of 'projects of the will' (Arendt 1981, 192). On the other hand, however, the chapter breaks new ground for research on crisis activism by suggesting that factors other than disillusionment in the wake of crises also inform everyday crisis activism. For the chapter traces, in turn, engagement in community currency movements as the combined

outcome of: a) unmade everyday practices and a crisis of *doxa* (see Sections 4.1 and 4.2), and b) habitual predispositions informing rational choice to participate (see Section 4.3). Hence, informed by these empirical findings, Section 4.4 concludes this analysis by highlighting how this research can be read as a middle-ground empirical resolution to the ongoing debates of whether: a) the moments of crisis is an important conjuncture point (Cordero 2016), and b) Bourdieu's work can account for moments of crisis and the social change potential of individuals.

4.1 Crisis community currency movements: Practical manifestations of a crisis consciousness?

The moment of crisis is a moment of 'lifeworld pathologies' (Cordero 2016, 69). Yet, according to proliferating scholarship, it is also a critical turning point in human history – signifying a 'breach in meaning and established practices' (Cordero 2016, 1) and informing 'a micro-cosmos of evolution' (Morin 1993, 5; see also Holloway 2010, 8). Drawing on Bourdieu's social practice theory and, principally, on work focusing on times of crisis (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Wacquant 1989) as synthesized in the novel research model presented in Fig.2.1 (Chapter 2; especially Stage 1), I contend that this understanding around the interlinked issues of a departure and normalcy and struggles for emancipation is a guiding dynamic of crisis community currency activism on the ground. Specifically, in addressing the first research question around the drivers of community currency activism, this section details how the ongoing Greek economic crisis was the spark that ignited this type of everyday activism. Specifically, sub-section 4.1.1 argues that participation in community currency movements was a creative response to the experienced malaises of this crisis. Sub-section 4.1.2 then moves on to suggest that the inevitable questioning of previously unquestioned norms (*doxa*) (Bourdieu 1977) of life and a novel crisis consciousness (Cordero 2016) also informed activism.

4.1.1 Community currency activism: A response to a crisis of habit

Over the course of my ethnography I came into contact with groups of Athenians who collectively decry the departure from normalcy in their everyday lives in the wake of the crisis. For as Prince (1920, 20) indicatively asserts, during crises ‘old customs crumble, and instability rules.’ This claim is excellently corroborated and exemplified through the following excerpt from my participant observation field notes:

In leaving the assembly, I had a strong sense that the members were in a challenging state of trying to re-define their lives and their daily routines – ‘trying to adjust everything they did and to become accustomed to the new rhythms of recession-laden Greece’ as Thalia indicatively asserted. From this perspective, Lysistrata’s and Alexandra’s otherwise insignificant overheard discussion on whether to spend their few remaining euros on cigarettes or on chocolate from the nearby kiosk followed by Sophia’s comment that ‘this wouldn’t even be a matter of discussion prior to the crisis as you would just get both’ gained unlikely significance. For as Sophia commented, ‘this captured, somewhat as a symbol, the break from normality in the wake of the crisis – exemplifying how even the simplest of things and decisions are much harder to make nowadays’ (Votsalo general assembly – FD: 14/06/2014).¹⁹

Indeed, I came across a common activist claim uncovering the ‘lifeworld pathologies’ of an otherwise systemic crisis (Cordero 2016, 69):

Simply put, our lives were put on hold (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member)²⁰.

The crisis just rocked the boat of everyone’s life – pretty much everything has just capsized (Myron, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Who could have ever imagined that our lives – the way of living for the past decades – could be instantaneously overhauled (Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos

¹⁹ All excerpts annotated as field-diary entries (FD) concern digitised notes from participant observation in the alternative economic field.

²⁰ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from semi-structured personal interviews detailed and dated in Chapter 3.

time-bank core member).

Against this backdrop of social practices that are being repressed in the wake of the crisis (see Chatzidakis 2014), the activists I engaged with were in the search for lifelines that would enable the (re)production of social life. Specifically, as Fig.4.1 highlights, the large majority of activists encounters suggested that the need to obtain services or goods not afforded in the wake of the crisis was a key driver for their participation. Up to 81%, 70% and 80% of the members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS respectively indicate that their participation was driven, to a large extent, by material need. Furthermore, an additional 19%, 25% and 20% of the members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS were driven, to a considerable extent, to these movements by material need.

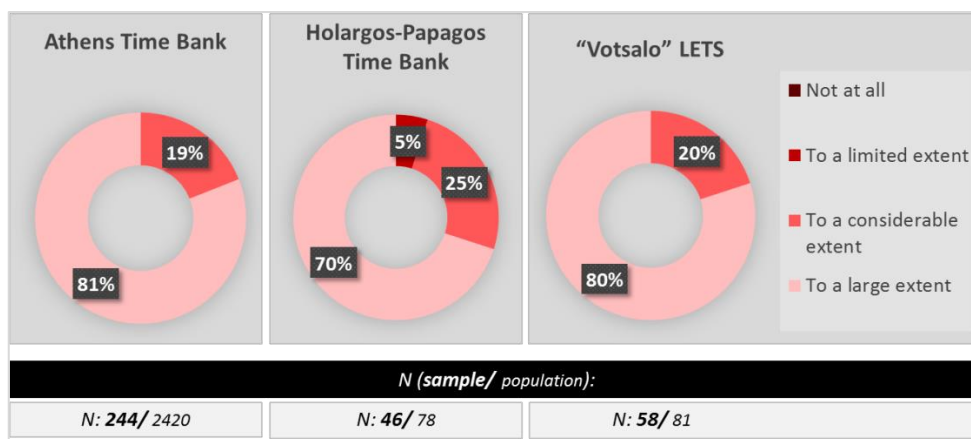


Figure 4.1: Extent to which (material) needs for exchange that cannot be met in the mainstream market acted as a driver of community currency activism

From this perspective, the alternative economy can, indeed, be treated as ‘another area of economic activity beyond the competitive economy that can complement employment and tackle unemployment and hardship’ (IMKO, 2012). Nonetheless, it is also important to note how the notion of crisis becomes an indicator of a new post-crash awareness capturing both the anxieties and discomforts of these activists but, also,

their emancipatory hopes and wishes (following Koselleck 2006, 360). Indeed, over the course of my ethnography I repeatedly uncovered an emancipatory discourse and ongoing discussions around destabilised capitalist practices and livelihood needs that could, in principle, be met through community currency activism. For instance, as I indicatively noted at the end of the first assembly of the Votsalo LETS I attended:

'There's an overarching sense of vibrancy, effervescence and hope. These activists are a far cry from images of Athenians as the hopeless victims of the crisis. For their widespread excitement, their commitment to put in a lot of hard work to organise their next public trading bazaar and, above everything else, their seemingly genuine hope that 'another world – another economy – is possible and in the making' as Pandora asserted, suggests that they have not fatalistically accepted their impoverishment in the wake of the crisis' (Votsalo general assembly – FD: 06/04/2014).

The following exemplifying quotations from a series of personal interviews testify to the veracity of my core understanding that the moment of crisis is simultaneously a moment of 'lifeworld pathologies' (Cordero 2016, 69) and unmade daily practices, as well as a moment of newly found hope in community currency movements:

You turn to these alternative currencies because they are the only, umm, the only currency you really have – because you are broke and unemployed... Because you have no one else to rely on, and because you can't just sit there – fatalistically waiting for a deus ex machina (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member).

So, I guess, it's the material need that came with the break from normality in the wake of the crisis as well as the hope of being able to live despite the crisis that really drove me to the Votsalo [LETS] (Aikaterine, Votsalo non-core member).

You have to think twice before doing anything [...]. You have to put it all down and think whether you can afford it – whether you would have to sacrifice something else... But, importantly, you also need to consider

whether other solutions and courses of action are possible – whether things like alternative currencies could act as a way out of unease (Pandora, Votsalo core member).

At their core, the exemplifying extracts cited above highlight a key issue around the unmaking of the unconscious during crises. In Bourdieu's (e.g. 1977) terms, we can make sense of this situation as a case whereby the *habitus* of many community currency activists had slipped-out of alignment with the objective goods they could secure in the economic *field* – meaning that many habitual forms of action were undermined and, thus, that rational choice had to take over (Wacquant 1989). As such, my ethnography was simultaneously an immersion into: a) a plethora of mundane everyday habits negatively affected by the crisis, and b) conscious deliberation informing community currency activism. For whilst people suddenly became fish-out-of-water (to paraphrase Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992)), they concurrently refused to fatalistically surrender to the new realities of the austere state.

For Bourdieu (e.g. 1977) it is the synchronisation of expectations with the objective reality of goods and capital that could be secured in the capitalist *field* that enables practices to unfold in an unconscious manner. Not surprisingly, then, the conscious realisation that money is an integral part of everything they did only came about when financial security was undermined. In a sense, the economic crisis meant that daily habits “re-materialised”. Indeed, many discussions I had and observed in the field revolved around money and the reliance of a host of mundane everyday practices on it. For activists often noted explicitly how surprised they were with their own selves in that their discussions were never money-centric in the past (e.g. FD: 10/07/2014; 23/09/2014). Hence, whilst the impacts of the crisis were diverse – reflecting the diverse availability of monetary and non-monetary capital between members of the movements – the following exemplifying extracts highlight exactly how these narratives are connected by the core realisation that money is the enabling *capital* for almost all, if

not all, practices – including, but not limited, to practice nexuses like socialising, consuming and DIY practices. For even when individuals were in possession of forms of *capital* other than money (e.g. social capital like friends and family that could act as support networks), it is only if one is in possession of the correct type of *capital* – namely money – that (s)he can effectively play the game. Subsequently, and as highlighted below, this meant that alternatives to legal tender suddenly gained traction as mechanisms that would allow the practical reproduction of everyday habits:

Consuming takes money, err... socialising with friends takes money, repairing that broken lock at your house takes money, driving the car takes money... It's in everything we do. [Pause] In its absence, we can't go about living in, um... "unthinking" manners: having money is taken for granted, and you only realise that your whole life is governed by its availability when there's no money available... [...] So that's, in a sense, why alternatives [to legal tender] are so critically important: they promise a way out of this, um..., "paralysis"... (Eirene, Athens time-bank core member).

Back in the day people lived in rural areas: they could grow stuff, they could just pick stuff off trees, they had friends and family nearby who could always step-in to help them... But in a large city like Athens, you, um..., you don't have access to land, you don't have social networks you can rely on. You can't grow your own food if you can't afford to buy it! [...] And, I guess, it's one of those things you only realise when you stop taking things for granted – money in this case. [...] So, alternative forms of money will, hopefully, help us, um..., take things for "granted" once more (Sophia, Votsalo core member).

These understandings collectively help provide a detailed response to the first research question around drivers of crisis community currency activism – uncovering a widespread claim around the need for the practical (re)production of life driving these movements. However, this can only ever constitute a partial response to the first research question. For the fact that many activists were able to instantaneously recognise community currencies as a viable alternative to legal tender is a paradox in a world

defined by the discursive hegemony of the capitalist monolith (e.g. Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). Indeed, the fact that community currency activists were able to “re-materialise” and to discursively reproduce daily practices that were unmade in the wake of the crisis suggests that these activists unexpectedly move beyond a typical line of thought that is abolitionist of alternatives to austerity as ‘irrational’ signifiers of leftist ‘populism’ (e.g. Mylonas 2014). Therefore: How was this possible? How were community currency activists able to develop this unorthodox appreciation of community currencies as a viable alternative to legal tender when community currency movements were but a very recent development in crisis-laden Athens? Sub-section 4.1.2 below explores these issues – aiming to uncover how realisation and acceptance of the destructive impact of the economic downturn on everyday practices subsequently culminates in the second key driver of community currency activism: activists being brought together by their unmaking of unquestioned myths (or *doxa* in Bourdieu’s (1977) terms) of life.

4.1.2 Community currency activism: An outcome of a ‘*doxic*’ crisis

The coupled impact of a destabilised *habitus* and an initial unconscious refusal to face the new realities of the economic field in the wake of the Greek economic crisis was dramatic. While Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) only spare a couple of short paragraphs to outline how people become ‘fish-out-of-water’ when encountering novel field conditions, my field-diary became a rich depository of extracts concerning individuals who outlined the dramatic emotional impact of this destabilisation of life-as-usual (e.g. FD: 15/07/2014; 16/12/2014). For instance, many activists shared with me narratives juxtaposing the ease of a matured *habitus* and post-crash unease:

Depression and anxiety became the new norm for a lot of us. It was just inevitable when someone simply pulled the carpet from under our feet

(Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

Knowing that you can go about living your life with no major obstacles, in your normal rhythms and in your normal routine puts you at ease. [Pause] When you lose that you can't help but feel, um... rather lost, rather, um... hopeless... (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member).

And yet in the midst of this unprecedented 'identity crisis' (Benhabib 1986; Habermas 1988; 1991), we also uncover the beginnings of a struggle for radical social transformation – as exemplified by the following field-diary excerpt:

People would come and go... Everyone having the right to participate and share views at any moment – each bringing different understandings and tacit knowledge on the table on how to stimulate further trading in the movement. [...] But, simultaneously, everyone was unified by the same desires and claims: to make this movement as successful as possible, to facilitate the realisation of livelihoods less dependent on euros, and to demonstrate, in practice, that they could still act against the crisis and austerity politics – persistently experimenting with alternatives against all odds (FD – Athens time-bank weekly meeting: 29/06/2014).

Specifically, in furthering the response to the first research question concerning drivers of everyday crisis activism, I contend that the effects of the economic crisis galvanised a citizenry willing to live despite-yet-beyond the failed mainstream. Drawing on Bourdieu (e.g. 1977), I explained in Chapter 2 that capitalist *doxa* represents the stability of the capitalist field – 'the universe of the undiscussed' (ibid.) that recedes in the wake of crises. Hence, I argue that crisis community currency movements are also the products of such a *doxic* crisis and, subsequently, crucibles of another doing. This boils down to the discursive unmaking of capitalist norms of life, and the subsequent emergence of critical discourses valuing alternative forms of economic activity (see necessary pre-conditions for community currency activism – Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.1).

For against a backdrop of fatalism in light of ‘the strange non-death of neoliberalism’ (Crouch 2011) in the wake of the ongoing crisis, I argue that the socio-economic disruptions brought about by the economic crisis gave rise to a critical consciousness vis-à-vis previously unquestioned norms of life that opened a window of opportunity for another, non-capitalist doing. For instance, as Lysistrata, core member of the Votsalo LETS, asserted in an assembly: *‘It was about time we stopped believing in those myths – facing or even creating our own realities!’* (Votsalo general assembly – FD: 19/07/2014). These ‘myths’ refer to a whole spectrum of unquestioned norms of capitalist *habiti* – including but not limited to reflections around the irrationality and the unworkability of a future-oriented *habitus* (e.g. borrowing money), and (neoliberal) capitalist norms and assumptions guiding everyday life practices and the broader system.

Most importantly, perhaps, community currency activists juxtapose a doctrine claiming that capitalism is the only game in town – that, allegedly, defined the everyday life of even the most radical anti-capitalist members prior to the outbreak of the crisis – and a discourse breaking away from capitalocentric *doxa* (see Gibson-Graham 2006). Specifically, in being asked to reflect on what drove them to community currency movements, most activists participating in my questionnaire survey suggested that, amongst others, the realisation of alternative economic possibility was a key driver of their activism. As Fig.4.2 suggests, a staggering 75% of members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and up to 80% of members of the Votsalo LETS, indicated that their involvement was driven, to a large extent, by this emancipatory realisation. Furthermore, 25% of members of the Athens time-bank, 20% of members of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank and 15% of members of the Votsalo LETS, suggest that their involvement was driven, to a considerable extent, by a realisation of diverse economic possibility.

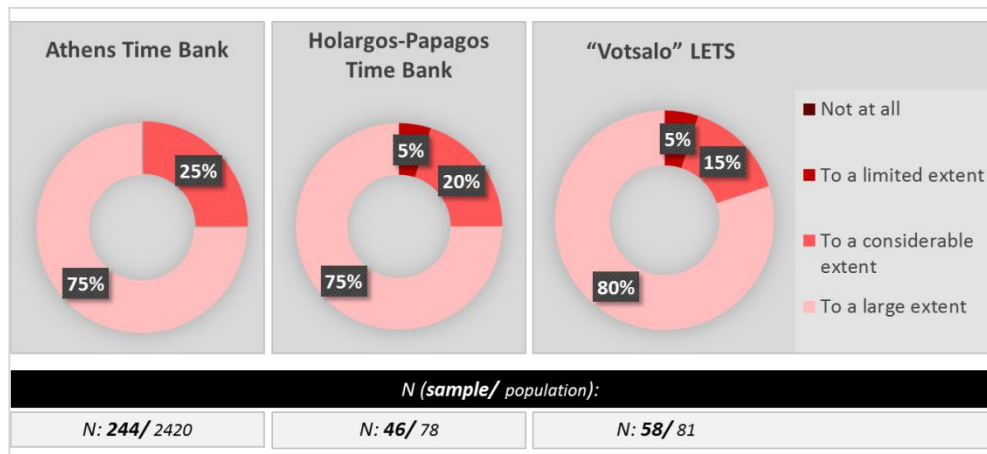


Figure 4.2: (Perceived) extent to which realisation of diverse economic possibility acted as a driver of community currency activism

Such claims are further corroborated by the discussions I had and observed. For, as exemplified below, the unavoidable exclusion from the mainstream market brought about by the economic crisis led to the recognition that alternative economic projects had to be pursued:

I never considered the possibility of not being part of the [mainstream] market. It's one of those things – those certainties of life. You just think that activism is something you do once you leave work – a weekend project. But the crisis made me realise that... Um... it made me think that, err... if the economy no longer addresses our needs, we might as well try and find innovative ways of living without the euro (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member, informal interview: 15/07/2014).

Activists, voluntary simplifiers, community currency movements: they are living proof that capitalism has not penetrated into all forms of social relations and organisation – that a different economy is possible. So we just thought to ourselves: 'Is there a reason why we couldn't do this here? Is there a reason to still hold on the myth of a mainstream economy and how we all need to be a part of it when we clearly cannot do so?' (Pandora, Votsalo core member).

Indeed, against what many community currency activists describe as 'a crisis of a society built around the myth that work is the only legitimate

point of access for income, status and rights' (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member – FD: 24/06/2014), they are driven by a post-crash discourse claiming that economic re-subjectification is possible – despite-yet-beyond the labour market. In the wake of the crisis everybody is understood to possess the agency, skills and non-monetary *capital* to receive from and contribute back to the community: an asset based understanding of subjectivity that breaks away from a series of capitalocentric discourses around the labour market and (capitalist) time (see Gibson-Graham 2007).

The following exemplifying extracts emphasize how many members of the three community currency movements have embarked on what Gibson-Graham (1996, 45) refer to as an 'overdeterminist strategy' of '[e]mptying capitalism of its universal attributes and [e]vacuating the essential and invariant logics that allow it hegemonise the economic and social terrain'. As such, crisis community currency activism reflects the core ethos of scholarship on everyday activism – with activists themselves drawing a sharp distinction between powerlessness in the mainstream market and an omnipresent 'resource' of 'expanded productivity' that 'can never be eclipsed or subordinated to any transcendent measure of power' on the other (Hardt and Negri 2009, 38; see also Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). For as most activists claimed:

They've taken our labour [market] power from us, but we still have skills and time that could be put to good use. [...] The crisis – paradoxically – makes you realise that you cannot be reduced to a "faceless unit" in the labour market (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

We used to think that the only way of making a living was by working. I'm still in work, but getting paid is far from certain, so this whole relationship has broken down. But, you know, it's also a time of realisation: we have skills and knowledge other people might need. [...] So if we can still provide things, why can't we also make a living out of this? (Eutychia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member)

Everyone says that they don't know what to offer, that they have nothing to

offer besides professional skills which are, likely, not that useful to anyone under the present economic circumstances. [...] But, you know what? The first thing I remember the others telling me is that everyone has something to offer. [Pause] And they were right (Hera, Athens time-bank core member)!

Thus, bearing in mind the manifold ways in which capitalist/capitalocentric *doxa* are challenged in the wake of the economic crisis, it is easy to conclude that there is considerable scope for viewing the moment of crisis as a social change opportunity. For as Holloway (2010) and Gibson-Graham (e.g. 1996; 2006) highlight, the first step in a struggle despite-yet-beyond capitalism is to break away from discursive enclosures (see also the necessary pre-conditions for community currency activism outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.1). From this perspective, post-crash activist critique and heterodox discourses represent ‘a virtual fracture which opens up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, that is, of possible transformation’ (Foucault 2000, 450).

This is, however, an oversimplified schema of reality. As such, in furthering my response to the first research question concerning the post-crash dynamics informing community currency activism, Section 4.2 will outline in more detail the unfolding crisis of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977) informing community currency activism to support a well-rounded response as to whether the crisis is an opportunity for social change.

4.2 Heterogeneous critical discourses in the wake of the crisis

In presenting the unfolding *doxic* crisis that followed the destabilisation of capitalist practices I have, thus far, only provided a big-picture overview. This misses out a critical element of Bourdieu’s (1977) conceptualisation of crises of *doxa* that became apparent through detailed data analysis and, thus, deserves attention when dealing with the first research question concerning the post-crash dynamics informing

community currency activism (see Fig.4.3). In particular, Bourdieu's (ibid.) conceptual schema puts forth a broad spectrum of lower to higher extents of critical questioning in the wake of crises. On the one end, a *heterodox* discourse critically deconstructs the prevailing *doxa* and aims to inform practices that do not abide to the previously unquestioned universe. On the other end, an *orthodox* discourse is less critical: whilst challenging certain assumptions, it tends to accept myths in practice. Whilst Section 4.1 has implicitly alluded to this dichotomy – presenting quotations that are variably critical of the mainstream – Section 4.2 will attempt to provide a more detailed account of the unfolding crisis of *doxa* – and, thus, to the first research question dealt with in this chapter.

In so doing, this section gradually builds towards an argument that critique in the era of economic downturn is multi-dimensional – something that is, most definitely, missed by most scholars linking ideas of crisis and critique (see Cordero 2016 for an overview). For a *doxic* crisis might have driven many Athenians to community currency movements, but adopting a traditional Marxist stance that would treat these post-crash movements as cauldrons of revolutionary change delivered by a unified proletariat (see O'Connor 1981; Korsh 1981; Derber 2015 for reviews) would be entirely inappropriate. Rather, this section aims to make clear that community currency activism only became possible because it signified different things to different people; because community currency movements resonated with a diverse set of discourses emerging in the wake of the crisis. In a genuine Zelizerian (2011) fashion, the findings do not only uncover the radical and incisive possibility of producing novel monies or of transforming various objects into monetary media through relational work. Rather, they also corroborate claims that distinct cultural codes can result in the proliferation of monies with internally heterogeneous meanings (ibid.).

Indeed, my ethnography uncovered how each and every community currency movement studied constituted an ideologically diverse milieu – thus partially unmaking my typological classification of Greek community

currency movements informing my case-study selection (see Chapter 3 – Section 3.2). This claim is substantiated by the following exemplifying field-diary excerpt:

In today's assembly the participants planned for their future activities by discussing what they would like to do and how future projects might help take the movement forward – increasing its size, number of trades, and potential social and economic impact. [...] These discussions validated what I was already suspecting: not everyone in the movement shared the radical values and aspirations of core members. Everyone was truly and genuinely critical of their past, and especially of their practices and faith in an economic system that could not really cater to their needs. But they were not all equally critical. [...] For instance some wanted a complete break from the capitalist mainstream and believed they could achieve it through the movement. But others simply saw community currencies as an expedient technology – accepting that they had little power in the face of global capitalist trends (FD – Votsalo weekly meeting: 17/06/2014).

Hence, in furthering the discussion around critical post-crash discourses informing community currency activism, a set of 'observer-generated' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1992, 178) alternative member typologies have been identified which reflect varying critical discourses invested in the alternative economy. Specifically, during participant observation, I identified four broad ideological groupings of members that were further substantiated and detailed through a series of interviews. These are: a) (Nouveau) Anarchists, b) Reformers, c) Humanisers, and d) Instrumentalists.²² As Fig.4.3 highlights schematically, whilst an unmaking of capitalocentrism (see Gibson-Graham 2006) is at the core of the discourses of all community currency activists, these distinct member typologies represent distinct discursive nexuses covering a whole spectrum between *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*. On the one end of the schema are those who

²² Whilst there was partial overlap in the elements constituting these typologies, the matrix approach to data analysis set-out in Miles and Huberman (1994) and adapted for part of the data analysis for this research (see Chapter 3) enabled the allocation of specific identity labels for each research informant.

holistically challenge previously unquestioned norms of life in the wake of the crisis. On the other end of the schema, there are those who are less critical of the capitalist status quo – only unmaking certain norms of life and, thus, not treating community currency activism as a radical alternative to the mainstream. These claims are corroborated in sub-sections 4.2.1-4.

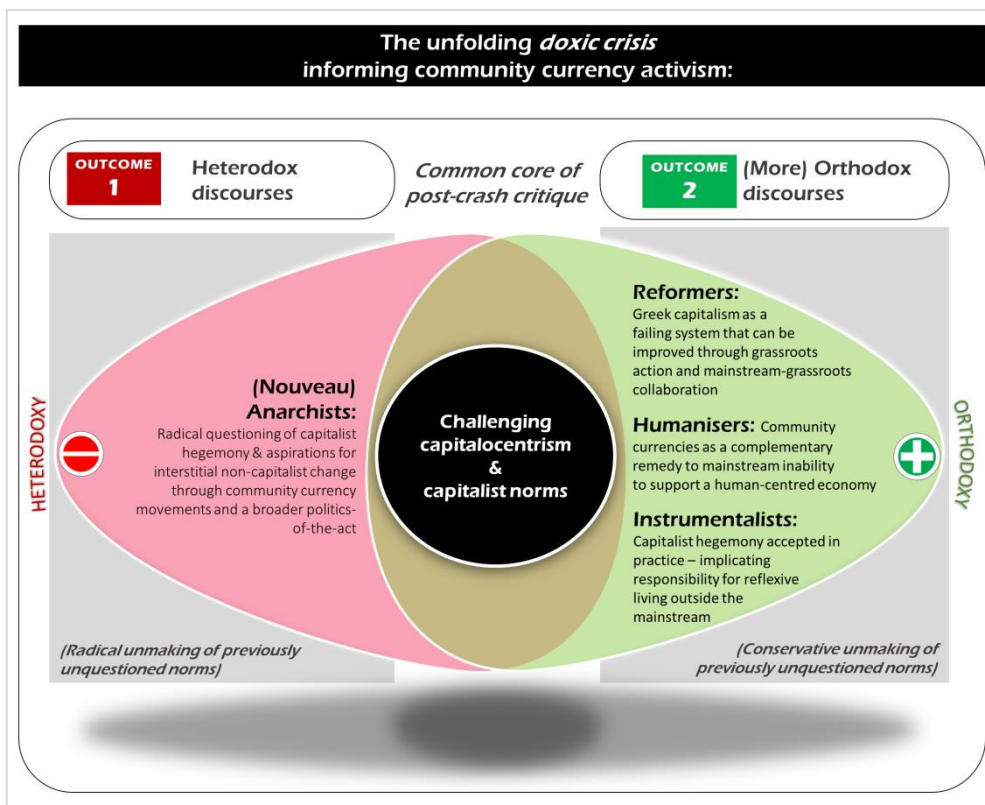


Figure 4.3: Universe of critical discourse in the wake of the Greek economic crisis (Adapted from Bourdieu 1977, 168)

4.2.1 The (Nouveau) Anarchist discourse

In corroborating the assertion that diverse critical discourses informed crisis community currency activism (see research question 1), this sub-section details the core of critical discourses developed by Anarchist activists in the wake of the Greek economic crisis. Specifically, over the course of the data collection I came across a plethora of community currency activists articulating radically anti-capitalist discourses who, in

addition to unmaking capitalocentrism, challenged a series of unquestioned norms of a capitalist society and favoured a novel way of doing activism. In a nutshell, and as Fig.4.3 outlines, while Anarchist members shared anti-capitalists dispositions and understandings well before the outbreak of the economic crisis, their challenging discourse in the wake of the crisis involves the unmaking of further unquestioned capitalist and activist nomos.

The first defining element of the heterodox discourse of Anarchist members is their disillusionment with a politics-of-demand-making and, subsequently, a rational expectation of greater benefits by a politics-of-the-act like community currency activism (see Day 2004). Whilst there was a tendency to celebrate community currencies as *'the continuation of the central Indignados demonstrations at Syntagma Square in the aftermath of the "Troika invasion"'* (Hera, Athens time-bank core member) or as *'just another form of activism'* (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member – FD: 10/06/2014), the economic crisis was simultaneously a moment or realisation that the politics-of-the-act is unworkable in attempting rupture with the mainstream. At a moment in time defined by the unwillingness of the mainstream to let go of austerity politics (e.g. Cordero 2016; Knight 2013), the following exemplifying extracts highlight how the critical discourse of Anarchists reflects Day's (e.g. 2011) and Holloway's (e.g. 2002; 2010) recent condemnation of a politics-of-demand. For social movements making demands are seen as pawns in the hands of the powerful who set the agenda, protect their interests, and prevent certain demands from being considered (Giugni 2004):

Our protests at Syntagma Square were a moment of realisation: we had been protesting for so many days, and they just went about introducing the Memorandum undeterred [...]. But, I guess, it makes sense: in a capitalist state the economy is the priority, not people... So whatever we demanded there was no way we would really be heard – especially since we were protesting against the core of their interests and policies. That's why it's really important to, um..., to go about becoming the change you want for the world rather than demanding it (Hera, Athens time-bank core member).

Never before had we realised that we were just creating fake realities of emancipation instead of enabling a true rupture by protesting. [...] We were still part of the labour and financial market, and we kept the “beast” alive with all of our work, sweat, blood and tears... [Pause] It’s about time this changed! It’s about time we took our labour, our lives, back into our hands (Sappho, Votsalo core member).

Hence, building on these lines of thought and on their total distrust of ‘a mainstream that only caters to its needs – particularly at this critical moment’ (Pandora, Votsalo core member), Anarchists envisioned deepening community currency networks rather than widening them to the mainstream. Any mainstream – business and State – relations were met with profound distrust in fear of corrupting heterotopia. Rather, Anarchists valued delinking by building their own alternative networks of cooperation that would fully economically re-subjectivise them by regaining control of means of production and not just of exchange. In other words, in place of envisioning the growth of community currencies through increased diffusion to the mainstream, they envisioned the creation of a collective commons (see DeAngelis 2007) that would enhance the alternative economy: a collectivist, decentralised and democratically planned production. As Lysistrata, core member of the Votsalo put it: ‘*the crisis inspired us to take back the economy – to make our own commons-based economies*’ (FD: 12/10/2014):

There’s no way I would accept any relations with the mainstream. They have the power, they would impose their views on us and they would, inevitably, turn the alternative economy into something complementing the mainstream... We have to do everything in our terms! (Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 12/10/2014).

That’s what they are trying to do with top-down initiated time-banks: corrupt this social movement and gain public support and money. It has also happened elsewhere. [...] From my point of view, there’s only one way forward: building our own grassroots networks of cooperation. Not just

community currency projects: producers, activists... everyone. We need to create our own commons-based economy of cooperation, collective decision-making and mutuality... (Sappho, Votsalo core member).

Of course, being able to appreciate and celebrate diverse economic possibility necessitates the unmaking of capitalocentric *doxa*. How, then, could such radical members value community currency activism when the leftist imaginary claims that the abolition of money is ‘the grandest of all ruptures effectuated by the Utopian Imagination’ (Jameson 2007, 229)? I contend that the ongoing economic crisis also brought about the common unmaking of this unquestioned *nomos*. For in acknowledging their power to enact alternative forms of economics, a final way through which Anarchist activists discursively responded to the economic crisis was by putting forth ‘images of Utopia defined not by money’s absence but rather by its radical transformation’ as Dodd (2014, 314) puts it. Indeed, the following exemplifying quotations are reminiscent of Zelizer’s (2011, 370) core claim that heterodox social practices and cultural values can inform the creation of novel forms of money:

We were always so critical of money – always seen as a force of corruption and inequality. We just never questioned whether better, alternative forms of money could exist... So when you just run out of [mainstream] money, when the mainstream [economy] just kicks you out, you have no other option than to start experimenting with alternatives – hoping that you can create an alternative economy that is, um... human-centred and driven by us (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

Growing up with leftist ideals you just develop this gut feeling that money entraps us in capitalism. You believe that – you realise it over the course of your everyday life. But then, when the crisis unfolded, when you no longer had a job or money, you came to realise the prospects of developing other forms of exchanges. Forms of “money” that could help you cope with the crisis – that also enable you to work in cooperation rather than against each other (Hector, Athens time-bank non-core member).

For Anarchist activists challenge the previously unchallenged capitalist nomos of individualism and competition that allegedly governed their performance of the mainstream economy. For both exemplifying quotations presented below juxtapose a discourse of an ‘individualist’ capitalist subject against that of a more altruistic non-capitalist subject capable of creating economies of cooperation. In this sense, the hegemony of capitalocentrism is further challenged by highlighting how not all social relations are governed by a capitalist rationality:

We just thought: “We cooperate on all sorts of levels – cooperation and mutual aid is in human nature. Why can’t we also do that in our economic relations?” (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member)

You just have to ask yourself: ‘What’s money? Is it just a mechanism of the capitalist economy, or can there be an alternative?’ Well, yes! That’s what community currencies do: When you need to get something, anything, you just ask for it through the network (Hector, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Bearing these claims in mind, we can thus conclude that the moment of crisis and its associated critiques were fundamental in shaping a novel political subject discovering a novel way of acting politically through its economic performances. However, not all community currency activists shared such deeply anti-capitalist aspirations. Rather, the new realities of the moment of crisis also brought about a less critical discourse concerned with complementing the failing mainstream. Sub-section 4.2.2 thus details the core of the critical discourses invested in community currency movements by what I label as Reformers.

4.2.2 The Reformers discourse

In contrast to the radical Anarchist discourse outlined in sub-section

4.2.1, the paragraphs below will outline a less critical worldview that does not completely unravel the prevailing capitalist *doxa* – in spite of partially unmaking capitalocentrism. Hence, this section further corroborates the key assertion that diverse critical discourses were a first key driver for crisis community currency activism (see research question 1). Specifically, what I label as Reformers (mainly from the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks) represent the embodiment of a multi-faceted reformative discourse torn between working with and challenging the mainstream. These are members who can be classified as ‘reformist anti-capitalists’ (see Callinicos 2003) in that they share a relatively more orthodox discourse that may recognise the arbitrariness of capitalist *doxa* but appears to accept it in practice. They, thus, embody an ongoing tension in academic writing on community currencies (e.g. North 2014): that between the alterity and the complementarity of community currencies.

Let me now build on this assertion, fully fleshing-out this discourse. To begin with, this second group of community currency participants shared a critical view vis-à-vis the Greek mainstream. Their *habitus* has slipped out of alignment with the objective goods they can obtain in the socio-economic field. As a consequence, and as exemplified below, in the wake of the crisis there is widespread questioning of the *doxic* assumption that the Greek state is a welfare state that can enable the unquestioned unfolding of everyday life:

The crisis made us realise – the harsh way – that the State cannot cater to our needs (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

How can you expect anything good from all those corrupt politicians – from all those imposing a harsh austerity politics without consideration of its social impacts on the ground? [...] We’ve had to rethink our lives – what we buy, what we do, what our future might look like – but that’s something that doesn’t show up in their economic calculations. It’s a state driven by these calculations – a blindfolded state that can’t see – or at least can’t care enough to see – everything happening on the ground (Dion, Athens

time-bank non-core member).

Nonetheless, and contrary to the Anarchist discourse outlined in Section 4.2.1, these members did not seek a rupture with the capitalist mainstream. In their view *'capitalism as a system – in general terms – remained necessary'* and what was instead deemed necessary was *'simply to re-adjust local conditions and politics'* or to *'infuse more leftist ideals at the local level in order to ensure that the state can cater – in socially just manners – for the needs of people'* (Cleitus, Athens time-bank core member). For in their view, *'there are no alternatives to capitalism and austerity at the nation-state level'* – *'for austerity was painful but somewhat unavoidable'* (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank). In other words, while appreciating the arbitrariness of capitalist *doxa*, such activists accepted it in practice— as evidenced by the persisting discursive hegemony of capitalocentrism (following Gibson-Graham 1996; ch1):

Recurring cycles of crisis affect the [capitalist] economy, with almost every generation having to rethink, at some point or another, the way society and life are organised. But capitalism always recovers, one way or another, and that's a testament to its power and capacity to respond to crises and public demands (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

It's utopic to think of a world without capitalism – we just have to find ways to work with what we have – to make what we have work for us (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

Subsequently, building on this claim, Nike, member of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank, provides a prime example of the explicit view that mainstream collaborations are necessary in both growing the alternative economic *field* and in improving the mainstream socio-technical landscape. Particularly, in providing the capping stone to this symbiotic view of community currencies, she emphasizes the need for community currency projects to form collaborations with mainstream actors (businesses, governments, think-tanks, etc.) in trying to increase their impact and

effectiveness: a vision of selective engagement with dominant institutions to avoid marginalisation:

If we don't form any alliances with the mainstream, we are doomed to fail. And I'm not just talking about getting some support from the city council – demanding a place to hold our meetings. If we really want to materialise on the vision of greater sustainability in our city, then we definitely need to build dense networks of cooperation and engage with local power structures (Nike, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member – FD: 16/12/2014).

Hence, in only developing a genuinely critical discourse with regards to the Greek economy and politics, Reformers collectively treated alternative currencies as a micro-scale antidote with some limited potential to gradually influence the local society and local politics. They, thus, wanted to break-out of 'the countercultural enclaves Anarchists envision of community currencies' (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank, core member), and conceptualised their currencies as symbiotic strategies (see Callinicos 2003) in that they could both fulfil roles and meet responsibilities the State is unable to meet under the present dire economic circumstances, and push forward and mainstream certain unorthodox ideals:

Being born out of this crisis, the goal of community currencies should be to become as "mainstream" as possible: filling in the voids in social welfare provision left behind by the failing local and national governments, and promoting leftist ideas to the local municipality (Anthousa, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

It's not about working against the state and our local authorities. It's about working with them, alongside them, through our, um... "parallel" economies to ensure that we don't suffer as much because of the crisis and austerity (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

On the one hand, and in not being abolitionist of mainstream socio-economic structures and relations, Reformers felt that it was critically

important *'to make the most of this, um... opportunity to instigate some changes in local government agendas'* (Nike, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member). In realising that local authorities could not address their welfare-provision responsibilities in the wake of the crisis – that *'the hands of the local authorities were tied'* (ibid.) – they felt it was their *'responsibility to show them [i.e. to mainstream actors] that local communities need not suffer that much because of austerity'; 'that local solutions and people's power can circumvent many of the challenges posed by the austere state'* (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). Subsequently, in enacting and/or in participating in alternative economic projects, Reformers hoped that their unorthodox actions would make *'local politicians realise, in a very tangible way that the local community is powerful'* (Nymphodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member) and that *'they should invest in supporting them as much as possible by granting them opportunities to flourish'* (Nike, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member). This was *'a win-win situation'* of *'both reducing the burden for welfare provision from the local state authorities and of developing a mainstream structure favouring the further growth and development of community currency movements'* (Eudocia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). *'Ideally'*, as Leontios (Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member) asserted, *'this would involve working with authorities towards a legal framework that would allow the circulation of alternative currencies that could also be used by businesses to meet a great range of everyday needs for consumption'*.

On the other hand, in feeling that *'the big issues are beyond [t]heir control'* (Euthalia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member), many Reformers felt that the moment of crisis *'dictated the day-to-day-empowerment of individuals taking back some control over their lives'* (Kallisto, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). Nonetheless, in reflecting on the causes of the crisis and, more generally, on social life as it unfolded prior to the crisis, they felt that *'they had wrongfully adopted individualistic lifestyles that corroded community'* and that *'re-establishing some community ties would be the only way of surviving the crisis'*

(*Nymphodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member*). However, in their view, this would take considerable time and effort in that ‘*people would need to be convinced about the critical importance of local community ties*’ (*Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member – FD: 12/12/2014*). Subsequently, in becoming involved in community currency movements, they hoped to ‘*make the first step in re-jiggling their lives in accord with a more communitarian and cooperative ethos*’ and to ‘*contribute towards the broader reformation of cultural codes at the local level by practically demonstrating to the local society the importance of community in surviving the crisis*’ (*ibid.*).

Hence, this evidence suggests that post-crash critique need not necessarily be radical to inform potentially emancipatory action and engagement in social movements. Rather, crisis community currency activism also becomes possible when individuals do not radically unmake their capitalocentric *doxa*. As such, in furthering the argument that diverse nexuses of post-crash critical discourse drive community currency activism, and thus the response to the first research question, sub-section 4.2.3 below details a penultimate activist typology.

4.2.3 The Humanisers discourse

In furthering the assertion that diverse critical discourses were a first key driver for community currency activism (see research question 1), this sub-section details the core of critical discourses developed by a penultimate group of community currency activists: Humanisers. In a nutshell, and in sharp contrast to Anarchist members (see sub-section 4.2.1), I contend that the nexus of critical discourse developed by Humanisers is much more focused on specific norms of either the Greek or the global capitalist field – and is, thus, a far cry from the complete disillusionment with the field typical of Anarchists (see Fig.4.3).

Specifically, the critical discourse of Humanisers is differentiated from that articulated by Anarchists with regards to their emphasis on social wellbeing and emancipation rather than on anti-capitalist social change. For against the novel discourse of an emancipatory and more human economic alternative, they still regard the mainstream economy as an unquestionably superior field. In Bourdieusian (2000, 217) language, Humanisers thus resign to dispositions that lead them 'to put up with objective conditions that would be judged intolerable or revolting by agents otherwise disposed'. Indicative of this stance is how they often juxtaposed understandings of a mainstream economy as the only way of meeting sustenance needs against an alternative economy that *'can only cater for secondary and social needs'* (Alexandra, Holargos-Papagos time-bank). Thus, there was even a claim that community currencies *'are not really about exchanges, but about becoming part of the community'* (Artemis, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member) – about *'providing a sense of togetherness at this critical moment – some limited empowerment in coping with the crisis – and not really about enabling survival in spite of the crisis'* (Rhode, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

In so doing, the critical discourse of Humanisers focused on boosting local social wellbeing instead of challenging capitalism as a system in its whole. For the wake of the crisis found them *'questioning what the economy is all about – what it should do'* and, subsequently, realising that *'economics is not just about statistics and paying-off public deficits, but also about real people, real communities and real needs'* (Roxanne, Votsalo non-core member). Hence, this framing of participation in community currencies as a form of community development draws on a discourse viewing community development as an inherently positive change – addressing social problems at both the personal and the broader scales. Whilst trades are important because they provide utility, there is a belief that what makes them exceptionally important is the fact that they form the main way people interact with each other; the main way people build a community of care. Within this discourse, discovering community currencies as an

'alternative' or a 'humanised economy' and 'not just another currency' or even as a new way of making friends suggests a strong emerging ethos around an economy which is re-embedded in the social:

It's an alternative economy, a humanised economy we could have never imagined in the past... Living proof that there can be an alternative to the [mainstream] antagonistic economy. [Pause] We don't simply exchange goods and services for their utility value. It's the fact that giving and taking services turns into an act of caring for each other... You sort of make new friends... (Roxanne, Votsalo core member).

You just never thought it's possible to forge both an economy and community through the interrelationship and mutual engagement (Phoibe, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

Of course, suggesting that the discourse of Humanisers is far more orthodox when compared against Anarchist views does not imply that it is completely void of challenging understandings. To begin with, economic resubjectification is, for Humanisers, a quest for furthering an economy which, contrary to the capitalist one, builds on a discourse of equality. For the outbreak of the economic crisis is marked by the widespread proliferation of a critical discourse that focuses on 'the unfortunate recognition that only some of us can be secure in this market' (Dion, Athens time-bank non-core member). Most importantly, though, their critical questioning also touches upon more fundamental laws of the mainstream market – including the inherent inequalities of the labour market and the exclusion of certain demographics:

Why should someone's job be worth more than someone else's? Why should the lower classes be hit the hardest by the crisis when it was always the upper classes that caused this chaos? (Myrrine, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Everyone's been affected by the crisis – but then, of course, you realise that not everyone is affected to the same extent. Being a cleaner I could never

save enough money to be able to live on my savings. But take a currently unemployed business entrepreneur, for instance; I'm sure he can survive the crisis on his savings alone (Zoe, Votsalo non-core member).

Older people are excluded from the labour market on the assumption that we can live on our pensions. But with all those cuts in pensions that just doesn't hold true. The capitalist economy excludes all of us; we can barely survive on pensions... But we are still active, we can still provide to society, outside the market. Why, then, can't we also get some sort of [monetary] recognition for this? (Rhode, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member, informal interview: 25/05/2014)

Furthermore, by uncovering the possibility of an alternative economy, Humanisers also break away from the previously unquestioned reality of stressful and unfulfilling work. This is something they 'just uncritically accepted in knowing that [t]hey would, at least, make some money that would enable personal fulfilment in other ways' (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member). However, in the wake of the crisis, and 'in knowing that there are no guarantees of getting a salary even if you work you're a**e off' (Eupraxia, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 16/12/2014), they resort to (re)discovering how work that is neither 'boring', nor 'stressing' or 'constraining' is possible:

For more than 30 years I was forced to do a job that wasn't really satisfying; that was both boring and stressing! But I thought that was normal, that I had no other option. Now, it's a whole different story... I was like: 'What's the point of all this if they never pay me anymore?' [Pause] So yes, I was really intrigued by the possibility this time-bank would give me to develop my arts and crafts skills – a long forgotten love of mine – and actually get some "money" for doing that! (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member)

But, you know, it's not just the one-to-one exchanges of goods and services. What really sold me to the idea of joining this network is that they have this bio-cosmetics group which is all about experimenting, sharing skills and

knowledge to produce hand-made cosmetics. That's a far cry from my day job! [...] That's a far cry from the idea that an economic system only constrains you – something I, most definitely, took for granted! So it's all about rediscovering yourself, what you actually like to do, and actually earning something out of it! (Roxanne, Votsalo core member).

Finally, by pitching ideas of emancipation against capitalocentrism, I argue that a further crisis of *doxa* with regards to unworthy forms of philanthropy unfolds. By juxtaposing solidarity economics against acts of charity, Humanisers realise that charity is a far cry from a practice drawing on ideas around emancipation and equality: it is a one-way process making room for a top-down approach. In contrast, community currencies rely on an ethic of emancipation and equality that resonates with Humanisers who now question the previously unquestioned norm that charity is the only way of providing for others outside the capitalist field. For *'in becoming a, um... "philanthropic case" yourself, you realise that philanthropy is ineffective and unsustainable'* (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member):

I used to think that philanthropy was enough to help those in need. But by now being in relative economic hardship myself, I came to realise that unless you emancipate someone, they cannot escape hardship (Eupraxia, Votsalo non-core member).

I do a lot of volunteer work and I am involved in a number of charities. But the time-bank ethos is, really, much closer to my heart. It's not just about helping people by giving them stuff; it's about helping people by emancipating them! And this is really important – especially nowadays when being a free subject should not be taken for granted... It's a real shame we never thought of this in the past! (Kallisto, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

From this perspective, it becomes clear that even when crises do not animate thoroughly anti-capitalist spirits, they do still inform multi-dimensional critique and questioning of previously unquestioned norms and ways of life that, ultimately, leads to activism. Hence, in furthering the

response to the first research question on what drives crisis community currency activism, sub-section 4.2.4 overleaf details the critical discourses of a fourth and final group of community currency activists: Instrumentalists.

4.2.4 The Instrumentalist discourse

In further corroborating the assertion that diverse critical discourses were a key driver of community currency activism (see research question 1), this final sub-section on the diverse critical discourse invested in community currency activism details the core of critical discourses developed by what I label as Instrumentalists.

Principally, the capitalist *doxa* remained largely unchallenged for Instrumentalists – accepting the limits imposed upon them and subordinating to the symbolic power of capitalism (e.g. Bourdieu 2000). For such members embody Bourdieu’s (ibid.) understandings of a dominated class that understands the arbitrariness of the capitalist *doxa* but simultaneously puts up with unbearable conditions. For whilst universally accepting how *‘there’s just something wrong with the system’*, capitalist *nomos* remains largely unchallenged for members like Lycurgus (*Athens time-bank non-core member*): *‘there can’t really be a non-capitalist society’*. Subsequently, participation in community currency movements is not seen as a means of resistance but, rather, simply as a way of coping with an economic collapse while waiting for the mainstream economy to restart. This claim, framing community currencies as a value-free *‘expedient’* technology, is excellently exemplified through the extracts cited below:

The alternative economy is nothing but an expedient technology to meet needs; an economy that is much inferior to the capitalist one. Believe me, when a proper job becomes available, I will take it up in a flash! (Lycurgus, Athens time-bank non-core member)

Ideology doesn't feed you, it doesn't help you be a good mum... And these movements aren't about ideology: they are here to help meet needs. [Pause] I, personally, purely joined because a friend of mine suggested that I could meet some needs – the needs of my kids – through the network (Anastasia, Votsalo non-core member).

And yet, it is important to note how 'luxury' consumerist goods or services previously acquired through participation in the mainstream market are counter-posed against the need to meet everyday sustenance needs and through community currency activism. Indeed, this juxtaposition forms part of a critical discourse which, albeit not challenging capitalism per se, challenges the subjectivity of the hedonist/ consumerist Greek of the most part of his/her modern history. There is, thus, an emerging non-radical discourse questioning previously unquestioned norms of life. For there is a critical attitude with regards to the realisation that they themselves had previously fallen into the trap of hedonism – that they played their part in contributing towards the crisis experienced:

We've all been there – we've all done that... But now that you can no longer consume with the same insatiable appetite, you just question how worthwhile that was... (Anastasia, Votsalo non-core member).

Maybe it's all because of our over-consumerist lifestyle – our hedonism. Maybe that's what got us here in the first place: spending as if there's no tomorrow... (Helena, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Accepting part of the responsibility for the crisis also implicates accepting a new civic role in dealing with the crisis. For Instrumentalists question both the capacity of a crisis-laden mainstream to provide job security and social welfare as well as their roles in the wake of austerity. In so doing, they subsequently frame community currency activism as a means of complementing the mainstream. For in adopting a discourse that closely aligns with neoliberal values, they are willing to accept a declining welfare state and growing civil responsibility in welfare provision:

When you can no longer take for granted that the state will provide for your needs, you just have to take the situation in your own hands. [...] It's obvious that the state has other [economic] priorities; that's inevitable to be honest. But it's also quite obvious that we can remove some of the welfare provision load from the state by taking initiative (Helena, Athens time-bank non-core member).

There's no job security, we can no longer rely on things like pensions and unemployment benefits... This forces you to rethink your role – your personal responsibility to find ways to cope with the crisis. We all have skills and something to offer, it's a matter of exploiting them and making good use of them (Aikaterine, Votsalo non-core member).

Hence, the above cited extracts also highlight how even Instrumentalists themselves unwittingly raise claims that are of crucial importance in thinking of alternative economies and, ultimately, of being able to live despite-yet-beyond capitalism. Whilst they do not articulate a genuinely radical anti-capitalist discourse, through understandings highlighting the skills and other capital individuals possess, Instrumentalists frame community currencies as milieus where re-subjectification can be premised on an asset based understanding of subjectivity (see Gibson-Graham 2006); an understanding that contradicts mainstream mantras reducing people to subjects of the labour market (see Holloway 2010). Thus, they challenge the assumption that the lack of money is necessarily paralysing in a capitalist world. More so, the claim that community currencies are value-free expedient technologies, '*somewhat like normal money which oblige no morality per se*' as highlighted by Aikaterine (Votsalo non-core member), is a statement that does not stand up to detailed analysis showing that the claims made are, in reality, claims that mirror key ideas of the interstitial non-capitalist theorisation of Holloway (2010):

We refuse to conform to the demands of an era that strips us bare of our ability to live our lives the way we want to! [...] We decided to take our lives into our own hands, as much as possible; to look at them in the eye and tell

them that we will fight for our survival. That we will carry on living our lives – without their euros but with the plentiful alternative currencies coming from us. Don't get me wrong, I'm not an anarchist – not sure I have any political ideology to be honest. [...] I merely joined to meet some of my needs for exchange unmet by mainstream money. It's just that, you know, everything we do is politics – and I'm exploring the politics of survival; the politics of refusing to become dependent on philanthropic aid, on public charity! (Merope, Athens time-bank non-core member)

Particularly, the above cited interview extract is a prime example of a non-negligible portion of Instrumentalists framing a needs-based participation in community currency movements as a 'politics of dignity' as Holloway (2010) puts it. While the opting-out from the mainstream market constitutes a forced action in place of a conscious act of non-conformity, Instrumentalists themselves deny the closure of a discourse claiming that there is no alternative to austerity. Materialising on their feelings of anger, they embark on a dignity struggle of taking control of their lives. They refuse to let the logic of mainstream money – and its unavailability – determine what they do and shape their activities. In other words, community currency activism is a process of hope and empowerment. Moreover, the assertion that mainstream money is limited and, consequently, needs are not met – that the distribution of money is controlled by 'them' and the subsequent call for more money and the claim that 'we' can create money that is plentiful – is, undeniably, a challenge to neoliberal concerns for financial orthodoxy. Indeed, Holloway (2010, 66) asserts that: 'money is the fine spider's web that holds us entrapped'. However, even Instrumentalists deny getting holistically 'entrapped' by the lack of mainstream money; they want to be able to meet their needs even without 'their money'. As such while they are by all means much less radical in their views and motivations for participation when compared against the other member typologies introduced in this chapter, Instrumentalists can under no circumstances be considered as individuals merely reproducing the *doxa* of a broken system. It is exactly because of this marginally emancipatory discourse that crisis

community currency activism becomes possible.

However, in further exploring what drives crisis community currency activism (see research question 1), this research also uncovered an additional trigger of activism. For alongside diverse critical discourses, pre-existing activist *habiti* also played an important role. Hence, in completing the narrative around drivers of community currency activism, Section 4.3 details how activist biographies might have informed contemporary community currency activism.

4.3 Uncovering heterogeneous member biographies as a further driver of crisis community currency activism

The preceding analysis reflects pre-existing accounts (North 2006; also see North 2015; Pearson 2003) on the diverse motivational discourses of community currency activists. As such, it speaks to a broad body of research dealing with alternative currencies as systems that are variably radical (e.g. Jonas 2010). Most importantly though, in dealing with the first research question concerning post-crash dynamics informing community currency activism, this analysis sheds light to the conceptual capacity of Bourdieu's work to account for community currencies as a crisis of *doxa*. Specifically, while the economic crisis has, indeed, shocked members out of their habitual acceptance of the capitalist economic *field* and into a more critical attitude (e.g. Bourdieu 1977), the data uncovers dimensions of heterogeneity – balancing between *heterodoxy* and *orthodoxy*. For while it was a *doxic* crisis that drove all members to community currencies, this did not unfold in mono-dimensional forms.

Nonetheless, whilst Bourdieu's work views crises as moments during which the *habitus* is both suspended and questioned (e.g. 1977; 2000, 19) and, thus, appears capable of accounting for social change, for the most part of his conceptual corpus he appears more deterministic. The *habitus*

becomes conceptualised as a set of unconscious and enduring dispositions, an embodied sensibility – a forgotten history – that is transposable to new circumstances and settings, helping explain why individuals reproduce social structures through their behaviour (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It transforms into the ‘generative principle of regulated improvisations’ (Bourdieu 1990a, 57) and, even, into a mechanism that commands responses to crises – as suggested by the following exemplifying field-diary excerpt:

In welcoming Anastasia to the group, Pandora was eager to learn what drove her to the movement. As Anastasia explained, ‘the crisis had certainly played its role – with an ever increasing number of needs that cannot be met with [mainstream] money’. However, as she went on to explain, she was no stranger to non-capitalist economies – routinely becoming involved in informal exchanges with friends and family for a number of years. [...] For Anastasia, community currencies thus represented ‘a more formalised way of exchanging stuff without [mainstream] money’ (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 10/06/2014).

Given the prevalence of such narratives over the course of my participant observation of the Votsalo LETS and the Athens and Holargos-Papagos time-banks, I attempted to develop a better understanding of whether pre-existing habits consistently inspired community currency activism. Through this exploration, I reached the conclusion that the habitual dispositions of many Athenians still have a role to play in informing community currency activism. Hence, in furthering the response to the first research question around drivers of community currency activism, the evidence presented in this section testify to the veracity of Bourdieu’s assertion that the *habitus* is the ‘generative principle of regulated improvisations’ (Bourdieu 1990a, 57) that commands non-habitual responses in the wake of crises (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989, 45; Swartz 2002, 645), and informs social movement participation (Crossley 2003).

First, the quantitative data presented in Fig.4.4 are a clear testament

to this assertion. Specifically, in being asked to reflect on what triggered their community currency activism, the respondents to the questionnaire survey administered as part of this research unequivocally indicated that their past experience of similar activities, community initiatives, social movements and/or grassroots projects played an important role. Up to 81% of members of the Athens time-bank, 70% of members of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank and 80% of members of the Votsalo LETS suggested that such past experiences had triggered, to a large extent, their involvement. Furthermore, 19% of members of the Athens time-bank, 25% of members of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank and 20% of members of the Votsalo LETS were, allegedly, driven to a considerable extent to community currency activism by their past experiences.

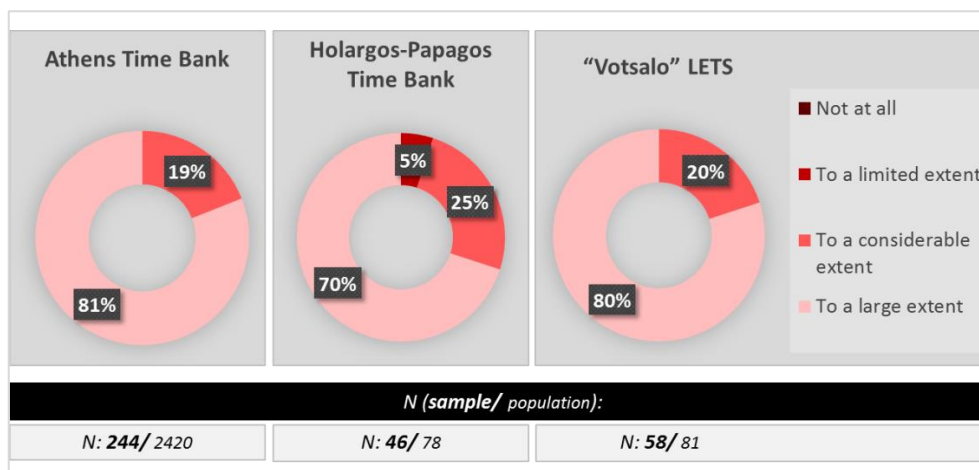


Figure 4.4: The (perceived) extent to which past experiences triggered crisis community currency activism

Second, in making the most of personal interviews to enter into the activist cosmos, I consistently uncovered how the alternative economy might have constituted an unknown *field* community currency activists did not previously encounter or consider, but certain pre-existing *habiti* predisposed many community currency activists towards recognising its rules and stakes – thus feeling that engagement in community currency movements was a rational course of action (e.g. Bourdieu 1995) (see also

Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.1 on the necessary pre-conditions of community currency activism). Specifically, Wood and Neal (2007) argue that through regular past experiences with a particular type of situation, individuals become used to and develop a “taste” or predisposition for behaviours associated with such situations. With this in mind, I argue that whilst the economic crisis was, indeed, unprecedented and community currencies represented ‘a brand new idea’ (Pandora, Votsalo core member, FD: 30/05/2014), community currency activists also drew on readily available action and moral models that were triggered contextually. The following exemplifying quotations help demonstrate how their life paths and ‘internalised habits of moral judgement’ (Vaisey 2009, 1687) had also prepared them for involvement in community currency movements. For they uncovered how the link between novel critical discourses in the wake of the crisis and the novel practice of community currency activism could only be made because of such pre-dispositions and past experiences:

Involvement in community currency movements was simply the natural thing to (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member, FD: 30/05/2014).

It’s not that, um... new to me – even though I had never encountered an alternative currency in the past [...] It’s sort of like, err... my life sort of follows a somewhat predetermined path guided by this moral compass that has seasoned in me since my childhood. And the more you walk on this path, the deeper you get into activism (Sophia, Votsalo core member).

You don’t just wake up one morning and say: ‘I’ll join a community currency movement’. You obviously need to sort of have a background of being involved in such activities – either in formal social movements or initiatives, or simply in terms of being familiar with things like informal mutual support networks... I think most of us have this sort of experience (Hera, Athens time-bank core member).

Hence, these assertions cast serious doubts to uncorroborated claims that crises are critical turning points in human history (see Chapter 2). For, unavoidably, community currency activism remained unthinkable for many

Athenians. Indeed, in introducing the idea of an alternative economy to non-activist spectators of the 'Athens Festival or Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy', I encountered widespread scepticism with regards to the idea that other economies are possible:

Oh dear... you're just chasing utopias! I think you need to face reality before it's too late! (Member of public 04 – FD: 12/10/2014)

It all sounds great in principle: alternative currencies, festivals, talks and presentations... But it's really a perversion – an illusion. I don't think they [i.e. alternative currencies] can contribute in any practical way towards surviving the crisis... I'd rather face the harsh realities – of a miniscule monthly salary and dependence on acts of charity – rather than fall for the myth that an alternative currency will save me! (Member of public 01; FD: 10/10/2014)

This is something many activists themselves realised – claiming that they 'would have been one of them if [t]hey didn't know that such things can work in practice' (*Lysistrata*, Votsalo core member – FD: 12/10/2014):

Maybe that's why they [i.e. community currency movements] haven't appealed to the masses. Maybe that's why you mainly find people who are inclined to this sort of action, who already have some experience of social movements – activism or community projects. It's all unknown to them... Maybe they feel insecure; maybe they lack this genuine faith that it can all work out for them (Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 13/10/2014).

But how exactly did past experiences lay the groundwork for community currency activism? Sub-section 4.3.1 responds to this question – furthering the argument that activist biographies were also a key driver of community currency activism.

4.3.1 Habitual predispositions informing community currency activism

In furthering the response to the first research question around

drivers of community currency activism, this sub-section details how previous life experiences of many community currency activists had paved the way for their activism. At core, I argue that activist biographies inform a rational calculation that uncovered how past and ongoing material conditions of existence, cultural knowledge, skills, dispositions and a general “feel for the game” are well suited for engagement in community currency movements – in spite of the fact that this was an unknown game (following Bourdieu 1990).

To begin with, for Anarchist members ‘*one thing simply brings another – activism begets activism and becomes second nature*’ (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member – FD: 30/05/2014). For all Anarchists outline how activism was part of their *habitus* and, subsequently, how previous involvement in social movements and activist struggles had equipped them with the necessary cultural *capital* to participate in community currency projects as virtuosos. Particularly, they shared rich narratives of: a) how they have become accustomed – through practice and trial-and-error – to procedures of consensus decision-making, collective management, conflict resolution, and resource and participant mobilisation, b) how their contacts with other activists provided them with the necessary know-how on community currency movements and the politics-of-the-act, and c) how they have learned, through practice, that the politics-of-demand is unworthy:

I’ve always lived in a permanent state of activism. [...] I’ve matured in activist circles; I’ve gained invaluable knowledge with regards to how critique of their [capitalist] state can transform into – potentially – emancipatory action (Solon, Votsalo core member).

Community currencies are a brand new way of trying to live without [mainstream] money... But, simultaneously, and owing to previous activist projects, we came into these novel movements with the necessary know-how to engage in and make the most of the alternative economy (Pandora, Votsalo core member).

Having gained experience from other social movements and leftist arenas, I

just knew that raising demands [towards the mainstream] would not change anything. [...] I just knew, deep inside, that when we, as activists, take the situation – our lives – into our very own hands, then... we can work miracles! (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

Second, the Reformers I encountered shared stories suggesting how previous involvement in social movements and projects seeking partial reforms paved the way to their participation in community currencies:

I've long been involved in a range of projects that – one way or another – seek to transform the mainstream. So, I guess, I've developed a predisposition for participating in practically anything along these lines (Helectra, Athens time-bank core member).

Trading and practicing the alternative economy constitute, most definitely, a novel way of being political through the ways we choose to consume. But, in a number of ways, the alternative economy is also the product of our growing ability to self-organise and, thus, the capping stone to everything we've learned and, err, achieved through our past projects in social movements (Eutychia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

Third, Humanisers with community-building dispositions highlighted how being part of and working towards building community cohesion and local solidarities was just part of who they are – with community currency movements allegedly constituting an extension of what they already did. For they had either acquired a primary *habitus* in their childhood predisposing them for the longing of community ties, or had developed a secondary *habitus* involving their engagement in community building efforts that predisposed them to recognising the stakes of community currency activism:

Being part of the [local] community is just a way of life for me... And community currency movements are but a somewhat different way of doing community (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member, FD: 17/10/2014).

For as long as I can remember myself, I've been involved in voluntary initiatives. It's part of who I am: wanting to be part, and help others, be part of a network of mutuality, support and solidarity (Nike, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

Having been brought-up into a closely-knit community, that's something I've always been longing for in my adult life. I don't know, I guess it's that memory that drives me; that emotional memory of people in unison, of people supporting each other... So that's, at core, why time-banking resonated with me. It's sort of, um... a way of, um... "formalising" informal arrangements we have with our neighbours in looking after and supporting each other (Phoibe, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

Finally, because of their semi-permanent lack of monetary *capital*, Instrumentalists like Lycurgus (*Athens time-bank non-core member*) outlined how they are 'always on the lookout for innovative ways of meeting sustenance needs'. Whilst 'there was definitely some rational calculation – weighing up the costs and benefits of participation – this was simultaneously a very "natural" thing to do' (*ibid.*). In other words, 'not much thinking had gone into participating' (*Lycurgus, Athens time-bank non-core member*). In a world defined 'by the permanent insecurity of the inevitable disruption of ways of living' (*Lycurgus, Athens time-bank non-core member*), they developed a taste for, mastery of skills and an understanding of how to opportunistically navigate a plethora of social *fields* in trying to meet their needs. For as Bourdieu (1984, 372) asserts, 'necessity imposes a taste for necessity'. Following Sweetman (2003), I thus argue that the enduring *habitus* of Instrumentalists was inherently reflexive – thus predisposing them to participate in an otherwise unknown field (also see Adams 2006; Decoteau 2015). For as the following exemplifying extracts demonstrate, participation in community currency movements was experienced as a natural progression of a "career" in opportunism:

It's basically an extension to what I would anyway do... I've always been in a state of permanent [economic] crisis. So I've learned to make the most of

really any opportunity that arises to secure my position. So, yes, when I heard about this community currency, I just immediately thought I should become involved (Aikaterine, Votsalo non-core member).

It's a matter of "mastering necessity", I'd say. You do need that feeling – that you can do it – to join the movement. Otherwise, it all seems rather difficult... (Merope, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Hence in furthering the response to the first research question on what drives community currency activism, I assert that all activists encountered entered the *field* with a feeling that this was a game worth playing. For given the relative familiarity of the otherwise unknown practice of community currency activism, many activists are reasonably confident about the future prospects of community currency movements:

It's a matter of joining in because of the knowledge that this sort of projects can actually work in practice (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

When you know that you walk into it with a head full of [transferable] knowledge, you feel confident enough. It's not as if you dive straight into the unknown without knowing how to swim – that would simply be foolish, overwhelming. The "waters" are, of course, unknown but if you are a good swimmer, then it all becomes manageable practice (Nike, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

It's far from flawless, but we have a fair amount of resources – skills, knowledge, etc. – between us, and practically everyone is disappointed by the limited prospects of the [mainstream] economy... So, most of us will, um... stick to it and try and make it work! (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member)

Bearing these claims in mind, I contend that moments of crisis do not necessarily constitute a radical break from normalcy as the *crisis-critique-change triplet* implies (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noyes 2011). For in dealing with the first research question concerning the drivers of community currency activism, this section uncovered how dynamics other than a quotidian crisis

and an associated crisis of *doxa* à la Bourdieu (e.g. 1977) also played their role. For the findings also testify to Bourdieu's assertion that the *habitus* is the 'generative principle of regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu 1990a, 57) that: a) commands non-habitual responses in the wake of crises (Wacquant 1989, 45; Swartz 2002, 645), and b) informs social movement participation (Crossley 2003). With this intricate meshwork of drivers for community currency activism in mind, the following, and last, section of this chapter attempts to: a) synthesize all arguments to provide a well-informed response to the first research question, and b) provide some initial comments on the appropriateness of Bourdieusian practice theory for exploring crisis activism.

4.4 Summary and conclusions

For the first time, this chapter has attempted to apply a Bourdieusian-based approach to crisis community currency activism. In so doing, it aimed to explore the first research question:

Q.1: What drives everyday crisis activism?

In addressing this question, this chapter uncovered a meshwork of drivers for community currency activism. First, it suggested that unmade capitalist practices and a subsequent crisis of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977) whereby unquestioned myths of capitalism and the everyday life are also unmade were key for participation. In so doing it uncovered how the economic crisis has informed a critical discourse that breaks away from the discursive hegemony of capitalocentrism (e.g. Gibson-Graham 2006). Second, the chapter then drew on the concept of the *habitus* (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 2002) to make sense of the diversity of critical discourses emerging as part of this crisis of *doxa* between members of the three community currency movements. It highlighted how the *habitus* brings 'the past into the present'

(Swartz 2002, 635) in that: a) the response to the crisis was also influenced by pre-held dispositions, and b) the alternative economy was understood as an unknown but simultaneously familiar *field* they could navigate.

Bearing this in mind, the chapter helps support an optimistic conclusion in that the moment of crisis is, in three key ways, an opportunity for social change. First as Holloway (2010) and Gibson-Graham (e.g. 1996; 2006) highlight, the first step in an emancipatory struggle despite-yet-beyond capitalism is to break away from the discursive enclosures of capitalocentrism, something even the least radical members of the three movements achieved – to a certain extent. For all members engaged in a ‘politics of dignity’ (Holloway 2010, thesis 10) whereby they both unmade unquestioned capitalist myths and refused to fatalistically resign to the commands of an era of economic downturn unmaking their everyday lives. The moment of crisis is, indeed, also a moment of opportunity for social change in that it ‘brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation’ (Bourdieu 1977, 168-9). Insofar as critique and heterodox discourses are currently being dismissed (Cordero 2016), the emerging ‘crisis consciousness’ (ibid.) outlined in this chapter provides some reassurance regarding the validity of the core *crisis-critique-change triplet* informing this research (e.g. Noys 2011; Morin 1993).

Second and related, against a bleak reality, community currency activists choose to see the future with some optimism and a regained sense of agency to engage and promote the alternative economy – a critical element of Holloway’s (2010) hope-centric manifesto. At a moment of cultural retreat – almost universally gloomy analyses (e.g. Gounari 2014; Rakopoulos 2014) and waning belief in actually-existing alternatives to capitalism and austerity (e.g. North 2016; Worth 2013) – this helps uncover another side of Athens that customarily remains hidden. From a superficial reading of Bourdieu this appears paradoxical. For Bourdieu (1998, 83) suggests that the capacity to colonize the future with ambitions to challenge economic conditions rests on the *capital* capacity to have hold on the

present. Certainly, in an era of disrupted practices this capacity would be diminished. Let's not forget, however, that for Bourdieu (e.g. 1977) times of crisis unmake the *doxa*. In this case, and as all evidence collectively suggests, there is a critical unmaking of the myth that only labour and mainstream monetary capital are valuable in economic activity. Indeed, Lysistrata indicatively suggests that:

We have every reason to think of ourselves as, um... as the true "crisis" of the [capitalist] mainstream. They've taken our monetary power from us, but we are still resourceful and, thus, capable of living despite-yet-beyond capitalism – possibly... It all starts right here and right now! Setting-up a community currency network is the easiest thing to do. But every little thing matters! We become more self-sufficient, we break the constraints of a society and a system that oppresses us (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

Third, and finally, this analysis uncovers how even in a capitalistic society with certain rules and habits, people are still capable of envisioning and enacting alternatives. First, and in line with Zelizer's (e.g. 1994; 2011) sociology of money that postulates that all forms of money are shaped by the social practices and cultural values of their users (e.g. Zelizer 1994; 2011), these findings prove the radical and incisive possibility of producing novel monies to communicate heterodox values. Second, they suggest that even under a capitalistic world, many individuals may still have pre-dispositions to perform the economy otherwise and challenge the mainstream. As such, while Bourdieu (e.g. 1990) argues that the status quo is perpetuated – that neoliberal capitalism is an unchallenged *doxa* (Bourdieu 1998a) – it is important to recognise how the apparent capitalist status quo already contains dimensions of non-capitalist possibility. For it still remains within society's agential capacities to transform into the true crisis of capitalism (Holloway 2010, 250). For our 'surplus value' (Vatter 2009) and 'surplus life' (Vatter 2009) is an omnipresent 'resource' of 'expanded productivity' that 'can never be eclipsed or subordinated to any transcendent measure of power' (Hardt and Negri 2009, 38; see also

Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006).

And yet, this raises serious doubts with regards to the capacity of community currency movements to diffuse in the broader society. Previous research has argued that both community currencies and social movements appeal to certain audiences (e.g. North 2006; McAdam 1989; Ibrahim 2015). While I did not uncover a middle-class disposition to participation, the novel focus of this chapter on habitual predispositions that still play a key role in shaping courses of action in spite of the unfolding *doxic* crisis of capitalocentrism, remains a worrying sign. It suggests that activism only resonates with certain audiences. Thus, even if we choose to celebrate the fact that this chapter has uncovered a nexus of heterodox discourses that can truly transform the crisis into an opportunity to unfold a novel form of life despite-yet-beyond capitalism, we must not ignore how activism has not resonated with a plethora of people not previously disposed to it. We are, thus, 'back with the necessity of a *deus ex machina* if social change is to be rendered intelligible' (Jenkins 2007, 88).

Finally, from a conceptual angle, the chapter testifies to the conceptual power of Bourdieu's work in studying crisis social movements. The *habitus* is widely criticised for its deterministic shade: it remains trapped in a structuralist viewpoint where acting subjects solely resemble actors in that their practices and improvisation are always governed by the structures (e.g. Mouzelis 1995; Alexander 2000) and is incapable of accounting for social change (e.g. Bonnewitz 2009). Nonetheless, as suggested by the evidence presented here, this was – at large the reality experienced in my ethnography. Even in an era of economic downturn whereby everyday habits are unmade and a crisis of *doxa* unfolds, a key mechanism driving people into community currency movements are their habitual pre-dispositions to engage in such *fields*. The crisis challenged certain *doxa* – thus bringing many Athenians closer to the philosophy of community currency movements. It is, thus, an opportunity for social change. At the same time, however, certain pre-held dispositions were

already directing now members of community currency movements to their direction. Indeed, as Bourdieu (1992[1986], 172-3) stresses ‘all the practices and products of a given agent are objectively harmonised among themselves’ through a habitus that partially transcends fuzzy fields. As such, engagement in community currency movements is equally an outcome of a *doxic* crisis as it is of enduring pre-dispositions for participation. For as Swartz (2002, 635) asserts:

‘Individuals do not simply conform to the external constraints and opportunities given to them. They adapt to or resist, seize the moment or miss the chance, in characteristic manners. They bring the past into the present in ways that go unacknowledged in structuralist or subjectivist accounts of human action.’

However, this is not to say that community currencies are static movements – that novice community currency activists come into this *field* with pre-existing *habiti* that remain unchanged. Instead, and drawing on Bourdieu (1995), I argue that as participation in the alternative economy unfolds, a heterodox *habitus* emerges and member dispositions undergo some – but not complete – transformation. For as Bourdieu (ibid. 99-100) argues: ‘as an agent participates more fully in a *field*, their *habitus* undergoes continuous and often unnoticed adjustments to become more compatible with the demands of the *field*’. This is the key issue dealt with in Chapter 5.

5 EVOLUTION IN COMMUNITY CURRENCY PRACTICE

We choose to turn the crisis right on its head – constructing other economies and other forms of living – one step at a time (Alexandra, Votsalo core member).²³

This chapter extends the Bourdieusian-based analysis of crisis community currencies presented in Chapter 4 by dealing with the second and third stages of the conceptual research model presented in Chapter 2 on emerging practices in a pre-formation and a routinized state (see Fig.2.1). In so doing, it explores the evolution in community currency practice – attempting to make sense of the processes that led to the enactment of alternative economic practices such as trading and, consequently, to partial yet non-negligible economic resubjectification outside the capitalist market. At its core, this exploration was inspired by an abundance of evidence from participant observation around the gradually acquired ability to perform the alternative economy – as exemplified below:

By the end of the meeting I was somewhat perplexed. Most attendants “celebrated” their “victories” of achieving partial economic resubjectification outside the mainstream market. Through trading – which was increasingly becoming an integrated part of their daily lives – they found novel ways to meet a diverse range of needs. Through private tutoring services they could fulfil their parenting duties to provide for their kids and allow them to develop their talents outside the mainstream market. By obtaining needed goods and services such as handmade cosmetics and hairdressing they were able to make ends meet – affording “luxuries” they wouldn’t afford otherwise. Furthermore, they had obviously

²³ Unless otherwise specified, all direct quotations are from semi-structured interviews – as detailed and dated in Chapter 3. Conversely, all excerpts annotated as field-diary entries (FD) concern digitised notes from participant observation in the alternative economic field.

become quite competent in trading – arranging for, carrying-out and “paying” for trades before my very eyes seamlessly and without having to refer back to trading rules and guidelines. But the “victories” they “celebrated” seemed rather insignificant – what they discussed and did couldn’t really corroborate their claim that they were gradually developing materially significant non-capitalist practices and routines. But as Sophia later explained to me, there were important reasons for “celebrating” these small “victories” – including, inter alia, the facts that ‘every little counts at this moment of crisis’ and that ‘they were the eventual outcomes of a challenging journey that deserved being celebrated’ (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 23/09/2014).

Specifically, in considering these issues, this chapter addresses the second research question pertaining to the hope-driven exploration of crisis community currencies:

Q.2: *Can (novel) non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about?*

In addressing this question, the chapter aims to take the understanding of what crisis community currency movements do beyond the confines of existing scholarship: beyond broad overviews and evaluations and under-developed understandings of everyday (crisis) activism and community currencies (see Chapter 2). This exploration departs from a recurring theme in my notes from participant observation around the evolutionary process of being able to practice the alternative economy in a habitual manner following reflexive questioning, experimentation, learning-in-practice and contestation that I further explored and developed through personal interviews and discussions.

In developing this narrative, this chapter draws on recent scholarship around the necessarily complex and challenging process of habituating novel practices (e.g. Noble and Watkins 2003; King 2000; Yang 2013). Sections 5.1 and 5.2 focus respectively on the initial challenge of enacting

non-capitalist practices and on the evolutionary habituation of performative non-capitalism – uncovering the messy experimentation cycle involved in routinizing such improvisation. Section 5.3 then extends these arguments to assert that this ‘micro-cosmos of evolution’ (Morin 1993, 5) does not constitute a radical break from normality as existing scholarship implies (e.g. *ibid.*; Holloway 2010) but, rather, a form of ‘regulated improvisation’ (Bourdieu 1990, 57) informed by pre-existing dispositions and embodied forms of *capital* – ultimately leading to distinction in how the alternative economy is being practiced. Drawing on this evidence, the chapter concludes in Section 5.4 by celebrating the success-stories of community currency activism as signs of a side of post-crash Athens that largely remains unseen, and by highlighting the need to ‘think with Bourdieu against Bourdieu’ (King 2000) in order to make sense of how everyday crisis activism unfolds.

5.1 Practicing the alternative economy: As easy as ‘putting the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle together’?

“Crisologists” and students of everyday activism tend to construct at ‘the abstract ontological level’ the ‘metaphysics of change’ and the ‘myth of “Life” as permanent excess’ – without accounting for how transformational rifts occur (Noys 2011, 52-3). Par contraire, the findings of this research on the performative aspect of the alternative economy help uncover, for the first time, how micro-level transformation unfolds. For they help move beyond ill-defined claims that critique preserves the ‘crisis [...] as the moment of its own realisation’ (Cordero 2016, 73) by culminating in the formation of ‘projects of the will’ (Arendt 1981, 192).

Specifically, whilst I was able to uncover a number of novel non-capitalist practices enacted through community currency activism that were largely defined by their habitual regularity and semi-conscious performance

(following Bourdieu 1977; 1884; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 37), my ethnography was primarily an immersion into a long, messy and contingent process of performing everyday activism. For community currency activists may have entered the alternative economic *field* with significantly unmade habits, newly developed non-capitalocentric dispositions and a sense that their pre-existing dispositions, *capital* and ways of being had prepared them for the unknown game of community currency activism (see Chapter 4), but as Thalia (*Votsalo core member*) categorically put it: '*Participating in the alternative economy, changing the ways the economy is experienced and performed, well, it, err, did not turn on a dime – most definitely not*'. As such, in *Lysistrata's* (*Votsalo core member – FD: 18/11/2014*) terms, practicing the alternative economy was '*never as simple as putting the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle together*'. In this light, in addressing the second research question on whether and how non-capitalist practices might emerge in the wake of the crisis, this section aims to highlight that whilst some novel practices did, indeed, emerge, this was far from a straightforward process of turning the moment of crisis right on its head.

This is precisely why core members of the three respective movements attempted to support newcomers in putting the pieces of the puzzle, to paraphrase *Lysistrata*, together. Specifically, through my participant observation I uncovered how management of the respective community currency movements included an element of what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 47) variably refer to as '*explicit pedagogy*', '*strategic*' or '*methodological inculcation*'. For, time after time, core members of the three community currency movements tried to instil to newcomers the rules and habits of the alternative economy. In particular, as core members were well aware of how community currency activism was always a new idea, no matter how familiar it seemed (*e.g. FD: 14/10/2014; 15/10/2014*), they frequently attempted to enhance learning of how to perform the economy outside the capitalist market – staging events such as public trading bazaars and start-up briefings that would help practically convey the meanings and deliver the necessary know-how on how to carry-out trades.

For instance, over my stay in Athens, the Votsalo LETS organised two open-air exchange bazaars (see Fig.5.1) which *'aimed at practically and tangibly showing people how they can actually live without mainstream money'* (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member – FD: 15/10/2014), and I experienced a number of one-to-one introductions to the alternative economy for newcomers – including myself. Core in such attempts to familiarise newcomers with the alternative economy was a common narrative around *'making the alternative the new normal'* or *'normalising the unorthodox'* as succinctly put by Lysistrata and Pandora respectively (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 15/10/2014).



Figure 5.1: Handmade and second-hand goods on “sale” during the open-air (trading) bazaar of the Votsalo LETS (19/10/2014)

The following field-diary entry from a start-up talk for newcomers to the Athens time-bank is indicative of this attempt:

Hera's start-up talk for newcomers conveyed her anxiety to ensure that they didn't become disillusioned or overwhelmed by the possible initial difficulties of trading – realising that time-banking was a novelty for many of them. She

was eager to highlight how many people find it hard to start with – how many new members don't even know what they can offer. [...] But, simultaneously, she was eager to outline how it all works out in the end – once you get the hang of it. For, as she highlighted, 'the truly emancipatory thing about time-banking is how it offers everyone the ability to trade without [mainstream] money'. [...] To begin with, she outlined the rules and technical aspects of the time-bank. Amongst others, though, she also highlighted how everyone can bring something valuable to the table – even if it's something as simple as helping someone sort their closet out – and how they would gradually develop competence and social relations to make trading easy (Athens time-bank weekly meeting – FD: 28/09/2014).

As the above-cited field-diary excerpt highlights, these activities ultimately constituted orchestrated attempts to introduce new members to the spirit and practices of the alternative economy – discursively assembling what Schatzki (1996) calls practices-as-entities (i.e. as idealised entities enabling novice activists to understand how to perform everyday activism). Hence, in drawing on Bourdieu's (e.g. 1977; 1990) conceptualisation of social practices, Fig.5.2 attempts to schematically outline how start-up talks to newcomers – including myself – did not only introduce the rules of the movement field, but also inadvertently reproduced an understanding of novel non-capitalist entities such as trading as multi-dimensional entities. Specifically, as Fig.5.2 outlines, during start-up talks core members focused on uncovering:

- i. The stocks of *capital* members already had (in terms of their skills and know-how) or would develop that would support practices like trading – as suggested by ideas that: *'we all have something to offer' or that 'it will be a bit difficult to start with, but you'll get the hang of it' (Pandora, Votsalo core member; FD: 27/05/2014).*
- ii. The role alternative currencies could play as a replacement of mainstream money.
- iii. How critiques of the failing mainstream gained additional significance when informing practices. For *'as they've taken us out of their economy,*

practicing our own economy is like rubbing-it into their face! (Sappho, Votsalo core member – FD: 27/05/2014).

- iv. How ‘community currencies is just a fancy new name we’ve given to stuff we anyway did – one way or another’ – ‘an extension to sharing goods with and helping-out friends and families’ (Kallisto, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member – FD: 28/09/2014) – and, thus, something that aligned with their *habitual* dispositions.
- v. How community currencies could support a plethora of everyday practices without the use of mainstream money – with the coordinators involved sharing, for instance, rich narratives of how other members and themselves had managed to support their parenting duties without relying on the mainstream market (e.g. FD: 27/05/2014; 28/09/2014).

Nonetheless, this was far from a successful process. For, as exemplified below, novel non-capitalist practices-as-entities (Schatzki 1996) could not instantaneously turn into concrete practices on the ground:

There’s a massive leap between envisioning “another world” – as we continuously proclaim – and actually performing a different economy (Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 15/10/2014).

You leave the start-up talk and you’re really excited – really confident that it’s all fairly easy and straight-forward. But you’d really be surprised by how unexpectedly difficult some things prove to be in practice... It all takes time to get used to – and effort... (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos non-core member – FD: 12/07/2014).

It all sounded, um... simple – straightforward! [...] I thought that I could carry-on getting goods and services without any real trouble. But, I was soon proven wrong! This alternative, err, “market”, has entirely different rules and rhythms and requires a different set of skills than those typical of the, err, “normal” market. [...] But the more you use them [i.e. alternative currencies] the more competent you become. [Pause] Only now – after two years of being in the movement – can I really say I’m competent enough to... for instance, to, err, get things like English [language] lessons and stuff for my

kids using “Votsala” [i.e. LETS credits] (Roxane, Votsalo core member).

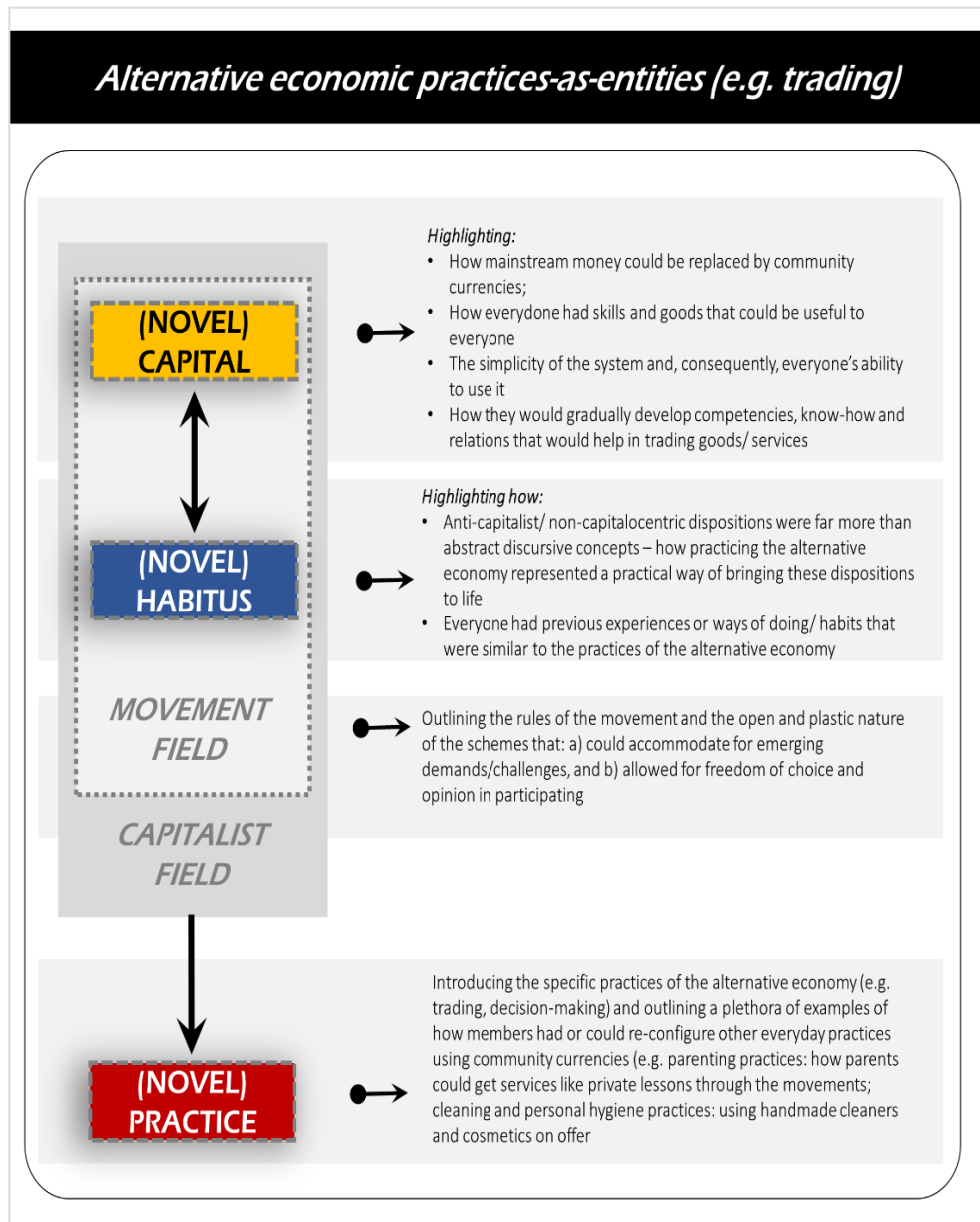


Figure 5.2: Start-up talks as an attempt to discursively assemble practices-as-entities

Why, then, was this the case – especially vis-à-vis the relative familiarity of the alternative economy (see Chapter 4 – Section 4.3)? What stood in the way of instantaneously enacting novel non-capitalist practices? What are the initial hurdles to action overlooked by otherwise inspiring scholarship on the moment of crisis and on everyday activism? Sub-section 5.1.1 below responds to these questions – thus furthering the response to

the second research question regarding whether and how novel non-capitalist practices emerge through community currency activism.

5.1.1 Uncovering the initial challenges of practicing the alternative economy

Inspiring scholarship on crises and everyday (crisis) activism highlights how the moment of crisis informs ‘a micro-cosmos of evolution’ (Morin 1993, 5) – thus constituting a critical turning point in human history (e.g. Cordero 2016| Noys 2011). Nonetheless, these politically motivational assertions fail to grasp the challenges and processes leading to social transformation on the ground. Hence, in further addressing the second research question on whether and how novel non-capitalist emerge through crisis community currency activism, this sub-section corroborates the argument that non-capitalist practices did not emerge out of thin air. Specifically, it documents the four key hurdles activists had to overcome before being in a position to enact and routinize novel non-capitalist practices. These reflect both the unease of transposing pre-existing dispositions and *habiti* to a novel an unknown social field, but also how everyday practices are inseparable from the materiality and the realities of the mainstream economic *field*.

First, whilst the economic crisis led to a wide-ranging unmaking of previously unquestioned *doxic* beliefs (see Chapter 4 – Sections 4.1-4.2), many of the rules and structures of perception that pertained to the pre-existing *habiti* of many activists had become human nature. This meant that things outside these rules and structures often clashed with their *habitus* and, thus, that the logics of the alternative economy were initially experienced as absurd by many members (following Bourdieu 1990). For instance, newcomers or even seasoned activists reflecting on their early experiences were not initially at ease with the different rhythms and

demands of the alternative economy – treating systemic rules with scepticism:

Once more, we embarked on a lengthy discussion as to why newcomers weren't really trading that much – if at all. Sophia was the first to offer her opinion, highlighting how this was not surprising – how it takes time for people to learn, understand, yet alone adopt, the working principles of the alternative economy (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 21/10/2014).

It made little sense – to begin with... You might have needed an electrician to repair the simplest of things at your home, but you had to go into all the trouble of posting an ad, hoping that someone might see it, waiting for ages for someone to respond... And then it would take ages to actually arrange for him to come over. [Pause] It was just much more convenient to get all this, um... the “conventional” way (Zoe, Votsalo non-core member).

Second, the data collected uncovered how mainstream money is not instantaneously interchangeable with alternative currencies. Rather, it is oftentimes an irreplaceable constitutive ingredient of consumption practices. For community currency activists had developed as economic actors with ‘reasonable expectations’ (Bourdieu 2005, 214) around the convenience and immediacy of economic exchanges that could not be met though the alternative economic *field* and its novel forms of *capital*:

[Mainstream] money is just so, um... tangible – you immediately pay for something when you get it. But here, it's far more complicated: credits are somewhat “detached” from those moments of consumption. [...] It's not simply that you can't just replace [mainstream] money for credits, but also the fact that you have to log-on to the platform at home to make a payment after an exchange. It sort of adds another dimension of complexity you are not really accustomed to – initially (Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member – Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 21/10/2014).

With [mainstream] money it's as simple as spending it immediately when you have it and when you need something. [Pause] But here, you really need to go into the, um..., into the “trouble” of planning ahead and making an effort

to arrange for a trade (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member).

Third, whilst all members appreciated how they could draw on transposable skills and knowledge (or *cultural capital*) acquired from previous endeavours, they collectively proclaimed how it was initially challenging to make use of this *capital*. As Solon (*Votsalo non-core member*) characteristically put it: *'It's the classic case of having that gut feeling you've got everything you need to succeed, but, um... not really knowing how to put it all to good use'*. Accordingly, many members stressed a gap between desiring to engage in non-capitalist practices and being briefed on how this might take place, and the actuality of performing everyday activism:

Reflecting on how some members still found the whole thing challenging, Demetra asserted that it was far from surprising: 'nothing had actually prepared us for this – no matter how competent we felt to start with' (Athens time-bank weekly meeting, FD: 13/07/2014).

Our comrades filled us in on everything – they offered their advice, skills and labour to help set all this up. But once we were left on our own, we found everything was difficult, overwhelming... We just couldn't get into the mind-set of automatically and immediately – without much thought – managing the movement. [...] All the "ingredients" were there, but something was still missing to complete the "recipe" (Sappho, Votsalo core member).

Fourth, and finally, many activists initially found it difficult to negotiate their participation in both the alternative and the mainstream economic *fields*. Their practices had either been routinized under a capitalist *field* and *habitus*, or certain types of *cultural capital* were of worth in both markets. As such, many novice members were, frequently, at odds with interrupting capitalistic routines in trying to enact even the most mundane of non-capitalist practices:

Sophia stressed some of the difficulties experienced in trying to make trading part of her (daily) routine. She shared a very detailed narrative of how she has to plan ahead and order a new batch [of shampoos] well in advance

because of the time it takes for Alexandra to prepare them. [...] And, ultimately, how challenging it was to escape from the habitual ease of just popping into a store whenever she runs out of shampoo (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 09/09/2014).

Consequently, in explicitly addressing the second research question concerning activist abilities to enact novel practices, it is suffice to say that the economic crisis was initially an era of destabilised but enduring practices for novice community currency activists. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1977a) argue, because dispositions and *capital* are embodied in symbolic forms, the *habitus* tends to develop a momentum that can generate practices even after the original conditions shaping it have vanished. Subsequently, there is also a fine-print to the above cited narratives. The following two extracts are prime examples of the ‘*hysteresis effect*’ (ibid., 78-9) whereby a number of members reflecting on their early days in the movements highlighted how even after the outbreak of the crisis they were still involved in practices they now understand as ‘*anachronistic*’ (Sophia, Votsalo core member), ‘*stubbornly resistant*’ (Eupheria, Athens time-bank core member), or ‘*ill-informed*’ (Solon, Votsalo non-core member, FD: 10/07/2014):

You don’t have the money, but you can’t just stop doing whatever it is you are doing, because you know of no other way of doing it. So you try borrowing money – from friends and family – to start with... Then, you realise that it’s impossible to keep doing that for ever... (Solon, Votsalo non-core member).

Maybe it’s an unconscious refusal to accept the new reality, maybe it’s the impossibility of breaking-away from things you always do – from things that, essentially, define who you are... But it all eventually hits in – sooner or later. You realise you have to accept the new reality – how you’ll never be able to do things the same way again (Eupheria, Athens time-bank core member).

How then could many seasoned members like Sophia now juxtapose such challenges experienced when they were novice activists against an assertion that ‘*we just got the hand of it*’ (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD:

09/09/2014)? How did many community currency activists manage to transform a number of their practices – thus rendering the crisis into an opportunity for micro-level social change? In furthering the response to the second research question concerning activist agency to enact non-capitalist practices, the following section will uncover the evolutionary development of novel practices.

5.2 The evolutionary development of novel practices

Against the backdrop of challenging attempts to enact novel non-capitalist practices, my ethnographic study was also an immersion into a number of success-stories of being able to enact novel non-capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis. For it became obvious that an emerging career in community currency activism was unfolding – rendering novice activists into seasoned activists with enduring practices. This narrative of the gradual familiarisation with alternative economic practices is, perhaps, best summarised through the following exemplifying excerpt from participant observation notes detailing how goods traded through the Votsalo LETS:

For Sophia, being able to both order and use [Alexandra's] handmade shampoos when showering appropriately was a cause for celebration. Something as mundane as not having to rely on the mainstream market for a shampoo and 'gradually getting to grips with using it' had thrilled her. As she explained, it wasn't just that she 'gradually' managed to develop competence in trading – being capable of 'gradually' overcoming her initial unease to trade with people she did know and of adjusting to the slower and more complicated process of getting a shampoo when compared against 'the ease of just popping to the store next door to get one'. Furthermore, it wasn't simply because of her eventual success in re-configuring her showering routines when using these products – automatically knowing how much shampoo to use, what water temperature worked best to make foam and how to prevent her hair from getting dry when using it. Instead, she valued the 'symbolic importance' of this achievement: how it excellently

exemplified the manifold mundane practices she was 'gradually' managing to reshape and routinize through participation in the movement (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 09/09/2014).

At core, the above-cited excerpt suggests that the ability to trade and enact everyday practices using traded goods does not just depend on becoming a member of a community currency movement and learning and following the rules of conduct. Routinizing alternative economic practices was not just about laboriously acquiring the 'alien ways' of the alternative economy (Bourdieu 1979, 5), but also about "sedimenting" these practices. For *'you are only really able to trade on a regular basis once you find that delicate balance between working [in the mainstream labour market] and trading in the time-bank' – 'once you are automatically able to log on the system, carry-out an trade, and register it online without having to refer back to the rule-book' (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank – FD: 29/12/2014).* For *'unless you manage to make trading part of your daily routine, you just revert to the ease of the mainstream market – its convenience, ease and speed of service' (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).* For *'unless you make a habit out of trading, then you are overwhelmed by its "complexity" when compared to the mainstream market' (Alexandra, Votsalo core member – FD: 28/10/2014).*

At core, I contend that this "sedimentation" (Bourdieu 1979, 5) of alternative economic practices is an evolutionary and time-dependent process – as suggested by the repeated use of the word "gradually" in Sophia's narrative of trading handmade cosmetics. Indeed, this excerpt exemplifies how *'practical mastery'* (ibid.) of the alternative economy emerged over time. Central in this time-intensive process was the eventual alignment of available *capital*, principles and structures and the slow formation of competence that brought the transformation of everyday practices full circle. For as Noble and Watkins (2003, 527) highlight: 'the "feel for the game" is developed over time and is only acquired through enormous application'. Leontios's *(Holargos-Papagos time-bank core*

member) metaphor of the gradually emerging feel for community currency activism as ‘*a stone-wall built one stone at a time*’ is, thus, telling of this slow habituation process (following Noble and Watkins 2003).

Above all else, though, ongoing engagement with the alternative economy over time enabled a significant transformation of novice activists into practice virtuosos. For, as Leontios (*Holargos-Papagos core member*) asserts, community currency activism ‘*entails the ability to make decisions on the spot*’. Specifically, in line with Bourdieu’s (1992, 19; 120-1) argument that virtuosos do not follow to precise norms and principles but, rather, act through a generalised ‘*sense of the game*’ (Bourdieu 1992, 19, 120-1), I made an abundance of field-notes capturing the core idea that the alternative economy had, over time, become such an integral part of the lives of some activists that they even exhibited ‘*practical flexibility*’ (Bourdieu 1992, 19). Against a backdrop of many community currency activists who lacked a ‘*feel for the game*’ (Bourdieu 1990), the unprompted references made in the excerpts cited below to ideas around ‘*mastering*’ specific heterodox economic practices the more you engage with them are clear signs of how community currency activism could steadily transform into a normal part and way of life (following de Certeau 1984; Mihelich and Storrs 2003). For as an outcome of their gradual familiarization with the alternative economic game, a number of activists were eventually able to go above and beyond official nostrums and improvise their way through activism – as excellently exemplified below:

For Zoe, not having enough disposable “Votsala” [credits] was a real threat to her ability to get the goods and services she needed. But Alexandra responded to her anxiety and worries by telling us how, after considerable experience in trading, she had circumvented this problem: ‘mastering [h]er ability to trade in spite of challenges’ by making unofficial arrangements to pay for the goods and services when her credit limit wasn’t in the red (i.e. when she would earn a lot of credits by selling her new batch of handmade shampoos or when her kids were on a break and she wouldn’t be spending that much for their English lessons). For as Alexandra asserted: ‘It’s not part

of the rules, but you just have to bend them – sometimes’. (FD: Votsalo weekly meeting, 28/10/2014).

*Following the, umm, “rule-book”, we should, umm, record our trades on the online platform. But, as you know, I’m s**t with computers and I don’t even have internet [connection] at home. So, I’ve sort of gradually improvised, and I’ve now “mastered” this “system” whereby I record all my trades on paper and then have my partner log everything in once every fortnight or so, when he’s at work. [...] Its, err, unconventional, but it works! (Aikaterine, Votsalo non-core member).*

Evidently, the above-cited excerpts are also connected by a common process of experimentation with the alternative economy that also played an important role in enabling the enactment and routinization of novel non-capitalist practices. For whilst Bourdieu’s conceptual corpus largely focuses on the reproduction of the *habitus* (e.g. 1977; 1990), I contend that community currency activists could only succeed in adapting to new circumstances ‘by means of creative reinventions which is this very opposite of a purely mechanical and passive forced accommodation’ (Bourdieu 1979, 4; see also Dalton 2004). At core, I contend that negotiating provisional selves and practices was essential in enabling this micro-level transformation. Indeed, my ethnography uncovered a recurrent theme around experimentation as a mechanism taking non-capitalist practices forward: ‘*You just try to put the pieces of the puzzle together – one by one and by trying out different, umm, arrangements for effective trading in the meantime. [Pause] That’s the only way of regaining control of what we do – of our everyday lives!*’ (Pandora, Votsalo core member). For practicing the alternative economy depended on ‘*discovering your way through it all*’ – ‘*trying out different approaches when contacting people to arrange a trade, when posting a “need” on the online directory and, critically, when trying to balance your work and life commitments and rhythms with the new demands of the alternative economy*’ (ibid.). For ‘*in becoming involved, you also have to rediscover your self – to adjust what you do and how you do it,*

to make the most of the goods, services and credits available, and to accept the different rhythms of the alternative economy without feeling like a fish out of water' (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member).

In this light, and in direct response to the second research question on whether and how novel practices might emerge, community currency movements might best be understood as 'laboratories of experience' (Melucci 1996) where increasing engagement in heterodox doings helped produce a heterodox *habitus* and novel practices. This claim helps highlight that whilst all activists were pre-disposed to practice the alternative economy in distinct manners, their emerging practices are, in fact, united by the common theme of evolution-in-practice. However, both my data analysis and conceptual models (e.g. Yang 2014) on how novel practices habituate over time and through experimentation uncover two further important conditions for making non-capitalist practices: a) pedagogy and reflexivity, and b) growing stocks of social *capital* and *illusio*. In further exploring how novel practices are enacted through community currency activism (see research question 2), the following two sub-sections detail these conditions.

5.2.1 Making novel practices through pedagogic action and reflexivity

The accounts documented in Section 5.2 above testify to the veracity of claims raised by scholars of everyday activism around society's creative capacities for emancipatory social change (e.g. Holloway 2002; 2010; Vatter 2009). For it is principally through their concrete 'doing in-against-and-beyond abstract labour' (Holloway 2010, 178) – by making use of their omnipresent 'resource' of 'expanded productivity' (Hardt and Negri 2009, 38) – that many activists were able to enact novel non-capitalist practices. However, I contend that the enactment of novel non-capitalist practices does not only depend on the activist 'power-to' (Holloway 2002;

2010) experiment with provisional selves and practices, but also on learning-through-practice. In other words, in furthering the response to the second research question on whether and how novel practices emerge, I argue that, above all else, this experimental process is important in that it is only through such experiences that activists learn how to perform the alternative economy.

Most of the time, this process manifested as an imperceptible familiarisation – as evident by the vague language used to describe how many provisional doings gave way to more routinized practice nexuses:

It just happened – that's all! (Sophia, Votsalo core member – FD: 09/09/2014).

I'm not really sure how or when the change happened. I just know I felt uneasy with it all at first, and it has now become by second nature... I guess I just, umm, learned how to be an effective user [of community currencies] (Menodora, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

Such quotations embody Bourdieu's (2000, 142-3) assertion that 'the agent engaged in practice knows the world ... too well [...] and takes it for granted, precisely because [s]he is caught up in it'. Occasionally though, and as exemplified through the excerpt from participant observation notes cited below, some activists were able to produce richer narratives that detailed how learning-through-action transformed experimental praxis into more stable practice nexuses. These accounts reveal how a key outcome of experimentation is the inculcation of tacit, practical knowledge (following Yang 2014; Bourdieu 1990). For the central issue in learning 'is becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice' (Pantzar and Shove 2010, 448) – an idea closely matched by Aristotle's (*Athens time-bank core member*) assertion that: 'we heard about community currencies from others, we've learned how they go about trading and managing the scheme, but we're truly learning how to do all this by... err, by actually doing stuff on the ground':

Sophia's account of her ongoing attempts to effectively use Alexandra's handmade shampoos ended with what she referred to as 'the weird realisation' that a whole new host of "user skills" were necessarily learned in using these shampoos. She had to develop a sensitivity of planning her orders well in advance in light of the time it took for a new batch to be produced on-demand, and to experiment a lot to be able to use these shampoos. [...] For, as she explained: 'you don't get as much foam as with conventional shampoos, so you have to use a larger amount; but not too much, because your hair gets really dry'. So, as she stressed, 'you can only learn what's appropriate through trial-and-error' (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 09/09/2014).

Underlying this '*implicit pedagogy*' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 47) is the reflexive stance adopted by many members in attempting to make non-capitalist practices. For as Yang (2014, 1533) highlights, a change in practices requires for an individual to 'be reflexive all the way through until a secondary *habitus* is constructed'. The epitome of this reflexive approach was, undoubtedly, the decision made by the core team of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank to organise an annual review meeting (see Fig.5.5).



Figure 5.3: 'SWOT' analysis of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank (25/01/2015)

Specifically, this review constituted an orchestrated attempt to ‘*start using the knowledge gained by figuring action-plans for the future*’ (Leontios, *Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member – FD: 23/12/2014*). This culminated in two meetings totalling into a 12-hour long ‘SWOT’ analysis, hierarchisation of goals and strategy design exercise I was fortunate enough to experience over the course of my data collection. Here, activists were given the chance to reflect on accomplishments and persisting challenges faced (*Holargos-Papagos SWOT analysis, FD: 25/01/2015*). Above all else though, as Hypatia asserted, it was ‘*a great opportunity*’ to ‘*tap into the knowledge*’ I had gathered on the movement through my scholarly engagement (*Holargos-Papagos SWOT analysis, FD: 25/01/2015*).

Most importantly, though, reflexivity manifested itself as an integral part of the everyday rhythms of the three community currency movements – with activists being reflexive all the way through until they acquired a novel *habitus* – in terms of movement management, trading, and making use of the goods or services traded. First, through an ongoing intra-personal ‘thought and talk’ process (Archer 2003, 167), community currency activists both shared tacit knowledge on performing the alternative economy and reflected on themselves in relation to the alternative economy *field*. As Pandora (*Votsalo core member – FD: 20/12/2014*) succinctly put it: ‘*For us, the alternative economy was as much a discussion and a thought-process about doing things as it was about actually going about doing them*’. Indeed, members from all three movements attached great importance to meetings and events that brought members together as they acted as milieus supporting reflexive thinking:

For Lysistrata, that was the whole point of having open consensus decision-making assemblies. It was all about bringing people together – diverse views, experiences and tacit knowledge from either the Votsalo LETS or other social movements – and reflecting on how the movement could be taken forward to enable greater effectiveness in supporting alternative livelihoods less

dependent on mainstream money (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 23/09/2014)

Once more, discussions prior to the official start of the meeting were dominated by the sharing of advice and tacit knowledge on how to best use Alexandra's handmade shampoos. And once more, people were reflecting on what worked best for them and how they've adjusted advice. For Solon, this was, obviously, far from interesting but, simultaneously, a 'typical example' of how 'the group develops by people discussing and reflecting in unison' (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 08/07/2014).

Second, 'autonomous reflexives' (Archer 2003) involved in making novel practices were far more self-assured out of scepticism of the expertise of others – as exemplified below:

Zoe approached me to discuss her reservations regarding everyone's advice to adopt Alexandra's innovative approach to overcoming credit shortages. As she asserted: 'What works for others doesn't work for all of us. [...] Alexandra may have found an innovative way of taking her limited credits forward by making unofficial arrangements to pay for the goods and services when her credit limit isn't in the red, but not everyone would accept getting paid several months after providing a service. So, it's back to the "drawing board" for me – to try and find ways of either making the most of my limited credits or of earning more credits' (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 28/10/2014).

Finally, through 'meta-reflexivity' (Archer 2003), many community currency activists questioned themselves and, specifically, whether they were doing something wrong in trying to practice the alternative economy:

Aikaterine was particularly self-reflective today, considering whether 'she was the problem in the equation'. She had been a member of the group from day one, but she kept forgetting how to log a trade in the online accounts database, was still overwhelmed with anxiety whenever she had to make a trade with someone she didn't know that well, and still felt uneasy with the whole process of identifying a trading partner through the online directory and arranging for a trade (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 08/07/2014).

So you think to yourself: 'Maybe you haven't tried enough, maybe you should give trading another go – in spite of finding it rather difficult – especially when you don't know the other person.' [...] And, err, you see everyone else being more at ease with it all, so you just think to yourself: what the heck – I'll give it another go! [Pause] And, thank God, most of the times it proves worth the effort... (Kallisto, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Hence, many activists like Pandora (*Votsalo* core member, FD: 08/07/2014) claimed that *'it is primarily because of the lessons learnt and because of our ongoing reflection that this abstract idea of an alternative economy gained real currency and real-world applicability'*. However, I contend that this is only part of the story of enacting novel non-capitalist practices. For in furthering the response to the second research question on whether and how novel practices emerge through community currency activism, sub-section 5.2.2 uncovers the growing abundance of social *capital* and *illusio* (or faith) in the alternative economy as the missing links enabling a transition in habits.

5.2.2 The growing abundance of *social capital* and *illusio* as the missing links in enabling a transition in habits

In further developing Bourdieu's and Passeron's (1977) assertion that a (secondary) *habitus* can develop through the acquisition of knowledge and cultural *capital* – as outlined above – I contend that two further, interrelated, elements played a crucial role in transforming the crisis into an opportunity for social change – in terms of enabling shifts in some practices and the *habitus*. Specifically, in advancing the response to the second research question on whether and how novel practices emerge through community currency activism, this section details how the growing abundance of *social capital*, and sustained or enhanced social movement *illusio* (Bourdieu 1998) to keep experimenting are key in enabling novel practices.

To begin with, for Bourdieu (e.g. 1977; 1990), *social capital* is an enabling mechanism for social practices. Nonetheless, bringing people together in community currency movements was, on its own, too weak of a force for producing the *social capital* necessary for trading. Many members stressed their initial unease with trading with members they did not really know in person and, thus, did not trust (e.g. Rhode, *Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member*; Aikaterine, *Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 08/07/2014*). Thus, trading often begun or took-off once members developed social connections. As such, the exemplifying quotations cited below highlight how social relations did not emerge or develop through exchanges of goods and services (what North (2006) refers to as ‘relationship trading’), but were rather the pre-requisite for trading. For I contend that non-capitalist practices were enabled by what I label as “*knowledge capital*” – whereby participation in exchanges creates knowledge in relation to trust and commitment necessary in practices like trading:

But, things have definitely changed since last summer when I decided to join a couple of friends who were going camping with others from the time-bank... I got to establish relations, I got to know people much better and, ever since, whenever I need a relevant service, these are the first people I think of... We are, once again, a tightly-knit group – trusting each other! (Phoibe, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

I only really started to trade once I got to know people in the meetings – and the like. [...] We formed and maintain friendships, and we just know we can rely on each other for a good quality service (Agnes, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

Second, and equally importantly, the enactment of non-capitalist practices was further supported by the growing feeling that engagement in the alternative economy was a worthwhile endeavour – what Bourdieu (e.g. 1990) refers to as (social movement) *illusio*. For in experiencing the success-stories of the alternative economy first hand, many activists were able to

discursively construct the alternative economy as something very tangible – as an endeavour that could only move forwards in the future in spite of initial challenges. For instance, the small successes of activists like Sophia who were able to effectively use traded cosmetics and make them part of their showering routines, triggers their participation momentum and their ‘commitment to making the alternative economy an even bigger part of daily life’ (Sophia, Votsalo core member). For ‘these small successes are critical in grounding the, um... abstract ideas of an alternative economy to the realities faced’ (ibid.). Hence, and as the following exemplifying extracts suggest, the initial unease in trying to practice the alternative economy would have resulted in broad disillusionment and non-participation if many struggling activists did not also become exposed to the thoroughly accessible evolutionary process of an alternative economy that only moves forward:

You get involved and start trading with this vague idea that we have to take our lives back into our hands. But you don't really know how... [Pause] You realise that it takes much more than setting up a movement – that it takes effort and time. [...] Occasionally you find yourself one step away from giving up... But, at the same time, you see other, older members who are really flourishing in these movements... So that really helps put things into perspective. It helps realise that it's actually possible to become someone like them – one small step at a time (Merope, Athens time-bank non-core member).

It's one step at a time – it's a slow process... But that's what makes it all so accessible, so tangible... You know it takes time and effort but, simultaneously, from your own experience, you sort of realise that it all pays-off in the end. The task at hand might seem overwhelmingly large at moments, to start with, but realising that every little helps and that the longer you try things out the more likely you are to achieve certain ends ensure that you remain committed to experimenting (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member).

Not surprisingly then, some Anarchist members had enhanced faith

that their activity was meaningful and worthwhile in that it also pointed to the possibility of broader social change in the future – either in terms of demonstrating how it was possible to change everyday practices or because milieus like consensus decision-making were celebrated as ‘explicit’ forms of pedagogy in a broader quest for socio-political change (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1997, 47). In other words, not only do these findings suggest that practicing the alternative economy sustained *illusio* in the alternative economy that, ultimately, helped habituate practices, but also that community currencies can, occasionally, help restore faith in life despite-yet-beyond capitalism. For they informed the ‘*docta spes*’, or educated hope (Bloch 1986), that broader social change was within their agentic capacities. Indeed, in acknowledging how the current world-order conditions us into certain types of thinking and doing (see De Angelis 2007), Anarchists saw their community currency movements as what Melucci (1996) would call ‘laboratories of experience’; ‘laboratories’ of learning new norms and becoming accustomed to new practices. It is thus, no coincidence how many Anarchists themselves precisely referred to their local currency movements as ‘*laboratories of experimentation and learning for something bigger*’ (Solon, Votsalo non-core member):

It all sounds good in principle, but it takes a massive leap of faith to actually hope that this will work in practice. [Pause] But this is what this movement has given us: hope that things can change! [...] Today I’ve managed to buy a shampoo without using any [mainstream] money, so who knows... tomorrow – sometime in the future – I might be able to live with no [mainstream] money at all! There’s definitely a light at the end of the tunnel, and we’re walking – one small step at a time – towards it! (Sophia, Votsalo core member)

Ultimately then, growing stocks of *social capital* and *illusio* were seen by many members as the missing links in (re)making a number of practices – and especially trading:

You try lots of different things out but, ultimately, being able to trade as part

of your everyday life depends on both knowing a lot of people in the movement and, umm, feeling that it's sort of worth the effort... So the more you do it, the more potential you have... (Isidora, Athens time-bank non-core member).

But we must also remember that we, as a group, have also changed a lot in this process... We came closer to each other, learned to respect and understand each other, became a body in unison that exchanges services and supports each other without second thought... [Pause] And last – but definitely not least – by, umm, seeing the actual impact the movement has had on the [local] community we keep regaining our momentum to keep going... So yes [pause] all the stars have aligned, you could say! (Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member)

Hence, in furthering the response to the second research question on whether and how novel non-capitalist practices emerge, it is suffice to say that these findings make the challenge of enacting novel non-capitalist practices frighteningly large. For beyond the uncritical celebration of everyday activism (see Chapter 2), it becomes clear that evolution in practice entails significant advancements in a number of areas. And yet, this sub-section also seems to suggest that the alternative economy can only ever move forward in that ever growing stocks of *capital* and *illusio* imply that community currency activists also have considerable agential potentialities (Sztompka 1991) to enact further non-capitalist practices

However, it would be wrong to assume that the novel non-capitalist practices and possible future practices of community currency activists are only the outcomes of the internal workings of community currency movements. For activists may have acquired a secondary activist *habitus* through their engagement in the alternative economy and through ever growing stocks of *embodied capital*, but they did not lose their past selves in so doing. Hence, Section 5.3 details how pre-held habitual dispositions also played a role in shaping activist practices.

5.3 Bringing the past into novel practices

In explicitly addressing the second research question on whether and how novel non-capitalist practices emerge through community currency activism, this section aims to clarify how the evolutionary habituation process detailed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 above did not just emerge from a blank canvas. Rather, in coming to grips with and creating the new realities and practices of the alternative economy, the activists I encountered were also influenced by their personal biographies that followed them.

Whilst Bourdieu's practice theory has been accused of determinism and closure, a number of scholars (e.g. Crossley 2001, 2013; Dalton 2004) have highlighted how such criticisms have misinterpreted the Bourdieusian theoretical corpus. For the *habitus* is 'the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation' (Bourdieu 1990, 57). Drawing on this line of thought, and in directly addressing the second research question on whether and how non-capitalist practices can emerge through community currency activism, I argue that the same mechanisms are also at play when dealing with the concrete enactment of alternative economic practices on the ground. As Chapter 4 suggested, members entered the alternative economic *field* with four distinct clusters of dispositions and symbolic and cultural capital. If pre-held habitual dispositions suggest practical actions in otherwise novel *fields* (Bourdieu 1984, 172), then it follows that the non-capitalist practices that were eventually enacted should reflect this diversity. Specifically, whilst I did not uncover a class-based distinction in tastes and practices (as Bourdieu's (1984) work asserts), there is still distinction in how members with distinct biographies perform the alternative economy.

First, along the lines of Bourdieu's theorisation (e.g. 1977; 1984), I contend that activists perform distinctly different practices in their endless process of pursuing emancipation from the proliferating mainstream. Specifically, some activists were simply users of community currencies –

'simply exploiting the opportunities as they came' (Dion, Athens time-bank non-core member) – whilst others were also “field-workers” – *'finding [t]hemselves investing significant amounts of time and effort to movement management in believing that's the only way of establishing more permanent and effective structures that will permit trading to flourish'* (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). Indeed, as Eugenius (Athens time-bank non-core member, FD: 14/09/2014) succinctly put it *'I just do what suits be best – what I'm relatively familiar with and what I believe is meaningful'*. For instance, in lacking an activist background, Humanisers and Instrumentalists alike were largely absent from movement management – feeling out-of-place or incompetent. For *'it's all about leaving it to those who know best – to those who are experienced'* (Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member). Furthermore, in lacking any previous experience of social movement activism, many Humanisers and Instrumentalists did not have the necessary *illusio* (e.g. Bourdieu 1977) that would help them see participation in decision-making and management as a worthwhile endeavour. They had developed an aversion for this type of practice and, at best, attended meetings because of the *'side-benefit of catching-up with friends'* (Xenia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

Second, because of their heterogeneous biographical identities, activists enacted otherwise similar practices in distinctly different manners. Approaches to management practices to stimulate trading are telling of this distinction. On the one hand, the action repertoires of Anarchist core members I came across in the Athens time-bank and the Votsalo LETS are situated within a broad framework of prefiguration. As I noted at the end of the first weekly assembly of the group I attended: *'They went to great lengths to ensure that direct democracy was effectively practised: minutes of meetings were communicated to everyone for commenting and decision-making was always postponed until as many members as possible could contribute their opinions in an attempt to create a common sense of "ownership" of the movement that would, allegedly, enthuse everyone to*

become more involved and trade more in their alternative economic spaces' (Votsalo weekly meeting, FD: 06/04/2014). Furthermore, they repeatedly attempted broader networking – *'tapping into the knowledge and resources of other activists in place of resorting to mainstream institutions for assistance in attempting to stimulate trading'* (Pandora, Votsalo core member). As such, while the everyday activisms I engaged with were to a large extent locally and project-grounded, there were also attempts to reach-out to and transnational solidarities were starting to emerge.

On the other hand, Reformers were naturally driven to managing the Holargos-Papagos time-bank and stimulating trading as a more professionalised organisation. Drawing on their knowledge that *'social movements only succeed through alliances with the mainstream'* (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos core member), management was primarily an act of navigating through the political structure. For instance, the period immediately after the election of the left-wing SYRIZA to power in January 2015 found Reformers extensively discussing how to *'make the best of a far more favourable political situation and get some favourable legislation in place for alternative currencies'* (Euthalia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member; 10/02/2015 – email communication). Furthermore, they often embraced ideological heterogeneity. Through what Snow et al. (1986) refer to as *'frame alignment'* practices, *'they focused on mobilising the local community and on embracing everyone – broadening the issues with which they engaged to incorporate those of potential supporters in an attempt to bring as many activists, services and opportunities to trade into the time-bank as possible'* (Holargos-Papagos time-bank core group meeting, FD: 12/09/2014).

At core, the schemas of the *habitus* of these members function like the *'underlying grammar'* (Crossley 2001, 84) that drives action in the otherwise new field of community currencies. On the one hand, Anarchist *embodied capital* includes the acquisition of skills and knowledge of how to use consensus decision-making that has become *'second nature'* (Pandora,

Votsalo core member – FD: 03/06/2014). Further, they were drawing from a rich pool of *social capital* that made networking possible. Indeed, certain cooperative coffee shops, squats and regions of the city acted as the physical spaces where Anarchist members of the Votsalo LETS and the Athens time-bank congregated for quite some time before establishing their respective community currency movements – thus developing shared visions, norms, convictions and mutually supportive solidarities. On the other hand, Reformers had acquired their *embodied cultural capital* through an altogether different political past. Many had been involved in social movement organisations and organised political parties in the past – experiencing set leadership structures the professionalised mobilisation of resources, the use of majoritarian voting systems to approve decisions at meetings, and attempts to mainstream and diffuse social movements. Furthermore, these past political engagements acted as sources of *capital* they could draw from for support. For ‘*you can’t just get support from anyone*’ (*Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member*).

Third, and finally, because of pre-existing *habiti* transposed to the alternative economy, very different meanings are invested in otherwise similar practices like trading. Whilst Bourdieu (1984) asserts that routine practices are characterised by nexuses of pre-defined and shared meanings and links distinct nexuses of practices and tastes with specific classes, I came across a situation whereby trading was informed by a very diverse set of dispositions. For Instrumentalists, trading represented a novel way of filling in the voids left behind by a mainstream in crisis: ‘*the very practical ability to do what we have to do as citizens*’ (*Dion, Athens time-bank non-core member*) or a ‘*citizen duty when the state is failing*’ (*Eugenius, Athens time-bank non-core member*). For Anarchists, trading represented an act of ‘*living a hoped-for future in small-scale at the present*’; an ‘*act of everyday, umm, “politics”*’ (*Sappho, Votsalo core member*) or ‘*a small victory to the hegemony of capitalism*’ (*Hector, Athens time-bank non-core member – FD: 07/12/2014*). For Reformers, trading represented ‘*a politics of consumption testifying to the power of people when they come together*’ (*Leontios,*

Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member), or ‘the ability of humankind to “flourish” even under capitalism’ (*Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member*). Finally, for Humanisers it ‘constituted a sort of very practical challenge to the culture of individualism and to a life of little satisfaction’ (*Agnes, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member*). For while trades are important to Humanisers ‘because they form a main way through which people can interact’, the underlying belief-structure of Humanisers tends to focus on ‘the inherent value of community relations’ (*Xenia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member*).

Hence, as these community currency movements were milieus where there were no rigid ideals everyone should adopt, many community currency activists could maintain or even nourish their social movement *illutio* in place of being forced to become involved in practices that would deplete it. Thus, while Melucci (1989) stresses how it is the coming together of activists that constitutes the gluing force of ‘laboratories of experience’, the findings suggest that in community currencies it was actually their segregated nature that played a role in enthusing participants. For instance, as Theodora (*Votsalo non-core member*) succinctly asserted during a weekly assembly: ‘It’s because these movements mean everything to everyone – because we all have different understandings and ways of engaging. That’s why our movements have been so successful: because they don’t force you to do something you don’t want to; because they don’t force you to become someone you are not; because you are free to do whatever you want and to feel however you want!’ (FD: 20/11/2014).

As such, and in addressing the second research question concerning the ways in which novel non-capitalist practices might emerge in the wake of the crisis, these accounts make it clear that there is a past-present continuity in crisis community currency activism. For novel non-capitalist practices are, at core, informed by a ‘logic of temporal sequential causality’ (Potter 2000, 241-2): a logic whereby each preceding instance of life or community currency activism exercises an immediate impact and is causally

responsible for a successor action. From this perspective, the moment of crisis is not a radical break from normality as leading “crisologists” suggest (e.g. Benhabib 1986; Cordero 2016; Morin 1976). For the post-crash ‘micro-cosmos of evolution’ (Morin 1993, 5) is also an evolutionary outcome of pre-held transposable *habiti*.

5.4 Summary and conclusions

The empirically rich narrative on the emerging non-capitalist practices documented in this chapter allows for a well-informed response to the second, and penultimate, research question – namely:

Q.2: *Can (novel) non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about?*

In dealing with this question, the chapter uncovered how novel non-capitalist practices can, indeed, emerge through community currency activism – detailing four specific processes and dynamics enabling the enactment of novel non-capitalist practices: a) pre-existing *habiti* that enabled a number of activists to adopt novel yet relatively familiar practices, b) experimentation with provisional selves to make the links between the constituent ingredients of practices, c) learning-in-practice and reflexivity, and d) increasing stocks of *social capital* and *illusio* in the alternative economy as a game worth playing the more one engages in these movements. On the basis of this evolutionary process of experimentation and habituation, community currency activists can, indeed, transform their critique of capitalism and the austere state into an emancipatory and routinized practice. By bringing the *crisis-critique-change triplet* full circle, these movements transform into the true crisis of capitalism (following Holloway 2010) – enacting forms of post-crash resistance that transform into a normal part and way of life (e.g. de Certeau 1984, 26; Mihelich and Storrs 2003; 419; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013) – into a ‘regular’,

‘scattered’, ‘non-dramatic’, ‘non-confrontational’, ‘typically habitual’ and ‘semi-conscious’ social practices (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 37; see also Demetriou 2016 for an overview).

For Bourdieu (2000, 19), ‘the question of social agency and political intervention becomes very important’ in times of crisis. Consequently, the very ability to exhibit capacity to (re)make a number of everyday practices through a dual process of experimentation and learning-in-practice – and in spite of initially being weighted-down by “capitalistic” habits – is commendable. In this regard, drawing upon the works of Pickerill and Chatterton (2006, 730), the three crisis community currency movements explored in this research represent ‘a “space” where there is a questioning of the laws and social norms of society and a creative desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity, and citizenship’. For they propose what Hardt and Negri (2009, 212) refer to as ‘creative tools of desertion, exodus and nomadism’ and, in so doing, cultivate the creativity of individuals capable of making-do of closed, hopeless situations to enact alternative economies and practices (following Gibson-Graham 2006; North 2014). Specifically, I contend that these crisis community currency movements capture the essence of Leontidou’s (2015) conceptualisation of the ‘Smart City’ in crisis. For they: a) create ‘spaces of active participation which tend to shape alternative ways of belonging and living together’ (Vaiou and Kalandides 2016, 468), b) act as ‘concrete utopias’ (Dinersteinn 2015, 114) prefiguratively modelling social change, and c) function as educational laboratories for participants who engage in a process of informal learning-in-practice.

There is, however, a catch. There is no denying that the novel practices enacted are not radically transformative – as suggested by recurring examples around the gradually routinized mundane everyday practices of trading or personal hygiene (see the recurring example of Sophia’s experience of shampooing with handmade shampoos acquired through the Votsalo LETS). Accordingly, I suggest that whilst community

currency activism did, indeed, lead to the proliferation and routinisation of a number of everyday practices, there is little room for triumphalism in that it did not enable a nexus of practices that would genuinely support life despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity.

And yet, the implications of this analysis are more far-reaching. First, this data furthers our understanding regarding the habituation of non-capitalist practices through community currency activism – furthering and providing empirical grounding to the novel research model on emerging non-capitalist practices presented in Chapter 2 (see Fig.2.1). Fig.5.4 below details this novel understanding.

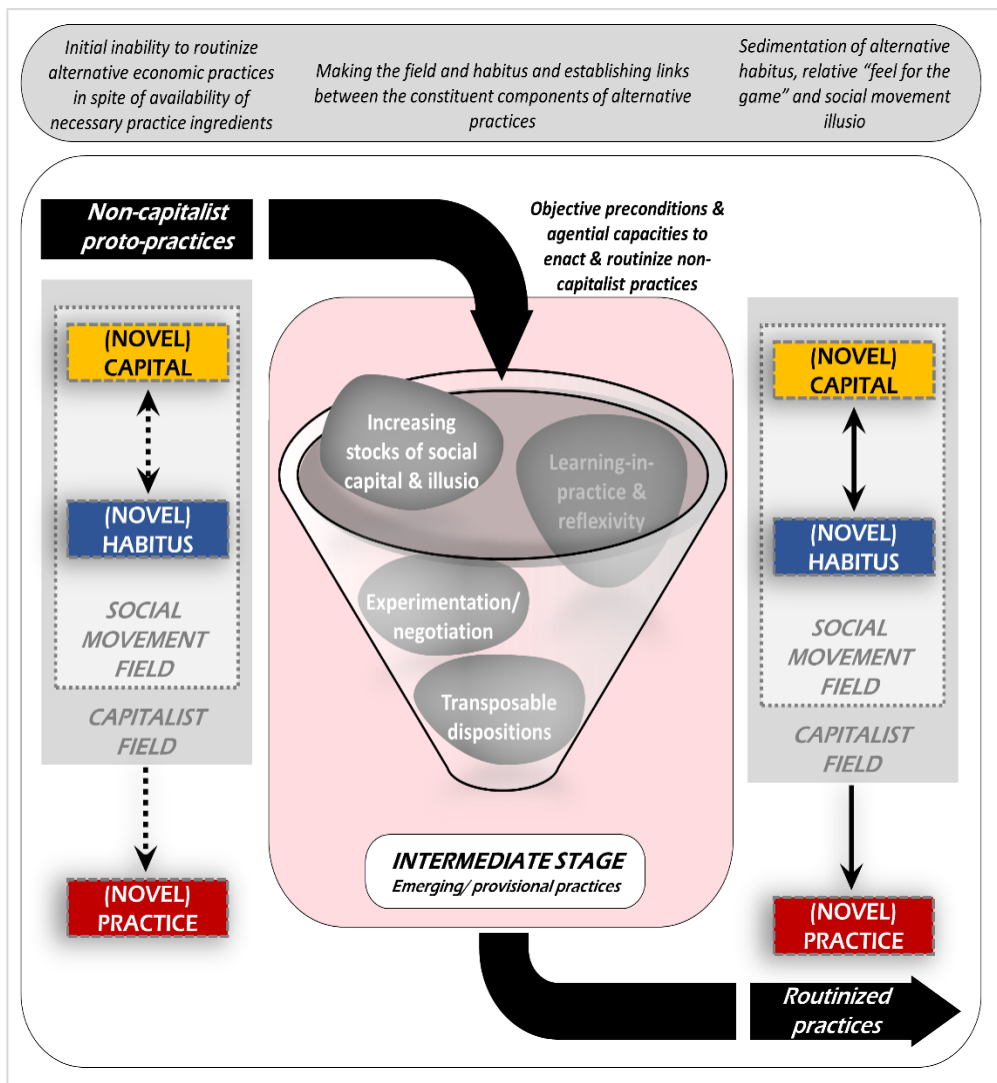


Figure 5.4: Reconceptualised habituation process

Specifically, Fig.5.4 reveals the messy complexity of transforming what Shove et al. (2012; 25) refer to as '*proto-practices*' into routinized non-capitalist practices – something that is most definitely missed by existing accounts of everyday crisis activism. For the empirical data presented in this chapter help develop a grounded understanding of the important intermediary stage between the second and the third stage of the habituation processes schematically envisioned through Fig.2.1 in Chapter 2. Whilst the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (see especially Section 2.3.4 and sub-section 2.3.4.1) allowed for some logical deductions with regards to the objective preconditions and agential capacities necessary to enact and routinize non-capitalist practices, these findings help clarify how experimentation, learning-in-practice and reflexivity, increasing stocks of *social capital* and belief (*illusio*) in the alternative economy the more one engages, as well as pre-existing practically-oriented dispositions are the four key stepping stones for routinized non-capitalist practices (see middle part of Fig.5.4).

Second, through the exploration of crisis community currency activism documented in this chapter, the core argument of this thesis regarding the appropriateness of Bourdieu's practice theory to exploring processes of social transformation during crises has been further corroborated. For the moment of the Greek (economic) crisis can only ever be understood as a trigger of activism and not as a fully blown out break from pre-existing identities and dispositions. Specifically, this analysis uncovers, for the first time, how a Bourdieusian-based analysis of crisis community currency movements can provide invaluable insights for the study of emerging non-capitalist practices – moving beyond under-developed scholarship on the moment of crisis and on everyday activism. For even if community currencies are understood as the transposition of pre-existing *habiti*, the *habitus* as a concept is flexible enough to account for this (Wacquant 1989, 45; Swartz 2002, 645).

However, it is also important to note how the relevance of Bourdieu's

theory in accounting for emerging non-capitalist practices is contingent upon ‘thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu’ (King 2000). For while Bourdieu’s scholarly corpus suggests that change in practices is possible – explicitly putting forth understandings of ‘creative reinventions’ informed by habitual dispositions in the wake of crises (Bourdieu 1979, 4; see also Dalton 2004) – it remains ill-equipped in accounting for how habituation takes place in the first place in order to deliver this change (e.g. Davey 2009; Noble and Watkins 2003; Strandbu and Streen-Johnsen 2014; Yang 2014). To be clear, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 17) recognise ‘*implicit*’ and ‘*explicit pedagogy*’ as modes for forming the *habitus*. However, as critics point out, when accounting for how *habiti* undergo change, pedagogy can only ever be one of the necessary conditions for change amongst others (e.g. Davey 2009; Noble and Watkins 2003; Strandbu and Streen-Johnsen 2014; Yang 2014). Furthermore, whilst Bourdieu is ‘by no means oblivious to the question of reflexivity’ during crises, ‘the nature and possibility of reflexivity are something of a mystery in his work’ (Crossley (2001, 117) and, as such, we had to think with-yet beyond Bourdieu to uncover the key role of reflexivity in making novel non-capitalist practices possible.

As such, the arguments presented in this chapter owe as much to Bourdieu’s own work as they do to the above cited scholars expanding on his work. Particularly, the conceptual model – and analysis in general terms – closely echoes the theoretical work of Yang (2014) by: a) adjusting her propositions as to how novel *habiti* are acquired to account for community currency activism, and b) providing empirical validation to claims around habituation that have, unfortunately, been constrained to the formal education *field* (e.g. Jo 2013; Lee and Kramer 2013)

In concluding that Bourdieu’s conceptual corpus and subsequent complementary work is well-suited for the study of community currency activism, it is also of critical importance to stress how the empirical results and conceptual arguments presented in this chapter help further the study of social movements, and community currencies in particular. First, while

Holloway (2010, Thesis 4) too focuses on experimentation in enacting forms of doing despite-yet-beyond capitalism, his conceptually poor manifesto would have not permitted for this kind of analysis. Second, traditional movement theories (see Chapter 2) would have under no circumstances been able to account for the processes detailed here. Drawing on North (2006), the three community currencies could have been analysed using theories such as the Resource Mobilisation Theory (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977). Indeed, my field-diary was a rich depository of processes that could be accounted by such theories. Nonetheless, by so doing I would be missing the whole point of this politics-of-the-act: how it is everyday messy practices that are critical in challenging the mainstream (following Day 2002; Holloway 2010).

Unfortunately, though, this is only part of the story. Beyond the detailed accounts of how a number of practices emerged and were routinized in the wake of the crisis through community currency activism lays a bleaker reality: the many more practices that could not be reconfigured and the depletion of social movement *illusio* for many more activists. The focus of this chapter on rather unimportant practices and the recurrent reliance on quotations and field-diary extracts concerning a very limited number of community currency activists was, thus, not a coincidence. Accordingly, it is only through the arguments raised in the next and final empirical chapter that one may really conclude whether there are any dimensions of grassroots social reconstruction in the ongoing Greek economic crisis.

6 COMMUNITY CURRENCY ACTIVISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING NON-CAPITALISM

Maybe they're right – perhaps we are crazy! Perhaps we are just disillusioned mavericks who refuse to face reality and escape into their own life bubbles... But our movements do exist, there's still scope for making this work – against all odds and failures! (Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 16/12/2014).²⁴

The onset of the economic crisis prompted anticipation of greater opportunities to challenge capitalism (Castells et al. 2012). Yet in light of emerging accounts outlining a number of challenges faced by everyday crisis activists (e.g. North 2016; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017), it remains difficult to maintain faith in their activism as a vehicle for micro-level social transformation. Against this backdrop, and as my ethnography constituted an immersion into an alternative economic *field* that was *predominantly* infertile, this chapter completes this empirical trilogy through a rigorous examination of the extent to which activists can operationalise their non-capitalistic values to transform into the true crisis of capitalism. For I assert that the limited success-stories of community currency activism discussed in Chapter 5 were an exception to an otherwise unproductive everyday activist endeavour.

Specifically, in considering these issues, this chapter deals with the third and final question of this research:

Q.3: *What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism, and how do they impact efforts to enact non-capitalist practices?*

In addressing this question, this chapter starts by drawing on manifold empirical data collected that point to the impossibilities of

²⁴ All excerpts annotated as field-diary entries (FD) concern digitised notes from participant observation. Unless otherwise specified, all other excerpts or direct quotations are from semi-structured interviews – as detailed and dated in Chapter 3.

community currency activism. Section 6.1 details three key barriers to action. Section 6.2 then moves on to uncover how these culminate in the long-term impossibility of non-capitalist practices. Nonetheless, the chapter subsequently moves on to turn the third research question right on its head. For Section 6.3 postulates that barriers to community currency activism do not always exercise a detrimental impact on attempted non-capitalist practices. Consequently, this exploration concludes in Section 6.4 by arguing that the social reconstruction dimensions of this crisis are marginal yet non-negligible – an issue a Bourdieusian-based account excellently captures.

6.1 Objective barriers to community currency activism

The overall aim of community currency activism was to practically challenge capitalocentrism. Yet, a crucial starting-point for this chapter is how many activists faced immense barriers in so doing. Indeed, my ethnography uncovered a number of challenges and considerable disillusionment with the alternative economy – with the following excerpt from my participant observation notes acting as a catalyst for my in-depth exploration of the challenges of making non-capitalism:

Then it was time to discuss the unavoidable: the long email co-authored and circulated by Gaiana and Eupraxia to everyone in the group notifying them of their decision to leave the Votsalo. [...] Both attended the meeting, 'in a last ditch attempt to make everyone realise that this isn't leading anywhere – that the movement, and alternative currencies in general, cannot support the quest to realise alternative livelihoods' as Gaiana categorically proclaimed. [...] Whilst I wouldn't adopt such an abolitionist stance myself, my own experience of the movement confirmed the veracity of their arguments in that I had experienced similar difficulties in attempting to trade. And, clearly, everyone else in the room realised how their activism was a challenging feat. But some simply adopted a more optimistic stance in believing that these were problems they could still overcome through hard work – as Pandora asserted (Votsalo weekly

meeting, FD: 02/09/2014).

Specifically, I contend that the majority of activists were not only uneasy with practicing the alternative economy to begin with but, rather, their activism unfolded on the ‘edge of impossibility’ (Holloway 2010, 71) throughout their engagement – even after enduring attempts to enact and routinize novel practices. Indeed, as exemplified below, there was a widespread claim that community currency activism was a challenging feat:

We were just asking for trouble! We were so naïve – thinking that the alternative economy could just take-off – that living without euros would be as easy as introducing our own [alternative] currency. [...] And here we are today [pause]: always encountering problems – barriers that are just too difficult to overcome (Pandora, Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 16/12/2014).

Breaking away from the mainstream – enacting an alternative economy – is an unequal fight. It’s a path full of hurdles we always try to overcome – unsuccessfully (Myron, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Bearing in mind the prominence of such claims and a repeatedly encountered discrepancy between non-capitalistic values and practices, the task now is to examine exactly what made community currency activism so challenging – why community currencies constituted ‘cracks [...] on the edge of impossibility’ (Holloway 2010, 71). Specifically, in addressing the third research question, the following sub-sections uncover: a) an alternative economy built of limited *capital* (section 6.1.1), b) an alternative economy facing unfavourable *field* conditions (section 6.1.2.); and c) an enduring *capitalocentric habitus* (section 6.1.3).

6.1.1 An alternative economy built of limited *capital*

This sub-section presents the first set of evidence around objective challenges to community currency activism. Specifically, the evidence

presented here aim to show how the potentiality of activist agency to turn the crisis into an opportunity for non-capitalist practices was repeatedly undermined by the actuality of a capital-poor alternative economic field²⁵. As detailed in turn below, activists were continuously up against *material*, *cultural*, and *social capital* limitations.

First, many community currency activists indicated how alternative currencies and goods/services requested were consistently in short supply. On the one hand, and as the following exemplifying field-diary excerpt uncovers, many activists consistently lacked the credits necessary to trade:

Gaiana came to the trading bazaar somewhat reluctantly. She knew she would find things to buy: Sophia's handmade cosmetics and shampoos that were a big hit with her family, a couple of hand-drawn t-shirts for her kids, and maybe even a handmade bracelet or some earrings to gift a friend for her birthday. But she knew she couldn't buy anything – she had spent all of her units on her son's guitar lessons. She was experiencing, as she indicatively asserted 'an alternative economy in which [s]he was, once again, poor – being as equally limited by not having any disposable "money" as in the mainstream market' (Votsalo trading bazaar, FD: 29/06/2014).

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire survey validate this narrative. On the one hand, and as Fig.6.1 indicatively highlights: the majority (66%) and a further 33% of the members of the Votsalo LETS suggested that they occasionally or very frequently lacked the credits necessary for making any trades. Further, up to 44% and 43% of members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks respectively frequently encountered similar time-credit shortages.

On the other hand, and whilst credit shortages were less of an issue for movements other than the Votsalo LETS, many members still reproduced a common claim that *'the alternative economy is a far cry from*

²⁵ Drawing on Sztompka's theory of social becoming (1991, 97).

the “plentiful” economy initially envisioned’, as Nike indicatively put it (informal interview: 10/07/2014). For in spite of fairing much better with regards to credit availability, they encountered the short supply of desired staple goods or services. For instance, as Fig.6.2 indicates: up to 67% and 63% of members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks respectively were, occasionally, limited by the unavailability of the goods and services they were after.

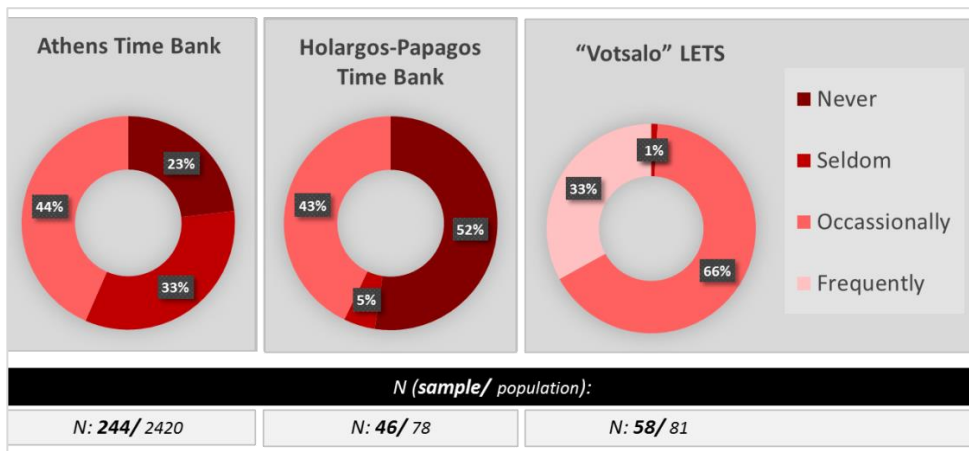


Figure 6.1: Frequency of shortages in alternative currencies or time-credits

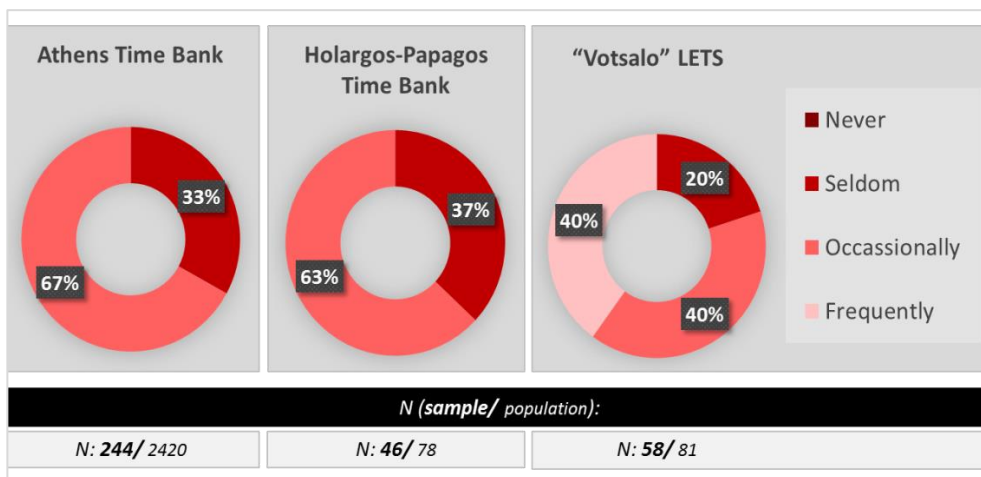


Figure 6.2: Frequency of encountering unavailability in desired goods/services

This is far from surprising in that the indicative list of traded services in the Athens time-bank over a two week period presented in Table 6.1 uncovers a total lack of any staple service exchanges.

Table 6.1: Indicative list of traded services in the Athens time-bank over a two week period as recorded in the online trading platform of the movement (03-16/11/2014)

Credits exchanged	Traded services	Credits exchanged	Traded services
10	Private tutoring: dance, English language, vocal training	3	Website design
7	Health and beauty: therapeutic massage, reflexology	3	Gardening
6	Translations	2	Logistical services and advice
5	Transcriptions	1	Small electric repairs

As such, and as exemplified below, there were ongoing discussions around the limited potential of supporting a range of practices while in shortage of alternative currencies or goods/services:

It, um... takes two to tango: wanting to trade is but one part of the story. There are, also, um... things that are really beyond your control: no matter how eager you might be [to trade] you can't just do it if you don't have any Votsala [alternative credits] left in your account or if you can't find what you are after... (Anastasia, Votsalo non-core member).

It's mainly things like psychotherapy, yoga, massages... Stuff I don't really want – things that don't really matter when you are just, um... struggling to survive the [economic] crisis – when you are really after more staple things that really matter in your everyday practices... (Artemis, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member).

In addition to such *material capital* limitations, a number of activists shared narratives suggesting that they lack trivial yet important skills – or *cultural capital* in Bourdieusian terminology – for practicing the alternative economy. On the one hand, many activists claimed that they lacked the *cultural capital* necessary for trading. Some claimed that they ‘lacked the skills that are on demand [in trading]’ (Eugenius, Athens time-bank non-core member – FD: 12/08/2014). Furthermore, activists like Kallisto (Athens time-bank non-core member – FD: 12/08/2014) highlighted how ‘it was just a bit difficult to use the [electronic] system’. Others even attributed their limited

trades to the fact that they *'don't really know how much [t]hey should charge for goods or services offered'* (Chloe; Votsalo non-core member) – that *'deciding how much to charge for something remained an, um... unsolved mystery'* (Euvanthe; Votsalo non-core member).

On the other hand, I also came across numerous instances whereby activists lacked the *cultural capital* necessary for managing the social movements and making decisions that would ensure that viability of their projects – and trading in particular. My ethnography was regularly an immersion into *'friendly catch-ups derailing decision-making [practices]'* (Kallisto; Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). Most importantly, though, I frequently encountered a sterile *'politics of critique'* in place of a desirable *'politics of action'* (Holloway 2010; Gibson-Graham 2006): incessant ideological and political disputes that were of little worth in trying to operationalise non-capitalist values. Indeed, as Pandora asserted succinctly: *'the almighty, um... "beast" [i.e. capitalism] is incessantly co-opting and controlling our lives and all we do is carry-out endless meetings, marked by ideological debates – unable as we are to turn such meetings into crucibles of, um... real, concrete action'* (Votsalo core member, FD: 02/12/2014).

Last but not least, I frequently encountered the lack of the *social capital* necessary for practicing the alternative economy. While Bourdieu (2007 [1986], 88) asserts that membership in social groups and networks entitles individuals to plentiful *social capital*, the study uncovered a paradox between discourses of *'an economic system we collectively bring to life'* (e.g. Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member) against the widespread realisation that: *'ironically, our solidarity economies are really devoid of much solidarity at all'* (Pandora; Votsalo core member – FD: 15/07/2014). To begin with, numerous activists realised that the pool of *social capital* they could potentially draw from was far too restricted in the first instance – realising how the small size of their movements and the high degrees of non-participation significantly limited the amount of social connections and

trades possible (e.g. *Holargos-Papagos time-bank coordinator meeting, FD: 12/10/2014; Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member*). Furthermore, a number of activists also felt they lacked the affinities necessary for trading. For instance, members like Demetrius (*Votsalo LETS non-core member*) claimed that: *'it was just impossible to carry-out any exchanges when you're not really part of the group – when you just don't know other members'*. Moreover, members like Lysistrata (*Votsalo core-member –FD: 15/07/2014*) realised that they lacked much social cohesion and trust to be carrying-out exchanges and to collaboratively develop the alternative economy in the first instance: *'Bullshit! What trust? Empty words... [...] We created this network to build trust and reciprocity, and it now seems to me that we could even find ourselves fighting each other with guns!'* Finally, numerous activists like Isidora (*Athens time-bank non-core member*), Nike (*Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member – FD: 18/12/2014*), Demetra (*Athens time-bank non-core member*) and Theodora (*Votsalo non-core member*) unapologetically attributed low levels of trading or their unwillingness to provide time, tacit and/or professional knowledge to further goals and projects of their movements to a profound distrust of members with different ideological commitments.

Unfortunately though, challenges to community currency activism do not stop at the significant *material, social or cultural capital* limitations detailed in this section. As such, the following sub-section furthers the response to the third research question concerning barriers to community currency activism by uncovering how the three community currency movements studied were also undermined by their positioning within an unfavourable *field*.

6.1.2 An alternative economy facing unfavourable *field* conditions

Alongside *capital* limitations (see sub-section 6.1.1), this research also uncovered how unfavourable *field* conditions contributed, in their turn,

towards the stark discrepancy between non-capitalistic values and concrete practices on the ground. Specifically, the following paragraphs detail, in turn, how the ways in which the alternative economy field developed, and its ongoing interactions with an infringing and unfavourable mainstream undermined the alternative economy in five key ways.

First, the activist experience of participating in both the *mainstream* and the *alternative economic fields* revealed how the *mainstream economic field* and its 'modes of domination' (Bourdieu 1976, 1977) assured the reproduction of capitalism. Specifically, while attempting to participate in both the alternative and the mainstream economic *fields* to meet their everyday needs, activists inevitably realised how the capitalist field exercised dominance over those staple primary goods and resources they required to support their everyday lives. Indeed, trading in the alternative economic *field* largely remained a contested practice – with activists repeatedly claiming – with reason – that it was '*doomed to only providing, um... sort of luxury services and second-hand goods*' as Anastasia (*Votsalo non-core member – FD: Votsalo weekly meeting, 10/06/2014*) indicatively reflected in light of the what she regarded as the '*inescapable realities of a capitalist city like Athens where [t]hey had no access to or control of primary capital and means of production*' (*ibid.*). Conversely, '*the mainstream market was well resourced – providing everyone all staple goods requested*' (*ibid.*). Subsequently, the alternative economy came to embody contextual norms and standards which signified what DeAngelis (2007) refers to as our conditioning by the rules of the mainstream. For instance, I spoke to Demetrius (*Votsalo non-core member*) who had initially thought of offering woodworking services. But since joining he got a lot of requests for small household repairs and so felt that by offering these services through the network he would undermine his ability to make a living in the more materially rewarding waged market. He went on to explain that '*at this moment in time, that there's not that much [h]e can get through the network, [h]is needs were solely related to earning money*' (*Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 28/10/2014*).

Second, and against the Bourdieusian conception of social *fields* geared towards autonomy (Bourdieu 2000c, 58; Fligstein and McAdam 2012, 24-6; see also Fligstein and McAdam 2012), community currency activists inevitably produced a *field* that remained in constant, destructive dialogue with the prevailing mainstream. For instance, practicing the alternative economy was undoubtedly undermined by the fact that Greek community currencies ‘operate on the verge of “illegality” – with no actual legislation pertaining to their use and circulation’ (*ibid.*). On the one hand, as Hera claimed: ‘with no legal status for time-banking and no possibility for any revenues, meeting at houses was unfortunate yet inevitable’ (*Athens time-bank weekly meeting – FD: 10/12/2014*). Ultimately then, this permanency in private establishments had serious negative implications. For unspoken rules of participation had developed that created boundaries either against newcomers or inactive members – thus limiting mobilisable *social capital*. Many participants thus used the idea of ‘invisible’ or ‘uneasy time-banking’ (e.g. *Demetra, Athens time-bank non-core member; Hector, Athens time-bank non-core member – FD: 10/12/2014*) to convey their understanding that meeting in houses did not help the movements reach-out to existing or prospective participants. Most importantly, though, the prospect of involving producers and other mainstream businesses and, ultimately, of increasing the range and supply of goods/services available in the movements was undermined by the inconvertibility of alternative currencies to mainstream money. Many activists felt that businesses and producers were highly unlikely to join – ‘unable as they are of covering their costs and paying their suppliers in alternative currencies’ (*ibid.*) or of ‘turning our currencies into something more, um... useful [*i.e.* mainstream money] in the [*mainstream*] market’ (*Chrysanthos, Votsalo non-core member*).

Third, against understandings stressing the importance of establishing stability in emerging *fields* (Fligstein and McAdam 2012), the three movements constituted milieus of unsettlement and contention. Activists largely lacked a common understanding of what was going on in the *field* – of what was at stake (following Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As

such, my field-diary often read as *'a rich depository of incessant and often unproductive debates regarding the orientation and focus of the movements in place of actually going about practicing the alternative economy'* (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 16/12/2014). Further, as certain decisions inevitably had to be reached, a number of members were often uneasy with the imposition of the views of the most active and powerful activists. Indeed, while Bourdieu (e.g. 1989, 1991b) and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) posit that social *fields* are broadly defined by power imbalances less powerful actors customarily accept, or occasionally struggle against, the findings suggest a third-way alternative: non-participation in light of emerging power imbalances. For instance, as suggested by Pandora (Votsalo core member – FD: 16/12/2014) *'many activists became disillusioned and, eventually, left the movements – feeling that these power imbalances betrayed the core principles of economic alternatives: namely cooperation, solidarity and horizontal relations'*.

Fourth, while activists realised the importance of trans-local ties across the broader *field* – as evidenced by emerging national networks like 'Solidarity4All' and networking attempts over the course of the 'Athens Festival for Solidarity and the Cooperative Economy' – they were largely unsuccessful in networking. Against Fligstein and McAdam's (2012, 15) focus on the importance of coalitions for field-development – in terms of providing material and "existential" rewards to activists – the everyday practices with which I engaged were locally- and project-grounded and, thus, incapable of increasing stocks of *cultural and social capital* necessary in transforming non-capitalist values into concrete action. As core participants focused on responding to more pressing issues such as emerging inter-personal conflicts, they hardly ever had the time to keep working on the inter-group solidarities they had formed (e.g. Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 21/10/2014, 22/10/2014). Further, even when there was enlistment overlap between groups, this often played-out to the detriment of networking. For *'in place of sharing ideas and experiences with everyone, such "mobile" activists ended-up being too short of time to*

actually make any significant contributions in meetings' (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 17/10/2014).

Finally, many activists even realised that their movements were intentionally performing the alternative economy in an insular and self-limiting manner. As the experience of the Votsalo LETS and the Holargos-Papagos time-bank suggests, it was often the intent of these groups to perform the alternative economy in an insular manner – albeit at the expense of increasing stocks of *social capital*. For instance, as I noted at the end of a weekly meeting of the core team of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank: *'core members of the time-bank were reluctant to form any external solidarities that could, allegedly, negatively impact the apolitical profile of the time-bank'* (FD: 13/12/2014). Furthermore, many activists of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank counterpoised the benefits of a tightly-knit group against the challenges of a large time-bank *'with greater potential for, um... trading, but, um... with no real cohesion'* (Nymphodora; Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member – FD: 26/11/2014). Members of the Votsalo LETS even intentionally excluded the elderly – in believing that they would only opportunistically get goods and services when needed without really being able to either participate in meetings or to trade. As such, members like Aikaterine (Votsalo non-core member – FD: 15/07/2014) claimed that *'it's really a shame that their invaluable pool of skills, knowledge, time and abilities to support this project goes untapped'*.

Moreover, and contra the expectation that reaching-out to social movement audiences would constitute a priority (e.g. Snow et al. 1986), there was intentionally very little effort to recruit new members and, ultimately, to increase stocks of *social capital* that could be put to good use in trading – as exemplified below:

In arguing that the greatest success of the capitalist field was its power to preclude emancipatory or imaginative thinking, many activists believed there was no point in trying to reach-out to prospective members in the first instance. For they argued that 'it's a waste of time to try to persuade people

that we can make our own economy’ – that ‘there’s no point bothering with promotional campaigns when the doctrine that there’s no alternative to either austerity or bankruptcy and return to the drachma is so pervasive that most people can’t even think of alternative ways of surviving the crisis’ as Lysistrata and Pandora respectively asserted. Furthermore, there was a widespread claim ‘that people were just too individualistic to even think of a cooperative economy’ as Lysistrata said emphatically. For ‘in a society that has only taught us the rules of competition and capitalism, it is, altogether, a waste of time to try and make the alternative economy resonant’, as Alexandra added (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 16/12/2014).

Furthermore, Anarchist members of the Votsalo LETS, even embarked on a process of thoroughly restrictive defensive localism – *‘intentionally avoiding [local] businesses, authorities, and promotional campaigns – even though these would, in principle, enhance the capacity to trade and the number of goods and services on offer – in trying to protect the movement, this, um... actually-existing “other world”, from those people who only want to opportunistically exploit the network’, as Lysistrata (Votsalo core member – FD: 17/11/2014) succinctly put it. As part of their defensive localism, such members even expressed a profound fear of co-optation. A fear of: a) ‘[local] politicians who would only endorse community currencies to gain popularity without actually providing any support – or even undermining the radical ethos of these groups’ (Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member – FD: 19/11/2014), or b) of ‘a mainstream that would just have to take action against community currencies if they grew to such an extent to pose a credibility to their authorities and everything they evangelise’ (Lysistrata, Votsalo core member – FD: 20/11/2014). Zoe’s (Votsalo non-core member) understanding around ‘ideological blindfolds undermining this movement’ typifies the limiting impacts of this discourse – uncovering the discursive co-optation of the non-capitalist imaginary and its possibilities against a prevailing mainstream (e.g. Castoriadis 1968; in Memos 2014, 105). For a number of activists felt that they were in fact ‘tilting at windmills’ (Nymphodora, Holargos-Papagos*

time-bank non-core member); that they ‘*identified enemies everywhere and went to extreme lengths to overprotect against them at the expense of creating an alternative economy truly capable of supporting everyday needs*’ (*Gaiana, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 02/12/2014*)

Ultimately, these understandings collectively paint the picture of an infertile *alternative economic field*. A *field* developed in self-limiting manners and while being constantly undermined by the mainstream – as activists were constantly up against the reproductive mechanisms of capitalism (e.g. Bourdieu 1997, 2000b) and their own ‘*field work*’ (Carolan 2005, 406-9) incompetence. Yet, alternative economic practices did not only ‘clash with the social synthesis of capitalism’ (Holloway 2010, 51) or with an ineffective alternative economic *field*. A third, and final, contributor to the identified discrepancy between non-capitalist/capitalocentric values and practices is how these practices, also ‘clash with ourselves’ (ibid. 63). Specifically, in further addressing the third research question dealt with in this chapter, Section 6.1.3 details how a persisting *capitalocentric habitus* also contributes towards this sharp discrepancy.

6.1.3 An enduring capitalocentric *habitus* resisting the alternative economy

In furthering the understanding of the barriers for community currency activism, the following few paragraphs detail how widespread resistance to the new norms and rhythms of alternative economic practices also played a pivotal role in undermining performative non-capitalism. Collectively, the findings presented in this section confirm what de Certeau (1984) refers as the ‘prison-house’ of the *habitus*. For the exemplifying evidence presented in this section uncover how it is often very difficult for the personal values invested in the alternative economy to act upon the *habitus* element of practices. These dynamics can best be understood through the notion of a *capitalocentric habitus*. For the ‘transposable’

nature of the *habitus* across *fields* and situations (e.g. Bourdieu 1990, 53) did not only mean that community currency activists were pre-disposed to practice the alternative economy (see Chapters 4 and 5). Rather, in participating in the alternative economic *field*, activists also embodied and reproduced social structures that worked against performative non-capitalism. Specifically, I argue that three core features of this *capitalocentric habitus* contributed towards the marked discrepancy between non-capitalist values and practices.

First, by being the carriers of their *habitual* histories (following Bourdieu 1990b, 56), many activists unavoidably realised how they either unthinkingly reproduced capitalist practices or avoided non-capitalist ones. There was a constant tension between capitalist practices that could unfold in an unthinking manner and non-capitalist practices that allegedly required constant monitoring and thinking (e.g. *Thalia, Votsalo non-core member; Myrrine, Athens time-bank non-core member*). For their habitual ways of living and practicing the economy followed certain internalised rhythms and drew on certain skills embedded in their *habitus* that were odds with the new principles of the alternative economy. For instance, *Thalia's (Votsalo non-core member; informal interview: 10/09/2014)* account of her difficulties in using products traded through the Votsalo LETS excellently helps exemplify how the meanings associated with the alternative economic *field* could not function effectively as a *habitus* (following Bourdieu 1990, 56). While she tried to get all of her soaps and shampoos from Alexandra, 'it remained extremely difficult'. For, as she later explained, she was used to both using shampoos of a consistent quality and consistency and to just popping into a store whenever running out of shampoo. Conversely, trading with Alexandra followed different rules altogether and rhythms she constantly found alienating and less convenient than buying from a store: having to accept lower quality batches, ordering well in advance, arranging for the trade, and, thus constituting an 'inconvenience'. Inevitably, she would often 'just return to the convenience of the mainstream market – out of habit' – to 'the convenience of a normal two-three minute walk to the

store'. Indeed, as she then went on to emphasize, her whole life was 'shaped around that image of an economy that's convenient' – an economic market that could be 'navigated at ease and without much planning nor unfamiliar ways of doing'. Ultimately, then, 'the difficulty of doing the most simple of things in the alternative economy was unthinkable' (*ibid.*).

Second, the biographical identities of many members meant that they were unwilling to change many of their pre-existing practices due to the internal identity rewards offered by practices within the mainstream market. While categories of meaning were deposited in the *habiti* of many activists with regards to the capitalist *field*, meanings associated with the alternative economic *field* could not function effectively as a *habitus* in that activists had to continuously think about the specific sociocultural conditions of their production (following Bourdieu 1990). For instance, while some members exploited the movements to get the stuff necessary to continue some of their parenting practices, others were reluctant to do so in believing that their identity as a good parent is dependent on the quality of the stuff obtained – something the alternative markets could not guarantee. The case of Kallisto is indicative of how defection from practices is conditioned by the meaning of practices and the rewards internal to them (following Bourdieu 1990). For her, getting private lessons for her kids through the mainstream market gave her a sense of control that juxtaposed against the uncertainty of the alternative market:

You want the best for your kid. You want to be the best possible parent... So when you are not quite certain of the quality of the lessons on offer through the network, when you sort of know how some people don't really care that much about what they offer because this is not a formal market and there are no real repercussions, then... Then you have no other choice but to make sacrifices to make sure that you can cover the costs of private lessons in the, umm, normal [sic] – more certain – market (Kallisto, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Such meanings of an uncertain alternative economy were broadly invested in the alternative economy by Humanisers, Transformers and Instrumentalists alike – juxtaposing understandings of a more professional mainstream market against amateurism in an alternative economy that could not offer any guarantees of quality. For against disillusionment with the mainstream (see Chapter 4) and objective (*capital*) difficulties in partaking in the mainstream market, they remained persistently predisposed to seeking the more professionally provided goods and services of a mainstream market. For practicing the alternative economy allegedly involved constant reflection and consideration around issues of quality and professionalism that did not enable this habitual predisposition to unfold smoothly:

And, umm, it's also quality: Alexandra is just experimenting when making shampoos, so it makes sense that sometimes the products aren't as good. [...] So, most of the times, I just return to the mainstream market – to the certainty and my, umm, enduring need, or desire, for obtaining good quality products (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member).

There's no certainty in it all. [...] In the [mainstream] market you pay for something – you pay a professional – and you know you'll get the job done – or, at least, your money back. [Pause] But here, we are all, umm, amateurs and there are no quality standards. There's, umm, an unusually important element of uncertainty at play when trading (Myrrine, Athens time-bank non-core member).

Third, for many activists a capitalistic *habitus* was seen as mere necessity (following Bourdieu 1990). For instance, for them being part of the mainstream labour market was an unquestionable rule of modern society they had to obey. For behind the exemplifying cases of Demetrius (*Votsalo non-core member – FD: 02/12/2014*) and Lysistrata (*Votsalo core member – FD: 11/11/2014*) who were forced to reduce the involvement in the alternative economy field due to pressures to participate in the mainstream market lies the critical issue that '*not working is, um... beyond imagination*'

(Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 02/12/2014). For them, the labour market was not only prioritised over trading in the alternative economy because of the challenges of the alternative economy but, critically, because their life-histories had conditioned them into an attitude reproducing the hegemony of the capitalist market. For they repeatedly described working in place of trading as ‘*common sense*’, ‘*inevitable*’ or even ‘*natural*’:

It’s unthinkable to imagine making a living without working [in the labour market]! It really is only natural – inevitable – that I chose work over trading. It’s the proper way of making a living. For in as much as we might want it, alternative forms of economic relations can only ever complement the living we make in the mainstream – in spite of their bigger political importance of showing that, umm, another world – another economy are possible... (Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member).

Not surprisingly, then, core members occasionally highlighted how some members ‘*just didn’t see this as an economic system – altogether*’ (Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 09/12/2014). Indeed, a recurring topic of conversation was how ‘*all that mattered to some was to meet-up with or make new friends*’ (Leontios, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member). For it was argued that for some the only thing at stake was to feel part of a social group – ‘*without really caring that much about carrying-out exchanges – as they, ultimately, knew that they could only make a living by working in the mainstream labour market*’ (ibid.).

Fourth, and finally, trading and practicing a host of non-capitalist practices remained contested in that they were at odds with the *habitual* pre-dispositions many activists invested in the alternative economy. Many Instrumentalists deflected from either offering goods or from engaging in movement management practices as the alternative economy ‘*simply represented another way of making a living – opportunistically*’ as Solon (Athens time-bank non-core member) unapologetically asserted. Indeed, as Pandora (Votsalo core member – FD: 03/06/2014) argued: ‘*By allowing*

*everyone to go into credit by 150 Votsala [LETS units] – so they could start spending – we inevitably encountered the unfortunate situation of many members basically seeing it as a giveaway of €150 they could spend and never come back to offer anything’. Furthermore, I contend that such avoidance tactics are an inevitable outcome of the heterogeneous ideological base of community currency movements. Specifically, power imbalances meant that many Instrumentalists and Humanisers felt that their movements were developing out-of-sync with their *habitual* pre-dispositions. Some activists subsequently put forth a discourse of participation in an alternative market that ‘had turned into a taboo’ (Myrrine, Athens time-bank non-core member) when trying to explain why they avoided their respective movements and non-capitalist practices. For they ‘just didn’t want to become associated with left-wing activism’ (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member) – because ‘anti-capitalism is, um... undesired – an undesired self’ (Isidora, Athens time-bank non-core member).*

6.2 From objective barriers to the impossibility of community currency activism

Collectively, the evidence presented above substantiate claims around the challenging nature of community currency activism that provided the starting point for the exploration recorded in this chapter documented by extant scholarship (see Chapter 2 - Section 2.4.2). Most importantly though, and in furthering the examination of barriers to community currency activism and their impact on attempts to enact non-capitalist practices (see Research Q.3), this evidence suggests that performative non-capitalist was largely doomed from the onset. Bourdieu (e.g. 1977; 1984) treats routine practices as the combined outcome of enduring *habiti*, *available capital* and *field conditions*. Accordingly, by suggesting that the triptych of *capital limitations*, *inappropriate field conditions* and *enduring capitalocentric habit* were the key challenges to

performative non-capitalism, this account suggests that many non-capitalist practices were in fact *'impossible practices'*. Given these significant shortages in the three core (Bourdieuian) ingredients necessary for social practices, it follows through that a practice-generating process of experimentation (see Chapter 5) could not even be initiated in the majority of cases – as non-capitalist practices did not even exist in a *'proto-practice'* state (Shove et al. 2012; 25): there were no grounds for trying to make any links between the (Bourdieuian) practice constituents in the first instance.

Subsequently, it comes as no big surprise that many activists I spoke to were staggered, perplexed or even cynical of success-stories of community currency activism:

I come across activists who triumphantly celebrate how community currencies have helped them – how they've become part of their daily routines... But I just find it too damn hard to actually believe them! Are they just faking it – refusing to accept that our movements are a failure? Are they sort of, um... just "propagandising" to keep everyone's spirits up – knowing that hope is all we have left? Are they just disillusioned – celebrating the smallest impacts community currencies can deliver? (Gaiana, Votsalo non-core member; informal interview: 01/11/2014)

I always find myself getting caught off-guard when I hear stories of people managing to change their lives through community currency movements... How on earth do they do that? (Anastasia, Votsalo non-core member)

This unfortunate situation is best exemplified through a stock of data concerning the non-enactment of key non-capitalist practices. For instance – and in spite of their self-proclaimed concerns about the (capitalist) status quo, their non-capitalocentric discourses, and the saliency of the impacts of the crisis – the survey findings presented in Fig.6.3 point to exceptionally low levels of trading for many activists. Specifically, and in line with previous accounts of crisis community currency movements (e.g. North 2016; Thanou 2013; Graham-Harrison 2015), up to 67% and 39% of the members of the Athens time-bank and the Votsalo LETS respectively indicated that they had

never traded – with a further 49% of the members of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank and the Votsalo LETS suggesting that they only traded goods and/or services once per month, on average. Conversely, only a minority of 12%, 27% and 1% of the members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS respectively indicated that they trade more often – several times per month, on average.

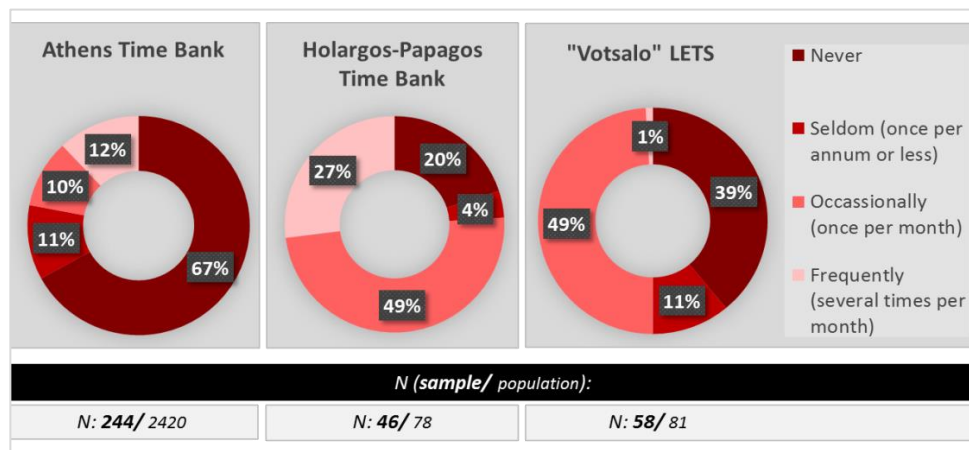


Figure 6.3: Trading frequency in the three community currency movements

With trading constituting the key enabling practice for a range of further non-capitalist practices by providing necessary forms of (material) *capital*, many activists subsequently articulated a limiting discourse around *'the near impossibility of living through trading'* (Kallisto, Athens time-bank non-core member) or, more generally, around *'an alternative economy that is desirable in principle yet inoperative in practice'* (Gaiana, Votsalo non-core member). As such, and as Fig.6.4 helps exemplify, the majority of community currency activists encountered did not believe that participation in community currency movements made a contribution towards the realisation of alternative livelihoods. Specifically, when asked whether using community currencies had enabled them to live without the euro, up to 55%, 47% and 38% of members of the Athens and the Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS respectively suggested that community currency activism had not contributed at all towards their economic re-subjectification outside the mainstream market. Furthermore, 37%, 21%

and 54% of members of the Athens and Holargos-Papagos time-banks and the Votsalo LETS respectively indicated that community currency movements did not, at most, make such an impact on their lives.

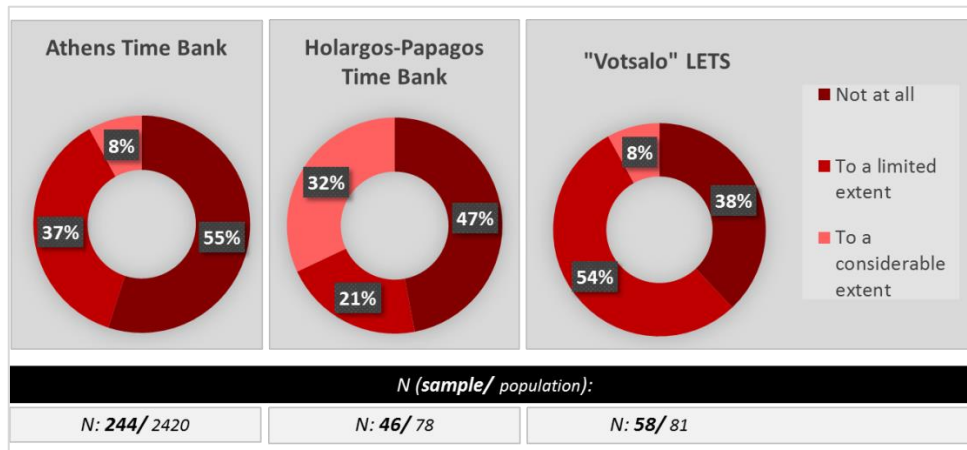


Figure 6.4: (Perceived) extent of ability to live despite-yet-beyond capitalism and austerity by using community currencies

Inevitably, then, this era is largely defined by destabilised but enduring capitalist practices. Against the optimistic story of many activists that had overcome their initial unease with practicing the alternative economy (see Chapter 5), the momentum of capitalocentric habits (following Bourdieu 1998) persisted. The following extracts are prime examples of what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977a, 78-9) label as a paradox 'hysteresis effect'. For through these exemplifying quotations we become exposed to stubbornly resistant habits that persevere against all odds in a messy and destabilised state because of commitment to their enactment. To otherwise mundane practices (e.g. buying toiletries) that come to signify an unconscious refusal to get to terms with the looming end of capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis:

Not having enough money is one thing – but you can't just stop living the way you are used to. [...] You make sacrifices, things become harder but, at the end of the day, you, um... just keep doing – keep living – the only way you know how – as much as possible that is... (Solon, Votsalo non-core member).

Even nowadays – being unemployed and, umm... virtually broke – I can't help myself from trying to live my life as if nothing changed. [...] It's simple things like just popping into a store to buy a shampoo when I run out in place of being all organised and stuff – in place of making sure I place an order with Alexandra well in advance. It's just some habits, some ways of doing things you just hold onto tightly – maybe just to get a false sense of security that everything is how it ought to be (Euvanthe, Votsalo non-core member).

As alarming as these accounts may be, I nonetheless contend that the impact of these barriers to activism is far greater than the simple sum of its parts. For as section 6.2.1 details, these barriers to action did not only undermine the enactment of non-capitalist practices in the present, but also exercised a limiting impact on the future possibilities of community currency activism – foreclosing any possibility of framing such struggling movements as 'spaces of hope' (Harvey 2000) that persist in spite of challenges (e.g. North 1999).

6.2.1 Trying to catch lightning in a bottle: Uncovering the long-term impossibility of 'impossible practices'

This sub-section explores the core assertion that the many challenges of community currency activism did not only culminate in the present-day impossibility of non-capitalist practices, but also in their long-term unfeasibility – even if objective conditions for their enactment were to improve. Specifically, in furthering the response to the third research question, and against Gibson-Graham's (1996; 2006) insistence that actually-existing economic alternatives nourish a language of possibility, I contend that first-hand experience of community currencies frequently operated as a break on the hopeful non-capitalist imaginary and, subsequently, on non-capitalist praxis. For in the face of objective barriers to action, and in place of becoming committed to make 'impossible

practices' work through timely *field-work*, many activists became overwhelmingly disillusioned with the alternative economy, saw no point in engaging and stopped participating in these movements altogether. There was, thus, widespread non-participation across the three movements.²⁶ As Fig.6.5 points out, up to a staggering 82% and 69% of members from the Athens time-bank and the Votsalo LETS never engaged with the alternative economy – in either trading or attending meetings or events. Conversely, a sole 8% and 10% of members of the two respective movements participated frequently.

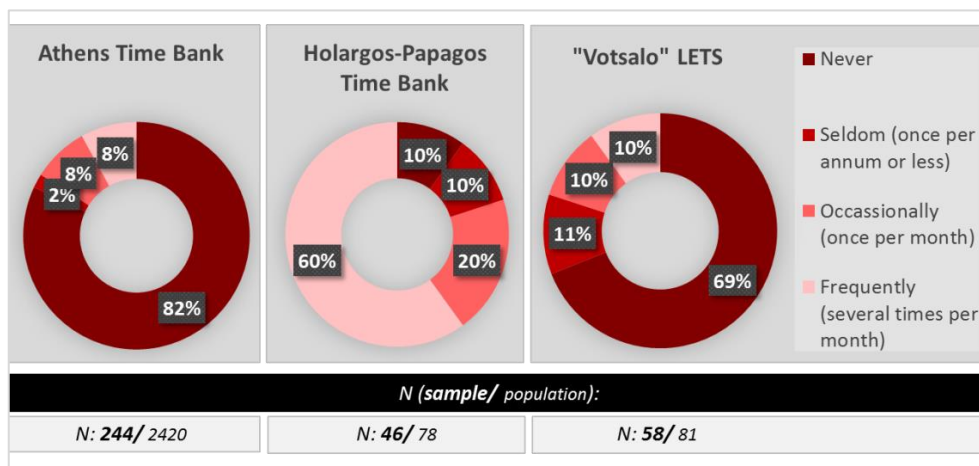


Figure 6.5: Frequency of overall participation in community currency movements (in either meetings, events or through trading)

Whilst a number of extenuating circumstances also contributed towards non-participation (e.g. family or work commitments), the veracity of the core argument around non-participation as an outcome of disillusionment introduced in this section is undeniable. For instance, a staggering 88% of members of the Votsalo LETS indicated how involvement in the movement was 'probably not' or 'not at all worth it'. Subsequently, and drawing on Klandermans (2004), such extenuating circumstances can only ever be understood as the coping stone in an already infertile situation defined by the decreasing prevalence of non-capitalocentric values and the

²⁶ The Holargos-Papagos time-bank is an exception to this rule of thumb. I argue, however that this is an atypical situation explored in section 6.3.1.

lack of motivation to try enact alternative economic practices.

As the synthesizing model on *'impossible practices'* presented in Fig.6.6 overleaf suggests, trying to enact non-capitalist practices through community currencies had, in large, transformed into an impossible feat of trying to catch lightning in a bottle. For the significant limitations in primary practice ingredients (namely: *capital, habiti, field conditions*) inevitably resulted in declining belief (*illusio*) in the alternative economy as a game worth playing (Bourdieu 1977) – thus drawing the final nail in the coffin of non-capitalist practices by also precluding the future possibility of currently *'impossible practices'*.

Specifically, through 'the regular exercise of mental ability' (Archer 2007, 4) to consider their activism in relation to the realities of modern-day Athens, many activists resorted to a discourse of *'restrictive failure'* (Marres and McGoe 2012). Their respective movements represented *'a failed experiment'* (Solon, Athens time-bank non-core member) – *'an experiment in living life differently that was just impractical'* (Euvanthe, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 10/12/2014) and, as such, one that should be abandoned. My field-diary thus transformed into a depository of ongoing claims around Greek community currency movements that were, at core: *'failing to live up to their actual potential'* (Anthousa, Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member – FD: 19/11/2014) and *'incapable of replicating the success stories of such forms of activism from abroad – of people actually being able to do much more without [mainstream] money'* (Thalia, Votsalo non-core member – FD: 20/10/2014).

Most importantly though, disillusionment in the face of barriers also contributed to a deeper *'doxic'* (e.g. Bourdieu 1977) crisis for community currency movements: to the unmaking of previously taken-for-granted assumptions and rules of non-capitalist economies. For the *'implicit pedagogy'* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 47) and reflexivity (e.g. Yang 2014, 1533) implicated in trying to enact novel practices captured, as a symbol,

how there can be no alternatives to either capitalism or austerity. In Lycurgus' (*Athens time-bank non-core member*) own terms: 'the crisis and associated austerity politics had transformed into nothing short of a nightmarish yet inevitable reality everyone has to accept', whilst community currency movements represented 'ill-timed and ill-informed luxuries'.

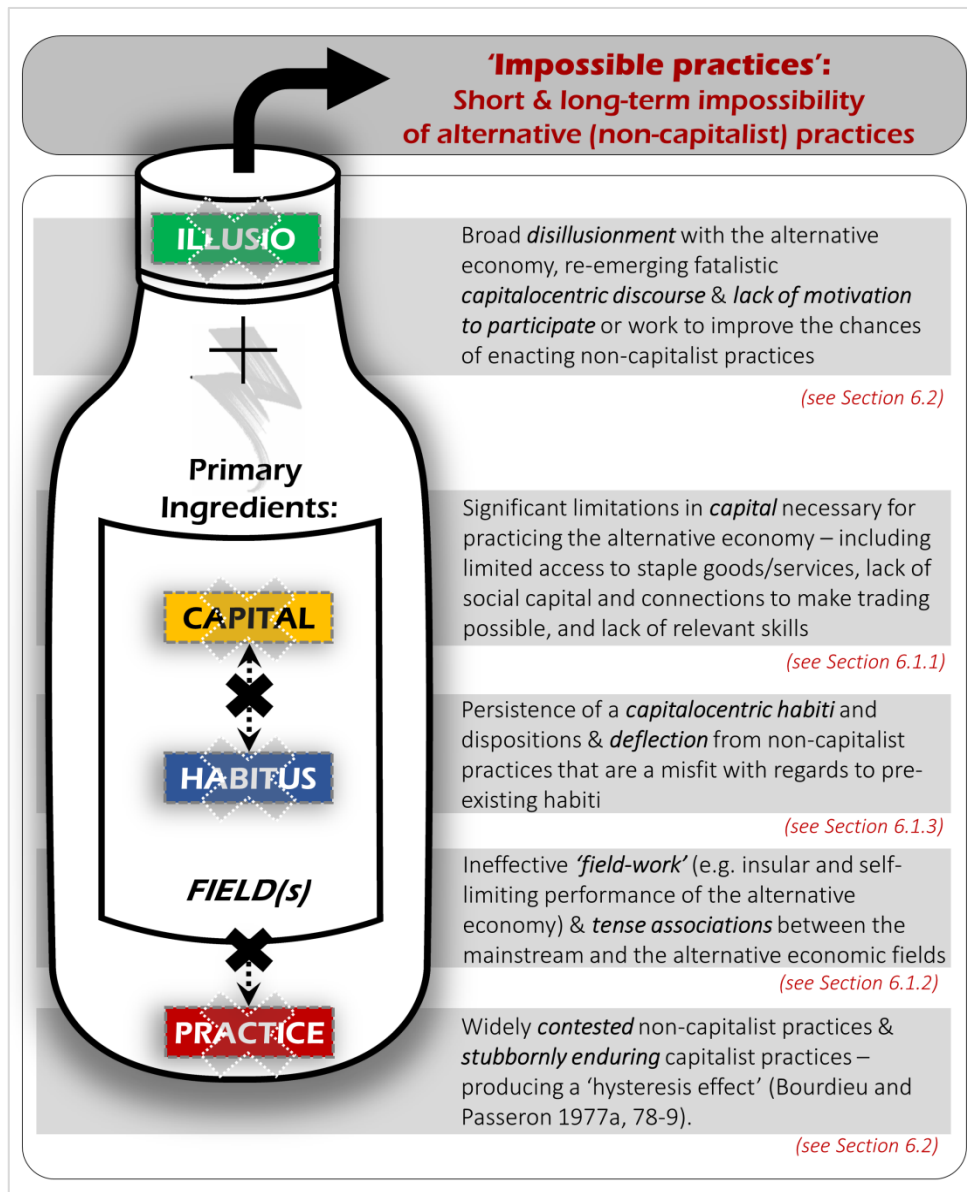


Figure 6.6: Trying to catch lightning in a bottle? Synthesizing model of 'impossible (non-capitalist) practices'

Emerging worldviews thus produced what DeAngelis (2007) refers to as 'enclosure as discourse': a narrowing sphere of activist agency and a

language of fatalism and submission in the face of a capitalist monolith. For through their first-hand experience many activists became acutely aware of how *'this is a waste of time', 'a meaningless illusion', 'a huge fat lie – a myth', 'something desirable in principle yet unwieldy in practice',* or even an *'impractical dream'* as activists like Zoe (Votsalo non-core member), Lycurgus (Athens time-bank non-core member), Euvanthe (Votsalo non-core member), Thalia (Votsalo non-core member) and Roxane (Votsalo core member – FD: 15/11/2014) respectively proclaimed. Subsequently, as Gaiana (Votsalo non-core member) assertively put it:

No wise man [sic.] would try to make the unworkable work! No one! [...] You are initially committed to the idea, to this abstract community of everyone facing the same difficulties as you do. But when there's no real opportunity for carrying-out exchanges and, thus, to also meet these people, it just all increasingly gets a bit too abstract. It becomes difficult to commit yourself to something so abstract – to something other than the certainty that there are no alternatives [to austerity and capitalism]...

Indicative of this boisterous return of capitalocentrism was how it even affected Anarchist activists. Whilst such members remained committed to their harsh critique of capitalism and to non-capitalist possibility, they were no longer committed to alternative economic practices. For the aftermath of their activism had largely seen the capitalist re-occupation of 'a special and privileged place in the language of social representation' (Gibson-Graham 2006, 1) – dictating the ways these activists both talk about capitalism and act within it. Specifically, for these members the act of avoiding the space, time or relation where power is exercised – of performing non-capitalism in invisible ways over the course of everyday life – does not constitute resistance. For their experience of the alternative economy had taught them that *'the small victories in living despite-yet-beyond austerity were relatively unimportant vis-à-vis the capitalist problem'* (Chrysanthos, Votsalo non-core member). Interstitial non-capitalism had, thus, transformed into *'a no-go struggle'* that *'is always*

up against the prevailing mainstream and always runs the risk of becoming co-opted in their [capitalist] hands – even though it cannot possibly constitute that much of a challenge [to the mainstream]’ (Demetrius, Votsalo non-core member). Further, in light of inescapable capitalist pressures, the idea of making community currency activism part of daily life transformed into ‘nothing short of an anathema’ as members like Sappho (Votsalo core member, informal interview: 12/10/2014) indicatively asserted.

These understandings collectively contribute towards an analysis that uncovers, as its core, the prison-house of capitalism – providing a very unfortunate response to the third research question by uncovering the detrimental objective barriers to action had on attempts to enact non-capitalist practices. And yet, my ethnography was also an immersion into a hopeful situation best captured through Holloway’s core argument that ‘cracks [may] exist on the edge of impossibility, but they do exist’ (2010, 71). Section 6.3 details this alternative case of failing-forward.

6.3 Failing-forward: Tracing the beginnings of non-capitalist practices turning failure into non-capitalist possibility

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 addressed the third research question by putting forth understandings of both a stark discrepancy between non-capitalocentric values and practices and of the waning belief in the alternative economy that conjunctively contributed to *‘impossible practices’*. Nonetheless, *‘impossible practices’* were but one outcome of objective barriers to non-capitalist practices. Indeed, the idea of catching lightning in a bottle is not only meant to convey the challenging nature of community currency activism, but also the unlikely potential of non-capitalist practices in spite of immense objective challenges. This section thus turns the third research question regarding the impacts of barriers to

non-capitalist practices right on its head. It details how objective barriers may have significantly undermined non-capitalist practices, but their combined effect did not always culminate in the full-scale impossibility of non-capitalism. Rather, it occasionally resulted to increased momentum to overturn these challenges.

Specifically, a number of activists I came across put forth a paradox discourse of belief (*illusio*) in the alternative economy in spite of challenges. This idea is epitomised by the following exemplifying quotations pointing to activist commitment to overcome failures and achieve the real-possible:

It takes a lot of work and commitment on our part – that’s the only way of finally making this work – of transforming this promising idea into concrete everyday praxis (Pandora, Votsalo core member).

There’s no denying that our [community currency] movements can barely survive – yet alone transform our lives and the world... But we must never forget that other comrades have worked hard to make similar initiatives flourish. That’s what we need to do as well: work hard and push forward (Zoe, Votsalo core member).

Talking with other activists and realising how it took time and effort to make community currencies part of their everyday lives just makes you appreciate how much effort you still need to put into this... But it also makes you realise that all this actually works out in the end – that there’s a point in all this and we are not just fools! (Solon, Votsalo core member – FD: 20/10/2014)

Yet given the already identified discrepancy between non-capitalist/capitalocentric values and practices on the ground, such assertions are hard to take at face value. Nonetheless, the occurrence of this discourse was overwhelming among committed activists. During participant observation I saw nothing to contradict it, and in asking such committed activists to reflect on how the alternative economy might develop, they tended to confirm this position. For, ultimately, this hopeful stance also impacted the

ways in which these members engaged with the alternative economy – as uncovered by the following excerpt from my participant observation notes. For as suggested below, approaching failure as a learning opportunity culminated in what I label as (partially) *'(im)possible practices'* in an attempt to convey the paradox future possibility of presently (fully) *'impossible practices'* due to activist commitment to problem-solving:

By the end of the meeting – and having heard everyone outlining rather long lists of challenges they faced in trying to trade – there was a widespread sense of disappointment I had not previously encountered [...]. However, this didn't crash anyone's spirit. After a 10 minute coffee break, everyone was ready to creatively work through these problems – identifying any possible opportunities and suggesting possible solutions to the manifold problems. [...] By the end of the discussion, I was sure: there was no room for abolitionism. Albeit struggling in key areas, the time-bank remained an effervescent space of experimentation – with its committed members rising to the challenge of trying to turn this into an effective and sustainable project (Holargos-Papagos SWOT analysis – FD: 25/01/2015).

Specifically, in light of maintained belief in the alternative economy as a worthwhile endeavour, a number of activists re-committed to the alternative economy – and specifically to the project of taking it forward – in three key ways. First, many committed members responded to challenges with increased commitment to their respective movements. They embarked on timely *'field-work'* (Carolan 2005, 406-9) – focusing on tactics and action-agendas for improving objective conditions within specific movements. These included: a) “SWOT” analyses implemented to inform the action-repertoires of the movements, b) a strong impetus to transfer international, national or local teachings from success-stories of community currency activism, c) attempts at co-operating with mainstream actors such as local businesses, producers, municipalities or political parties to increase stocks of *capital* and legitimacy, and d) a desire to make the most of my immersion in community currency activism – making use of my findings to identify problem areas, possible solutions and best practices. Perhaps most

interestingly, members of the Votsalo LETS even decided to organise and participate in a series of seminars where they would learn how to make handmade cosmetics and household cleaning products they could then trade in the movement – ‘in a last ditch attempt to stimulate trading’ as Roxane indicatively asserted during one such event (FD: 20/11/2014 – see also Fig.6.7 below).



Figure 6.7: Seminar for cosmetic and household cleaning product making (20/11/2014)

Second, there is even a silver-lining to non-participation in specific community currency movements – as excellently exemplified by the unavoidable failure of the Votsalo LETS. For the growing intention to leave and non-participation led, in a number of cases, to growing engagement in other initiatives or leftist organisations that were, allegedly, more successful and could, thus, benefit from the lessons of failure. Specifically, a number of committed activists embody a trans-local and mobile activist identity – broadly engaging in a number of solidarity economy initiatives and selectively committing to those projects that appear more promising. The following extract from a Skype conversation with Pandora (*Votsalo core member; 20/04/2014*) following the unfortunate decision to put an end to

the Votsalo LETS is telling of this impetus for alternative forms engagement in the broader alternative economy field:

Pandora: [...] By congregating at a number of places where I meet up with a lot of other activist-friends from other movements, I've realised that all those problems – all those failures – are something really specific to the Votsalo. When the [Votsalo] project started, the aim was to cover our basic needs, to stop thinking as a consumer, start thinking as a human being. [To prove] that we can live without money. We haven't been able to do that, but other groups have been far more successful...

Phedeas: So, you'll give it a second chance – maybe through another network...

Pandora: Yes, definitely! [...] After all, let's not forget that's a way of ensuring that we actually make use of the lessons from our past failures...

Finally, a core of activists became increasingly committed to an altogether different – and more promising – approach to the alternative economy. Specifically, through discussions over the course and in the aftermath of the third 'Athens Festival for the Solidarity and Cooperative Economy', members like Pandora, Sophia and Alexandra expressed their excitement to transfer knowledge from what they collectively referred to as the *'failed experiment of the Votsalo'* to *'radically reconsider their way of dealing with and practicing the alternative economy'* (FD: 12/10/2014). They approached this failure as an indication of the limited capacities of isolated movements to enact alternative livelihoods and, ultimately as a call to arms to co-create a broader network of alternative economic projects (FD: 13/10/2014). As such, inspired from the 'Cooperativa Integral Catalana' presenting at the third 'Athens Festival for the Solidarity and Cooperative Economy' (FD: 12/10/2014), many activists embarked on ongoing discussions that lay the ground-works for a promising alternative endeavour. This is envisioned to *'combine all the basic elements of an economic system – such as production, consumption, and circulation through a local currency – in a self-managed, "umbrella", project enabling non-capitalist forms of doing – as a panacea against the limited successes*

and manifold challenges of local community currency movements' (FD: 13/10/2014). This understanding is excellently captured through the language used in the "harvest-board" segment presented in Fig.6.8 and summarising activist discussions over the course of the Festival. For this synopsis of discussions uncovers ideas around the maintained activist momentum for 'co-creation' and 'continuation' – focusing especially on a series of practical considerations for action (e.g. as captured through references to the necessity for reflexive evaluation, networking and broader cooperatives or even training and education).

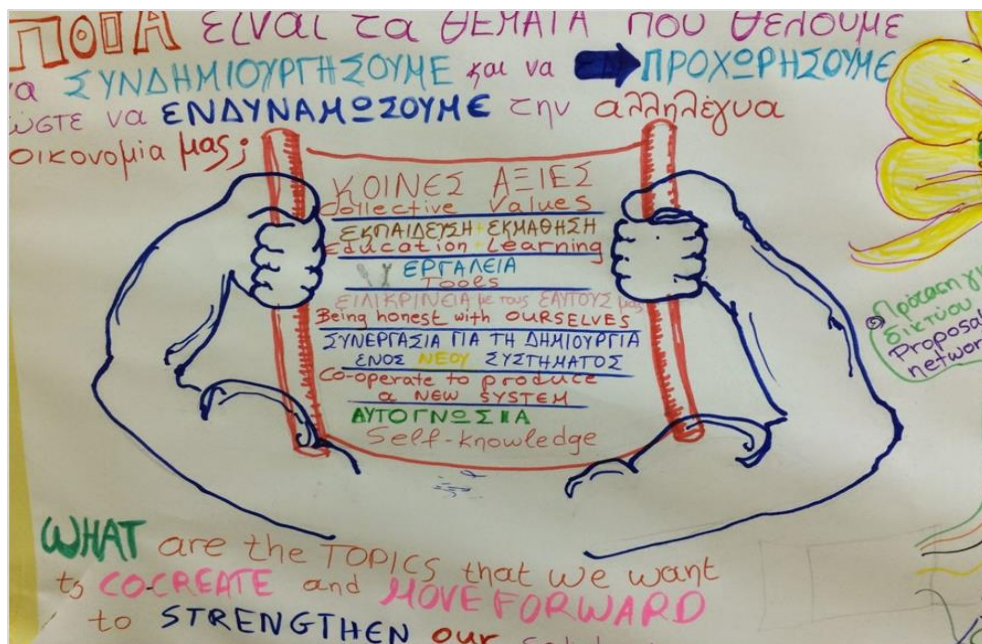


Figure 6.8: Segment of "harvest board" summarising activist discussions for an Athenian Integral Cooperative (Dated: 13/10/2014)

6.3.1 Making sense of the process of failing-forward

Given Crossley's (1999; also see Klandermann's 2004) accounts linking practical gratification and faith in a social movement, the fact that some members were not disillusioned by failure is surprising. Subsequently, in furthering the exploration of barriers to activism and their impact on non-capitalist practices (see Research Question 3), it is important to question

why the immense challenges of enacting non-capitalist practices did not always have a disillusioning impact. I argue that this paradox of immense objective barriers that did not act to the detriment of non-capitalist practices boils down to four mechanisms fully detailed in the following paragraphs.

First, Bourdieu's (1977) work on the orthodox and heterodox manifestations of moments whereby unquestioned norms and values of practice systems are questioned (*doxic crises*) helps account for a situation whereby this questioning of the alternative economy did not culminate in broad disillusionment (see Fig.6.8). Specifically, beyond core criticisms regarding objective barriers to community currency activism already outlined in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 (see overlapping centre of Fig.6.8), the activists encountered responded to challenges in two distinctly different manners. On the one hand, and as Fig.6.8 details, some members resorted to 'capitalocentric subjugation': an altogether fatalistic discourse of non-capitalist impossibility outlined in Section 6.2 (see outcome 1, Fig.6.8). On the other hand, some members rejected '*heterodox*' discourses as blasphemies (Bourdieu 1977): '*as proof that some people – some renegades – are all too quick to turn against these movements without really trying to make them work*' (Pandora, Votsalo core member – FD: 16/12/2014). Such activists occupying the '*orthodoxy*' end of the *doxic crisis* spectrum (see outcome 2, Fig.6.8) did not lose faith in the alternative economy as a '*game*' worth playing. Instead, they put forth a '*critically emancipatory discourse*'. Specifically, these '*orthodox*' members may challenge specific rules and practices of community currency activism, but they still accept fundamental norms of the alternative economy. They, thus, simply resort to criticising their respective movements. As exemplified through the quotations cited below, the failures of the alternative economy boiled down to the immaturity of their respective movements and, consequently, to the need to make the most of their tacit knowledge and put considerable effort into rectifying problematic situations:

I think that the Votsalo failed because of problems specific to its operation – not because this is all an illusion (Sophia, Votsalo core member).

It would really be unfair to say that community currencies are, generally, unviable. We've only been doing this for the past two-three years and, most definitely, our movement is still immature. I see no reason why it shouldn't grow – why it shouldn't improve – as time goes by. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day! (Hypatia, Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member)

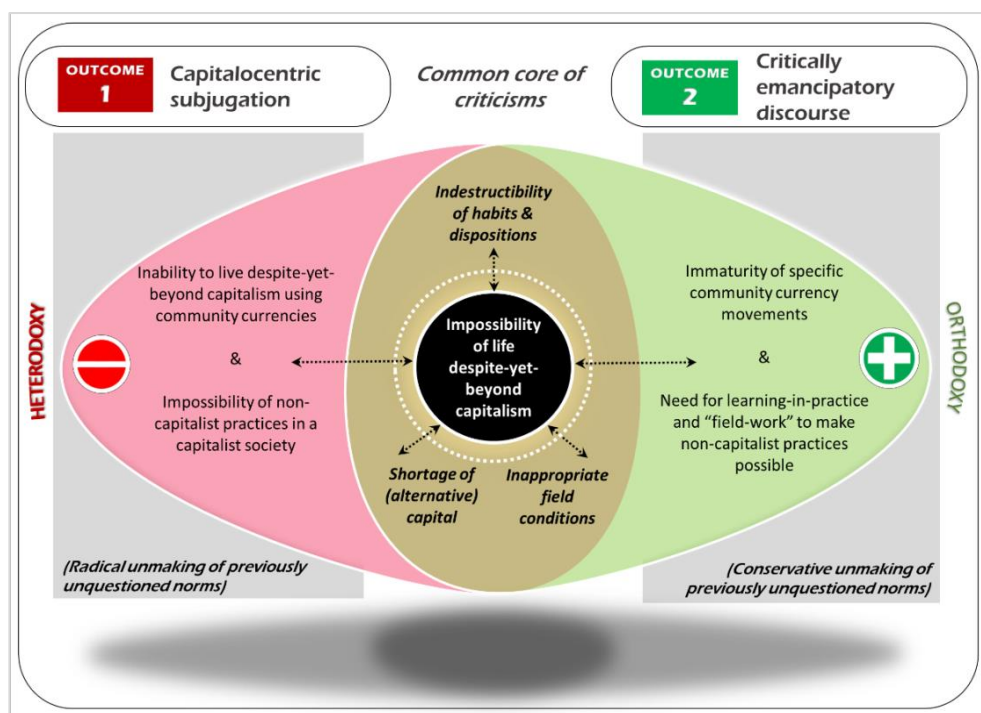


Figure 6.9: The two faces of an unfolding doxic crisis (Drawing on Bourdieu (1977, 168))

Second, such ‘orthodox’ members put forth a discourse of ‘generative failure’ (Marres and McGoey 2012) responsible for heightened engagement and emotional energy for participation. For this small core of highly committed members approached moments of instability and questioning as important turning points for community currency activism. Such moments allegedly delivered the opportunity to make the most of past failures – facilitating the identification of challenges and misbehaviours and, thus, allowing for the reflexive development of action-repertoires that could practically improve their chances of performing non-capitalism. I contend

that it is through the challenges and failures of trying to enact non-capitalist practices that community currency activism became accessible and possible. Specifically, the following exemplifying quotations uncover the (constrained) agential ‘possibilism’ (Sztompka 1992) appreciated and exhibited by these committed ‘orthodox’ members. For the subjective definition and interpretation of the unfavourable situation of community currency activism as an opportunity for learning consciously “awakens” (ibid. 103) their activism – delivering, through their place-based experiences and increasing agency to enact non-capitalist practices sometime in the future:

We are still at the start of a long journey towards something much bigger – maybe even at a national level... We are not claiming we can change the world. Our experience has taught us that that is near to impossible. But our small-scale experiments, all the knowledge gained and those, um... didactic moments of “failure” can only ever equip us with the tools necessary to make some changes in the future (Pandora, Votsalo core member).

They say that “a calm sea never made a worthy sailor”; our mistakes and failures can only make us more worthy in navigating these seas! (Sophia, Votsalo core member; FD: 23/12/2014)

Third, some committed activists claimed that their trans-local solidarities also delivered the promise of making currently failing non-capitalist practices possible. For prevailing ‘social movement scenes’ – namely networks of activists who share a collective identity, coalesce at specific ‘networks of physical spaces’ and create or promote counter-cultural ways of living (Creasap 2012; Leach and Haunss 2009) – supported the quest for alternative livelihoods in two key ways. To begin with, these scenes ‘animated commitments and the momentum’ (Hera, Athens time-bank core member – FD: 14/12/2014) of a number of activists. Following Melucci (1989), I argue that emotional investments developed in such milieus played a pivotal role in maintaining devotion in the respective movements. For in spite of the challenging nature of community currency activism, many activists either highlighted the ‘strong sense of comradeship,

togetherness and mutual support' (Pandora; Votsalo core member) or 'the collective responsibility to make this work – to prevent disillusionment across the field' (Lysistrata; Votsalo core member). Most importantly, though, by congregating in a number social movement scenes over the course of my ethnography, I repeatedly uncovered an 'unfocused process of knowledge-sharing' (FD: 23/11/2014) giving many struggling activists assurance that they 'would not be constrained by certain ineffective ways of practicing the alternative economy, nor preclude any novel ideas or strategies that might make projects much more effective' (Pandora, Votsalo core member). As exemplified through the extracts cited below, explicit in these accounts is their contribution towards the future possibility of '(im)possible practices' – 'providing food for thought' (*ibid.*). This is exemplified through a process of 'meta-reflexivity' (Archer 2003) whereby activists tried to put to good use information gathered: a) questioning themselves and the ways they went about engaging in the alternative economy, and b) becoming motivated to apply insights in trying to enact non-capitalist practices:

Pandora came to the meeting rather excited. She just happened to bump into someone from the Mesopotamia time-bank while having some drinks with friends, and he just happened to inform her of a number of tactics they were successfully adopting in trying to boost trades. Inevitably, then, given the ongoing struggles and discussions of the group around the very low levels of trading, she felt it was important to consider and discuss these ideas (FD: Votsalo weekly meeting – 12/10/2014).

For Alexandra, the 'real benefit' of people coming together with other activists – even coincidentally – was how they could share information and help each other out. In her view, just hanging out with activist friends 'provided the immense possibility of discovering tactics that work' – of 'becoming inspired by what others are doing more successfully than us' (Votsalo weekly meeting – FD: 23/07/2014).

Finally, objective prevailing conditions and tangential benefits of participation also played a pivotal role in nourishing '(im)possible practices'

by keeping the spirits of many activists high. The case of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank lends itself to this argument. For instance, the annual play put together by members of the time-bank (see Fig.6.10) was widely celebrated as *'a sign of the power of communities when people come together'* (Hypatia; Votsalo core member – FD: 09/06/2014).



Figure 6.10: The theatre group of the Holargos-Papagos time-bank in action (09/06/2014)

Specifically, in spite of failures in enabling non-capitalist practices, the Holargos-Papagos time-bank had transformed into a *'working utopia'* (Crossley 1999) demonstrating *'the power of community that can make the most of even the most challenging circumstances'* – that *'can deliver projects and benefits to its members entirely on its own capacities – without any support or money'* (Menodora; Holargos-Papagos time-bank non-core member). In other words, such moments nourished a *'language of possibility'* (Gibson-Graham 2006) – the fundamental belief in the alternative economy as an *illusio* that uncovers the future possibility of *'(im)possible practices'*. For references to *'excitement'*, *'stimulation to keep going'* and *'high evangelism'* made by Hypatia (Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member) and Kallisto (Holargos-Papagos time-bank core member)

suggest that the experience of such tangential benefits tapped into a deeper level of belief in the alternative economy (following Bourdieu 1998).

Collectively, then, these four conditions uncover that community currency activists remained committed with reason. As such, in exploring the third research question regarding barriers to activism and their impact on practice, it is suffice to say that one of the greatest strengths of the three respective movements is how they possess key pre-conditions for their own survival – buffering against objective challenges and, thus, maintaining the possibility for non-capitalist practices sometime in the future wide open. The four conditions detailed in this section thus constitute the ‘extraordinary energy’ of community currency movements that ensures that they keep fighting for non-capitalism against the logical deduction that they should not (Holloway 2010, 78-9). In synthesizing these arguments, Section 6.4 moves on to provide final answers to the third and final research question regarding barriers to action and their impact on practice.

6.4 Summary and conclusions

The narrative of the near impossibility and potentiality of community currency activism communicated in this chapter allows for a well-informed response to the third, and final, research question – namely:

Q.3: *What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism, and how do they impact efforts to enact non-capitalist practices?*

In dealing with this question, the chapter detailed three key barriers to community currency activism: *capital limitations, unfavourable field conditions and persisting capitalocentric habiti*. These exercise a detrimental impact on attempts to enact non-capitalist practices – as captured through the novel label of ‘*impossible practices*’. This conclusion thus challenges Day’s (2004) empirically uninformed assertion that social movements adopting direct-action tactics are better equipped in challenging the

hegemony of capitalism than movements engaged in a politics-of-demand. For the findings uncover that the success cases presented in Chapter 5 are only part of the story of crisis community currency activism. In so doing, they confirm how the obstacles to community currency activism documented by extant scholarship (see Chapter 2 – sub-section 2.4.2) hold particularly true in the context of the Greek alternative economic *field*.

Nonetheless, whilst speaking to a large body of scholarship on everyday (crisis) activism and on community currencies, the findings extend our understanding of obstacles to action – focusing, for the first time, on the challenge of enthusing and supporting non-capitalist practices and, particularly, on the simultaneous impact of objective challenges and their subjective interpretation. In so doing, the findings contradict: a) Gibson-Graham's (2006) assertion that non-mainstream market economic is more prevalent than capitalocentric practices, and b) North's (2007) claim that conditions are now ripe for community currencies to play a bigger role in enacting alternative livelihoods. As such, against 'crisologists' (e.g. Morin 1993; Wieviorka 2012) arguing that crises like the present economic downturn constitute opportunities for social reconstruction and social change, this chapter spoke to a more critical body of literature on resistance to austerity that concludes that such projects are very far from materialising a micro-level social change (e.g. Varvarousis and Kallis 2017).

Paradoxically, though, in furthering the exploration of the third research question, the chapter also uncovered how objective challenges to community currency activism are not always detrimental. For their immense impact is mitigated by underlying conditions nourishing the momentum to work towards making non-capitalism practical in the future. Hence these understandings help paint a marginally hopeful narrative regarding the social reconstruction dimensions of the ongoing crisis. Through this exploration of barriers to activism and their impact on non-capitalist practices, this chapter helps empirically detail how cracks existing on the edge of impossibility (Holloway 2010, 71) can overcome the threat of

disillusion; how there still remains room for celebrating actually-existing alternatives because of the agential potentiality (following Sztompka 1991). Hence, North's (1999, 73) claim that community currency movements should principally be celebrated for their effervescent creativity rather than for their practical significance seems to hold particularly true with regards to three movements explored in this thesis.

In this light, these findings help develop a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of social movement engagement (see Fig.6.10, p.287). Klandermans' (2004) and Crossley's (1999) social movement accounts suggest a dynamic of disengagement in the face of disillusionment. On the one hand, these understandings are reflected through a '*process of restrictive failure*' (Fig.6.10; case 1) emerging from the experienced realities of insufficient gratification, objective barriers to non-capitalist practices and from the widespread questioning of community currency activism. For this process details how widespread disillusionment, a sense of powerlessness for action and declining commitment to the respective movements lead – oftentimes following triggers – to a discourse of the alternative economy as a failed experiment, to non-participation and, ultimately, to the long-term impossibility of non-capitalist practices. On the other hand, these findings also uncover the more hopeful scenario of '*constructive failure*': the dynamics of case-specific disillusionment and a growing sense of mastering the alternative economy that, under favourable prevailing circumstances, ultimately lead to: a) ongoing engagement and belief in the alternative economy field, and b) heightened commitment to make '*(im)possible practices*' possible (Fig.6.10, case 2).

And yet, the implications of this analysis are more far-reaching. For through the exploration of crisis community currency activism documented in this chapter, the core argument of this thesis regarding the appropriateness of Bourdieu's practice theory to exploring processes of social transformation during crises has been further corroborated. This analysis uncovers how Bourdieusian practice theory can provide invaluable

insights for the study of barriers to non-capitalist practices. First, alongside providing specific appropriate analytic concepts such as the *habitus* and *illusio*, these findings and their analysis effectively demonstrate the veracity of the core of Bourdieu's understanding of the social world. Against criticisms of Bourdieu's work regarding his focus on the (near) impossibility of change (e.g. Alexander 2000; Gorder 1980, 34; Mouzelis 1995) and more recent practice theories postulating that practices are in a constant state of flux (e.g. Shove et al. 2012), this chapter suggests that the Bourdieusian (e.g. 1990, 108) emphasis on moments of social stasis captures the essence of '*impossible (non-capitalist) practices*'. Subsequently, as productive it might be to think *beyond* Bourdieu in developing theories around habituation (see Chapter 5), it also remains important to think *with* Bourdieu.

Second, the findings evidence the capacity of Bourdieu's theory to provide a silver-lining to the bleak reality of community currency activism in contemporary Greece. *Illusio* (Bourdieu 1997) – an important yet under-emphasised theoretical concept in either Bourdieu's work or subsequent work drawing on his theories – manifests itself as a useful tool when 'looking for hope in a dark night' (Holloway 2010, 20). For instance, and in sharp contrast to a recent Guardian report (Graham-Harrison, 17/07/2015) associating failures of the Votsalo LETS with closure of the emancipatory imaginary, *illusio* helps uncover possibility in '*(im)possible practices*'. Consequently, by drawing on Bourdieu, this chapter takes Gibson-Graham's (2006, xxxiv) 'politics of language' a step further – putting forth an understanding of a language of economic possibility *in spite of failure*. For in significantly extending North's (2014) on the importance of tangential practices – namely 'commitment-building mechanisms' – for community currency movements, the chapter uncovered *illusio* and a number of associated tangential processes as vital secondary ingredients of community currency activism. As such, if we are to deal with community currency movements as 'working utopias' that nourish the non-capitalist imaginary (Crossley 1999; see Chapter 5), it is important to highlight that they largely persist because of stubbornly resistant *illusio* in the alternative economy.

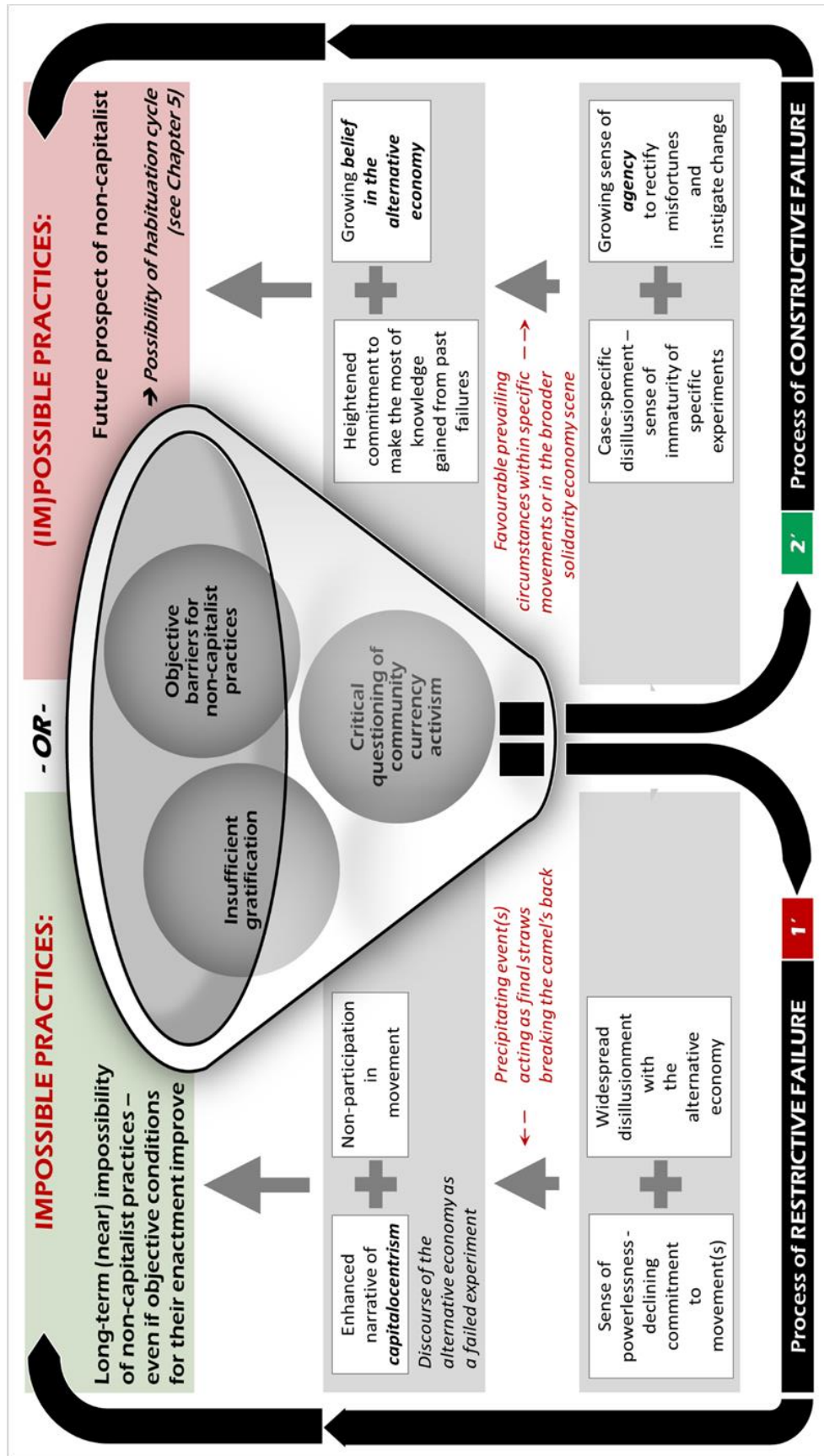


Figure 6.11: Dynamics of (dis)engagement

Equipped with these understandings that both help uncover the relevance of Bourdieu's practice theory and maintain a vigilant eye with regards to the assertion that crisis community currencies can transform the economic downturn into an opportunity for social change, the following, and concluding, chapter of this thesis fully fleshes-out the relevance and importance of this work.

PART III

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7 CONCLUSION

This thesis departed from the need for a novel narrative on the ongoing Greek economic crisis that captures the irreducible significance of forms of crisis activism that persist against the re-assertion of capitalism and austerity as the only games in town. To begin this exploratory process, I set myself the following overarching research aim addressed by a set of research questions reproduced below:

Overarching research aim: To explore whether everyday activism might help transform the Greek crisis into an opportunity for social change.

Q.1: What drives everyday crisis activism?

Q.2: Can (novel) non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about?

Q.3: What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism and how do they impact efforts to enact non-capitalist practices?

To address this research aim and questions, this thesis started from three original positions. Principally, it is the first study focusing on crisis community currency movements as a conceptually powerful and empirically critical case-study of how austerity and capitalism are being contested on the ground. Second, it built on an original conceptual framework – thinking with-yet-beyond Bourdieu’s practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1990). This helped overcome a series of conceptual shortcomings of literature on everyday activism and disparate ideas on crises as an opportunity for social change – exploring how heterodox values and critiques emerging in the wake of the crisis can deliver micro-level change by coming to have a hold on concrete everyday practices. Third, and finally, it is amongst the first studies of community currency movements adopting an ethnographic approach in an

attempt to explore everyday activism and practices on the ground. As a result, the preceding empirical chapters have offered an account of community currencies that significantly differs on a theoretical, empirical and methodological level from contemporary research in this area – capturing, for the first time, how the ongoing Greek crisis is being contested through lifestyle practices.

This concluding chapter brings all the disparate research findings together to provide final conclusions regarding the inspiring idea of periodic crises as moments of critique and social change (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011), and to detail the broader implications of this exploratory study. Specifically:

- i. Section 7.1 summarises the main findings of this study – relating them explicitly to three research questions.
- ii. Section 7.2 answers the overall research aim of exploring the moment of economic crisis as a moment of critique and social change.
- iii. Finally, Section 7.3 distils the main scholarly implications of this research.

7.1 Summary of findings

This section summarises the research findings: a) explicitly addressing each research question in turn, and b) outlining some initial synthesizing arguments.

7.1.1 What drives everyday crisis activism? (Q.1 – see Chapter 4)

In dealing with the first research question seeking to uncover what drives community currency activism, Chapter 4 uncovered two key drivers of community currency activism: a) the crisis and its experienced impacts, and b) certain previous life experiences (e.g. of participation in social

movements, of leading an opportunistic lifestyle, etc.) that pre-disposed many activists to becoming part of the alternative economy scene.

On the one hand, there is no denying that many Athenians were driven to community currency movements because of the economic crisis and with the hope of enacting non-capitalist practices. For an otherwise systemic crisis also led to a series of experienced 'lifeworld pathologies', and to a profound critique of the status quo and unquestioned ways of life (Cordero 2016, 69). Specifically, Bourdieu (e.g. 1990) customarily argues that it is impossible for individuals to escape from routinized social practices and to act upon them. In contrast, inspired by Bourdieu's (2000) assertion that moments of crisis unmake pre-held habits and 'bring the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation' (Bourdieu 1977, 168-9), Chapter 4 argued that the primary ingredient of community currency activism was an unfolding crisis of *doxa* à la Bourdieu (1997): a process whereby everyday habits and unquestioned myths of capitalism and the everyday life were replaced by a critical discourse that breaks-away from capitalocentrism (e.g. Gibson-Graham 2006).

On the other hand, I contend that two key pre-conditions for mobilisation also played a key role – thus furthering conceptually under-developed understandings around post-crash critique that informs 'a micro-cosmos of evolution' (Morin 1993, 5). First, it would be impossible for individuals to mobilise in community currency movements had they not developed a critical enough attitude unmaking capitalocentric ideas – an idea that can be understood through Bourdieu's (1977) scholarship on the two faces of *doxic* crises (i.e. post-crash orthodox and heterodox critiques and questioning). Second, pre-existing *habiti* also played a pivotal role in driving community currency activism – constituting its second key ingredient. For activists could only make the link between unmade practices/ critique and participation in community currency movements because their previous experiences had led them to a genuine feeling that the otherwise unknown practices of community currency activism was a

rational course of action (following Bourdieu 1999; 2000). Hence, it is exactly because of diverse pre-held dispositions and *habiti* that: a) participation in an otherwise unknown yet relatively familiar *field* alternative economy was possible to begin with, and b) the non-capitalocentric discourse emerging in the wake of the crisis was so heterogeneous.

As such, in uncovering these key drivers of crisis community currency activism, the exploration of the first research question documented in Chapter 4 can only partially validate scholarship treating the moment of crisis as a critical turning point in human history (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011; O'Connor 1981). For post-crash critique was crucial in forming projects of the will, but there was simultaneously a continuity between the past and the present – with pre-existing dispositions still playing an important role. Hence, this exploration helps re-cast our understanding of critical-practical activity in the wake of crises not as an outcome of an abrupt break from normality (e.g. *ibid.*) but, rather, as and outcome of a spark that ignited activism. For this Bourdieusian-based exploration also uncovered the inherently fragile nature of capitalism (Cordero 2016). For it showed how the solidity of capitalism may have been intensively challenged in the wake of the crisis, but Greek society already carried within it a latent momentum for rupture from capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2006). Many contemporary community currency activists were already equipped with a toolbox of non-capitalist discourses and practices ensuring that critique of the austere state turned into potentially emancipatory praxis.

7.1.2 Can non-capitalist habits and practices emerge through everyday crisis activism, and how do they come about? (Q.2 – see Chapter 5)

In dealing with the second research question concerning the enactment of non-capitalist practices through community currency activism, Chapter 5 detailed how the crisis can, indeed, be viewed as an opportunity for social reconstruction – thus validating conceptual assertions around the

significance of crises and the capacities of everyday activism to deliver micro-level social change discussed in Chapter 2 (see especially Sections 2.1 and 2.2). For in accordance with Varvarousis' and Kallis' (2017) claim that the legacy of the Squares Movement currently lives on rhizomatically – embodied within individual activists who have been able to redefine their needs and to adopt heterodox values and practices – community currency movements can be understood as crucibles of non-capitalist praxis.

Specifically, a number of activists were able to make use of the novel *capital* provided in community currency movements (i.e. alternative forms of money, the *social capital* of people coming together in a community of practice, and traded goods or services) to support mundane everyday practices. Furthermore, numerous activists were, indeed, able to transpose their pre-existing dispositions and tacit know-how to engage in and enact different sets of practices or practices with different embedded meanings they felt comfortable with. Finally, a number of activists were able to practice the alternative economy in a routinized, habitual and unconscious manner – signifying how the alternative economy could, indeed, become part of their daily lives and routines. As such, the narrative presented in Chapter 5 uncovered: a) the enactment and evolutionary habituation of non-capitalist practices that draw on community currencies as their vital resource, and b) the future possibilities of community currency activism in light of nourished activist impetus and commitment to further non-capitalist practices. Subsequently, by uncovering the social reconstruction potential of community currency activism, this chapter made an important contribution towards emancipatory understandings of the Greek crisis as an 'open vista for social transformations' (Cordero 2016, 2).

And yet, whilst providing an optimistic response to the second research question concerning the enactment of non-capitalist practices, the analysis documented in Chapter 5 suggested that novel non-capitalist practices do not emerge instantaneously – in spite of enabling pre-existing *habiti* and forms of *embodied capital*. Specifically, in thinking with-yet-

beyond Bourdieu (following Yang 2013) to address the second research question regarding the development of non-capitalist practices, Chapter 5 detailed how the transformation of non-capitalocentric discourses emerging in the wake of the crisis into emancipatory praxis in the everyday life is a messy, contingent and experimental process of gradually learning-through-practice how to become an activist, and of becoming accustomed to the ways and rules of the alternative economy. For instance, the recurring example of Sophia's experience of trying to use handmade cosmetics traded through the Votsalo LETS uncovered an evolutionary process of being increasingly able to trade and make use of these goods as the way they could be obtained and used was strikingly different to the processes of the mainstream market. Hence, this exploration validated my conceptual choice to draw on Bourdieu's practice theory (e.g. 1977; 1984) in an attempt to overcome the significant gaps of disparate theories on the moment of crisis and scholarship on everyday activism in accounting for and making sense of how social transformation unfolds on the ground.

7.1.3 What are the barriers to everyday crisis activism and how do they impact efforts to enact non-capitalist practices? (Q.3 – see Chapter 6)

In dealing with the third research question regarding barriers to community currency activism, this final empirical chapter detailed how the enactment of alternative practices was exceptionally limited. For the majority of activists were constantly up against a number of barriers to action making many non-capitalist practices like trading impossible:

- i. Significant *capital* limitations (lacking alternative currencies or the skills and tacit know-how necessary for practicing the alternative economy, being unable to find the goods or services they were after, or simply lacking the necessary trust and affinities to trade with each other).
- ii. An alternative economic *field* that constantly limited their capacities to perform the alternative economy – e.g. as there were constant

- unproductive debates on the nature of the movements and a frictional interaction with the mainstream labour market exercising power over community currency activists.
- iii. Their very own selves and pre-held *habiti* – e.g. as they remained reluctant to participate in the alternative economy at the expense of making money in the mainstream labour market.
 - iv. Declining faith in the alternative economy as a worthwhile project.

Specifically, in addressing the third and final research question through Bourdieu's lenses (e.g. 1977; 1990), Chapter 6 argued that most community currency activists were unable to make any connections between core practice ingredients – not least because of the widespread unavailability of such ingredients to start with. In this respect, a practice-based analysis added a dose of realism to understandings of the crisis as an opportunity for social change and of the ability of interstitial non-capitalism to deliver in practice – uncovering what I labelled as '*impossible [non-capitalist] practices*'. For in adopting a practice perspective, the chapter revealed how individuals and their *habiti* are socialised within capitalist practices to such an extent that it remains difficult to break away from capitalism – even at this moment of rupture.

Subsequently: a) Lovell's (2000, 33) criticism that Bourdieu's sociology 'induces at times a strong sense of political paralysis', and b) Girling's (2004) claim that Bourdieu himself evidenced no confidence in the ability of social movements for social transformation, hold – in reality – alarmingly true vis-à-vis the three community currency movements studied. Therefore, I contend that a Bourdieusian-based analysis of everyday crisis activism also validates and adds conceptual rigour and grounding to under-developed and vague claims that post-crash critique is, customarily, ineffective in delivering social change (e.g. Cordero 2016, 52; Geuss 2010).

Nonetheless, the observations and analysis presented in Chapter 6 also raised a puzzling question: how could such objective barriers not

demoralise a number of activists? Specifically, even when discussing this unfortunate situation whereby community currency movements could not turn the crisis right on its head, Chapter 6 put forth a significant silver-lining. It dealt with the third research question on barriers to community currency and their impacts on non-capitalist practice by putting forth the controversial argument that objective barriers to non-capitalist practices do not always culminate in *'impossible practices'*. Rather, these barriers occasionally provide activists with the momentum necessary to turn failure into a learning moment – something that could, in principle, prove important when trying to enact non-capitalist practices in the future.

In addressing this paradox, the chapter uncovered maintained belief in the alternative economy that does not surrender when setbacks occur as a critical complementary ingredient of non-capitalist practices (following Bourdieu 1977). This understanding is captured through the notion of *'(im)possible practices'* aimed to convey how currently *'impossible practices'* could be made possible sometime in the future in light of maintained belief in the alternative economy as a game worth playing. Hence, not only did this account help add conceptual rigour and empirical grounding to vague claims around the practical ineffectiveness of post-crash critique (see Section 2.1.1), but it also moved a step further to add an important silver-lining around activist potential to overcome challenging circumstances.

7.1.4 Synthesizing the parts to the whole

The research findings summarised above help add empirical detailing to what everyday crisis activism entails in practice – thus significantly advancing our rudimentary conceptual understanding of habituation processes and social transformation in the wake of crises. Thus, they collectively inform a synthesizing model (see Fig.7.1) that furthers our understanding around the evolutionary development of non-capitalist practices through community currency activism.

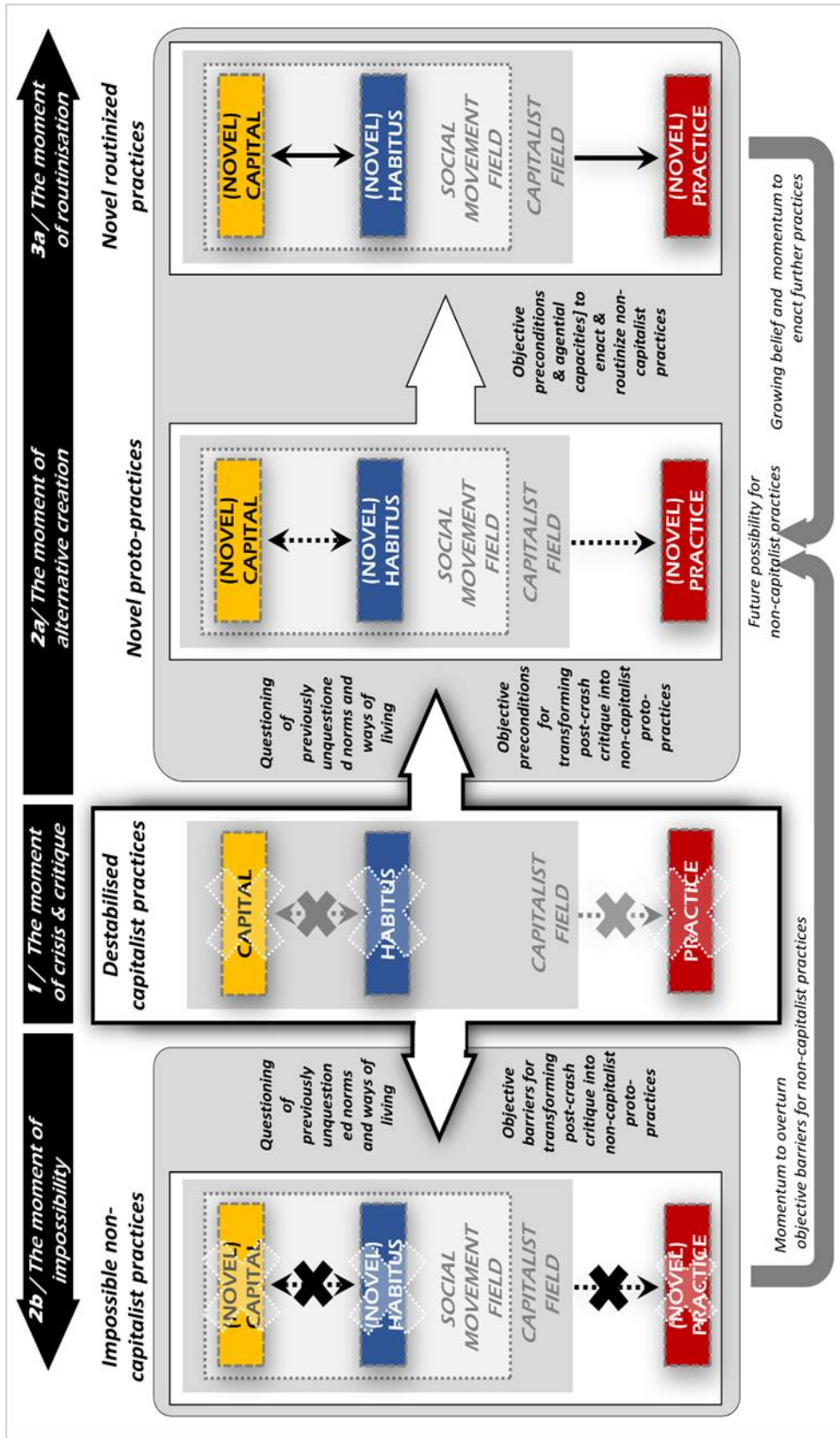


Figure 7.1: Empirically-grounded model on the development of novel non-capitalist practices

At its core, the empirically-grounded model presented in Fig.7.1 suggests that everyday crisis activism is an extremely complex process – with no clear starting points in that activists also bring their past into novel endeavours, no straight-forward processes for enacting novel practices, nor with any guarantees of success. Specifically, Fig.7.1 reflects, once more, Bourdieu's (e.g. 1977; 1984) understanding of social practices as the combined outcome of *capital* and *habitus* interactions (see double-ended arrows) within a (*sub-*) *field* of action. As this empirically-grounded model suggests, unmade capitalist practices, the subsequent disillusionment and questioning of capitalocentric beliefs and ways of living and the relative familiarity of non-capitalist practices constituted the starting points of community currency movements (see Q.1 – sub-section 7.1.1). Nonetheless, the evolutionary process of developing novel non-capitalist practices through community currency activism could not always come full circle. Reflecting my Bourdieusian-based assertion that post-crash critique and questioning of otherwise unquestioned norms of life would only transform into emancipatory praxis if certain key pre-conditions were met (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.4.1), I contend that many non-capitalist practices could only ever exist *as impossible practices*.

On the one hand, and with regards to the success stories of community currency activism (see Fig.7.1, stages 2a and 3a), all necessary pre-conditions for action are met (see Chapter 2 – sub-section 2.3.4.1):

- i. A post-crash critical discourse is favourable to everyday activism;
- ii. Pre-existing dispositions convince prospective activists that community currency activism is a rational and meaningful endeavour;
- iii. The movements set the groundwork for non-capitalist practices as *proto-practices* (Pantzar and Shove, 2010; Shove et al. 2012, 25) by providing the necessary practice ingredients;
- iv. 'Explicit' and 'implicit pedagogy' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Yang 2014, 1533) contribute towards the enactment of novel practices as activists are able to gradually establish the links between *proto-practice*

- ingredients, experiment with provisional practices, learn-in-practice and, ultimately routinize novel sets of practices;
- v. Enduring or growing faith (*illusio*) (Bourdieu 1984) in everyday activism as a game worth playing provides the necessary momentum to attempt the enactment of further non-capitalist practices.

On the other hand, many of these pre-conditions are customarily not met – resulting in *impossible practices* (see Fig.7.1 – stage 2b):

- i. The movements are incapable of laying the groundwork for non-capitalist practices as *proto-practices* (Pantzar and Shove, 2010; Shove et al. 2012, 25) by providing the necessary practice ingredients;
- ii. There is growing discontent with the alternative economy – culminating in non-participation and, thus, in the inability to learn-through-practice how to best perform the alternative economy.

Nonetheless, in reflecting the silver-lining of opportunity for non-capitalist practices in the future, this model (see Fig.7.1) postulates: a) the possibility of either working towards further non-capitalist practices because of increased faith in the alternative economy in the aftermath of limited successes that nourish momentum, and b) the possibility of transforming, through learning, failure into a key ingredient for non-capitalist possibility (see grey arrows at the bottom-end of Fig.7.1).

Subsequently, the findings collectively suggest that community currency movements and their practices unfold through an intricate meshwork of competing dynamics – thus extending our current under-developed understandings of everyday crisis activism. For community currency movements are simultaneously influenced by: a) pre-existing beliefs and habits and newly-emerging non-capitalocentric understandings, b) *illusio* and disillusionment, c) an unfavourable capitalist mainstream and emerging alternative economic *fields*, d) the unconscious practicing of everyday activism and conscious calculation of risks, benefits and

opportunities, and e) agential capacities and incapacities to evolutionary enact non-capitalist practices when coming together in community currency movements.

Alongside these deterministic and emancipatory influences, they are further affected by synchronic as well as diachronic dynamics. As Fig.7.1 summarises, the findings uncover both a 'logic of simultaneity' and a 'logic of temporal sequential causality' (following Potter 2000, 241-2). On the one hand, we see 'a set of (inter)relations of (determined and determining) position' (ibid. 242) as the synchronic (un)availability of all necessary practice ingredients either permits or undermines the development of novel non-capitalist practices. On the other hand, we see a familiar temporal logic whereby each preceding instance of activism – or life in general – exercises an immediate impact and is causally responsible for a successor action. In other words, 'action operates on more than one level simultaneously' (Potter 2000, 242).

But how might these understandings help address the central research aim of exploring the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change? Is there room for celebrating these community currencies as forms of transformative everyday crisis activism? What does this experience tell us about the processes of social reconstruction in the wake of the crisis? Section 7.2 deals with these issues to provide overarching conclusions.

7.2 Is this the moment of non-capitalist opportunity?

In explicitly addressing the overall research aim to explore the moment of crisis as a possible opportunity for social change, I contend that there is not much room for triumphalism with regards to the potential of community currency activists to turn the economic crisis into a social opportunity for enacting non-capitalist lifestyles. Whilst the ongoing Greek economic crisis did, indeed, 'open up a social opportunity to ask

fundamental questions' (Schneider et al. 2010, 511), it is impossible to deny that these movements only had a small impact on everyday practices and that the economic crisis did not deliver the omnipresent opportunity for action. Accordingly, I argue that the crisis and its emerging grievances may have constituted the latent potential of everyday activism, but this was in practice undermined by the objective impotentialities of community currency activism in modern-day Athens. Therefore, whilst politically inspiring, the interlinked ideas of crisis, critique and change (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011) largely prove a myth – thus uncovering how criticisms of the idea of the moment of crisis as an important turning point hold true (see Chapter 2 – Section 2.1.1). For many community currency activists do, indeed, lack much agential power to transform their disillusionment vis-à-vis a failing mainstream and an interrupted social existence into emancipatory practice (following Noys 2011; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017).

Subsequently, this partial inability to give birth to novel practices – even at this moment of rupture – casts serious doubts with regards to the achievability and viability of the interstitial non-capitalist vision. There is already widespread criticism of scholarship on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change, on everyday activism and on community currency movements – collectively challenging inspiring theoretical claims around a world that can change in a non-capitalist direction (see Chapter 2). The findings of this research can only ever corroborate the veracity of existing criticisms of interstitial non-capitalist endeavours by uncovering how identified obstacles to action also undermine attempts to enact novel livelihoods despite-yet-beyond capitalism in the relatively unexplored context of recession-laden Athens. Indeed, whilst North (1999, 69) concludes that community currency movements are mainly 'restricted by exclusion from the access to economic resources beyond participants' private ownership or control', the research findings suggest that a plethora of other barriers to action played an equally important role in undermining alternative economic praxis. These include significant limitations in alternative forms of *capital*, internally infertile *field* conditions and frictional

interactions with the mainstream, and enduring capitalistic *habiti* – obstacles that have, to a certain extent, been identified by previous scholarship on community currencies (e.g. Aldridge et al. 2001; Dittmer 2013; Seyfang 2001; Lee 2006). Perhaps, then, Marx and Engel’s critique of alternative economic practices of their age still holds alarmingly true nowadays. Perhaps such economic alternatives are, indeed, a ‘chimeral game’ – ‘silly-silly, stale and basically reactionary’ (Marx; in Levitas 1990).

Particularly, drawing on Holloway’s (2010, 178) claim that concrete ‘doing in-against-and-beyond abstract labour’ has an immense emancipatory potential, Athenian community currencies were selected as a ‘most likely’ critical case-study (Flyvbjerg’s 2006) of everyday activism in the wake of the Greek crisis. This supported the hypothesis that if this form of everyday activism that significantly benefits from the provision of novel forms of *capital* and a practice-destructing crisis is not capable of supporting novel non-capitalocentric practices, then there is little hope for everyday (crisis) activism anywhere. Unfortunately, even at a time when community currency movements could prove important in supporting alternative livelihoods and emancipatory non-capitalist practices, they cannot even be dismissed as a small first step for surviving the crisis. For projects like the Votsalo LETS cannot even survive let alone flourish in the interstices of capitalism. Consequently, rather than uncovering dimensions of social reconstruction in the wake of the crisis, these findings largely support and add empirical detail to the neo-Marxist stance that understands moments of crisis as a time when ‘the old is dying but the new cannot be born’ (Gramsci 1971, 276).

Hence, from a rational realist perspective, it is easy to buy into the argument of the universal inevitability of current capitalistic forces. For at a moment in time when the *crisis-critique-change triplet* is mainly receiving a battering (e.g. Noys 2011) and Athens is itself being discursively reduced to a ‘cemetery for the living’ (Gounari 2014, 187), these movements mainly have symbolic significance. They only help uncover how many Athenians

refuse to become the victims of the ongoing economic crisis – adopting instead an identity of struggling, yet largely failing, subjects experimenting with provisional selves and practices. Further, whilst these findings testify to the veracity of sociological understandings of money claiming that the economy is an open performative space of diverse economic practices and possibility (e.g. Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Zelizer 2011), they simultaneously uncover the difficulty of making other economies possible without general socio-systemic changes.

This suggests that Gibson-Graham's (2006, xxxi) call for a scholarship that focuses on the 'possible' and not on the 'probable' is misguided – overemphasizing agential possibility to break free from capitalist enclosures against all odds. Nonetheless, in place of abolitionism I adopt a more optimistic stance that follows Varvarousis and Kallis' (2017, 145-6) assertion that the important question is not whether grassroots alternatives achieve micro-level social change but, rather, 'whether they contribute to the – endless – process of pursuing emancipation'. Hence, I contend that there is still some room for the tentative celebration of these movements because of their limited yet non-negligible successes and future potentiality. In this light, and in an attempt to deconstruct the discursive hegemony of the claim that there can be no alternatives to capitalism (following Gibson-Graham 1996), sub-section 7.2.1 attempts to uncover how community currency activists are not just misinformed mavericks.

7.2.1 Uncovering the unlikely non-capitalist possibility of crisis community currency movements

In further addressing the central research aim of whether the moment of the Greek economic crisis is also a moment of non-capitalist change, this sub-section details how it still remains possible to talk of the moment of crisis in optimistic terms. For the interlinked ideas of crisis, critique and change inspiring this thesis are not completely off-track when

dealing with community currency activism. This section thus testifies to the veracity of claims stressing that crises do not ‘signify that tomorrow a miracle will occur’ – but, rather, that they constitute a moment in time when society transforms into an open site of potentially emancipatory struggles (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011). For the findings of this research suggest that the emancipatory understanding of everyday crisis activism as a powerful tool in transforming critique into micro-level social change still holds partially true.

Fig.7.2 overleaf schematically details this assertion – synthesizing empirical findings on the practices of the alternative economy presented in Chapters 4-6 to distil what they tell us about the agential capacities of community currency activists for social transformation. In particular, drawing on Sztompka’s (1991) work on agency, its actuality and potentiality in the context of variable degrees of structural determinism or opportunity, the figure aims to make clear that there remains some ground for celebrating post-crash community currency movements and their practical achievements on the ground. For there are four “faces” of community currency activism plotted between two interacting axes conveying variable degrees of: a) enabling potential from the “external” world within which community currency activists operate, and b) agency for micro-level social change.

On the one hand, we see the unfortunate situation of activists being unable to transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for social change (see top half of Fig.7.2.). First, unmade yet occasionally stubbornly persisting capitalist practices in the wake of the crisis simultaneously signify a world that has lost its cohesion and has become a problem and low levels of activist agency to make the most of this opportunity, act independently and make their own free choices. Second, what I label as *impossible non-capitalist practices* signify a capitalist world that acts as a prison-house and forbids access to forms of capital that would support alternative practices

and persistently low levels of agency to make the alternative economy work.

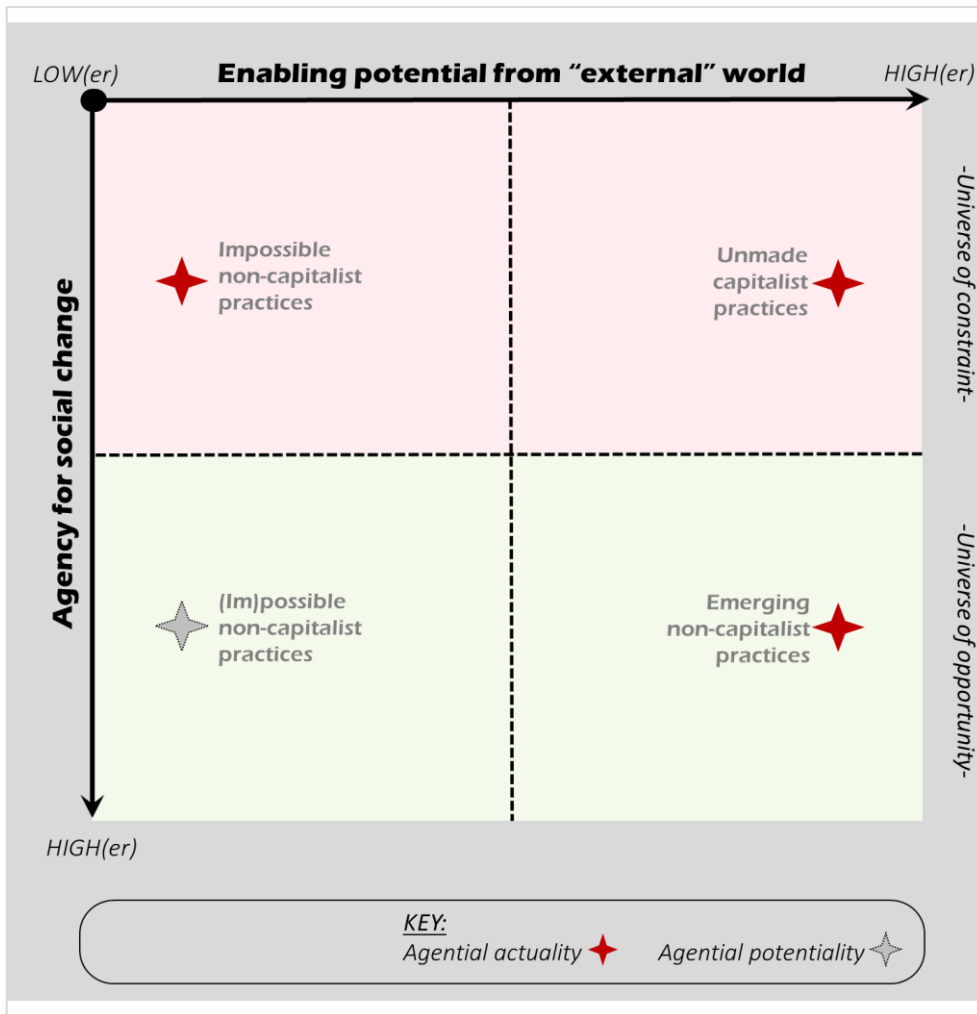


Figure 7.2: The four "faces" of activist agency to transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for non-capitalism

On the other hand, however, we see the more optimistic cases of activist actuality and potentiality for enacting novel non-capitalist practices (see bottom half of Fig.7.2). For in spite of a lesser organisational virtuosity and manifold challenges, many activists insist to struggle for forms of living despite-yet-beyond austerity and capitalism. This is, thus, a moment of non-capitalist opportunity – albeit marginally. First, emerging non-capitalist practices signify relatively high levels of activist agency to take back control of their daily practices and enact a routinized alternative economy within a

world that does not pose many barriers to action (e.g. as pre-existing *habiti* can be transposed to the alternative economic *field*). Second, activist momentum to make impossible practices possible (what I label as (im)possible practices) may signify the challenging *field* conditions within which alternative practices struggle to develop, but also relatively high levels of agency – as many activists currently feel better equipped to make impossible practices possible through timely *field-work*. Thus, in response to Bourdieu's (2000, 19) key 'question of social agency' for social change during crises, I argue that the findings of this thesis uncover how actors in civil society currently 'assume a surprisingly active and momentous role' (Habermas 1997, 379). For emerging non-capitalist practices and partially *(im)possible practices* help frame community currency activists as constrained engineers of social practices.

In this light, the crisis community currency movements considered can best be understood as 'working utopias' (following Crossley 1999). First, they 'maintain a Utopian element' by enabling a number of practices despite-yet-beyond capitalism at a miniscule scale (ibid. 810). Second, they are 'practical experiments in practice' (Crossley's 1999, 820) – persisting in spite of many barriers – and should, for this reason alone, enjoy a status that far exceeds visions of abstract future utopias. Third, and finally, these movements are ever developing projects – defined by the future possibility of further non-capitalist practices. Hence, they are an integral part of Leontidou's (2015) vision of the 'Smart City' – acting as crucibles of experimentation and innovation that strive to 'produce affects, values and practices that can bring about new modes of being' (Daskalaki 2017, 2).

Moreover, I contend that these struggling movements can only move forward in the future. In particular, my personal experience of these movements suggests that there is enough scope to nourish and make use of the agential potentialities of community currency activists to enact non-capitalist practices. For there is real opportunity to enhance community currencies through a series of practical and accessible interventions.

Specifically, in light of enduring activist commitment to community currency movements, we can draw five pragmatic recommendations for timely *field-work* to fully unleash the potential of these movements for micro-level social transformation:

- i. Networking and participant recruitment should be prioritised in an attempt to *mobilise cultural, social and material capital* that is important in supporting non-capitalist practices – either in terms of acquiring lay knowledge or developing more opportunities for trading. Practically, this could involve promotional campaigns to get the message out, and making the maintenance and expansion of networks a routinized part of movement activities (e.g. through regular internal planning meetings between local initiatives, through ongoing communications with foreign initiatives, by linking smaller movements under umbrella organisations for active cooperation and inter-movement trading, etc.).
- ii. Critically, such dense activist networks should work towards the development of a clear agenda of what institutional reforms to claim from the government to enhance the pools of staple *capital* within the alternative economy *field* – especially with regards to agreeing on a solution for involving primary producers, cooperatives, and/or local and ethical businesses.
- iii. Spin-off projects like the ‘Athens Integral Cooperative’ should be practically supported to fully nourish their potential of serving many more needs and supporting many more non-capitalist practices when compared against single community currency movements – by reclaiming work, property and markets. For instance, and bearing in mind the objective challenge of recruiting primary producers in community currency movements, the availability of primary goods in such networks could play an important role in meeting staple needs.
- iv. ‘Commitment-building mechanisms’ (see North 2014) and tangential projects like regular socials and group events should also be prioritised. For it is these tangential activities that often allowed for: a) the establishment of social bonds – thus resulting in or enhancing

- mobilisable pools of *social capital* – and b) nourished commitment to problem-solving in trying to make impossible practices possible.
- v. Open group meetings and assemblies and emerging social movement scenes should also be maintained as they serve as critical milieus supporting reflexivity and active learning-in-practice. To this end, innovative thinking will likely prove catalytic in trying to secure participation momentum. Yet, greater effort must be put in ensuring that such meetings remain focused on the practical side of performing the alternative economy – avoiding the creeping risk of unproductive debate.

Collectively, then, these arguments suggest that the moment of the Greek economic crisis might not be a moment of non-capitalist *opportunity*, but it remains a moment of non-capitalist *possibility* that ought to be exploited and nourished. For it does not deliver the omnipresent resource for challenging the mainstream, but it delivers the occasional possibility to enact and struggle for a number of non-capitalist practices through community currency activism. For it still remains possible to consider crisis community currency movements as milieus of non-capitalist possibility and future potential. Hence, in directly addressing the overarching research aim to explore whether everyday crisis activism might help transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for social reconstruction, it is suffice to say that this possibility depends on agential capacities, commitments and subjective interpretations which are strictly context and case-specific.

7.3 Research Implications: Towards a future research agenda on crisis activism?

The overarching aim of this thesis to explore the moment of crisis as a possible opportunity for social change was not new. Such ideas have been explored from at least as far back as Marx's anti-capitalist manifesto

treating capitalism as an inherently crisis-prone system and its periodic crises as cauldrons of revolutionary social movements (O'Connor 1981; Korsh 1981; Noble 2000; 71-100). This study cannot hope to provide definite responses to these ideas – especially upon recognition of the three core limitations of the research.

First, caution must be taken in drawing too many wider conclusions. Even though the case-studies were purposely selected for their criticality, the analyses presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis uncover how the dynamics, processes and challenges of community currency activism recorded were strictly place and context specific. Hence, a single multi-sited ethnography of crisis activism cannot hope to provide an adequate or representative understanding of post-crash activism – especially given the inevitable biases of conducting a 'militant' ethnography (Juris 2007). Second, whilst the strength of this approach in studying three movements has been that it has uncovered how similar issues, developments and challenges define crisis community currency activism in different localities, it has simultaneously overlooked processes and dynamics that would give a better sense of how individuals negotiate and go about performing everyday activism at the local level. Third, I suggest that this research project is a starting point rather than an end point. For there is still much more to learn about what happened in the three community currency movements considered. Specifically, follow-up or longitudinal research with a much longer time-frame than that allowed for this thesis is necessary to discern if emerging non-capitalist practices signify the beginning of history or a house of cards.

However, setting these limitations aside, it is important to reiterate that this research has provided a radically different conception of the Greek economic crisis than one which focuses on the social deconstruction dimensions of this moment of rupture. In a nutshell, these accounts open up a timely conversation on the moment of crisis and how to best explore and reconsider it as a moment of opportunity. For at a moment of cultural

retreat, gloomy analyses and waning belief in actually-existing alternatives (e.g. Crouch 2011; Gounari 2011; Graham-Harrison 2015; Hill 2012), this thesis signifies the end of a period of fatalism. It contributes to a nascent body of scholarship that attempts to uncover the evolving process of pursuing emancipation initiated by everyday crisis activists (e.g. Arampatzi 2017; Leontidou 2015; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017). This thesis has found that the ongoing crisis can be rethought as an opportunity for social change insofar as activists contesting austerity and capitalism exhibit agential capacities/ potentiality to enact novel non-capitalist practices. Subsequently, these community currency movements help uncover another side of Greece – beyond the typical abolition of alternatives to austerity as ‘irrational’ leftist ‘populism’ (Mylonas 2014).

This bold claim is corroborated by a rigorous conceptual approach capable – albeit its shortcomings – of uncovering both creative capacities for action and the challenging and frictional nature of attempts to instigate social change within the interstices of a capitalist society. For the research moved away from both previous theorisation on moments of crisis that remains severely under-developed in terms of acknowledging the fundamental dynamics of social life (Cordero 2016, 148), and from scholarship on everyday activism that is incapable of raising-up to the challenge of rigorously accounting for direct-action tactics (see Chapter 2). In so doing, this thesis suggests that critique in the wake of the crisis can only contribute towards social transformation if it comes to have a hold over daily practice through habituation processes. Subsequently, then, there is a need to re-consider what I label as the *crisis-critique-change triplet* by paying attention to daily practice.

To suggest that there is a need re-consider the moment of crisis in these terms is, undeniably, a bold claim. Nonetheless, I contend that the empirically, conceptually and methodologically novel approach to everyday crisis activism adopted in this research project and, thus, the timely answers it has informed, lay the groundwork for further robust understandings of

alternatives to austerity and capitalism. To bring this thesis to a close, sub-section 7.3.1 will therefore highlight the major advances afforded.

7.3.1 Conceptual advancements and a novel research agenda on crisis activism

This research project on crisis community currency movements would, undoubtedly, benefit from a second round of data collection on the critical matter of how the possibility for social change afforded by the crisis can transform into concrete opportunity for radical transformation. This could address a range of further research questions such as: How might the ever-deepening economic crisis impact community currency activism? Can committed activists truly make *impossible practices* possible? Are the limited successes of enacting novel non-capitalist practices capable of maintaining activist momentum in the long-run? Have seemingly routinized practices truly become embedded parts of everyday life despite-yet-beyond capitalism in the long run? Are we witnessing the beginning of novel non-capitalist *habiti* and practices, or a short parenthesis in capitalist doing? Can further non-capitalist practices be routinized? What might the impacts of *field-work* to improve the objective conditions for enacting novel practices be?

However, this final section steps away from the specifics of my research on crisis community currency activism to lay bare what I regard as the groundworks for a future research agenda exploring crisis as an opportunity. This agenda is of equal relevance to a number of forms of everyday (crisis) activism – including, but not limited, to community currency movements, consumer-producer cooperatives, integral cooperatives, work cooperatives, co-housing schemes and community economies sharing a commons. As detailed in this sub-section, this forward-looking agenda is informed by claims concerning the need to:

- i. Pay attention to everyday life as the vista for social transformation;
- ii. Explore activist agency to transform the moment of crisis into an opportunity for social change with a critical eye;
- iii. Embark on further, in-depth work in the area of crisis activism;
- iv. Start drawing on Bourdieu's rigorous theory to explore crisis activism.

First, this thesis has proposed that micro-level social transformation in the wake of the crisis is occasionally possible, but that the key battleground for such change is everyday life. Such issues are typically ignored in relevant literature. Anti-capitalist manifestos (e.g. Holloway 2002; 2010) remain conceptually incapable of rising-up to the challenge of understanding the newest forms of movements adopting direct-action tactics. As such, conceptually weak empirical accounts of everyday activism that do not account for how non-capitalist practices emerge in the first instance or solely focus on collective activities keep proliferating (e.g. Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Lewis 2015). Moreover, existing scholarship on alternative forms of resilience to crises shies away from accounting for the processes of social reconstruction (e.g. Cordero 2016). Furthermore, disparate ideas on the moment of crisis as an opportunity for social change are defined by falsified teleological ideas (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011). And, finally, whilst there is a claim that what changes with social innovations like crisis community currencies are everyday practices (Avelino et al. 2014, 16), relevant scholarship remains silent as to how individual users seek to re-invent their everyday lives. In contrast, focusing on how activists turn the everyday into their battleground promises to uncover the power of critique for concrete transformation in moments of crisis (e.g. Cordero 2016). If this is accepted, productive work might be conducted by advancing this novel research agenda: How might other movements or forms of everyday activism attempt to enact novel practices? Might post-crash questioning create novel non-capitalist subjects out of individuals who had not previously developed a taste for activism?

Second, this thesis has shown that activist agency for social change must always be considered in relation to its broader context and its interaction with prevailing (capitalist) structures. For the thesis highlighted how agency for change should not be taken for granted (e.g. Cordero 2016; Noys 2011, 46; Kunkel 2011, 14). Future investigations concentrating on the role of micro-macro and agency-structure interactions thus seem warranted – especially in terms of producing timely insights on alternative forms of everyday crisis activism to get a better sense of its social reconstruction capacities. For example: Might alternative forms of activism, including the emerging ‘Athens Integral Cooperative’, be better equipped in terms of nourishing agential potentialities to unmake the crisis because of their expected greater control over necessary capital? Might community currency or other movements engaging more with mainstream actors fare better when trying to enact performative non-capitalism? Might less radical or better connected movements be more successful in delivering micro-level change? Might ownership of a primary production source and/or a commons improve chances of success? Might individual everyday activists struggling outside organised movements adopt novel non-capitalist practices?

Third, these issues point towards the necessity for further in-depth work in this area. I assert that it would have been close to impossible to collect these insights on everyday activism had I not immersed myself into the everyday worlds of community currency movements and had I not decided to largely follow the field where it took me (see Chapter 3). Subsequently, the thesis has also shown that it is insufficient to explore community currency movements through broad overviews and evaluations (e.g. Seyfang 2006a; 2006b; 2002; 2009), or even through traditional social movement scholarship focusing on issues such as the appropriate framing of community currency movements to ensure support from mainstream actors (e.g. North 2006). Instead, I would suggest that any future attempts committed to taking community currency activism seriously should adopt similar approaches that focus on the real everyday rhythms and practices of

alternative economies on the ground. To this end, more innovative methods such as video- and photo-ethnography applied in similar accounts of everyday activism (e.g. Lewis 2015) might also prove useful.

Fourth, and finally, I believe that it is now time for scholarship in the emerging field of everyday (crisis) activism to start drawing on the rigorous social practice theory tradition – and, especially, on Bourdieu’s conceptual corpus. For this research concludes that Bourdieu’s practice theory and subsequent theoretical developments on how social practices emerge provide a very useful framework for investigating attempts to transform the crisis into an opportunity for social change. Indeed, the synthesizing research model presented in Fig.7.1 testifies, above all, to the need for further rigorous explorations of everyday crisis activism to uncover and make sense of how social change might unfold. First, it appears paramount that any research seeking to explore everyday activism focuses on the gradual habituation of everyday activism – providing stories of how performative non-capitalism might evolutionary emerge over time and in particular spaces. For existing scholarship on the moment of crisis and on everyday activism (see Chapter 2 – Sections 2.1.1 and 2.2.2) pays no attention to such issues – constructing instead at ‘the abstract ontological level’ the ‘metaphysics of change’ and the ‘myth of “Life” as permanent excess’ without accounting for how transformational rifts occur (Noys 2011, 52-3). Second, as even Holloway’s (2002; 2010) politically motivating manifestos mention the difficulties of breaking-away from capitalism, I contend that considerable scholarly advancements would be made possible by adopting Bourdieu’s rigorous practice approach. For it helps maintain a vigilant eye with regards to the practical significance of actually-existing alternatives – helping account for how social stasis and social change dynamics co-exist in an intricate meshwork of (im)possibility indicative of Bourdieu’s multiple and conflicting definitions of social practices (Potter 2000). Undeniably, such insights could also be permitted by adopting alternative practice theories (e.g. Shove and Pantzar 2012). However, I contend that a Bourdieusian-based account is uniquely situated to exploring

the influences of persisting and transposable *habiti* and crisis phenomena, and processes of habituation – key issues that, nonetheless, remain beyond the scope of more recent social practice theories (e.g. Shove et al. 2012) de-centring individual agents from their understandings of the social world.

Collectively, then, these broader research implications highlight the necessity for further, in-depth empirical focus on actually-existing alternatives to the crisis. For they suggest that contextually embedded dynamics invoked in the course of attempts to live despite-yet-beyond the crisis fundamentally help reconsider the crisis as a moment of (marginal yet non-negligible) possibility for social change. Whilst the observations in this thesis regarding emerging and *'(im)possible [non-capitalist] practices'* may seem trivial vis-à-vis the spectrum of austerity and an enduring capitalist mainstream, I contend that these mundane everyday practices and rhythms are critically important in uncovering and delivering everyday activism and radical transformation in the wake of the crisis. Against a backdrop of declining faith in alternatives to austerity (e.g. Worth 2013; Graham-Harrison 2015) and scholarship on everyday crisis activism uncovering a series of obstacles to action (e.g. North 2016; Varvarousis and Kallis 2017), I argue that it is now time to start paying serious attention to the issue of grassroots reconstruction in the wake of the crisis. For these otherwise hidden and trivial processes and impacts of everyday crisis activism may well be our only tools in trying to put forth a novel language of insurgency and non-capitalist possibility in the wake of the ongoing and ever-deepening Greek economic crisis. In so doing, it seems warranted to adopt an approach allowing for tentatively optimistic conclusions regarding the crisis as an opportunity. For it is only through reasonable, pragmatic and substantiated claims around actually-existing alternatives in an otherwise capitalist society that optimistic non-capitalist narratives can be protected against criticisms.

In conclusion, to open-up the non-capitalist imaginary and escape doomsday understandings of the moment of crisis, future research should

concentrate less on abstract thought about everyday crisis activism, and more on the lived practice and experience of such activism.

8 GLOSSARY

- Capitalocentrism*** A stultifying understanding of the economy as a capitalist social system that: a) refuses to understand the economy as a nexus of social relations and practices on the ground that can be changed, b) denies the possibility of any economic alternatives to capitalism, or c) stresses that any actually-existing alternatives are necessarily inferior to the prevailing capitalist economy.
- Capital*** More than purely monetary resources available to an individual to support courses of action within a given social context.
- Community currencies*** Alternatives to legal tender used in trading goods and/ or services that help meet needs for exchange that cannot be met through mainstream money. These include: time-banks (where time spent offering a service is used as a currency), locally issued notes or tokens, or notional mutual credits/debits generated by the act of exchange itself within Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (LETS).
- Doxa/doxic*** Norms and understandings of social life that normally go unquestioned as individuals go about living their everyday lives in typically habitual and pre-reflexive manners.
- Field*** The broader context of objective conditions (e.g. availability and distribution of resources) within which everyday action unfolds. This external world customarily becomes internalised within individuals in the form of pre-reflexive understanding of the broader rules of conduct and possibility defining that field

<i>Habitus/ Habiti</i>	An enduring system of embodied tendencies for action and perceptions that unconsciously shape individuals' perceptions of the social world and how they react to it.
<i>Hysteresis</i>	The counter-adaptive lag in tendencies for action (see habitus) that retards adaptation to a changed social context.
<i>Illusio</i>	The fundamental belief that a course of action is worth pursuing – often operating at the pre-reflexive level as individuals develop a taste for certain behaviours they deem worthy.
<i>Interstitial non-capitalism</i>	A non-confrontational approach to acting against the capitalist mainstream seeking to immediately enable forms of doing and living despite-yet-beyond the capitalist mainstream without having to first inflict system-wide change. This involves supporting a becoming existence that enables individuals partial autonomy from the prevailing mainstream by putting to good use his/her creative agential capacities for action.
<i>(Social) practice</i>	Behaviours and actions that form part of daily habit and, thus, unfold in an unconscious manner in so far as objective conditions for their enactment remain unchanged

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10 APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 – Field-diary extract

FD: Tuesday 15th July 2014 (Weekly meeting of the Votsalo LETS at “Pasamontana” autonomous space)

Participants (pseudonyms):

- Zoe Rizopoulou
- Sophia Nikitaki
- Gaiana Koutalianou
- Sappho Vagianna
- Lysistrata Varnavas
- Pandora
- Kyriakopoulos
- Roxane Kitsou
- Thalia Kalfagianni
- Solon Theodorakis
- Alexandra Palaiologou
- Aikaterine Andreou

Running description:

[...] Then it was time to discuss the plans for the open-air exchange and trading bazaar (planned to take place the following Sunday). Roxane started the discussion, rather hastily – she looked as if she had enough of discussing the topic for so long without reaching any finalised decisions, wanting, perhaps, to go home. She had a read through a page of her notebook (where she keeps notes from all the meetings she attends) and started outlining what had been discussed regarding this issue during the previous meeting and new developments. ‘As agreed, reminder emails and text messages [to our participants] have been sent, but no one else has responded. It will – most probably – just be Sophia, Lysistrata and myself bringing products to trade’ she said. By the time she completed her sentence – Alexandra said: ‘How about you Pandora? You always bring something’. Pandora said: ‘I will be at work... But anyway, I’m not really willing to keep bringing T-shirts [hand-drawn T-shirts she makes by herself]. There’s no way I can cover my expenses [in euros], and all those paints and stuff do cost an awful lot of money’. Lysistrata then added: ‘Yes, exactly. It’s almost like we have entrapped ourselves in an iron cage; we’ve chosen to

try and free ourselves from the market and that's something really nice – don't take me wrong – but there aren't many things we can do without using any money at all. That's why I will only bring a couple of [handmade] soaps... I just don't have enough money to make more, and as we cannot accept any money at the market, there's no way I can cover my expenses'.

As it was going on, Thalia turned to me and said 'it's just too early to be thinking of living without euros'. Indeed, that was exactly the conclusion I've been making in listening to this discussion as well as previous ones. Then, she hesitantly turned to the group and said: 'So why on earth should we go ahead with this event? We will just waste our time and efforts... And it will be bad publicity for us; all those onlookers thinking that joining the network is pointless; nothing to exchange, very few participants...' 'Yes, I agree with Thalia. I don't know if it's just me – because it's summer and I feel tired – but I am not willing to put any effort circulating promotional flyers, setting up the tables, etc., if it will all be in vain.' Solon then said.

As he was saying this, I could see a number of nodding heads around the room. Unsurprisingly, the unanimous decision was soon reached to cancel the trading bazaar, and it was agreed to move on to the next topic that was on the agenda for the meeting: finalising the ad for a new meeting space. Then, the doorbell rang, signalling the arrival of Sophia and Sappho. A friendly catch-up with everyone, and then back to business: Roxane briefing them on what we had agreed. Obviously saddened (contrary to her joyful entrance), Sappho then said: 'I'm really disappointed. What kind of movement are we if we cannot organise a single event? And how do we expect people to find out about us if they never hear from us nor see us in action? I'm sorry to say this, but I disagree with what you have decided'. Zoe, in a rather defensive tone then said: 'What you say is right – in theory – but there's nothing we can do! We cannot force our members to participate!' receiving the apparent support from everyone who was already in the room. 'How about just setting up a table and distributing information leaflets to the public? Just so we show people that we exist' Sophia then went on to say, with her position being challenged – once more – by everyone as they felt that information provision would not attract any new participants. Sappho, acting like a *deus ex machina*, then intervened to solve this impasse. It was deemed, by her, too early to just be carrying out this kind of trading bazaars. Instead, she suggested, that we could, instead just have a bartering market without using any credits. This way, the event would be open to anyone, acting as the best possible publicity the very idea that people can obtain goods

without using (mainstream money). As this proposition was accepted by everyone, the discussion regarding the specifics of the event kept going for a while (circa one hour). By the end, everyone was exhausted – as it was almost 10.30pm – and eager to go home.

Then, as it was decided that everyone was just too tired to discuss any of the other items on the agenda, Pandora took the opportunity to raise a different issue: an issue I suspect may forever influence the dynamics and strong social ties within this network – opening up Pandora’s box. As she explained, she had discovered that Lysistrata had registered her mother in the network without informing anyone and without following the registration guidelines/ protocol. As she highlighted, obviously disturbed (this, perhaps, explains why she hadn’t really participated in any of the previous discussions): ‘This raises serious doubts. We may be friends, but procedures are procedures and we should always follow them. I am not saying that Alexandra did that intentionally, or that I don’t trust her, but we should keep an eye on certain things. Obviously shocked and angry, Lysistrata then said: ‘Bullshit! What trust? Empty words... I admit I should have followed the right procedures, but I just didn’t even think that this would be an issue. We created this network to build trust and reciprocity, and it now seems to me that we could even find ourselves fighting each other with guns!’ Pandora then said: ‘All I am saying is that when someone is an administrator, he/she is inevitably in a power position. And power, any type of power, may bring corruption. This is why we need to be crystal clear in the way we deal with things. We are not just a bunch of friends helping each other. Someday, someone else will serve as an administrator; someone with whom we may not be so close; someone who may choose to take advantage of his position, transferring, for instance, credits to his account. This is why we need to follow the rules!’ Aikaterine then went on to say: ‘I guess the real issue is that we are talking about a family member. This is, I guess, what makes people suspicious. The fact that Lysistrata could get services/products without paying [in alternative units] through her mother’s account’. Solon, in defence of Lysistrata, who seemed buried in her thoughts (quiet as she was, shuffling through her notebook as if she was trying to find something) then said: ‘Anyone can mess up with the accounts, quite easily, which is exactly why we need trust and reciprocity. And I believe that Lysistrata has gained our trust and respect all this time’. This found Aikaterine in agreement: ‘I would never imagine that Lysistrata did this with an ulterior motive!’

[...] The heated discussion went on for a while. Throughout, Lysistrata was a

silent spectator of two opposing camps verbally fighting each other: one supporting the idea that rules are rules and should be followed religiously (Pandora, Sappho, Sophia, Thalia), and one excusing Lysistrata on the grounds that when people know each other for a long time, bureaucratic procedures can – at times – be avoided (Alexandra, Zoe, Solon). As time went by and the meeting was getting closer to its end, the signs of a rift within the network were increasing visible – uncovering that ‘ironically, our solidarity economies are really devoid of much solidarity at all!’ (Pandora). This was, perhaps, enlarged when Pandora added a further dimension to the heated argument: the general distrust between many members and the low levels of trading and participation. As she said: ‘This is just the tip of the iceberg. I know an awful lot of people who don’t trust each other and don’t trade with each other – especially when they feel that someone has joined the group with motives they don’t entirely agree with’. Further, she claimed that many members were, in fact, disillusioned with the imposition of the more radical views of the most active members of the group. Looking at the faces around the room, and from the many nodding heads, I immediately got the sense that most participants in the meeting were in agreement with Pandora. They ‘just weren’t as ballsy to really admit these challenges and start discussing them as Pandora was’ as Thalia whispered to my ear.

[...] Nonetheless, Pandora was to finish her statement with an even more controversial claim: ‘that by registering elderly people like Lysistrata’s mother in the network, we inevitably enhance the issue of non-participation. It only makes sense that they will never attend our meetings or events...’ As she went on to explain: ‘I also find myself spending a lot of “Votsala” for my mother, but I would never consider registering her to the network as I know that she would have nothing to offer back for the services she would receive’. Evidently upset, being an elderly herself, Sophia then intervened: ‘From my point of view, solidarity should be directed to everyone, irrespective of age. Why is it important for us that they attend the meetings every Tuesday? What’s more important: just meeting for the sake of meeting, or furthering solidarity economy? It’s like we are trying to create an alternative society which is still characterised by the same pathogenies of the mainstream: excluding the less able’. Zoe then said: ‘Exactly, we should not differentiate between people!’ Then, it was the turn of Aikaterine: ‘Guys, I feel really upset! It’s like a black cloud has covered everything. And we keep talking about registering new members as if our sole purpose is to make the network larger, ignoring in this way the central issue of developing trust and reciprocity amongst our

members. But, anyway, I ask you the following: Who would qualify as incapable of offering something? Can't a young person also be unable to offer anything back to the network? And believe me, elderly people can offer a lot – it's really a shame that their invaluable pool of skills, knowledge, time and abilities to support this project goes untapped. And it's much better if we help make them active again; they have to feel that they are still needed and worth something. They have to become active and get off their couches; they have to stop spending all their time watching "Klemmena Oneira" [A Greek soap-opera]!

Trying to calm everyone down, and aware of the fact that the issue of having the network open to elderly people keeps being debated since the creation of the network, Roxane intervened: 'I think we better end this discussion here – it's already 12.30pm! I'll upload the minutes of the meeting on the forum, and we can, perhaps, continue our discussion next week, when everybody will be much calmer...' And so it was: the end to an eventful meeting. Unlike all other meetings which would end with friendly chats between the participants, this ended in silence; the 'dark cloud' Gaiana was talking about was on top of everyone, even my own self. Thoughtful as I was, I took the long way back home. The events were truly puzzling me...

Instructions to self: Need to explore the following:

- I. Will this cloud have a silver lining? Will the issue get resolved?
- II. To what extent can trust be re-established?
- III. Will this event change the social interaction dynamics of the meetings to follow?
- IV. Is the vision of an alternative economy a utopia (not only in that Capitalism challenges its operation, but also in that these movements have to face a number of intrinsic problems?)
- V. How about my other case-studies? Is there trust between the organisers? Has that always been the case?

Analytic ideas and inferences:

The alternative economy is practiced with great unease – against all good intentions and necessity:

- I. Observations in agreement on theorisation on crack-capitalism. Intrinsic and extrinsic challenges faced in doing things differently. Most importantly, these challenges arise from: a) activist choices, and b) persisting interactions with an unfavourable mainstream.
- II. Community currencies are dynamic movements and not smoothly operating trading systems. Irrespective of the fact that they bring people together to co-shape and co-experience an alternative economy, there are no guarantees of people actually being able to work together and trust each other.

10.2 Appendix 2 – Interview schedule

Preamble:

1. Friendly greeting – informal conversation to ease transition into more formalised interview
2. Introduction to research project
3. Some comments on the process
4. Explain confidentiality, ask participant to read and sign consent forms
5. Remind them that they are the expert – so I want to primarily listen to their own opinions and enter into a conversation as equal partners. I am interested in getting opinions and personal experiences and narratives – there are, thus, no right or wrong answers. Ask them to say as much as they can.

Section 1: Type and extent of involvement

1. To start with then, I wondered if you could just tell me about your involvement in this movement – how often do you participate?

Prompts:

- How involved are you in trading or in movement management?
- Would you say that the movement has become an integrated part of your daily life?
- What determines and what undermines your involvement?
- Would you say that you are a “typical” member in terms of your involvement?
- What does community currency activism mean to you?

Section 2: Motivations and triggers of involvement

1. I wondered if you could just tell me about your participation in this movement – how – and why – did it start?

Prompts:

- How did you find out about the movement?

- What was your role in establishing the movement?
- What motivated you to participate? (A coping strategy? Moral or political convictions? Other needs (e.g. psychological)?)
- Any previous experience of such movements or of activism?
- Any previous life experiences that prepared you for community currency activism, or made you think that this is something worth pursuing?

Section 3: The moment of crisis

1. The movement developed in the wake of the economic crisis – so how big of an impact did this crisis actually have on you on a personal level? Was it a key trigger of your activism?

Prompts:

- What are the impacts of this crisis for you and your everyday life?
- Did it change the way you do things?
- Did it make you question things you took for granted?
- Did it have an impact on your opinions and on how you see the world?
- Would you consider becoming a member of a community currency movement had it not been for the crisis?
- Is your involvement a sort of critical-practical reaction to the crisis and austerity politics?

Section 4: Views on the impact of the alternative economy on everyday practices

1. What impact has your involvement had on your daily life?

Prompts:

- What needs do you cover? (Material? Social? Psychological?)
- How big of an effect has the movement had on your life as a whole?
- Have you been able to use the movement to (re)produce any daily practices?
- How easy was it to get to grips with performing the alternative economy?
- Have you developed as an activist the longer you participate? Has this been a learning experience?
- Any noteworthy stories or experiences of successfully being able to make trading part of your daily life or to reproduce practices that previously depended on

mainstream money?

- What are the personal challenges you face – if any?
- Who else (people, forms of activism, organisations, etc.) is important in helping you meet daily needs at this moment of crisis?

Section 5: Overall evaluation, reflections on the movement

1. Is the movement a success – in general terms?

Prompts:

- What are the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats to movement practice?
- What works well/ badly?
- Is there a future in this? Can it survive in the long-term?
- How might the movement improve – if it can?
- How about other forms of grassroots innovation?
- How do you feel about the movement after experiencing the alternative economy first hand?
- Is it a worthwhile endeavour?
- Have your perceptions of the movement changed over time? If yes, has this affected your participation?

Endings

- Anything I've not asked about that you think I might be interested in? Anything else you would like to discuss?
- Anyone else you think I should talk to?
- Any questions you have for me?

10.3 Appendix 3 – Extract from an interview

Interview with Pandora Kyriakopoulos on 19/06/2014

[...]

Phedeas: ... So, let's start with something easy! What made you join the Votsalo?

Pandora: ...What made me join... Well, um... the Votsalo was partly created on my suggestion, and of course, Elena's suggestion. It was the result of our personal search at a time of uncertainty – a time where our daily lives have simply been destroyed, where we've started having second thoughts even for the simplest things... Activists, voluntary simplifiers, community currency movements: they are living proof that capitalism has not penetrated into all forms of social relations and organisation – that a different economy is possible. So we just thought to ourselves: 'Is there any reason why we couldn't do this here? Is there any reason to still hold on the myth of a mainstream economy and how we all need to be a part of it when we clearly cannot do so?'

Phedeas: Makes perfect sense...

Pandora: Of course, we still had the popular Korydallos Assembly and I had already suggested (at least 3 times) that we create an alternative economy group – that's the general name I had given to it. Everyone found that odd, they didn't understand and, obviously, it was never discussed properly. At some point Elena showed up at one of the meetings, after an intervention she had made in the Korydallos Municipality. She happened to be sitting next to me, and at some point she made the suggestion. She proposed the same thing. I don't know if she was just luckier than me, if the timing was better, or if they had heard about it several times, but they started wondering and thinking about various things, about an everyday life we could no longer have... I don't know...The point is that in the end we all got involved – because of the circumstances: i.e. the crisis and the memorandums. So when we had the discussion (this was the 4th time the topic was being raised in a meeting), we talked about what exactly we meant and what we wanted. It turned out that Elena and I were not talking about the same thing [uncomfortable laugh]!.. Anyway, we managed to get over various differences, especially those between Elena and myself, and to create this group. At the beginning there were 7 people involved in the discussions regarding the creation of this group. One of them was completely passive and it was not long before he left, without making any contributions. Someone else was in a conflict with another member and was (I would say) forced to leave – I didn't like that... anyway, there were five of us left: the five main members who created this network. We had been discussing issues like what, where, how...the procedures...you know...for about a year...

Phedeas: Yes, yes...

Pandora: And then we managed to create it and called it Votsalo. So that's my involvement ever since the day when the suggestion was made...

Phedeas: And what are your goals and motivations (both for the whole group, and for you personally?)

Pandora: The first goal was... well, um... seeing as people had already become poor and knowing how much worse things would get, I thought it would be good to create a group where exchanges can be made, not in the way we are used to, with no money involved (there is none anyway), in order for us to – at least – cover more personal needs (as far as possible). If that was feasible on a small scale, then it would also be feasible on a larger scale.... Then we could perhaps gain control of our lives again...

Phedeas: So it's mainly because of the crisis and its impacts on your daily life...

Pandora: Definitely! You now have to think twice before doing anything – even if it's just about buying a packet of cigarettes from the kiosk... You have to put it all down and think whether you can afford it – whether you would have to sacrifice something else... But, importantly, you also need to consider whether other solutions and courses of action are possible – whether things like alternative currencies could act as a way out of unease... Simultaneously, though, the second key reason as to why I became involved was that I had always been obsessed with self-sufficiency. I always wanted to be independent from the state, at personal level – of course that's not absolute....

Phedeas: No, of course not, I understand what you mean.

Pandora: I always wanted to be able to produce the products I would need myself (to the extent possible) so that I wouldn't be dependent on energy or anything else that has to do with the state. Because this is also what makes me poor!

Phedeas: So were you involved in similar initiatives in the past?

Pandora: Not quite: community currencies are a brand new way of trying to live without [mainstream] money... But, simultaneously, and owing to previous activist projects, we came into these novel movements with the necessary know-how to engage in and make the most of the alternative economy... Having gained experience from other social movements and leftist arenas, I just knew that raising demands [towards the mainstream] would not change anything. I just knew, deep inside, that when we, as activists, take the situation – their lives – into their very own hands, then... we can work miracles! So, maybe... Maybe that's why they [i.e. community currency movements] haven't appealed to the masses. Maybe that's why you mainly find people who are inclined to this sort of action, who already have some experience of social movements – activism or community projects. It's all unknown to them – maybe they feel insecure; maybe they lack this genuine faith that it can all work out for them...

Phedeas: And how about developing a sense of community – as most members suggest? Was the development of interpersonal relations and solidarity also one of your goals? Or were these secondary as far as you were concerned?

Pandora: I don't think I see things in the same way as other people do, as far as solidarity and the development of interpersonal relations is concerned. Contrary to most other members of the group, I am quite social and communicative, so I have no such issues. I think that if you want to communicate with someone, then you go ahead and do it. You open up, no matter what the result, you make the first step, with a positive attitude and clear thinking. If you get something back from the other person, then that's great! If not, you haven't really lost anything...

Phedeas: Exactly!

Pandora: I believe solidarity is something you can only see in practice. If I see someone on the street and I think that they need help, I will try to help them. If they say that they don't need my help, then I will leave them alone. It's that simple as far as I'm concerned!

Phedeas: Yes, yes... And what about the primary needs actually covered through this participation?

Pandora: Unfortunately not many of them are covered, because participation is not wide. There should be a specialty or a product to cover all our needs... The basic ones, not the secondary ones...

Phedeas: Yes...

Pandora: I wouldn't mind if the secondary ones were covered too, as long as the basic ones were covered first! Food, services I need in my everyday life – doctors etc. But that's not happening...

Phedeas: No...

Pandora: ...and handymen. Say you need a doctor, a carpenter...I think there's still a long way to go, at least to get things where I think they should be...With all these individuals involved, so that whenever I need something, someone from the network is able to provide me with whatever that may be...

Phedeas: Yes...

Pandora: I have, however, covered some needs I wouldn't have been able to cover otherwise.

Phedeas: Despite the difficulties faced in terms of covering your needs, were there any positive results you weren't expecting, anything that surprised you pleasantly?

Pandora: Yes... Although I'm particularly social, I would say that I was pleasantly surprised by my contact with people in my neighbourhood. I didn't have this until recently. I don't go out in my neighbourhood much, even though I've lived here for a few years now....The mere fact that I now go out in my neighbourhood and I'll be seeing people I know, either through the network or through other groups in the field, that's a pleasant surprise for me.

Phedeas: You said earlier that the Votsalo does not contribute to covering your everyday needs that much. What other individuals are important to you in your everyday life, when it comes to covering certain needs?

Pandora: Due to my prolonged unemployment, I am getting some help from my family, through my parents' pensions. Also from various friends, before Votsalo too, as part of this solidarity. If someone needed something, someone else would cover that need.

Phedeas: Now looking at your experiences with the Votsalo, what are the positive experiences and what are the negative experiences (or difficulties), if you are able to isolate a few?

Pandora: Hmm... shall I go with positive? I think it's positive that I have personally grown through these teams. Each one of us has their peculiarities, I may be a bit

extreme myself in terms of the way I express myself and move and think... Being in touch with these people, the meeting process, it has helped me personally. You listen to others more carefully, you become more accepting of other people's opinion, you listen to their opinions and try to include it in your own thoughts, and how you would like all this to develop later on... Also, the fact that I met several remarkable and positive people. That's definitely something I've earned. The negative thing for me is that... I want a different team, Phedeas! I didn't want to say it now, while you are recording, but I think it needs to be heard... I want a different team! I can't stand them anymore! They are no good to me, what can I do? I tried, I tried, I tried... they've pissed me off! They get stuck with this, that and the other! They don't...The others can create a SYRIZA group, I don't know what they want. They can go to shops, with "votsala" and euros... Get their clothes and all good...Go back to their previous normal lives and be happy! Maybe I will join them! Just to find the easy way out of my problems! But no chance of me getting involved in setting this up. No way!!! Find the easy way out of my problems, yes, of course, I'm not an idiot! Why not? We are in crisis – I can also join a network – just as a member. That's not the point though! If they want to go though, they should just do it, just so we can get rid of them and do something else ourselves! The way things are now though, I don't see Votsalo going much further...Human selfishness is unsurmountable! The same goes for stupidity! And they win against everything!

Pandora/ Phedeas: [uncomfortable laughs]

Pandora: ...At the beginning I wanted this to open up, to embrace the entire Korydallos area, with lots of meetings being held, lots of groups in every neighbourhood. But the fact is that a small group of people with more things in common can do things slightly better and make them easier. When there are many different perspectives though, all this keeps moving backwards, or not moving at all in the best case. And this makes you fed up, it upsets you and it ruins the relationships that had been built...all this is taking us back rather than forward. That's what I am seeing, that at the end of the day we are unable to really work with ourselves in order to get over our personal issues and stuck-up views within the groups, even though that's the goal of all groups...

Phedeas: Exactly...

Pandora: That's not an easy thing to achieve. There are a lot of difficulties in that respect.

Phedeas: Other than the above, did you notice any other weak points with regard to Votsalo?

Pandora: Another weak point is the unit. We created another economy with small differences to the other one, the "normal" economy we know, the one with the euro or any other currency. The fact that there is a measuring unit means that we have started seeing these problems in practice. For example, there is a member who has reached the negative limit we had set ourselves. We were expecting this to happen at some point. The same goes for members who are close to the positive limit. Because one of them was mainly here to offer things, while the other one is seeing that there is little demand for what he has to offer so he is at a dead end...

Phedeas: Yes, yes...

Pandora: Other than that, we are led to dead ends by the mere way in which the network was set up – it is so dependent on the internet, computers let's say, and you need some sort of specialisation, people who should definitely know and should definitely learn these things in order for this network to function....I believe that's a problem, it's problematic. This also shows that the network is, unfortunately, problematic.

Phedeas: So, was it all a mistake?

Pandora: Hm.... Well, going into this, we were just asking for trouble! We were so naïve – thinking that the alternative economy could just take-off – that living without euros would be as easy as introducing our own [alternative] currency. [...] And here we are today [pause]: always encountering problems – barriers that are just too difficult to overcome... [Pause] But, I'll probably surprise you, but I don't think it was a mistake! Definitely not! [Pause] I've definitely gained something... When thinking of our network, these verses by our great poet [C.P. Kavafy] pop in my mind: "And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean"... [Pause] So yes, we haven't achieved a lot, but we've achieved something and, most importantly, we've gained important experience... [Pause] So yes, it was definitely worth all the effort!

Phedeas: And what are the strong points of this attempt?

Pandora: The strong points are the fact that it managed to cover some critical needs for some people, even though the network operates within a very small area. Classes for young children that were [financially] impossible for the parents to cover...The fact that through the involvement with the network, we have been in touch with other groups – when we were thinking things through and trying to figure out how to set it up, how others did it, we got in touch with other groups with a different purpose and they helped us learn things we weren't aware of; it has improved our lives, and it also helps some of us produce something. Even if things are not exactly what we would like them to be, it comes out as a big and powerful network, a network of people with something to do and, maybe, at some point, someone facing problems will be able to rely on it and on the help that it offers... The actions we have engaged in, the events and all that....I think that's all positive and it teaches as something. It also gives us the opportunity to leave our mark on the local community – nothing too major....

But, let's not forget that we are still at the start of a really long journey towards something much bigger – at the local or, even, at a national level... We are not claiming that we can change the world – our experience has taught us that that is near to impossible. [Pause] But our small-scale experiments, all the knowledge gained and those, um... didactic moments of "failure" can only ever equip us with the tools necessary to make some changes in the future...

[...]

10.4 Appendix 4 – Electronically Administered Questionnaire Survey

Welcome to our survey! Your willingness to complete this survey is much appreciated!

Phedeas Stephanides, PhD Candidate (University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK) and member of the alternative economic movement in which you partake, invites you to participate in this survey. The aim is to document your experience of using community currencies, and the results will be used for the PhD research purposes. Most importantly, however, they will be communicated to the administrators of the network in an attempt to support their efforts to improve its operations.

*Survey participants are entitled to claim **0.5 network credits** for their participation (See Terms and Conditions)

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- I. This questionnaire comprises of **seventeen (17) questions**, many of which you can answer by selecting from a list of available responses.
- II. Filling in the questionnaire should take **fifteen-twenty (15-20) minutes**. We have a lot to learn from you!
- III. Participation in this survey is **voluntary**.
- IV. Any participant is free to either choose not to provide an answer to any specific question, or even withdraw from the survey at any time, without giving any reason.
- V. Participants are requested to answer the questions as **honestly** as possible. **There are no right or wrong answers!**
- VI. No information will be disclosed to any third parties, or used for commercial purposes.
- VII. Participants are **not** requested to provide any personal identification details.
- VIII. In completing this questionnaire, you may feel the need to further detail and justify your responses. As such, the final section of this form invites you to an interview where you can express your opinions in full detail.
- IX. To organize these interviews, you are being asked to provide your **contact details**. Should you choose to provide any personal identification details, these will remain confidential and will be solely used to attempt to get in touch with you.
- X. **Similarly, these details are necessary if you wish to receive 0.5 (network) credits for your participation in the survey.** If you do not provide these details, the credits will be donated to the network.
- XI. It is noted that in order **to qualify for these credits, no more than 50% of the survey must remain incomplete.**

Please indicate your agreement/ disagreement to partake in this survey:

- I have read and understood the terms and conditions, and agree to participate.
- I have read and understood the terms and conditions, but do not wish to participate.

If you have agreed to participate in this survey, then move on to Section 1.

SECTION 1: Your Involvement in Community Currency Movements

The following questions aim to capture your involvement and experience of participating in a community currency movement.

1.1 Which community currency movement or trading network do you participate in?
(Please select the network in which you participate more often/ heavily)

- The Votsalo LETS The Holargos-Papagos time-bank
 The Athens time-bank Other *(Please specify)* _____

1.2 How frequently do you participate in the movement overall (by either trading, attending meetings or events organized)? *(Please select the answer that best describes your situation)*

- Never Occasionally (Roughly Once per Month, on Average)
 Seldom (Once per Annum or Less Often) Frequently (Several Times per Month)

1.3 How often do you trade (by offering or receiving goods and/or services) within the network? *(Please select the answer that best describes your situation)*

- Never Occasionally (Roughly Once per Month, on Average)
 Seldom (Once per Annum or Less Often) Frequently (Several Times per Month)

1.4 Did you face any difficulties in trading (or in attempting to trade) any goods and/or services? *(Please select the answer that best describes your situation)*

- Yes, but only while I was an inexperienced user of the alternative currency
 Yes, throughout my involvement in the scheme
 No, none at all

*If you have selected 'No, none at all' please move to question 1.5.
Otherwise, move to question 1.4(a)*

1.4(a) How often did you face any of the following difficulties trading/ attempting to trade?

(Please select the answers that best describe your situation)

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently - Always
Difficulties using the trading platform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties understanding the trading rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties pricing goods/ services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulty in trading with people I do not know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact difficulties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shortages of alternative currencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unavailability of the goods or services I need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of demand for the goods or services I offer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other difficulties <i>(Please specify and qualify)</i> _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1.5 To what extent do any of the following prevent you from attending events and/or meetings organized by the movement?

(Please select the answers that best describe your situation)

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently - Always
The day they are held	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The time they are held	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The place where they are held	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The topics discussed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not interested in socializing with members of the movement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <i>(Please Specify and Qualify your Response)</i> _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 1.6 Do you wish to detail your responses or describe any other situations preventing you from participating in the network's events and meetings or from trading? If yes, then you are kindly requested to type your comments in the space provided below:

SECTION 2: Motivations and Outcomes of Participation

You have made it to the penultimate section of this survey! Thank you!

The following questions will help us develop a better understanding of what triggered your participation in this movement.

- 2.1 What triggered you participation?

	Not at All	To a Limited Extent	To a Considerable Extent	To a Large Extent
Friends or family who already participated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The promotional material/ campaigns of the movement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal beliefs/ values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal curiosity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Material need for the (re)production of daily life in the wake of the crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My past experience of similar activities, initiatives, social movements or grassroots projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Realization of diverse economic possibility outside the mainstream (capitalist) economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <i>(Please specify and qualify)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2.2 To what extent was your participation informed by any of the following?

	The extent to which you hoped to:			
	Not at All	To a Limited Extent	To a Considerable Extent	To a Large Extent
Obtain needed services or goods you could not afford in the wake of the crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain needed services or goods you would not normally pay for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain needed services you could not perform by yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make use of your previously unaccounted labor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop new skills and talents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel better about yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet people and/or make new friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spend more time with like-minded people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partake in a reuse market for unwanted goods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help strengthen the local economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help build trust and reciprocity between people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give back to people in need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help empower socially-excluded population groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become more politically active	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voice your opposition to consumerism/materialism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Act against Capitalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support alternative forms of economic activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help create a better society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please Specify) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2.3 To what extent did you achieve any of the following through your involvement?

	The extent to which you were able to:			
	Not at All	To a Limited Extent	To a Considerable Extent	To a Large Extent
Obtain needed services or goods you could not afford in the wake of the crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain needed services or goods you would not normally pay for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain needed services you could not perform by yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make use of your previously unaccounted labor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop new skills and talents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel better about yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet people and/or make new friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spend more time with like-minded people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partake in a reuse market for unwanted goods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help strengthen the local economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help build trust and reciprocity between people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give back to people in need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help empower socially-excluded population groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become more politically active	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voice your opposition to consumerism/materialism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Act against Capitalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support alternative forms of economic activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help create a better society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please Specify) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SECTION 3: Demographic data

This is the last section of this survey. Thank you for your participation so far!

The following questions concern your demographic profile. We understand that you may not wish to provide such information. Nonetheless, we would like to highlight that this data will help us analyse your responses.

3.1 Your age (In Years):

- 18-25 36-45 56-65 (3)
- 26-35 46-55 Over 66

3.2 Number of dependants (e.g. children, parents, etc.):

- 0 2
- 1 3 or more

3.3 Your household income (Per annum; In Euros):

- 0-6000 10001-20000 30001 or more
- 6001-10000 20001-30000

3.4 Your previous involvement in other social movements, networks and/or political organizations:

(You can choose as many options as you wish)

- None
- Member of another time-bank or community currency movement
- Member of a People's Assembly
- Member of a NGO
- Member of another social movement
- Member of a political party/ organization
- Other *(Please Specify Type)* _____
-

Are there any questions we have forgotten? Would you like to tell us anything else?
If yes, then please feel free to add any comments below:

This is the end of this questionnaire survey!
Thank you for your participation! We appreciate your time, feedback and contribution!

If you would like to ask any questions, or even follow up on the results of this survey, please do not hesitate to contact the primary researcher or the administrators of the movement in which you partake. Contact details are provided below:

*Phedeas Stephanides, Science, Society & Sustainability (3S) Research Group,
Email: p.stephanides@uea.ac.uk; Tel.: +30 697 1979299 (GR); +44 7891070350 (UK)*

Would you like to receive 0.5 credits for your participation in this survey?

- Yes
- No. I would like to donate these credits to the movement
- Yes No. I would like to donate these credits to the movement

The next stage of this research is to carry out one-to-one interviews with members of the initiative exploring some of the issues raised above in more detail. Would you be happy to be interviewed as part of this project?

(Note that: a) the interviews will be arranged at your convenience, and b) your anonymity will be fully protected and any information provided will be anonymized)

- Yes No

Please enter your name and contact details if you would like to receive 0.5 credits for your participation in this survey, and/or if you are happy to be interviewed.

Name/ Account Name: _____

Phone/ Email: _____

10.5 Appendix 5 – Consent and release forms

Research Project on Community Currencies in Recession-Laden Greece

Information Sheet for Research Participants



-
- Research Duration: April 2014 – January 2015. (Final dissertation submission deadline: October 2016)
 - Researcher: Phedeas Stephanides (PhD Student, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia)
-

Research Overview:

The ongoing economic crisis has revealed much about the vulnerabilities of the mainstream economy – paving the way for the recent sprouting of many community currencies in locations that had previously lacked motivation to work outside capitalist institutions. This development echoes the work of leading “crisologists” who have long suggested that crises do not only lead to social disorganisation and destruction, but also include dimensions of re-construction and social-political innovation. In seeking to develop an in-depth understanding of these movements, this project aims to the in-depth inquiry of: a) why and how involvement in these movements unfolds, and b) how the alternative economy is being practiced.

Research questions (provisional):

- 1) What is the nature of these initiatives?
 - a) What are the different solutions on offer?
 - b) How do they interpret the crisis?
 - c) What are they doing?
- 2) How effective are they?
 - a) What do their members and coordinators see as success?
 - b) What are the challenges they face?
- 3) What kind of future might they build?

In addressing these questions, a mixed-method qualitative data collection approach will be adopted, involving:

- a) A questionnaire survey distributed electronically and/ or in hard copies to the participants of the research case-studies (June – August 2014 – provisional);
- b) Semi-structured and ad-hoc/ informal interviews with the coordinators and participants of these initiatives (maximum duration of approximately 1 hour per interview; to take place at the offices/ meeting places of the community currency schemes of interest or in any other location deemed appropriate (April 2014 – January 2015 - provisional));
- c) In-situ participant observation (at the offices, exchange centres, events and meetings of the community currency schemes of interest; (June- November 2014)).

<p>Researcher contact details:</p> <p>Phedeas Stephanides PhD Student School of Environmental Sciences University of East Anglia Norwich NR4 7TJ Tel.: +44 (0) 7891070350 Email p.stephanides@uea.ac.uk</p>	<p>Supervisor contact details:</p> <p>Dr Gill Seyfang Senior Lecturer School of Environmental Sciences University of East Anglia Norwich NR4 7TJ Tel.: +44 (0)1603 59 2956 Email g.seyfang@uea.ac.uk</p>
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**Research Project on Community Currencies in
Recession-Laden Greece**



Consent Form: General consent
(Covering participant observation)

Having read through the project summary, you are now free to make an informed decision whether to be involved in the research, and to choose the level of your involvement.

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Phedeas Stephanides (PhD student, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia) is conducting a research study to help understand the nature and effectiveness of community currencies developed in Greece since the outbreak of the economic crisis. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your active involvement in using community currencies. You are also a member of a social network I have befriended and which I want to document as a special case-study of how people can live without mainstream money.

The research aims to document your activities and discussions as a group in an attempt to make sense of the social and cultural context of your understandings and beliefs, and gain rich insights into your experience and practices as a member of this network.

B. PROCEDURES

1. If you agree to be in this study the following will occur: Phedeas will spend time with you, participate in your activities/ events/ meetings, and talk to you about your engagement in the network. If you agree, some of these conversations and your formal meetings will be recorded with your permission, and notes will be made.
2. Participation in the study may take a great deal of your time. We cannot estimate a total number of hours with any precision as the project is scheduled to last for at least 7 months and, with your permission, Phedeas will be visiting with you on a regular basis.

3. Some of our conversations will include discussions of your motivations to participate in this network, your values and ideologies, and the challenges you may face in being part of this community currency movement.

C. RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the conversation topics might (though not likely) make you uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions or to stop continuing to participate in the conversation whenever you are not comfortable with the subject. You are free to leave the conversation at any time, or to ask the researcher to leave or stop talking at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in the research will not involve a loss of privacy. The researcher will keep information as confidentially as possible (using pseudonyms). Remember, that this research does not aim at “naming and shaming” individuals, but at documenting the nature and effectiveness of the network as a whole. As such, any information regarding your particular involvement in the network need not identify you in any ways. No individual identities or descriptions will be used in any reports or publications from this study and your name will not be recorded. Only Phedeas Stephanides will have access to your coded study records, notes and recordings. When the study is finished, any recordings will be stored in a secure, locked archive and destroyed upon completion of the project. Edited excerpts will be used for academic presentations, including the final dissertation report and other publications in academic journals.

If, for any reason, you make it clear that you do not wish to participate in the study, notes/ recordings regarding your involvement in the network and your voiced opinions/ discussions will NOT be made, and no references will be made to you in the final report.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit (e.g. economic) to you for participating in this study. However, the research findings will also be of importance beyond academia. Conclusions regarding: a) the main challenges and weaknesses of the scheme, and b) the main needs, aims and normative standpoints of the participants will be communicated to the members and coordinators, providing you with useful advice on how future activities should be designed for maximum effectiveness and participation.

E. COSTS

There will be no costs to you (aside some time commitments) as a result of taking part in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

You have talked to the researcher about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have further questions, you may contact him via email or via phone. If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. If, for some reason, you do not wish to do this, you may contact the supervisor responsible for this research (see contact details below).

Researcher contact details:	Supervisor contact details:
Phedeas Stephanides	Dr Gill Seyfang
PhD Student	Senior Lecturer
School of Environmental Sciences	School of Environmental Sciences
University of East Anglia	University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ	Norwich NR4 7TJ
Tel.: +44 (0) 7891070350	Tel.: +44 (0)1603 59 2956
Email p.stephanides@uea.ac.uk	Email g.seyfang@uea.ac.uk

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

If you agree to participate please sign below.

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

**Research Project on Community Currencies in
Recession-Laden Greece**



Consent Form: Personal interviews

Please tick each box on the right-hand side of the form:

I, _____ [<i>insert interviewee's name</i>] agree that this interview may be used by Phedeas Stephanides for a PhD research project under the supervision of Gill Seyfang of the University of East Anglia.	
I have received a copy of the <i>Information Sheet for Research Participants</i> , and have read and understood this.	
I understand that my name will not be cited in the research. Any extracts from this interview will be communicated using a pseudonym.	
I give my consent for this interview to be digitally recorded.	
I also understand that any recordings made during the interview will be erased once the research project is complete.	
I give my consent for notes to be taken during my interview.	
I understand that the content of the interview may be quoted <i>verbatim</i> in a variety of ways throughout the life of the research project and afterwards: in the thesis manuscript, in any ensuing presentations or publications, websites, in teaching, as well as in discussion with other researchers.	
Please use this space if you wish to qualify your consent in any way:	
I understand that I can withdraw consent for this interview to be used at any point up until the thesis has been submitted.	
I have received a copy of this statement.	

Signature of interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____