Master thesis Human Geography: ‘Conflict, Territories, and Identities’
Lavinia Steinfort, s4319273
Supervised by Dr. Roos Pijpers
Seeds for Change
How Greek social movements break with a neoliberal crisis

Supervisor: Dr. Roos Pijpers
Second reader: Dr. Bas Hendrikx

MSc Human Geography
‘Conflicts, Territories, and Identities’
Radboud University Nijmegen
Lavinia Steinfort, s4319273
Lavinia.Steinfort@student.ru.nl
August 2014
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  p. 5
ABSTRACT            p. 6

PART 1: INTRODUCTION  p. 8
1.1 GETTING STARTED   p. 10
1.2 OBJECTIVES       p. 11
1.3 QUESTIONS        p. 11
    1.3.1 Research question  p. 11
    1.3.2 Sub-questions     p. 11
1.4 RELEVANCE        p. 11
1.5 MY POSITION AS A RESEARCHER  p. 13
1.6 READING GUIDE    p. 14

PART 2: BACKGROUND AND THEORY  p. 17
2.1 FINANCIAL INTERDEPENDENCIES  p. 17
    2.1.1 Contextualizing the crises  p. 17
    2.1.2 How the Euro came of age  p. 18
    2.1.3 Disparities within Europe  p. 19
    2.1.4 From bailing to blaming  p. 21
    2.1.5 Neoliberal consequences  p. 23
    2.1.6 The dispossession of a people  p. 25
2.2 A GLANCE INTO GREECE’S PAST  p. 28
2.3 THE (UN)DOING OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS  p. 30
    2.3.1 Cooperativism as movements’ cornerstone  p. 30
    2.3.2 A multitude of challenges  p. 33
    2.3.3 Intersubjective catalysts for change?  p. 34
    2.3.4 Rounding off  p. 37
PART 3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

3.1 CONSTRUCTIVIST FOUNDATIONS p. 39
   3.1.1 Interconnecting methodologies p. 39
   3.1.2 Tools and techniques p. 42
   3.1.3 Surprised by a quantitative turn p. 45

3.2 THESSALONIAN TURBULENCE p. 46
   3.2.1 Where are we coming from? p. 46
   3.2.2 Struggles for solidarity p. 48

3.3 FOLLOWING MOVEMENTS p. 52
   3.3.1 The water is ours p. 52
   3.3.2 Without middle men p. 55
   3.3.3 Demanding an equal living p. 58

3.4 IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS p. 61
   3.4.1 A matter of solidarity and equality p. 61
   3.4.2 Anarchism and the anti-Shock Doctrine p. 65

3.5 AN INDICATIVE OVERVIEW p. 68
   3.5.1 Cross-cutting relations p. 68
   3.5.2 Telling numbers p. 70
   3.5.3 Finishing up p. 72

PART 4: ANALYSES

4.1 COUNTERING CAPITALISM p. 74
   4.1.1 Wake up from passivity p. 74
   4.1.2 Movements taking shape p. 77

4.2 EXPERIENCING MOVEMENTS p. 79
   4.2.1 Collective belonging p. 79
   4.2.2 Network aspirations p. 81
   4.2.3 The difficulties of difference p. 82
4.3 CONFLICTING RELATIONS
  4.3.1 Power practices
  4.3.2 Interrupting agencies
  4.3.3 Interfering authority
  4.3.4 Unavoidable tensions

4.4 ENVISIONING CHANGE
  4.4.1 Opening up to diversity
  4.4.2 Society in constant flux
  4.4.3 Everyday gains and awaited Change
  4.4.4 The communal in the performative

4.5 DISCUSSION
  4.5.1 Contributions challenged
  4.5.2 Emancipatory potential
  4.5.3 Close to conclusion

PART 5: CONCLUSION
5.1 CONCLUSION
5.2 THE ROAD AHEAD
  5.2.1 Perceived challenges
  5.2.2 Common grounds
5.3 REFLECTIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX
  I. Movements, initiatives and participants
  II. List of interviews
  III. Interview questions
  IV. Questionnaires
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Roos Pijpers. Her guidance, careful scrutiny and feedback have been pivotal in conducting my research and finalizing this thesis. I am grateful for the clear and open guidance in which she left me room to explore and combine the topics of social movements, neoliberalism, and (communal) performativity. Her feedback was most constructive and motivated me to fully dedicate myself to the research. In addition, her scrutiny helped me to elaborate and refine my stance on the combined use of discursive and performative powers.

Besides my supervisor, my sincere thanks goes out to Dr. Willemijn Verkoren, Dr. Mathijs van Leeuwen, Dr. Henk van Houtum and many others who developed and taught courses in the Human Geography Master ‘Conflict, Territories, and Identities’. Due to the freedom the program provided I have been able to give shape to my fields of interest and combine these with fieldwork, voluntary work and an internship.

My gratitude goes also out to Willem, my partner, for his patience and support during these past months. Our conversations helped me to make sense of the numerous movements, sharpen my analyses and develop the concept of communal performativity. The proofreading and spelling checks of Willem and my father Richard were vital for improving the form and structure of this thesis. Also, I would like to thank my mother and all my friends who stood by me during this undertaking.

Last, but not least, I am deeply indebted to Thessaloniki’s social movements and their participants. Especially, I would like to thank Kostas and Marius as they introduced me to the many initiatives that make up the movements as well as Chris, Yannis and Lena for their invaluable cooperation and openness. Without the continuous efforts of them and many others, clarifying society’s condition, sharing their experiences and making me feel part of their worlds, I would not have been able to stress the scope, urgency and significance of their endeavors. Their ongoing, creative and dedicated engagements have strengthened my belief that the late John Lennon best expressed as, power to the people.

Amsterdam, August 2014
This thesis is an examination of how the social movements in Thessaloniki, Greece, break with neoliberal discourses. I address the movements in relation to the 2009 Greek debt crisis and explore their impact on the members and on society as a whole. I set out the context of the crisis, Greece's history and social movement theory to zoom in on the city's water, food, and labor movements. Then, I discuss in order: (1) the way the movements are formed in response to the crisis, the European Union and neoliberalism; (2) how the members of the numerous initiatives making up the movements experience their involvement as well that of other movements; (3) the extent to which the agencies of members, initiatives and movements correspond as well as conflict; and (4) the way these social forces change Thessaloniki's socio-economic landscape and whether this can be understood as communal performativity. I focus on the power struggles that complicate the relations between and within social movements, as they impair the efforts to cooperate and create networks. Additionally, I examine the notion of communal performativity as the movements' power and ability to break with neoliberal discourses and to bring about societal change. I go on to argue that discourses, which perpetuate the power imbalances, and performativity, through which one breaks with these imbalances, are complementary as both concepts treat power as practice. Defining power as practice sheds light on the way the realms of agency and structure are intertwined. Finally, I discuss how a commitment to improving the communication among initiatives can empower the social movements in order to overcome challenges, to build networks and to enhance their impact on society.

Keywords: social movements, neoliberalism, discourses, performativity, societal change
PART I
INTRODUCTION
1.1 GETTING STARTED

In a Greece of crisis and of misery, another Greece is being created at a fast pace, one of people who get self-organized for survival and also for resistance. [T]he multifaceted solidarity structures shows us that they play a catalytic role in the increase of self-confidence of our co-citizens, assisting them at the same time to avoid total depression and collapse. .. Resourcefulness of the people and the radically innovative solutions they apply, often provide a pleasant surprise. – Kevin Flanaghan, August 2013

This is one of the many available quotes on the social movements that are now taking shape in Greece. Since 2009 Greece has been going through a debt crisis that also hit the rest of Europe (Lane 2012). The so called Troika that consists of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund responded in neoliberal fashion, with bailout packages – 240 billion in total – and harsh austerity measures fueling political uncertainty and economic despair (Hadjimichalis 2011). As debts were socialized the Greek people were forced to bear the burdens of austerity, such as tax and price increases, privatization that destroy public facilities, and unemployment because of job-cuts and pressed wages (Panageotou 2011). In response to these neoliberal measures – that were in favor of capital and at the expense of people – many have lost further trust in politics and economy, and have joined forces to change society. Over the past three years over 3,000 projects have been set up that formed networks of solidarity, as people reach out to each other to create social cooperatives, community programs and redistribution centers (Kioupkiolis and Karyotis 2013). Because the Greek people face ever increasing states of dispossession, and are being exposed or subjected to immediate suffering (Butler and Athanasiou 2013) many thousands are urged to give solidarity a chance. Ideal as it sounds, this is no easy task.

The social movements of Thessaloniki, the second largest city of Greece, have taken up this task and are said to be thriving with numerous citizens’ initiatives, labor cooperatives and neighborhood groups resisting the crisis in various ways. For this reason I conducted fieldwork in Thessaloniki for two months, delving in particularly into the water, food and labor movements in order to grasp the relations between Greece’s debt crisis and the social movements, between these social movements and the people involved, and between Thessaloniki’s society and these social movements. I took part in some of the movements’ initiatives and spoke with dozens of people who either directly or indirectly participate in the struggles to familiarize myself with what they go through. As such, I got a glimpse of how the movements and the people involved challenge and

1 http://www.resilience.org/stories/2013-08-28/solidarity-for-all-greece
2 http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/young-greeks-helping-each-other-to-combat-crisis-a-916123.html
empower each other, how these movements change the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki, and what can be learned from all this.

What unifies the water, food and labor movements is that they have risen out of the need to oppose neoliberalism in order to take life into common hands. This need transcends the individual as it concerns also one’s neighbors, virtually affecting hundreds of thousands of people in Thessaloniki. A number that is growing to this day. When people acknowledge the necessity to join forces, people reach out to each other. The movements were not merely built to aid the participants, but rather with the belief that society as a whole should move away from a neoliberal mindset and embrace change. To accomplish this, the larger population should get involved. The movements, initiatives and people acknowledge that they have to cooperate and convene in networks to develop alternatives, apply proposals, and spread successful examples that counter neoliberalism. Meanwhile initiatives are tangled up in numerous power struggles which impair communication and collaboration, and risk to delegitimize their efforts and those of the movements on a whole. Yet, as these difficulties nurture the persistent desire to cooperate and build networks, there is hope to convince society that it pays off to engage with others, to demand one’s rights and to decide over one’s own life and over the resources that concern everyone.

For the movements to turn life into common hands, the notion of direct democracy appears promising. Direct democracy is one of the most recited – and occasionally criticized – concepts among the movements as it is grounded on the principles of equality, self-organization and collective decision-making. However, the way the initiatives apply these principles and aim to affect society is often experienced as an experiment, a test and a bet. Social experimenting is pivotal in moving away from neoliberalism and towards the creation of a common understanding. To experiment – which often involves direct democracy – is to break with neoliberal attitudes and practices. In order to oppose neoliberalism, the movements have to be creative, explore society, and find out what it takes for people to take care of themselves and each other.

Without a solid answer, these experiments – as in the initiatives of which the movements are composed – appear to be able to break with neoliberalism in surprising ways. I bring in performativity, to elucidate whether such experiments are countering neoliberal discourses by which people and governments abide by the rules of the market and the imperative of growth. Performativity is a notion of Butler (1993) that affirms the possibility that a person’s speech, gesture or action can negotiate and negate one’s positioning in certain discourses through interrupting their reproduction. I will explore in this thesis whether it is of value to reconceptualize performativity into communal performativity, since the initiatives – and perhaps actions in general – are not individual efforts by themselves. The focus on performativity as well as discourse enables me to understand power as a practice that can both dismantle and reinforce power imbalances. Moreover, as these movements intent to break with neoliberalism, there is a lot we can learn from what is happening in Thessaloniki, and to the whole of Greece for that matter.
As Tomas Sedlacek argues, ‘Greece is not behind the rest of Europe but ahead of it because it has gone bankrupt before the rest of Europe’. The whole of Europe is going through a crisis because of the prevailing faith in neoliberalism and the obsession with growth that puts market forces in power before the people’s well-being (Harvey 2011). Since the social movements, in all their varieties, defy neoliberal principles and practices – and potentially create ‘another Greece’, I believe it is important to take note of these significant developments in Thessaloniki – before it is ‘our’ turn. Even before the coming of another Europe, another Netherlands could be more than mere imagination.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives follow the course of my research, by starting out on a general, theoretical level, narrowing down to the empirical level and concluding with a focus on Thessaloniki’s water, food and labor movements. First, the Greek debt crisis needs to be related to Europe’s debt crisis and to the discourses of neoliberalism. Explicating the interconnections between Greece’s situation and developments in Europe sheds light on Greece’s deteriorating economy. In turn, the concept of neoliberalism is used to explain how politics and capitalism have evolved to legitimize the increasingly uneven economic development in Europe, going at the expense of Greece, which together with other factors can clarify why various social movements have arisen. Second, during fieldwork in Thessaloniki I have tried to understand how the people involved experience their engagement with their social movement and the existence of other social movements. Additionally, the extent to which the personal agency of the people as well as the social agency of the movements corresponds – will be examined. The various impacts of the social movements needs attention to comprehend if and how they change the lives of the people involved and the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki. Third, in order to understand how movements initiate societal change I attempt to reconceptualize performativity into communal performativity and assess the latter’s value. Fourth, the challenges the social movements and the participants face can serve to develop lessons for the future of these and other social movements in order to enhance their impact on society. The four objectives can now be formulated:

- To identify the developments of neoliberalism within Europe that contributed to Greece’s debt crisis and to understand how these resulted in Thessaloniki’s social movements.
- To interpret the experiences of the participants and the level of correspondence between the agencies of the social movements and the agencies of the people involved.

To reconceptualize performativity into communal performativity and to assess whether this concept is able to capture the movements’ possibilities to initiate change.

To comprehend the challenges Thessaloniki’s social movements face for deriving lessons to enhance the socio-economic impact of these and other social movements.

1.3 QUESTIONS

The objectives bring me to the research question, which is divided into five sub-questions. The first four sub-questions on the debt crisis, experiences, various agencies and communal performativity will be analyzed in part four. Then, this thesis will conclude with a preliminary answer to sub-question five, discussing the lessons derived from the challenges Thessaloniki’s movements face.

1.3.1 Research question

How are Thessaloniki’s social movements and its initiatives taking shape in relation to Greece’s debt crisis, to what extent do the agencies of the people involved correspond to the agencies of the movements, and which lessons can be drawn from the challenges the movements experience to understand how the movements’ socio-economic impact on Thessaloniki’s society can be enhanced?

1.3.2 Sub-questions

1. How are Greece’s debt crisis, the European Union and neoliberalism related to the emergence of Thessaloniki’s social movements?

2. In what ways do the people involved experience the engagement with their specific movement, as well as the existence of other social movements?

3. To what extent do the agencies of the people involved correspond with the agencies of the social movements, and how do the multiple articulations of agencies conflict?

4. Are the social movements changing the people involved and the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki, and can this be understood as a form of communal performativity?

5. What can be learned from the challenges Thessaloniki’s social movements are facing to enhance the socio-economic impact of these social movements and others?

1.4 RELEVANCE

The relevance of this research is two-fold, societal and academic. Firstly, societal relevance is expressed by giving the people participating in Thessaloniki’s social movements a voice. Their participation signifies that they demand change. In turn, I try to understand whether such change is taking place, by asking to what extent the agencies of the people and the agencies of the movements
they are involved with go hand in hand, and how the movement changes the people and impacts the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki. The research aims to be in the interest of the participants of Thessaloniki's social movements and other social movements that have arisen elsewhere in Europe. As financial crises are occurring at an increasing rate, the people throughout Europe can learn from the responses of Thessaloniki's social movements, as in the alternatives that are proposed and being applied to set an example for society. In order to increase the societal relevance, the research intents to develop lessons – in close interaction with the research population – out of the challenges the social movements and the involved people face, which may be of help to enhance the socio-economic impact of Thessaloniki's movement as well as of other social movements in similar situations.

Secondly, the academic relevance lies in the combination of addressing the injustices of neoliberal structures that increase uneven development within Europe, and the developments of Greece's social movements in which people seek to collectively break with these structures. The politico-economic situation of Europe and Greece is sketched out by drawing on Harvey's account on capitalism and the financial crisis, Hadjimichalis' understanding of the increasing disparities within Europe, and Comaroff and Comaroff's argument on neoliberalism and dispossession. With the help of Butler and Athanasiou (2013) it is examined how neoliberal policies treat an increasing number of people as disposable; leaving them in a state of dispossession in which they are nearly deprived from basic human rights such as water, food and labor. Greece's debt crisis, neoliberal discourses and states of dispossession are linked to the rise of Thessaloniki's social movements. In theorizing social movements Butler's notion of performativity is elucidating, as the movements and their members express the power and potentiality of breaking with neoliberal structures. However as performativity usually applies to the individual, the performativity that involves social movements appears to be of a communal kind. In this research I explore the concept of communal performativity as in how it empowers people, their initiatives and the various social movements to act upon their ideas, develop alternatives to neoliberal practices, and propose these to society, to ultimately impact society. By developing and finally assessing this concept it can be understood whether it contributes to Butler's notion; how it can help us understand the potential of social movements; and to what extent the agencies of the participants, the initiatives and the movements can challenge, articulate, and strengthen one another. Setting out the relations between communal performativity and these multiple agencies will help me understand their impact on Thessaloniki's socio-economic landscape. Moreover, by looking into the ideological underpinnings of the movements, such as the concept of direct democracy as developed by Castoriadis (1991, 1997), the limitations of (communal) performativity – as well as of direct democracy – may come to light. Thus, the concept of performativity, and how communality may contribute to it, is key for this research's academic relevance by interrelating the issues of neoliberalism, dispossession, social movements, performativity and societal change.
The societal and academic relevance are ultimately interrelated, as an analysis of Thessaloniki's social movements and the concept of communal performativity provides the possibility of further exploring the structure-agency debate. Hence, by tracing the symbiotic intricacies of structures – from neoliberalism to the somewhat improvised structures of social movements that are made up of networks between people, initiatives and various struggles – it can be understood that people are not merely subjected to such structures but that they ingeniously maneuver them, and by means of them co-create alternatives.

1.5 MY POSITION AS A RESEARCHER

When doing research and composing a subsequent report it is important to make one's position explicit. For doing research implies having a degree of power. Neither the research, nor the researcher can get away with claiming to be objective. Since objectivity legitimizes the power that makes knowledge look like neutral knowledge, one's own subjectivity should be acknowledged. To affirm my subjectivity means to explicate from which academic fields my motivation, choices, and thoughts developed in order to admit to their normative claims. In the following I will explain how this thesis relates to the academic disciplines of cultural anthropology and development sociology, conflict studies and human geography.

As I did my Bachelors in cultural anthropology and development sociology (University of Amsterdam) I became receptive to so called global issues that concern local people. From this I took the insight that power structures should not be taken for granted and that people are not merely the victims of such power structures. Society was cut down to its constructivist fabric and after a minor in conflict studies and experiences abroad, my fascination for foreign cultures and conflicts came to connote a kind of imperial exoticism. In becoming more aware of my own responsibility I could not legitimate my want to analyze a conflict in a more remote destination. Therefore I looked for a conflict closer to home for which I – as a European citizens – carry responsibility. Greece's debt crisis is related to the troubling management of the European Union, in that it favors the accumulation of capital over the protection and well-being of its citizens. Responsibility essentially accompanies the training of academics. For this reason I decided to take Greece and Thessaloniki in particular as a case study as it shows in what kind of conflicts the European Union takes part. To illustrate, Katherina, a woman I met during a demonstration says, ‘we’re in a terrible war. The rest of Europe should know that. These are the kind of wars that Europe fights’.

The above quote shows that some – if not many – people in Thessaloniki feel to be part of a war, in which the governments of Europe and Greece are fighting their own people. As this thesis concludes my Masters in conflict studies, I briefly relate Greece's crisis to Zizek's view on violence,
which was treated in one of the Master’s curricular courses. Zizek distinguishes in *SOS Violence* (2008) between objective and subjective violence. Objective violence, from neo-Nazi fascism to anarchic rebellion appears to come from nowhere to infiltrate our peaceful, liberal world. However this violence cannot be seen as separated from the subjective violence by which powerful governments, institutions and elite govern populations. The supposedly objective violence – or any other reaction – of the marginalized only makes sense as a complex retaliation against the structural violence of policies, conduct and measures by those who set the rules. So whatever way the Greek people reacts towards 2009 debt crisis is intimately connected with the larger politico-economic power structures in which the population is embedded.

Human geography is concerned with these power struggles, alike the previously mentioned academic fields. However, human geography is additionally concerned with scales and networks. Both of these elements have colored this research to the extent that the scope of this research includes the more global structures of a financial crisis, the various levels of governance, as well as the stories and experiences of the Greek people in which top down power is strengthened, negotiated, and sometimes countered. These levels cannot do without each other. They can be said to have given existence to each other, be it in sometimes rather harsh ways. Therefore the relations between these levels and the resonance of actions that are employed appear to make up a network of interconnected structures, processes and actors. Moreover, while studying the social movements, the interdependencies between participants, initiatives and movements came to the fore. In order to get an understanding of the socio-economic impact of social movements and how it can be enhanced, the research field enfolded as complex web of engagements. A web in which people and movements as a whole – for very good reasons – may have difficulties cooperating, but vigorously endeavor to do so.

Hence, this thesis is colored by the – subjective – observation – that the ills of greater politico-economic structure affect the well-being of the people. Such injustice should be countered by pointing out which parties bear responsibility and by emphasizing that when forces are joint people have the potential to empower themselves and each other. As such, I plead for taking position when doing research, since we are – whether we acknowledge it or not – already enmeshed with the fields that we research.

1.6 READING GUIDE

The thesis in front of you is divided into five parts. This first part covered an elaborative introduction, including a foreword, the research question, objectives, and the social and academic relevance of the research. Thereafter I have made my position as a researcher explicit by treating the various academic disciplines I am trained in. The upcoming part includes the context of the Greek debt crisis. I will elaborate on the role of the European Union, the workings of neoliberalism, and the history of the Greece state up from World War II. This part will end with a theoretical framework for exploring
social movements and communal performativity.

In the third part postmodernism and actor-network theory are treated as the methodologies to do research on Thessaloniki’s social movements. Subsequently, the methods I used and the ethics I tried to adhere to are spelled out. Then I will introduce Thessaloniki’s field of social movements and the principles under which I perceive them to be interrelated. After mapping out the various struggles against the privatizations of nature, water, medical care, and waste, I move on to the movements I focused on during fieldwork, these being the water, food and labor movement. In mapping out the movements I will bring to the fore the data I collected during fieldwork. Additionally, I explore the theories some of my informants draw on to conclude with some quantitative data to make sense of how the movements are connecting to each other and to society at large.

The fourth part contains the analyses of the first four sub-questions in which I concentrate on the labor, food and water movements, the latter in particular. The inquiry that belongs to the first sub-question entails an understanding of how the interrelations between Greece’s debt crisis, the European Union and neoliberalism shape Thessaloniki’s social movements. An analysis will be developed that fits the second sub-question, addressing the way people experience the movement they are engaged in and the existence of other movements. For the second sub-question I consider the agencies of the people involved and how these may correspond to the agencies of the social movements. When treating the third sub-question I address how the social movements are changing the people involved and the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki, and whether this can be understood as a form of communal performativity. To answer this question I will explore the concept of performativity and to what extent communality is already inscribed in performativity. This part will finish off with a discussion that opens with an assessment of the concept of communal performativity, and of what remains to be examined. Thereafter I set forth the value, limitations, and emancipatory potentials of Thessaloniki’s movements, discussing the relevance of such understanding for the whole of Europe and suggesting ways to enhance the impacts of social movements.

In the fifth and last part I will offer an overview of the insights which I attained during the course of this research by speaking and listening to many inspiring laborers, citizens and activists alike. Thereafter I will share some ideas that relate to the fifth sub-question on the challenges of Thessaloniki’s social movements, and how an understanding of these challenges may enhance the impact of movements in Thessaloniki and elsewhere. To round off, I will take a step back to reflect upon my influence on the research as well as upon how these movements – the subject of research – are still influencing me, by lastly referring to the power of criticism.
PART 2
BACKGROUND AND THEORY
2.1 FINANCIAL INTERDEPENDENCIES

2.1.1 Contextualizing the crisis

To understand what is happening in Greece I first reflect on the financial crisis in Europe. Its 2009 financial crisis has been explained in relation to the earlier crisis of the United States (2007) where the mortgage sector collapsed. In turn the financial markets of the United States, Europe and other regions came under distress (Acharya and Richardson 2009: 195). Simply put, these markets experienced growth because the economy was financialized, as borrowing and giving out loans pumped money into the economies. However, the capital needed to give out loans was not present, and as risks remained concentrated loans were not insured. Taking loans was heavily encouraged, regardless of interest rates and the ability to pay them off (Ibid.: 196). Both people and banks ran into debts, while they were unable to ensure reimbursement. As financial institutions were taking higher risks to create short-term profits the European crisis came about and Europe’s financial market dried up. Yet, where is the crisis is coming from is still under debate. In this section I will relate the financial crisis to economic developments, from the structural funds of 1988 and the coming of age of the European Union and the Euro to the three underlying crises that stem from borrowing, as borrowing was misconceived for growth.

In 1993 the European Economic Community was renamed into the European Community (EC) and created the European Union (EU) to tailor Europe into an integrated zone of economic activities. The union’s objectives were, and still are, an integrated market of free and undistorted competition, sustainable development, fighting exclusion and discrimination, and promoting socio-economic cohesion. Before demonstrating the contradictions between these objectives, I elaborate on what preceded the establishment of the EU. In 1988 the European Community transformed its structural funds to narrow the discrepancy between Europe’s low- and higher-income countries (Cappelen et al. 2003: 622). These funds were based on ideas of fortifying socio-economic cohesion, diminishing extensive inequality and redistributing wealth. However, the regional cooperation preceding the 1988 reforms came to a standstill and were replaced by a convergence on the national level, as the aim was to facilitate an economic ‘catch up’ for lower-income countries (Ibid.: 639). While on a national scale countries like Greece seemed to catch up through liberalizing reforms such as privatization, on a domestic level local industries were outcompeted and came to a standstill (Hadjimichalis 2011). In the short run funds boosted the national economies, but in the long run funds proved to be debts that – in part due to international recessions – brought about increasing dependency and uneven development between high and lower-income countries (Stiglitz 2006). As neoliberalism gained ground, the notion of responsibility rose to prominence. The ideological base of the funds shifted from a focus on redistribution to alleviate inequality towards the demand of taking

responsibility for one’s national budget, regardless of budget dependencies of lower-income countries that the structural funds perpetuated. Although the EU may have tried to be receptive of the uneven starting points as in the structural, economic differences of lower-income countries when entering the union, the Union soon lost sight of the urgency to take up inequality and be concerned with the local industries of lower-income countries. The more powerful economies of higher-income countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium were too busy with the financial imperative to grow (Sedlacek 2011).

2.1.2 How the Euro came of age

Borrowing was thought to be the means for growth and with the coming of the Euro provisions for lending and borrowing within Europe – by both the ECB and national banks, became less strict. In 1999 the European Monetary Union (EMU) decided to adopt a single European currency, the Euro, which came into effect in 2002 in order to bring economic prosperity by creating one European market (Dicken 2011: 209). Europe experienced overall economic growth until the first cracks of the 2007 crisis in the United States appeared. As Berglöf et al. point out, to improve European integration, the position of banks and overall growth, GIIPS countries – that were considered to be in Europe’s peripheral economy – were encouraged to borrow from the banks of core countries that were said to have ‘strong’ economies. Until the beginning of 2008 countries in the ‘periphery’ went through a credit boom; from large inflows of capital to increasing rates of investment and consumption (Berglöf et al. 2009: 3). However in 2008, in relation to the 2007 crisis in the United States, cracks in Spain’s real estate, East European economies and Irish banking started to show, and by the end of the year Europe’s ‘core’ economies were also stagnating and in decline. In and outside Europe unemployment rates were skyrocketing, property and real estate froze, retail sales sunk, firms and plants shut down or were relocated, and the financial sector was yet again shook by crisis (Ibid). The 2008 ‘global’ crisis made investors re-examine the prospects of decreasing credit growth and increasing deficits, which resulted in restraining credit conditions, outflows of capital, and a standstill of construction. Banks were in trouble as capital was drying up and loan losses were ahead. As such the stress in the banking sector, fear of investors and domestic recessions all fueled the contours and debts of the financial crisis (Lane 2012: 54). In result the foreign indebtedness of GIIPS countries was accelerating, first to national banks, then the European Central Bank, and eventually the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve when Europe’s financial crisis worsened (Lynn 2010: 105).

By 2011 much faith in the Euro was lost and as Greece’s financial problems became the economic focal point, heated discussions on a Europe without a Euro or a Euro without Greece arose. However, Europe’s financial crisis as in the drying up of European markets has a very complex set of sources, distinct though interrelated courses and a variety of outcomes. For now, to get an insight into

---

GIIPS countries stand for Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Spain
the dynamics of the financial crisis, three interlocking crises can be distinguished that can be traced back to borrowing. First is the banking crisis as banks perilously speculated on loans, while they had too little capital to vouch for. Second, the sovereign debt crisis is identified, which is the case when countries cannot pay their public debt, because they have become dependent on funds that confront them with rising loan interests, funding difficulties, and increasing budget deficits. Third, as a result of the bank and debt crises a growth crisis is at hand, because economic growth slows down and is unevenly allocated across Europe (Shambaugh 2012: 157). Although the socio-economic specificities of the respective European countries influenced the varying borrowing practices across Europe and matter in fully understanding the impact of these crises, there is growing consensus that the persistent belief in growth by means of borrowing reinforced Europe's overarching financial crisis (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Harvey 2011; Hadjimichalis 2011). Borrowing was thought to bring growth and wealth to a country, but with borrowing and especially speculated borrowing debts increased, which made countries ever more dependent on each other. With the crisis borrowing accelerated; GIIPS countries were diagnosed to have economic problems and being in need of bailout packages, which are said to be necessary for the Euro to survive. Yet, the debt shares of the banks in the Euro zone are so high that the zone will go bankrupt if one of the GIIPS countries, such as Greece, cannot pay off its debts. Then, the austerity measures to narrow national budget deficits also constrain growth resulting in a vicious circle, since growth is treated as indispensable to come out of the overall financial crisis (Ibid.: 159).

These dynamics show that the belief in borrowing and growth is untenable. However, policy responses have so far been limited to the crises' symptoms such as bailing out national banks and dictating austerity measures to narrow budget deficits, while promoting banks to buy up the national debt of other countries. When seeing these crises as interlinked one sees how 'solving' one crisis exacerbates others (Ibid.: 160). As the above has shown how these economic developments are interlinked and led up to the financial crisis, I will now spend some words on how politico-economic structures increased unevenness within the EU by zooming in on Greece and South Europe.

2.1.3 Disparities within Europe

In this section I will explain that increasing dependencies of so called 'peripheral' on 'core' economies strengthened the core economies of North West Europe, eventually widening the disparities between the lower-income countries in the 'periphery' and high-income countries in the economic 'core'. However, the economic situations within and between these 'camps' are rather diverse and liable. The financial crisis is at the same time complicating societies of struggling as well as more stable economies, as the respective populations are to a bad, worse and worst extent subjected to austerity measures of the EU, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the case of Greece. The picture
that Greece’s ten percent budget deficit and 15.69 percent of government debt – that is over 300 billion euro – supposedly asked for austerity measures needs to be put in context, as it is part of a much bigger picture. Europe, Southern Europe and Greece are economically interlocked, since the financial difficulties Greece is in are not isolated from the rest of Europe, as the integration policies of North West Europe, such as the earlier mentioned structural funds as well as liberalizing reforms when entering the EU heavily affected the dependency of Greece. When Greece became part of the EU it had to liberalize by opening up its economy to leave the domestic market unprotected, which destroyed local industries and made Greece ever more dependent on structural funds (Hadjimichalis 2011). Even if Greece would not have joined the EU it would have been affected by the EU and the global economy. Yet, as Greece became an EU member and implemented the Euro, its import, export and budget became increasingly dependent on EU rules, policies and subsidies. Also, privatizing reforms have put Greek agriculture assets up for sale (Clifton et al. 2006) which are increasingly acquired by foreign companies, further abolishing the autonomy and resilience of the Greek economy (Featherstone 2003).

When the Euro was launched imbalances in Europe’s economies were discarded, because fundamental similarities were lacking in economic and social structures, rates of capital and labor mobility, and fiscal mechanisms. To elaborate, for a currency to be of benefit for all the participating countries in the short and long term, social structures have to correspond with regional economic structures (Thirwall 2000; Magnifico 1973). A high degree of labor and capital mobility is required in all of Europe’s economies to not cause regional disparities. An integrated fiscal system is necessary to spread the costs and benefits and withstand financial shocks. As Hadjimichalis argues, ‘in the absence of such similarities, neoliberal restrictive monetary policies will produce geographically uneven employment/unemployment’ (2011: 159). Following the implementation of the Euro, increasing capital mobility was countered by the rising discrepancy in (un)employment, inflation and economies (Ibid). Alternatives such as fiscal collaboration were not yet considered feasible. Instead, actors in the core region, including German speaking countries and the Netherlands decided by means of EU rules over the trade, domestic markets and employment of ‘the periphery’, covering South European countries (Ibid.: 160). The economies of the ‘core’ countries benefitted much more from EU trade than the economies in the ‘periphery’, because first of all the Euro increased the exchange rates of the latter. Second, the protection of domestic markets fell away, which is needed for ‘peripheral’ economies to strengthen their position. Third, due to exchange value the trade surpluses were directed to the ‘core’ countries at the expense of many south European countries, reinforcing their peripheral position (Ibid.: 161). As such, the implementation of the Euro and the accompanying liberalizing programs turned out to be in favor of Europe’s higher-income countries and at the costs of low-income countries such as Greece (2011: 255).

http://www.tradingeconomics.com/greece/government-debt-to-gdp
This unevenness within the EU swelled up when in 2002 East European countries entered. At that time 10 percent of the population that lived in the wealthiest part of the EU accounted for 19 percent of the union’s GDP. In contrast the 10 percent of the population living in the least wealthy part of the EU, which accounted for only 1.5 percent of the GDP. After six years, in 2008, 43 percent of the union’s GDP was from only 14 percent of EU’s territory; in the regions of London, Hamburg, Munich, Milan and Paris (Ibid.: 157-158). Areas that were perceived as economically successful from the seventies until the nineties, such as Italy, Valencia, Basque country, northern Portugal and northern Greece, began to show economic slow-down because of the economic reforms that preceded the Euro. Up to the mid-nineties these areas were running on small and medium businesses, specialized industries, agriculture and tourism, until these were domestically and internationally restructured and privatized. These developments proved, nonetheless, counterproductive as investments sought high, immediate financial profits which these areas could not offer. Regarding international developments, world recessions of the late eighties and mid-nineties made demand shrunk and new, cheap markets and competitors replaced above mentioned industries, forcing many firms and plants to shut down. Domestically, in the frame of neoliberalism the state withdrew to put the market in charge, inciting large privatizations of public goods and services (Luxton and Iraedley 2010). As support and subsidies were pulled in, the costs for smaller enterprises increased. Small and medium business were unable to withstand these and other changes, causing the massive closures of companies (Hadjimichalis 2011: 158-159) and the severe decline of previously successful industries in Greece and the rest of South Europe.

2.1.4 From bailing to blaming

In spite of structural dependency, increasing unevenness and an interconnected context, Greece became in 2009 the epitome of Europe’s financial problems because of its increasing debt and budget deficits, and under the attack of speculators which increased the country’s cost of borrowing. All eyes were fixed on Greece, when in February 2010 the Panhellenic Socialist Movements (PASOK) – the supposedly socialist government – was obliged to seek funds for 60 billion euro of its debt. While financial institutions schemed to hide Greece’s debts, investors pull out which compelled the European Commission, the European Bank, and the IMF to intervene (Hadjimichalis 2011: 256). This so called Troika provided in May 2010 a bailout of 110 billion euro. In the months following it became clear that Greece needed additional support to pay the loans and the rest of its debt, which led to a second bailout package of 106 billion euro (Panageotou 2011: 1). As a result, European politics and media outlets often portray Greece’s issues as if they are solely limited to Greece. The financial crisis that the people of Greece are suffering from is not for nothing called a sovereign debt crisis. Although economic integration has been going at the expense of one’s national sovereignty, national debt suddenly seems to destroy and erect boundaries. The former is the case as the EU and IMF are heavily intervening in Greece’s economics, and the latter is apparent as Greece is charged guilty, as if it is an
isolated entity. Popular opinions have been saying that Greece is living beyond its means and must make instant cutbacks (Rossi and Aguilera 2010: 2). Such opinions tend to blame Greece’s internal system; a bloated public sector, political corruption and an uncompetitive economy (Panageotou 2011). Below I will briefly discuss these factors to thereafter argue that they are not isolated from the structural imbalances that increase and perpetuate Greece’s unfavorable economic position.

The problems Greece is in can be traced back to the eighties and nineties when the PASOK government, headed by Papandreou, applied to grants and subsidies of the European Community to improve the standard of living of parts of the population and the elite, without restructuring the economy. The country was hit hard by the recessions of the seventies and the changing economic system forced Greece, like many other European countries to de-industrialize (Ibid.: 7). As competition increased industries had to look for cheaper labor forces and moved to economies outside Europe. Moreover, businesses left Greece to escape its tough bureaucracy. Greece became known for clientelism, an uncompetitive economic climate and structural institutionalized corruption by which interest groups prospered. It was no exception that international businesses were involved. The scandal with Siemens is one of the best-known example in which the company’s executives bribed the political elite to safeguard contracts from the late nineties until 2009 (Ibid.: 10). When Greece entered the EU and adopted the Euro in 2001 industries further diminished. Greek industries were left unprotected as the market had to open up and compete with other European markets. It became cheaper for the Greek economy to import products than to manufacture them. Ever since it has been easier and cheaper to import product with borrowed money from the EU and its core economies (Ibid.: 25). According to Panageotou (2011) Manolopoulos (2011) Greece became even less competitive when it adopted the Euro. As the EU and a number of French, German, and even Greek banks were eager to offer loans, Greece was eager to accept them even though they have been ruining the Greek economy from the start. The EU and its currency thus created the economic rationale ‘for PIIGS to take the loans offered by the EU to import commodities’ (Ibid.: 26). To draw on Stiglitz (2006), the core economies who give out the loans are at least as responsible for the money as those peripheral countries that are willing to borrow it.

In discussing Europe’s financial crises the ‘core’ is often represented by Germany while South Europe, including Greece, is being reified as the ‘periphery’. When looking into this dichotomy it shows that since the Euro was introduced Portugal, Spain and Greece’s negative trade balances increased, while the exports of Germany went up. German exports to South Europe rose steeply between 2000 and the outbreak of the crisis, while domestic demand nearly stagnated with only 0.2 percent growth a year (Hadjimichalis 2011: 263). The German government squeezed manufacturing

8 http://demonocracy.info/infographics/eu/debt_greek/debt_greek.html
9 Hadjimichalis quotes Eurostat 2006 (2011: 262)
costs of engineered exports such as cars and machinery by pressing down the wages. While Greece’s labor productivity and competition only slightly increased Germany has built up high surpluses (Ibid). Due to a combination of EU and IMF bailout packages, interest rates, and a set of austerity measures the production of goods and services is in Greece 25 percent higher than in Germany. This situation is comparable with Ireland and even France, where the production costs are respectively 23 and 13 percent higher than in Germany (Ibid). By squeezing wages and production costs, core countries such as Germany consolidated their position. Meanwhile the industries in South Europe were destroyed by firm fusion, relocation to cheaper production areas and squeezed wages, choosing lower-paid migrants over the local workforce. These and other developments, like Greece hosting the Olympic which added twenty billion euro of debt, in combination with an inefficient public sector, corruption, and clientelism drove Greece to borrow money which increased its foreign debt (Ibid).

The above tried to show how uneven dependencies within Europe evolved in that its high-income core countries such as Germany and the Netherlands have benefitted from disadvantaged positions of the called ‘peripheral’ GIIPS countries. This argument, overlooking many complexities of the crisis, is still made because it defies the popular – though deceiving – idea that economies of GIIPS countries and Greece specifically are to blame for ‘their’ debts and budget deficits. However, this idea is intimately connected to neoliberalism as an ideology and a set of practices that legitimize increasing disparities within Europe. So I now turn to neoliberalism to understand why the EU and member-states restructured the way they did.

2.1.5 Neoliberal consequences

The imbalances in Europe, which amplify Greece’s disadvantaged position by becoming dependent on bailout packages of the EU and IMF, are sustained through a strong belief in neoliberalism. Neoliberalism can be understood as prominent political discourses of capitalist governmentality, which is a system of meaning preceding practices and institutions that encourage state, society and individuals to adhere to the rules of the market (Larner 2000: 12). This governmentality generates a deregulating set of policies and practices in which the state both acts upon its control and withdraws for its control over the market, through promoting free trade and privatization (Faulk 2008: 258). In Foucault’s own words, the pragmatics of neoliberal governmentalities involves ‘a coupling of a set of practices and a regime of truth [that] forms an apparatus (dispositif) of knowledge-power’ (Foucault 2008: 19, cited by Flew 2012:31). In other words, politico-economic rationalities are being shaped by the regularities, such as moral forms, epistemological structures and specific languages (Cotoi 2012: 117) that construct reality; as in a commonsensical truth that puts profit before people. In the following the content of these neoliberal regularities will be treated, together with their consequences.

Neoliberalism and its governmentality are intrinsically connected to capitalism and can be

---

http://www.tradingeconomics.com/germany/exports
viewed as a manifestation of contemporary capitalism, in which capital accumulation becomes paradoxically a right and duty in itself (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 45). Capitalism is a system that propagates entrepreneurship, private ownership and profit accumulation. Neoliberalism is viewed as the latest phase of capitalism in which market forces are deliberately and openly put in charge. Previously governments appeared to have more control over capital forces. Now, governments say to serve capital as capital is said to serve economic growth. According to our common sense, nothing ought to stand in the way of growth; in the way of accumulation. The mantra of capital accumulation is pervasive in that accumulation as in economic growth is taken for granted as the first and foremost way to ‘help’ humanity forward. Neoliberalism and the practices that abide by it, fail to question if it does indeed help people and if so, at what and whose expense. As such, the primacy of neoliberalism covers up power relations that decide on the rules of the market and legitimizes these rules and relations (Greenhouse 2008). In what is coming I will start off by referring to Harvey (2011) on the one hand to reframe the financial crisis as a crisis of capitalism, and on the other to discuss how three contradictions inherent to capitalism have manifested themselves in Greece. Thereafter I will explore how the mechanisms of neoliberalism contributed to subjectifying and blaming Greece. This section concludes with the consequences of neoliberal austerity measures for the Greek people, who have found themselves in states of dispossession.

The crisis of capitalism as it is treated by Harvey critically depicts the global financial crisis by explicating the relation between capitalism and neoliberalism. He follows Marxian thought that sees the internal contradiction of capital accumulation as the root of Europe’s crisis. The contradictions inherent to capitalism are based upon the principle of a competitive drive for private profits, which heighten when markets become detached from state regulations. The crisis in Europe must be put into perspective by pivotal changes that occurred in the sixties when transnational corporations multiplied (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 83) and the seventies when capital was deliberately chosen over social welfare. At that time labor was said to have excessive power which held the accumulation of capital back, so the neoliberal doctrine had to thwart this obstacle. To favor the power of capital over labor; wages were cut, taxes were lifted for the rich and public services were cancelled. As wages were pressed and demand went down, credit cards were introduced to ensure demand which in Harvey’s words, ‘pumped up the credit economy’. The consent of the population started to depend less on providing facilities and services – that were at least said to aspire (social) equality, but on encouraging credit consumption that materially comforted the population. To maintain

---

11 http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html
12 Speech from David Harvey, ‘Crises of Capitalism’, 26 April 2010, London
13 Social equality as distinguished from market equality
consent, neoliberal capitalism moved the crisis geographically around as production processes were off shored by appropriating ‘new’ markets and neglecting others, such as the Greek market. This dynamic exemplifies that capitalism, due to the following contradictions, is unable to solve its crises, but can only create debt and dependencies, through mortgages, credit cards and bailout packages. For capitalism to survive, neoliberalism was said to have the answers, and with that the contradictions did nothing but increase.

Capitalism’s principle of competitive accumulation is manifest in the capitalist mode of production where a relatively small amount of people share the drive, power and means to possess and invest in the capital mode of production (Clifton 1977). In turn, ‘working’ people have to take part in the mode of production by selling their labor in order to make a living. I will discuss three contradictions which are pertinent for the dynamics of Europe’s crisis that are affecting Greece. First, the regulated organization of capitalism which is apparent in EU and IMF policies is opposed by market anarchism in which accumulation cannot be bound, but circumvents limits by inverting new markets. For accumulation to increase new markets have to be appropriated to have access to a cheaper pool of laborers and a larger pool of consumers in order to outcompete competitors. In correspondence, European unification can be viewed as the initial means of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium to get a foothold in neighboring markets for maintaining and improving their hegemonic position (Agnew 2001). The second contradiction is the endless accumulation through production and nowadays financialization, in contrast to the constraints it imposes on social and individual consumption. Europe's crises exemplify this opposition as economies must recover for the unlimited growth of capital to continue, at the expense of the welfare states' services and population, whose wages and means to consume are pressed down. The third contradiction that capitalism led to is the authority that powerful states and institutions assign to the market, while the responsibility is ascribed to those countries and people who least benefitted from market forces. The latter is in particular visible in Europe, where EU and IMF strategies are considered neutral and for the sake of the whole of Europe and its citizens. Paradoxically, the government and people of Greece bear the responsibility for ‘their’ debt. Although the bailouts may be a way to share responsibility, they only augment Greece's burden, dependency and responsibility, which it ‘apparently’ cannot handle.

2.1.6 The dispossession of a people

The previous contradictions can be summed up by the crisis' characteristics of over-accumulation and under-consumption, which are the effect of neoliberal policies and market fanaticism. The latter

---

15 In order to keep accumulation going
16 http://people.umass.edu/dmkotz/Fin_and_NL_08_09.pdf
contains that values, progress and society have become more narrowly defined by economic growth and that the division of labor is increasingly fragmented, as the production process – which was once in the hegemonic centers – is cut up and relocated to so called peripheries (Hajimichalis 2011: 255). Production centers have turned into service centers, which still direct the division over labor, in part by deciding where to relocate – cheaper – production. Neoliberalism ‘connects powerful centers to subordinate peripheries, its mode of integration is fragmentary rather than total, it builds commonalities upon asymmetries. In short it divides by uniting’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 64). These asymmetries and the accompanying subjection of countries, societies and minorities are by the neoliberal mantra reduced to market effects (Ibid.: 82). That Greece and the Greek people – among many – lost out and were remade into a subordinated periphery was thereby reduced to a mere market effect. This market effect, embedded in an individualist culture in which everyone has the responsibility to be a homo economicus, connoted blame; a blame that the Greece people supposedly asked for. Politics and media reframed the Greek debt as ‘their problem’, because of corruption, mismanagement and the wasting of EU money. Insights into inequalities and geographical dependencies did not correspond to this ‘market thinking’ and was deemed to be archaic activism (Hudson 2006). Moreover, critique on EU policies and neoliberalism that pointed towards unequal trade and increasing disparities were discarded in mainstream economics, politics and media. Instead, austerity measures that had to keep Greece in check – as a manifestation of the blame – were widely supported.

The austerity measures worsened the already turbulent situations Greece was in and had severe economic, political and social implications. The measures were a prerequisite to attain EU and IMF's bailout loans and consisted of exorbitantly increased taxes and massive public sector cuts as in wages and pensions, which in turn demanded large-scale privatization (Panageotou 2011). The latter has been called the final stage in the neoliberal doctrine. Privatization is the last piece of the neoliberal puzzle because it disenfranchises both state and society by putting ownership in hands that are only concerned with private gains. As such, privatization programs have been known for rising income disparities and unequal distribution of the majority of goods and services (Birdsall and Nellis 2003: 1617). Since the bailout Greece’s public services and utilities are increasingly put up for sale as privatization is accelerating. As we speak resources such as transportation, energy and water are being privatized (TPTG 2011: 258). Economically, it are the people in Greece who have to pay the bill for austerity measures such as privatization. In effect, as standards of living are declining many are becoming further alienated from the state that abides by measures that protect the financial institutions and private investors at the expense of the population. These politico-economic implications exacerbate social tensions and latent conflicts. More so, the number of austerity measures are still on a rise and are expected to only nurture existing cleavages within Greece – and

---

beyond its borders, both in the short and long run (Monastiriotis 2011: 323).

These implications are severely affecting the population and have been leading up to states of dispossession in which people find themselves nearly derived from the rights to labor, water, and food that are most fundamental to human life. The cutting of public and private budgets leaves almost 28 percent of the populations without a job. Thessaloniki’s water is on the brick of privatization, in part due to bailout plans. A lack of income and already high food prices have made it very difficult for heads of household to feed to their family. Austerity measures, as an important factor in amplifying processes of dispossession, and dispossession itself can be understood as embodying the appearance of neoliberalism (Breuer 2013: 230). Neoliberalism as in the practices that implement austerity measures by legitimizing privatization and dismantling public services and goods, may even be rephrased as an ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Swyngedouw 2006). To refer back to the asymmetries between core and peripheral countries, Europe’s processes of accumulation are too often at the advantage of core countries’ and at the disadvantage of peripheral countries’ economies; moreover, by austerity measures which put people – in Greece and elsewhere – in positions of dispossession. For the accumulative logic of capitalism accelerates into an accumulation of dispossession (Rossi 2012: 351) which at an increasing rate displaces people and treats them as disposable (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). That neoliberal policies and practices dispose people in favor of capital is expressed by austerity measures that leave many Greek people unemployed, because of wage reduction and job elimination (Malkoutzis 2011: 2).

Due to these measures well over 230,000 people lost their job (Ibid). The regular unemployment rate went up from 7.8 percent in 2008 to 27.6 percent in 2014, which is the highest is Europe. Among the youth 58.3 percent is unemployed. If the numbers of people that are inactive and unemployed are combined it shows that 4.7 million people are without an income. Those who still have a job faced severe wage cuts, with a 22 percent cut on a minimum loan of 751 euros. While the wages of the people below twenty five are reduced by 32 percent. Moreover, the unemployment benefits went down from 500 to 360 euros. As health care is being privatized and as people are increasingly without sufficient financial means, three million Greeks are without health insurance. Moreover, the rate in homelessness augmented with 25 percent and an immense rise in aggression, health problems and suicide has been reported. The number of suicides in the first four months of 2011

---

18 http://www.tradingeconomics.com/greece/youth-unemployment-rate
19 http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.article&id=1761
20 http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/28/us-greece-idUSTRE81R23G20120228
21 See footnote 19
increased with 40 percent, compared to the same period in 2010. While psychiatric hospitals are closing down, the mental health of many Greek people is said to be deteriorating with an increasing number of people in need of psychiatric help (TPTG 2011: 277). However, current Prime Minister Samaras said that the austerity measures were successfully implemented. More so, after seven years of crisis it has been reported that the Greek economy is improving. Despite announcements on positive growth rates, signs of surpluses and investors being rewarded by Greek bonds, the population is in greater despair as their rights to have a decent human living continue to be cut.

Since the outbreak of the austerity measures social unrest has been canalized in mobilizations of all sorts; from a rise in Right wing extremism and a diversity of political anarchism to demonstrations, street protests and civil networks. Although these manifestations are tremendously diverse, often contradictory and in strife with one another, it can be argued that ‘they are an act of desperate defiance in response to violent act[s] of dispossession’ (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 144). Yet, in order to understand the varied responses to dispossession and the response of the social movement in particular, a brief sketch of Greece since World War II is required.

2.2 A GLANCE INTO GREECE’S PAST

What is happening in Greece nowadays cannot be solely explained by the economic, political and social developments in Europe, but are as much the results of historical forces that have been domestically at play. With a few broad historical strokes I intend to indicate which changes have occurred in Greece. Thereafter I will come to discuss how this led up to current situations of conflict and cohesion.

Greece was left destroyed after World War II. Then British and American governments stepped in and relied on clientelism to assist the country in reconstruction, which was troubled by social chaos, a feeble government and ravaged harvests (Close 2002: 16). When the country was brought under control it polarized between security forces who defended Greece’s traditional values and the rising Communist Party (Ibid.: 18). This soon turned into a Right wing government (1946/1947) that – with American and British backing – prosecuted the Left and defeated Greek communists (Ibid.: 26-31). While the United States financially aided the country, it also restructured Greece’s government by appointing army and government officials and reforming government policy
As such, the Greek economy was officially capitalized and social alternatives were neglected. From 1950 to 1973 economic development assumed large proportions, but was accompanied by a dependency on foreign investment and technology, and by a growing foreign debt. Capitalization not only implied accelerated consumption rates and improved living standards but also social inequality, which was reinforced by state institutions as most of the Greek people were paid considerably low. In the meantime power struggles within the authoritarian government intensified until the military coup in 1967 which – with the help of NATO and the United States – put Papadopoulos in charge, whose dictatorship lasted until 1974 when workers broke out in revolt.

The empty promises of Papadopoulos and his junta resembled the parliamentary politics preceding 1967, showing the regime’s lack of legitimacy. However, as the junta promoted sports, subsidized construction and rewarded the population with television sets, it banned rights to demonstrate and strike, and repressed the elected councils of unions and cooperatives. Nonetheless, resistance movements were active throughout Papadopoulos rule, and after international pressure relaxed regime’s censorship student activism was complemented by wage earners who were fed up with the dictatorship and the 1973 international recession. In 1974 their widely carried demands for social and political justice resulted in the fall of the junta. Greece became a democracy under president Karamanlis (1974-1981). Thereafter, divisions within government and society over democratic conditions tipped over the majority in favor of Papandreou and the Left wing party PASOK that stayed in power until 1989. Yet, a loan from the EEC that required austerity measures, obliged PASOK in the eighties to turn against its anticapitalist and anti-western program. Even though PASOK reduced social inequality, it was financed by unsustainable subsidies that were derived from the EEC loan. Moreover, PASOK was known for its financial scandals, bloating the public sector and bringing disgrace upon the long history of cooperatives, to which I will turn in the next chapter.

From 1974 until 1993 the economic performance of Greece deteriorated and by the eighties Greece lagged behind other so called developing countries in the EEC, such as Ireland and Portugal. Already during the nineties Greece was kept in check by the IMF, EU and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. When Greece entered the EU and signed financial agreements profits and competitiveness went up, yet high unemployment and the protracted pressing down of wages worsened social disparities. The distribution of social services was subjected to clientelism and the quality of most public services remained poor. In the same period urbanization accrued and millions of migrants entered Greece, who came to be seen as the cause of crime. As Greek politicians – be they from PASOK or the 1974 founded New Democracy – were often depending on clientelism and corruption, and in need of scapegoats, social and economic injustices only increased. For these reasons people lost further faith in politics during the nineties and zeroes. It has been argued that developments of economic competition, weakening communities and
urbanization as well as immigration created a culture of individualism and materialism. While Greece's religious and conservative values have been fading, Greece's population and especially the young, experience a sense of alienation. As Kourakis, a professor criminology stated, ‘Traditional values are gradually becoming obsolete but have not been replaced yet by new ones’ (Ibid.: 222).

This somewhat vacuum of values has been utilized contradictorily by politicians, media and citizens as a space for expressing discontent over deprivation. Like elsewhere in Europe, to remain in or rise to power many Greek politicians have employed nationalism and xenophobia, which is in turn amplified by media outlets (Doxiadis and Matsaganis 2012). In opposition, the so called radical Left has resurrected to resist the respective neoliberal, nationalist and xenophobic discourses that Greece and other governments are employing. While followers of Right wing politics – with Golden Dawn and their anti-immigrant rhetoric as its extreme – are increasing, so do the numbers of the radical Left. Economic uncertainty, lack of political legitimacy and social rifts have contributed to the rise of so called Left and Right wing social movements (Ibid.: 18) as they backlash against the austerity measures to address injustices, sometimes in very violent ways. Despite substantial differences in ideology, rhetorical practices and in who is the subject of violence, both the ‘extreme Right’ and ‘radical Left’ are channels to express the grievances over economic, political and social forces that leave many people dispossessed; expressions that cry-out for change. In this context social conflicts that are politico-economically infused have spread. However, cohesion incepted simultaneously as people started to reach out to each other. For this research I limit myself to the latter in order to discuss the forces of social movements in Greece.

2.3 THE (UN)DOING OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

2.3.1 Cooperativism as movements’ cornerstone

Social movements have proven to be a prevailing means of many Greek people to demand for social, economic and political justice. That Greece is familiar with social movements show the 1944 battle of communism against authorities, the intellectual protest of 1968 against the junta, and the Polytechnic uprising of 1973 that initiated the end of the junta (Kornetis 2010: 173). As uprisings were heavily repressed, the growing sense of injustice accumulated into a massive three-day mobilization of students occupying Athens Polytechnic University which led to the downfall of the junta in 1974. Throughout the seventies, eighties and nineties parts of the population continued to rise up for

---

28 Golden Dawn is a political party, established in 1980, which is since 2013 infamous for its fascist and neo-Nazi rhetoric.

29 http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=819&
different causes. In the aftermath of the 1999 alter-globalization protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization, thousands protested in Thessaloniki against the EU summit in 2003 (Sullivan 2005). In 2008, on the threshold of the Greek debt crisis, a 15-year-old student was killed leading to demonstrations and protests throughout Greece and the rest of Europe. Moreover, up from May 2010 Greece experienced a series of riots which are part of recent social upheavals that respond to the economic crisis as it left many in despair (Kioupkiolis and Karyotis 2013: 8). The movements were said to be at their peak of mass mobilization in 2011. On May 25 that year tens to hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in various Greek cities, in response to the indignados movement in Spain, demanding ‘all politicians to go’ (Rocamadur 2011: 78). While Spanish banks were bailed out, the population was suffering from the many austerity measures that hit social policies. Spanish and Greek people defied the hierarchy of representative party politics and stood for ‘real’ bottom up democracy that operates by means of assemblies. The movements in Spain and Greece are often referred to as los indignados, meaning ‘the outraged’, and together with the Occupy movement they can be seen as an offspring of the Arab spring, which started after a street vendor put himself on fire, due to the injustice that was done to him.

Greece’s indignados movement is also known as the square movement or direct democracy now! movement (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013), as the latter refers to direct democracy as the most valuable gain of the 2011 uprisings. On June 28 and 29, 2011, out of a strike violent clashes enfolded between the police and protesters, as the second austerity package passed in parliament (Simiti 2014: 12). In 2012 the protests continued as on April 5 a retired pharmacist committed suicide for he eschewed to eat out of the garbage because of austerity measures. Although anger against the police and politicians persisted, feelings of disappointment and defeat had taken a grip on demonstrators and protestors alike, as the Memorandum was approved (Rocamadur 2011: 89). Despite a severe sense of exhaustion among those who actively opposed the austerity measures, the uprisings did show that a growing number of the Greek people could no longer accept to be passive and spoken for.

The upheavals share a strong voice of the people who stood up because they no longer accept the ongoing state of dispossession because government fails to represent them; economy squeezes the population; and society is too busy carrying on as usual. In recent movements the principle of cooperativism appears to be a cornerstone, as it aspires autonomous confederations that collaborate

---

33 On direct democracy will be elaborated in the chapter ‘Ideological Underpinnings’ of part 3.
under democratic principles of equality whose output is attuned to the social needs and ecological conditions, in order to achieve sustainable development of the community in alignment to its environment (Kioupkiolis and Karyotis 2013: 2-4). Ratner specifies and extends this definition, because collectivism should go as far as that people hand in their self-interest to decide collectively on how resources benefit all members of the group; for the active role that each member has in shaping the group has to create a strong sense of solidarity (Ratner 2009: 55). Collectivism and cooperativism are closely aligned. However, collectivism mainly stresses cohesion based on humans' interdependencies, while cooperativism clarifies that cohesion can be established by social, economic and political cooperation. As Greek cooperativism in various shapes dates back to the 18th century, this piece of history for interconnecting today's social movements and the principles of cooperativism is treated in the following. Then I will go into the theory of social movements to point to inevitable challenges. Finally, I theorize the performative power of a social movement, in order to explore its potential of tackling the injustices of neoliberal processes of dispossession.

In 1780, one of the first industrial cooperatives was set up in Ampelakia, Central Greece, for producing and exporting cotton (Kioupkiolis and Karyotis 2013: 2). Then, with the 1915 first law on cooperatives a large cooperative movement of 2500, mainly agriculture, coops emerged. The movement generated credit to fight tax extortion, which could destroy communal farmers that were part of the movement (Ibid.: 3). Since the movement’s onset cooperatives facilitated the subsistence of farmers, pivotal infrastructures and rural development. Yet, cooperativism was also dependent on clientelism and state patronage. In the eighties, when PASOK was elected, individualism and materialism did not only tear down the solidarity of communities but also the cooperatives themselves by politicizing them. Cooperatives' problems resembled the harm PASOK and the practice of clientelism created in the public sector as cooperatives' principles were ad hoc copied to other sectors, and as both struggled with overstaffing, increasing debts and risky investments. Neoliberal priority of private interests augmented mismanagement, corruption and inefficiency (Ibid.: 4). Cooperatives were equated with failure because of the infiltration of financial and political interests. However, a number of cooperatives continued to support the local economy by taking social and environmental sustainability into account. As neoliberalism restructured and ravaged Greece's economy, the cooperative movement rejected its dependency on capitalism and neoliberal politics and resurrected cooperativism's values. The values of direct democracies and these Greek cooperatives, such as participation, collaboration and equality (Ibid.: 4), seek to empower the environment as well as the community and the individual by strengthening the in-between interconnections in order to provide inclusive socio-economic justice. The principles of cooperativism are visible and reshaped by Greece's social movements today, despite tensions, errors and challenges that are touched upon below.
2.3.2 A multitude of challenges

Social movements are easily idealized, as the image of mobilizing people who seek and demand change can be very evoking. Yet, wherever people come together, even with the best intentions, difficulties occur. To understand where these challenges come from social movements need to be theorized and located, in connection to acknowledging the position and experience of the participants.

According to Davis et al. social movements emerge out of widely carried social forces, which are in turn accompanied by diffuse social and political developments that can all together contribute to societal change (2005: 253). In the case of Greece and elsewhere, economical developments should be added, since economic turbulences such as an increasing unemployment rate and raising living expenses are clearly involved in shaping Greece’s contemporary social movements. Tilly and Tarrow come to define social movements ‘as a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities’ (2006: 8). Social movements are said to be a combination of making claims through sustained campaigns; public performances as in public gatherings and lobbying activities; and public displays of integrity, commitment and unity (Ibid). Next to these qualities social movements can be perceived as ‘a distinct social process consisting of [three] mechanisms through which actors engage in collective action’ (Porta and Diani 2006: 20). The first mechanism is that the participants are conflictingly connected to distinguished adversaries. The second mechanism is that a relatively dense and informal network of people is formed. The third mechanism is that the people part of the movement share a clearly defined identity (Ibid.: 21). From what preceded, a number of notions can be distilled for understanding the social movements in Greece and Thessaloniki in particular. These notions include persistent claim making; public performances to display unity, commitment and integrity – which in turn cover the mechanisms of adversaries, a network of people and a shared identity; the collective and evolving character of movements; and the intersection of social, political and economic developments for change to occur.

However, the analytic characteristics of social movements go hand in hand with how the movements’ participants experience their social movements as well as others. These experiences tend to link processes on local and more global sites. Moreover, in order to do justice to the persons involved, the participants should be understood as socially and spatially embedded, knowledgeable actors – often citizens who are ‘part of shifting forms of social solidarity and identification [, and] involved in a dynamic, networked politics’ (Leach and Scoones 2007: 3/15) across glocal sites. The actors are equipped with numerous know-how, needs and motivations to initiate or join a movement, which are in turn tied to their – lived-through and occasionally shifting – disposition in society. Their engagement interrelate processes that to some extent transcend locality, while being paradoxically grounded and reproduced locally. For ‘glocal-ity’ refers to the global processes such as neoliberalization that impinge upon local sites. Global, or at least transnational, processes are not only carried by locality
but would not exist if it would not be for actual localities. Neoliberalism cannot be viewed in separation from locality as neoliberal discourses are practiced, appropriated as well as contested, by situated people. Localities influence ‘global’ processes in surprising ways, in that the people’s daily interactions, practices and movements have the ability to intensify neoliberal practices and policies and show the cracks and ruptures in neoliberal discourses, sometimes simultaneously.

The complex, conflicting interplay between so called global and local forces (Carr 2004) is to some extent actively being shaped by the interconnecting participants of social movements and by the vastly changing and accelerating conditions in society. Collective, socio-political mobilization is interdependent on how the participants engage with each other and with what is going on in society, which, as the above quote shows, is an engagement practiced through emerging solidarities that tend to be chaotic and unstable (Leach and Scoones 2007: 16). Because similar ideals and demands are colored by the emotions that accompany people’s engagement and by the vastly changing and accelerating conditions in society, frictions within the social movements and between the social movements and society are somewhat inevitable. Yet, frictions do not necessarily have to be negative. According to Tsing, frictions are ‘the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference’ (2005: 4). Frictions are said to inflict motion, and the rise of movements can only be understood as when frictions come to the surface. For, Tsing asks herself, why would we bother to change anything if it was not for friction (Ibid.: 207). Subsequently, for social criticism and mobilization to be developed the acknowledgement of and the room for friction is crucial.

Friction can advance engagement. For instance, the severe friction brought about by the austerity measures resulted in the square movements in Greece triggering short- and sometimes long-term participation of many people who were not engaged before. However, this is not to say that every friction is constructive. Also within and between social movements, frictions can arise since values, ideals and the future are at stake. Frictions can also be defined as struggles caused by a clash of wills, temperaments and opinions. Although a clash can be a source of inspiration, creativity, and mobilization, its downsides risks inflicting fragmentation, stagnation and immobilization. Being open, valuing diversity and aspiring equality do not take away the sometimes troubling realities of power (Sharp 1990) between people, initiatives and movements. As such, it is valuable to not only focus on the cohesion within the movement and the solidarity it generates, but to also pay attention to the frictions, obstacles and clashes the involved people go through, in order to reflect on and derive lessons from such challenges.

2.3.3 Intersubjective catalysts for change?

In order to grasp the impact of the practices of those participating in the movements I turn to Butler’s notion of performativity. In relation to performativity, discourses of neoliberalism and accelerating states of dispossession will be addressed for understanding how their consequences as in participants’
practices are being shaped. This may give some directions on if and if so, how Thessaloniki’s social movements can be a catalyst for societal change.

Greece’s social movements and the practices of cooperativism seek to break with the neoliberal discourses of economy and politics that give expression to a culture of individualism and materialism. These breaks, small as they can be, defy a determinist reading of neoliberalism as a system in which people are completely trapped. People taking to the streets, occupying factories and redistributing goods and services on cooperativist terms exemplify ruptures with neoliberalism. Such breaking refers to performativity, as the ongoing process – in thought or practice – that renegotiates one’s position in reference to the iterative reproduction of a neoliberal discourse, with the possibility of breaking away from the discourse by rupturing the iteration (Butler 1993). Although performativity usually refers to speech and utterances, the notion of performativity has been broadened to be the capacity and potential of the doing, i.e. the performing of actions (Butler 2010: 147). Fundamental to Butler’s thinking is that performativity does neither presupposes an essence or identity, nor is determined by discourses in which social, economic, and political structures intersect. For performative acts are themselves constituting and constructing identity and structure. As such, it can be said that performativity has the capacity to somehow negotiate and negate societal structures which include consumerist culture, neoliberal discourse and individualist society.

The shift from discourse to performativity reveals a clash between the multiple faces of power. In contextualizing the crisis I located power within neoliberal discourses at the beginning of this part. Generally, discursive analyses have a determinist understanding of society that leaves little room for change, as Foucault has put structures over agency by defying the intentional human agent. Yet, Foucault’s notion of discourse did evolve from being rather rigid systems of meaning towards practices by (human) organization which are more open to agency and thus change (Cleaver 2007). While discursive practice supposed to encompass agency, this agency is too elusive to not be engulfed by discourses’ determinist reminiscence (Schneider and Till 2009). For discursive practices tend to bring to light the mere reproduction of power structures. Butler’s reading of practice is vital in understanding how the emergence of Greece’s social movements opposes such reproduction. Performativity, as a practice, does not deem discourses irrelevant but gives them a twist by exposing people’s power to negotiate and counter neoliberal discourses which treat a people as disposable.

Moreover, in a dialogue on dispossession, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) challenge what in individualist society is known as the ‘Sovereign I’ through the lens of performativity. As performative acts have the capacity to break open neoliberal discourses, the foundations of neoliberalism need reviewing. Whereas neoliberalism presumes a ‘Sovereign I’ that is constituted by the premises of property and ownership (Ibid.: 12), the breaking open of neoliberal discourses is accompanied by a falling apart of the neoliberal Sovereign I. The void in discourse that performativity creates, implies not only an openness to the future, but also to the other. As such, one must acknowledge that the idea of a Sovereign I can no longer be sustained. By virtue of performing, the I turns out to be already
intersubjectively related to the other. Thus, by acknowledging the intersubjectivity of people, one can ‘think dispossession outside of the logics of possession’ (Ibid.: 7). So, when moving away from the Sovereign I it can argued that everyone is already dispossessed of oneself, since intersubjectivity points to the insight that one cannot possess oneself; that one’s autonomy – if existent at all – is severely limited. For we are much more defined intersubjectively, in other words through – performatively – interacting with each other. When recognizing that we are already open to, interdependent on, and ultimately constituted by the other, human interrelations can strengthen and multiply. To take this one step further, when being literary dispossessed or acknowledging one’s ontological dispossession one finds oneself to be connected with and touched by others. Hence, such dispossession has the potential of a certain responsiveness, as the quote below points out,

The predicament of being moved by what one sees, feels, and comes to know is always one in which one finds oneself transported elsewhere, into another scene, or into a social world in which one is not the center. And this form of dispossession is constituted as a form of responsiveness that gives rise to action and resistance, to appearing together with others, in an effort to demand the end of injustice (Ibid.: xi).

Social movements can be grasped as a kind of communal responsiveness, since they emerge when people are confronted with a conflict in society which unifies their demands, collectively mobilizing them to bring about change. Since people’s power is bound to collectivity agencies are relationally constituted. In other words, performatives’ practice and potential are a relational response as in an expression of the interrelations among the participants. To some extent, the participating actors assume to share the belief that they can contribute to this change. As a result the intersubjective forces – which can be said to encompass both the collective and the individual – generate intended and unintended reconfigurations of meanings, practices and interactions (Edelman 2001: 288). Although it can be argued that individual engagement is necessary, such performativity is no longer limited to the individual, for performativity is in force due to the shared, intersubjective support such actions receives. Hence, the need is born to reconceptualize performativity, into communal performativity as an attempt to affirm the intersubjective character of performativity and the aspiration to live up to a (new) sense of community – or even society – where the participants take care of each other. Communal performativities are the rupturing response of intersubjective agencies that empower to break with neoliberal discourses together, with an openness to each other and the future. Therefore the sum may be more than its parts because of the interrelated solidarity between parts, leaving the outcome of socio-economic transformation op-ended, uncertain and – despite challenges – hopeful.
2.3.4 Rounding off

Although these contextual, historical and theoretical frames are far from sufficient to do justice to the multitude of factors that are of influence in Greece, they argued against populist accounts that solely blame Greece and neglect neoliberalism’s share in this crisis. Previously I put Greece’s debt crisis in relation to a wider financial crisis that is occurring throughout Europe; to its own history; and to movements’ past and current potential. So far, I treated the situation in Greece undifferentiated, because most of the population is subjected to Europe and Greece’s crises and the additional austerity measures. However, as mentioned, many parts of Greece witness the rising up of numerous social movements that rejects the neoliberal processes of dispossession. The upcoming part elaborates on the methodology and methods used while doing fieldwork. Thereafter I go into Thessaloniki’s history with regard to previous and present social movements. As this thesis focuses on the labor, food and water movements, I will discuss these extensively. Then I turn to the movements’ ideological underpinnings in order to find out around which thoughts the city’s social forces revolve. At last, an indicative overview is presented for understanding the interrelations among movements and initiatives, and between the movements and the people in the street.
PART 3
METHODOLOGY AND DATA
3.1 CONSTRUCTIVIST FOUNDATIONS

3.1.1 Interconnecting methodologies

The methodology I have chosen to apply is a combination of postmodernism and actor-network theory that is founded upon a constructivist understanding of society. Together they enable me to address the connections that engender social movements and their interaction with society. For I understand social movements to be networks made up of webs socio-spatial relations, that rework the structure-agency distinction. Firstly, I will treat the constructivist ontology of these methodologies and their sensitivity to power relations. Then, I go into deconstructing and tracing as the methods that these methodologies comprise. Thirdly, I will come back to the sub-questions. Finally, I discuss how these methodologies help me to explore the concept communal performativity.

Postmodernism provides a constructivist ontology in that reality that is thought to be plural, without an essence, socially constructed and ever changing (McHale 1992: 3). Especially in times of crisis and social upheaval, as is the case in Greece, society is ever more subjected to vast changes, since its constructions come to the fore when the supposed common sense of reality is falling apart. Actor-network theory presents the understanding that ‘knowledge, agents, institutions, organizations, and society as a whole are effects and that such effects are the results of relations enacted through heterogeneous networks of humans and non-humans’ (Bosco in Aitken and Valentine 2006: 136). The dualism between structure and agency is absolved because agency is no longer limited to actors, as networks are much more than mere structures. Agency is reframed as the effects of relations coming about through the constant (re)configuration of networks (Ibid.:139-141). Even though I agree that networks encompass both the human and non-human, depending on the level of analysis – from crises to social movements – a focus on either the human or the non-human can be perceived in this thesis. The framework on the crisis, the European Union and neoliberalism zooms in on non-human interconnections, while the theory, fieldwork and analyses of social movements focuses on human interrelations. Actor-network theory treats power as ‘a shared capacity […] which is thoroughly decentered in different networks’ (Castree 2002: 121). Power, in the framework of postmodernism, is relational, heterogeneous and ‘diffused throughout the social order and takes many new forms’ (Leonard 1994: 19). All in all, both postmodernism and actor-network theory are critical of power structures, seek to relocate power from a centered, top down to a diffuse, bottom up level, and point to the complex interconnections between agencies of interacting people, structures and processes.

The methods of tracing and deconstructing are the tools to research fluid realities without an essence in which everything is an effect. Since postmodern thinkers take reality as a construction, I apply deconstruction: as an interpretation technique in order to grasp inconsistencies, paradoxes and assumptions within the social movements and reveal the multiple, embedded layers of meaning that are being created, reproduced and occasionally altered (O’Leary 2007). To deconstruct is to make sense of those meanings that underlie the inherent contradictions that our social worlds make up. The
task is to look for the ambiguities that give access to the many contradicting frames, which society and its people employ to give meaning – in order to deconstruct these frames accordingly. Deconstruction is a way of interpreting the fabric of society by embedding the actors, historicizing the structures and putting these ambiguities into context. When social movements are the subject of deconstruction, a complex field of human interrelations is brought to bear which can be followed closely by the method of tracing (Smith 2001: 3). Actor-network theory becomes concrete in tracing practices. As Smith argues, networks and their effect are continuously reconfiguring the complex knits of abstract and concrete relations (Ibid) that can neither be explained on the spot nor scrapped of the surface. For understanding the knowledge, agents, institutions, organizations and society on a whole as effects, the connections and interconnections of these puzzling, three-dimensional constructions require tracing (Latour 1996). This means that the multitude of effects should be followed, as literally as possible. Since one cannot get a hold of these effects, one needs to chase their clues, follow their moves and track their trails (Alcadipani and Hassard 2010). The chaotic and unstable engagements, which actively forge social movements, call for persistent tracing and thorough deconstructing as to do justice to these complex, changing and contradicting edifices. These methods put postmodernism and actor-network theory to practice, thus assisting me in answering the five sub-questions, as power and empowerment underline each of them.

The first sub-question asks for the relation between Greece’s debt crisis and the social movements, involving the issues of the European Union and neoliberalism. It requests an explanation of the extent to which these issues have power over the people of Greece in general and specifically over the people of Thessaloniki’s social movements. Yet, it leaves room for the power of social movements as they respond to Greece’s debt crisis. The second sub-question refers to the way participants experience their engagement as well as the existence and engagement of other movements. It is sensitive to the different kinds of engagement and the power that engagements involve. The third-sub-question on how the agencies of the movements and people are corresponding, hints at the relation between individual and social empowerment as well as to frictions among the people and among the movements as actions, assumptions, and aspirations can come to clash. The fourth sub-question looks at the socio-economic impact of the movements on Thessaloniki’s society and asks to trace the socio-economic influence of the movements on Thessaloniki’s society; in other words, if and how the social movements empower society. The fifth and last sub-question asks for the challenges that may weaken the movements’ power and the way these can be overcome in order to enhance the power of these and other social movements. The methods of tracing and deconstruction enable me to get an insight into the constructed, contradictory and ever changing networks of the movements’ social organization. Moreover, actor-network theory facilitates a framework that allows me to engage in multi-layered analyses (Coe and Yeung 2001: 374), which conceptualizes the

http://www.iep.utm.edu/deconst/
neoliberal powers within Europe, Thessaloniki's field of various struggles and movements, as well as the relations in between both. Postmodernism enables me to deconstruct the social movements by prioritizing the people (Clarke 2006) who are subjected to neoliberal austerity measures and involved in the social movements. The responsiveness of impacts are explored, meaning the interaction between the Greece debt crisis, neoliberalism and Thessaloniki's social movements; the effect of people's agencies on the movements, and of the movements on people's agencies; and, finally the socio-economic impact of the movements on Thessaloniki's society. Thus, against the backdrop of constructivism it is recognized that meaning, knowledge and so called ‘reality’ are constructed by a multitude of actors, including both me and – more importantly – the research population. Therefore, constructivism requires an inductive approach in which data and theory interact throughout the research process to generate grounded theory in that analyses acknowledge their attachment to the field (Bryman 2008: 549).

The combination of these methodologies thus assist me in getting an understanding of the movements as in networks of relations, by focusing on the participants who give meaning to the relations within the movement; the relations between initiatives that give shape to the movement; the relations between movements; and their linkages with Thessaloniki's society. Moreover, these methodologies provide me with the tools to explore the concept of communal performativity in which the issues of power, frictions, cohesion, empowerment and challenges play a significant role. In actor-network theory the actors are inherently part of a human/ non-human network, while postmodernism presses the interrelations between people. For this reason performativity – which is originally narrowed down to the individual, sensibly involves intersubjectivity, or in other words the interrelations between people, which are in turn interconnected with so called non-human effects. Since the notion of community is pivotal to build movements and initiatives, communal performativity appears to be at stake. Butler's notion of performativity is based on a postmodernist ontology in which reality and meaning are deconstructed to its bare power relations through which (inter)subjectivities can empowered. As such communal performativity, if the concept proves to be viable, carries the intersubjective potential of breaking with these power relations. Through actor-network theory empowerment can be understood in terms of circulations and flows (Bosco in Aitken and Valentine 2006: 139) – as in interconnections between people and the power of cohesion, whereas maintaining the deconstructive power base of postmodernism that acknowledges frictions and challenges. This way, Thessaloniki's social movements can be critically examined from within. Additionally, an understanding of their socio-economic impact on society can be develop in order to derive – with the participants – lessons for these and other social movements. Following the research tools and techniques will be addressed as to introduce Thessaloniki's social movements amongst which I did fieldwork.
3.1.2 Tools and techniques

In connection to actor-network theory and postmodernism, the initial research methods consisted of literature research and fieldwork. Literature research was conducted in preparation of the fieldwork and included reviewing and implementing relevant literature and theories on ‘crisis’, ‘neoliberalism’, ‘social movements’ and ‘performativity’. Consequently, I conducted fieldwork for a two-month period, from the 15\textsuperscript{th} of February to mid-April, to employ in-debt interviews and participant observation. In mapping out Thessaloniki’s field of social movements I made extensive use of the snowball-approach to get in touch with people, who share a strong opinion on the movements and their socio-economic impact. Via various gatekeepers I got to know manifold initiatives, whose members all spoke of being movements by themselves. Through the internet I got in touch with K136, meaning ‘initiative 136’, which is part of the water movement. Yannis, an environmental academic, who is one of the leaders of K136, the water struggle and other social movements, was my gatekeeper. He introduced me to various initiatives in the water, food and labor movements. From there many contacts followed, as the people I interviewed were very willing to put me in touch with others, even if they did not fully agree with the others’ enactment of a social movement. As such, I tried to deepen out the dynamics of cohesion and friction. In my first week I visited the previously occupied factory VioMe, which is part of the labor movement and an example for others, with the help of Tasos who also became a gatekeeper. He translated the interview there and many others afterwards, as he introduced me to a great variety of cooperatives that make up the labor movement. On various other occasions the persons I interviewed provided the next contacts. In only a few cases I visited an initiative without having a contact person.

By speaking with various informants over and over again about the variety of movements I got to distinguish the many struggles, movements and initiatives. I came to the understanding that a number of initiatives form – intentionally or unintentionally – a social movement by similar struggles against a certain injustice. Then, due to the extensive research question and the manifold initiatives, I decided to get in touch with as many people and initiatives as I could. I tried to be open to all the initiatives I came across in order to find out in conversation what they have in common with each other. It was an evolving process in which I ran from one initiative to the next. In total I have been in contact with seven movements, consisting of the health, garbage, anti-gold, anti-fascist/anti-racist, labor, food, and water movements which were made up of forty initiatives; centers, committees and action groups, most of which were set up in response to the 2009 crisis. An overview of the initiatives is presented in appendix I. I conducted seventy in-debt, semi-structured interviews which often took between one and two hours each, besides 26 informal, in-debt conversations. In total I formally interviewed 63 people that were in one way or another connected to the social movements. Table 1 below presents an overview of the number of movements I studied, the number of initiatives and

---

\textsuperscript{35} I use pseudonyms in referring to gatekeepers and other respondents in order to respect their privacy and well-being.
respondents I had contact with, and the number of interviews I conducted. An overview of the interviews – with whom and on which date – is included in appendix II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of movements</th>
<th>Number of initiatives</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Number of conversations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Overall overview in numbers

The number of interviews and interviewees differ as fifteen of the seventy interviews were a follow-up interview. Although most interviews were one on one, sometimes more members of an initiative attended an interview. Especially at the interviews on the labor movement I tend to interview several cooperative members at a time. Moreover, some participants of the labor movement were wary and sometimes hostile towards being recorded. Therefore I decided to limit all documentation to instant annotations by writing actively along during the interviews. Since most interviewees spoke English quite slowly, I had all the opportunity to write down their ideas, experiences, and opinions. Yet, the citations that are brought forth are subjected to the imperfections of immediate note-taking. In contrast, during the informal conversations I decided to refrain from instant annotations and write these notes down on my way of, as immediate note-taking could have disturbed the conversation partner. Whenever I cite a phrase or refer to a fragment of one of the in-debt conversations, a footnote will clarify the method used.

Throughout the research period, participant observation allowed me to become familiar with the many initiatives and allowed the research population to become familiar with me. I participated in as many activities and events as I could, to become engaged with the various initiatives and social movements, in order to understand how the people, initiatives and movements put their aspirations into practice (Bryman 2008: 465-466). The activities and events covered the attending of assemblies, in particular the assemblies of the water movement. On a weekly basis I helped out at the non-profit consumer cooperative Bioscoop, which is part of the labor and food movements. A couple of times I was involved in serving the solidarity diners of Steki Metanaston, a center for the support of immigrants, which is for various reasons not one of the movements I focus on. I also attended several concerts and demonstrations where I encountered people from different initiatives and movements. Finally, I visited seventeen cooperatives, which are part of the labor movement. Almost half of these cooperatives were either cafes or restaurants. I visited these places regularly to conduct interviews and participant observation by simply hanging out.

Only at the end of my stay, after almost all data were collected, I came to decide to focus mainly on the labor, food and water movements because they are quite interconnected as many members recite similar principles, take part in multiple movements, and are relatively familiar with the initiatives of the other movements. Table 2 shows that I contacted seventeen labor cooperatives and interviewed 30 of their members. With regard to the food movement I had contact with eight
initiatives and interviewed eleven of its participants. Finally, I focused on three water initiatives and interviewed sixteen people involved in the water movement. As Yannis, one of the co-founders of water initiative K136, was my foremost gatekeeper, I was able to attend K136’s weekly assemblies and interview many of the water movement’s members. The frequent contact I had with K136 and the other water initiatives is reflected in the analyses of part four. Although this thesis focuses on the water, food and labor movements, I had most access to the latter’s initiatives. This enabled me to reflect more thorough on the dynamics amid the water initiatives. To note, when food initiatives are or function as cooperatives, they are included in the number of labor initiatives. For this reason the numbers of labor initiatives, respondents, and interviews are that high.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>Number of initiatives</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water movement</td>
<td>SOSte to nero, K136 and Water Warriors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food movement</td>
<td>Bioscoop*, Centrophia*, Allostrapos*, S.PA.ME.<em>, Open Network</em>, PER.KA and two markets without mediators</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor movement</td>
<td>VioMe, Non-governed Cities, Poeta, Bellevile, Domino, Artcore, Egnatia Post, Kazani, Laywer Partners, Point Blank, Computerativa as well as the (*) food initiatives above</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Focused overview in numbers

Participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations helped me to gain further insight into how the people perceive their motives, engagement and influence on the movement, and the socio-economic impact of the movements on Thessaloniki’s society. By means of these qualitative research techniques I was able to build rapport in order to understand how the agencies, the people as well as the movements counter and reinforce each other. The techniques also enabled me to perceive the potential, use and challenges of communal performativity. The interviews were semi-structured because it encouraged interviewees to co-direct the content and course of the interview (Ibid.: 438). Appendix II discloses the list of questions that I formulated in advance of the fieldwork and kept in mind during the interviews. During the informal conversations, which could take place after an assembly, in one of the cooperative cafes, or at a demonstration, I learned a lot from those I spoke to as they touched upon issues I could not foresee. Hence, in accordance with postmodernism, I utilized participant observation and semi-structured interviews to limit the power imbalance between researcher and informant. As such, I consider us both to be co-participants in the conception of knowledge.

Due to the great number of initiatives the respondents pointed out to me during the course of
fieldwork, only a minority of the interviews had a follow-up. Although I saw some of my informants multiple times in both formal and informal settings, the majority were involved in so many different struggles that they were simply too busy to become really close with them. However, since the movements were rather accessible – most people I spoke with were very eager, articulate and open to share their experiences – I felt I should use these opportunities to get a broader understanding of how the initiatives and movements are interconnected and distinguish themselves. This approach of being rather open to whoever and whatever crossed my way resulted in having a relatively good sense of what was going on in terms of distinct and similar dynamics of the various movements. Yet, it implied that I did not get as close to or absorbed with one initiative or movement in particular. While, in the analyses of part four I refer most often to the water movement, I did not become that personal with its participants. The informal conversations and semi-structured interviews do seem very open, but their data is as such limited to building rapport by merely a few encounters. Nevertheless, I experienced the many encounters and inclusive perspective as invaluable for my personal and academic understanding of what people are capable of when gathering out of need. Then, to respect the privacy and well-being of my informants and preserve the delicate cohesion between people, initiatives and movements, I use pseudonyms when I refer to a participant’s opinion.

3.1.3 Surprised by a quantitative turn

In the process of getting to know the various – groups of – actors I became aware of the differences between initiatives and movements. The more I spoke to people, the more complex relations and dynamics between the people, initiatives and social movements became. Along the way the desire evolved to grasp and map the manifold relations between the various groups of actors. Even though I make the analytic distinction between movements and initiatives, shapes and units are rather entangled in the field. For grasping how the participants see the difference among them, I let the interviewee decide on the focus of the interview. However, to get a more consistent view of the interrelations, I created a questionnaire – see appendix IIIa – after one month of fieldwork in order to go through the manifold initiatives and movements. During most of the interviews I conducted in the second half of my stay, I went with the respective respondent through this questionnaire that included 25 of the 40 initiatives. The respondents were asked to give a number from one to five to their two-fold relation with the other initiatives; in order, active (1), agreeing (2); not familiar with (3); disagreeing (4); and disapproving (5). As such, it was a continuum that ran from active agreeing to active disagreeing. They could answer according to their personal relation with the other initiatives and according to how their initiative is related to the other initiatives. Additionally, the questionnaire reserved space for comments, which were in practice most often verbally shared. Although questionnaires are rather limited, it was a practical opportunity to make sense of the complex set of – sometimes contradictory – relations between movements, initiatives and participants. In the end 31 respondents filled in the questionnaire. However, to make sense of the food, labor and water
movements particularly, I conclude part three with a discussion on seven initiatives – which are part of one of these movements – and the differing opinions of their members. The analysis, which will be accompanied by a figure that visualizes the interrelations, goes not further into the numbers 1-5 as it would complicate the overview too much. For the outline of interrelations to be clear, the discussion refers to the data of the semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative techniques I ended up applying were not limited to a questionnaire among the movements’ participants. In the process of doing fieldwork I was so absorbed with the initiatives that I asked myself how the impacts of initiatives and movements could be put into perspective. As Thessaloniki’s social movements were quite dynamic I needed the full two months to slightly grasp the complexity of aspirations, agencies and interconnections. This focus – valuable as I find it – went at the expense of having contact with other parts of Thessaloniki’s population. Yet, in order to understand the scope and resonance of the movement’s efforts, I had to find a way to approach people that were not involved in any of the social movements. For this reason I decided to use a comparable format – see appendix IIIb – as the previous questionnaire, except for adapting the degree of active (dis)agreeing to a continuum from being very positive to very negative about an initiative. Number 3, not being familiar with, remained the same. Achilles, one of the leaders of the prominent social center Micropolis, helped me out by adding logos to the initiatives so that the respondent could recognize the initiatives even if they did not know their name. This general survey was filled in by 67 people whom I randomly selected at the boulevard. These encounters together with the filled in questionnaires gave me a rough idea of which initiatives were known to the wider public. Although the above techniques may appear to contradict my methodology which was said to be qualitative, I use them as mere indications in that they are complementary to the qualitative data I gathered. Hence, I perceive their findings to be somewhat clarifying, putting Thessaloniki’s rather complex field of social movements into context. To conclude, throughout the fieldwork I regularly drew maps of the interrelations between struggles and initiatives. When I was able to detangle the struggles at the end of my fieldwork, I separated the movements and initiatives, and ordered the interviews accordingly. Thus, once I left the research field and started writing I could quite easily go through the interviews, highlight relevant citations and integrate the bulk of data.

3.2 THESSALONIAN TURBULENCE

3.2.1 Where are we coming from?

Nowadays, Thessaloniki is the second city of Greece with over a million inhabitants, covering 1,455.62 square kilometers. In many ways it sets itself apart from the rest of Greece. While the rest of Greece received independence from the Ottoman empire in 1821, Thessaloniki was occupied for another century. Only in 1912 did the city become part of Greece. Thessaloniki was founded in 315 BC. Due to
its strategic position next to the sea the city became known to be affluent and diverse in its population. At the time a great number of Jewish, Serbian, Bulgarian, Turkish, and Greek people inhabited the city. Until Thessaloniki became Greek it was celebrated for its tolerance towards different ethnicities and religions. The struggle for independence is said to last longer because more groups were invested in not becoming part of the Greek state. During World War I Thessaloniki became a base for the Allied Forces in conflict with Greece’s neutral King George I at the time. In 1917 the city faced a massive fire that left 72,000 of the city’s residents homeless. While many went abroad, the Greek refugees from Minor Asia were relocated in Thessaloniki, as well as in many other Greek cities. During World War II it was occupied by German forces and as a result 50,000 of its Jews were sent to concentration camps. Despite and perhaps because of severe suffering, throughout these decades – as well as before and after – Thessaloniki has been a fort of resistance. Although I already touched upon social movements in Greece and elsewhere that preceded Thessaloniki’s contemporaries, I will now come to discuss some of city’s previous uprisings as they were of influence to bring Thessaloniki to where it is today. These moments of social upheaval were also highlighted during the interviews and conversations.

Greece experienced a major student uprising in 1973 that fought against the junta and for freedom and democracy. In 1972 the Greek students started to demonstrate. As Athens continued its revolt Thessaloniki was bound to follow. Although the uprising of Thessaloniki’s students is said to be unknown to many, it was a hallmark in increasing the resisting, anti-dictatorial sentiment in the city. As the memory and results of activism were still fresh, Thessaloniki and the rest of the country rose up as part of the ecological movement when the government revealed its nuclear program in 1974 (Charalambis et al. 2004: 222). Moreover, the feminist movement that outlasted the decades and the anti-war movement during the Balkan Wars of the nineties kept activism alive. Besides many more uprisings and movements in the meantime, the 2003 anti- or alternative globalization protests against the EU summit were again a key moment in Thessaloniki’s recent history of social movements. On
June 19 of that year between 3,500 and 4,000 joined the solidarity march for immigrants. The next day a variety of anti-authoritarian groups, including the anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa – which later on co-founded the social center Micropolis at the onset of the crisis – challenged the police. The groups were attacked with rubber and chemical bullets and many were left injured. The third day another few thousands took to the streets as the counter EU summit took place, a campaign that had been planned for over a year (Sullivan 2005: 11). These alter-globalization protests were framed as to oppose the EU’s ‘democratic deficit’ (Habermas 2001: 14) for the citizens felt left out from the structures of representation and decision-making in the EU. In several days of protesting, 16,000 police troops activated to arrest between 100 and 200 people (Ibid.: 15). This social upheaval waned through the great amount of violence and the lack of results in order re-emerge during the 2006/2007 student uprising.

When it became clear in 2006 that the government wanted to reform and cut down on higher education, many thousands of students, activists and other citizens marched for eleven months through Thessaloniki. Despite severe police repression the protestors persisted. Consequently, the article to privatize higher education was amended and later postponed as it turned out. Kostas who actively participated, said that they were victorious because they thought to have won. As the crisis kicked in three years after, austerity measures followed in that 33 percent of the budget for higher education was cut, with another 14 percent to follow until 2016. Many of the people that were active during the 2006/2007 student uprising also took part in Thessaloniki’s square movement and in the various movements of today. Not surprisingly, the social upheavals of 2003 and 2006/2007 already experimented with the practices of direct democracy; a trait that turned out to be invaluable for many of Thessaloniki’s present movements to which I now turn.

3.2.2 Struggles for solidarity

In framing Thessaloniki’s current social movements the Spanish indignados movement is often referred to. As mentioned before, hundred thousand angry people took to the streets in 58 cities throughout Spain in May 2011. The protestors occupied the squares and demanded reforms in the
electoral and economic system. This massive mobilization inspired many thousands in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities to take the squares. At Thessaloniki’s square movement many thousands gathered in front of the famous White Tower on the 25th of May. It is said that between 500,000 and one million people took part in the protests that followed. Although the exact number is unknown, this uprising engaged many people that had never been active before. The protests persisted throughout 2011. Yet, in the first months of 2012 they started to wane. As police brutality heightened and austerity measures only accelerated many felt that there was no point to continue. The people became disappointed because their actions seem to have no result. Those who are still involved try to persist despite disillusions. Dimitris, one of the leaders of the water initiative K136, is being interviewed on a terrace and says ‘they [those who left] came to the square as they were fed up, but [they] lost their engagement when summer started’. Aurora, a member of the successful bar cooperative Belleville, explains the overall sentiment, for ‘everybody feels that there’s nothing to win. There’s despair... that nothing can be changed’. Although in the many interviews and conversations feelings of disappointment and despair are expressed, many movements are still active. Next, I will briefly describe the seven most prominent movements I came across in Thessaloniki.

Social movements where theorized by Tilly and Tarrow to be sustained campaigns of claim making (2006: 8). These claims cover a wide range of topics from fighting against fascism and racism to fighting for access to healthcare, and a humane and environmental friendly way of processing the garbage. What they have in common is to fight for the protection of a variety of human rights and against anyone and anything that abuses these rights. There are many ways to decide what unites these movements and what sets them apart. During my fieldwork I noticed that the most common way to categorize people, groups and initiatives is by means of political affiliation. The persons I spoke with feel in general affiliated with either anarchism or the Left. The sweeping distinctions of anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, anti-authoritarianism, Marxism, Trotskyism and reformism are accompanied by further divisions within in each political direction. Even though not all people involved in one or more movements position themselves in one of these categories, nearly all of the people I have had contact with are actively shaping and reshaping their political thinking. In Thessaloniki both leftist and anarchic thoughts and practices have been alive for decades if not longer.

41 http://www.redpepper.org.uk/los-indignados/
42 http://socialistworker.org/2011/06/22/struggle-of-the-squares
43 A comment based on many conversations and interviews.
44 Interview Dimitris of water initiative K136 of water company EYATH on 18.2
45 Interview Aurora of cooperative bar Belleville on 2.3
46 The most prominent movements are the health, garbage, anti-gold, anti-fascist/anti-racist, food, water and labor movements.
Besides categorizations based on political affiliation I noticed another distinction between movements that solely oppose and movements that oppose by posing an alternative. The alternative tends to be framed as an alternative for Thessaloniki’s individualist, consumerist and neoliberal society. Of course this distinction was made by those who took part in the movements that tried to develop an alternative or that exchanged the former for the latter. For this reason I will not focus on the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement as it does not pose a concrete alternative. Although opposing struggles, such as the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement, have been plenty before the crisis, I focus on the water, food and labor movements because they were developed in response to the crisis in order to put alternatives to the test. To propose and apply an alternative are a major benchmark for zooming in on these three movements. The majority of the forty initiatives I had contact with were set up in reaction to the 2009 economic crisis. They come forth out of the need to act upon the political convictions as the livelihoods of many residents are deteriorating.

When you walk through the center of Thessaloniki you stumble upon crowds of people. At the seaside the mood tends to be cheerful where people sunbathe or go for a stroll. In the three main streets that cross the city from East to West you find people that are waiting for the bus, enjoying a chat and a frappe, and going from store to store – with here and there street vendors who try to convince pedestrians to buy a pair of sunglasses. Behind these pleasant appearances at least one third of Thessaloniki’s population is unable to pay for health insurance. The city has three universities educating over 150,000 students. The high number of youths implies that the overall unemployment rate is higher than elsewhere in the country. Additionally, laws are amended and applied that can turn off your water, cut your electricity and confiscate your house without notification. Since the beginning of the crisis 30,000 water meters and all public taps have been cut off, while the number of homeless people is growing. Despite disappointment among and beyond the movements, worsening living conditions in Thessaloniki urge a few thousand people to become engaged, to continue participation, or to even step up their involvement in often more than one social movement.

The 2009 economic crisis so far resulted in two national-level bailout plans and many austerity measures to pay for these. To comply to these measures healthcare – from insurance packages to hospitals – is subjected to severe cuts and privatization. The struggle to change such policies triggered a healthcare movement that set up a voluntary medical center, where over three hundred voluntary doctors, dentists and nurses treat anyone for free. Another struggle centers around massive garbage processing in Efkarpia, a neighborhood in the far West of Thessaloniki, which harms

---

47 The statement that one third has no health insurance was widely repeated by the interviewees and stated on posters throughout the city.

48 https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/56319

49 This observation is based on many interviews and conversations.
the environment and people living next to the processing site. The people engaged in the garbage movement developed a model to decentralize the processing by setting up garbage cooperatives. As such, the garbage could provide employment, while neither causing unnecessary harm to the people nor the environment. The anti-gold struggles form another movement in Thessaloniki. The anti-gold movement fights against the gold-mining that is being prepared in Chalcidice, a province only thirty kilometers away from Thessaloniki. Through illegitimate transfers 95 percent of the mines is owned by the Eldorado Gold Corporation, while the remaining five percent is in the hands of AKTOR, the biggest Greek construction company that has often been accused of corruption. The mining methods are highly controversial and these operations would be disastrous for the environment and people's livelihoods which are based on cultivation, fishing and tourism. The anti-gold movement is very alive in Thessaloniki because of the urgency of the matter, and the close relations and proximity between Chalcidice and Thessaloniki. All in all, the health, garbage and anti-gold movements can be said to be the most urgent struggles in Thessaloniki.

The three previous issues are in your face. As Maria – a prominent activist in the anti-gold struggles puts it, ‘we are only waking up because it is in our face. Because the mountain is next door’. Her companion, Chara, continues, ‘we were sleeping. [But] all day we're living with this’. These movements are experienced to very pressing. A rising part of the residents are simply discarded as they have no more access to healthcare. Also, the lives of people living next to the mountain where the mining operations will take place or next to the garbage processor will be destroyed. Therefore these movements are said to receive the most support from Thessaloniki’s population and are liable to different dynamics than the labor, food, and water movements are. The dynamics of the latter are for many reasons – that will be treated latter – more difficult and occasionally problematic. Throughout this thesis I will focus to varying extents on the water, food and labor movements because they are rather clearly born out of the 2009 crisis and eager to develop alternatives to neoliberalism. Moreover, the challenges they face are in my view important for understanding the difficulties of triggering support for a struggle. Occasionally I refer to the health, garbage and anti-gold movements to understand the various dynamics at play. In the following I come to discuss the labor, food and water movements by means of some of the empirical data I collected. To begin with, the struggle against the privatization of water.

---

50 http://takethesquare.net/2013/11/07/halkidiki-gold-mining-a-brief-history-greece-saveskouries/
51 http://www.grreporter.info/en/two_largest_greek_companies_became_target_tax_authorities/4153
52 Even though the water struggle is urgent and fairly popular among the public, it is not experienced as that pressing by some members of other movements. This dynamic is discussed in the upcoming chapter ‘Following Movements’ and throughout part 4.
53 Interview Chara and Maria of SOSChalcidice on 4.4
54 See footnote 53
3.3 FOLLOWING MOVEMENTS

3.3.1 The water is ours

Thessaloniki and Athens are the only Greek cities where the water company is state-owned. EYATH, the Water Supply and Water Sewage Company, is responsible for providing the water in Thessaloniki. Dimitris, one of the leaders of water initiative K136 and vice president of EYATH's union, explains that 'since 2006 it was clear that privatization was being prepared'. Already in 2001 EYATH went to the stock market by selling 26 percent of its shares to small investors. During the crisis TAIPED – the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund – was set up by the Greek state to sell public properties to the private sector. The Greek government transferred 40 percent of EYATH shares to TAIPED in 2011 to transfer another 34 percent in 2012, in correspondence to the Troika’s second bailout plan. The transfers are in preparation of privatizing 51 percent of EYATH shares and the management to its highest bidder. Among four of the bidders were SUEZ, the giant French multinational – who already owns 5 percent of EYATH shares – and water initiative K136. The latter filed a lawsuit because they were excluded from the bidding process, while meeting all legal requirements. K136 is still awaiting court’s decision. After elaborating on K136, I will treat SOSte to nero and Water Warriors as the other groups that are also actively involved in the water movement, to finish off with some of the struggle’s main features.

The idea behind citizens’ initiative K136 was born during the 2011 gatherings at Thessaloniki’s square next to the White Tower. Stavros, the president of EAYTH’s union describes how K136 incepted.

At the [White] Tower in 2011 the indignados movement and K136 started, because it is important to give solutions. The union [of EYATH] gave a press conference and they threw a note of fifty [euros] on the table to say that they wanted to buy their share. It began as a joke but people were really interested.

Since the workers of EYATH, activists and other citizens noticed that people were actually interested in buying the water they found out that if every household pays 136 euros the stock – 51 percent of the shares that is about to be privatized – could be owned by the people. In other words, K136’s intention is that the water will be bought by Thessaloniki’s citizens so that it will become a cooperativized commons that is protected from future privatization attempts. At the White Tower, Dimitris, previous vice president of EYATH’s union, Stavros, its current president, Yannis, prominent academic activist who was my foremost gatekeeper to the movements, and a few other established activists met

55 Interview Dimitris of water initiative K136 and water company EYATH on 18.2
56 Interview Stavros of water company EYATH and water umbrella SOSte to nero on 10.3
to oppose the water privatization. From there K136 grew out to be a popular initiative that developed a model to cooperativize EYATH by registering water cooperatives in already nine of the eleven municipalities of Thessaloniki. The model was developed in the weekly assemblies, which are open meetings where K136’s position, difficulties and practicalities are discussed to decide upon strategy actions. In total I attended seven of K136’s weekly meetings and conducted sixteen interviews with ten people that are involved in the three main initiatives, keeping the water movement alive. However, there are said to be about fifty groups that support the struggles against the privatization of EYATH. One the first night of my fieldwork Yannis – one of K136’s leaders – introduces me quite literally to the water movement by inviting me to the general water assembly in the town hall which is attended by over a hundred people. There it is decided upon that a water referendum will be held on the 18th of May in combination with the municipal and regional elections. This evening I notice that most attendants only clapped for the speakers that represent their group or initiative, a dynamic pinpointing to initiatives’ distinct identities that recurred throughout the fieldtrip.

Because of the many groups that support the water issue the coordination body SOSte to nero, meaning ‘save the water’, was created around April 2013 to include and represent all the groups that back up the water movement. The group of people that make up this umbrella are visible in national and international media, and co-organize many activities to inform the public about the threat of privatization. SOSte is like K136 – which also enjoys international recognition – occupied with getting the referendum of May 18 off the ground. Sophia, a woman who is mostly working on SOSte’s arts and cultural efforts, tells me what SOSte has to work on.

Now SOSte has to open itself to the city. This is not easy, because we don’t have experience with this. To find the people is difficult, because people don’t know what is going on. We need to fight the law, deal with finances and let people know about the struggle. But we need to go step by step.

Again and again, throughout the interviews, it is mentioned that the public is not engaged. As such it is for every initiative and movement the biggest task to move society, by motivating and involving the population. However since there are many initiatives, there are many positions on how to involve the public, which are based on several principles. K136 is pushing for a proposal that cooperativizes the water to turn it into a commons, while SOSte would like the water to be public, which could mean that the water is state, municipally, and/or people owned. Although the people and groups that are part of SOSte – similar to other initiatives – have different opinions, they try to put these differences

57 The cooperatives are for now a registered unit of people that expressed their interest in managing the water cooperatively.
58 The relation between the municipality and the water movement will be discussed in the chapter ‘Conflicting Relations’ of part 4.
59 Interview Sophia of water umbrella SOSte to nero on 5.3
aside to get the referendum organized in order to circumvent privatization. The coordination body encompasses next to many other groups K136 and Water Warriors; the latter is one of the most recent water initiatives as it was established in autumn 2013.

Water Warriors is a group of almost forty young people and experienced activists whose efforts try to inform and involve the public on the water struggle by organizing festivals and concerts. The name is derived from the popular uprising in Cochabamba, Bolivia which led to the withdrawal of a multinational company that was responsible for tripling the prices, whereby water became unaffordable for the majority of the population. Water Warriors was set up to mobilize persons that oppose privatization, while refraining from taking a stance on how the water should be managed – once privatization is off the table. The most important features that characterize Water Warriors and K136 – as well as other initiatives and movements – are the open assemblies that function by means of direct democracy. This implies that decisions are based on discussion, consensus and – when necessary – on one person, one vote. For direct democracy to work the assemblies have to be egalitarian, bottom up and open. As such, the assemblies can only function through active participation, which can result in lengthily discussion. Kostas, a friendly looking guy who set up Water Warriors says passionately ‘direct democracy is the best method in order to take control of our lives. It is best to be there when the decisions are made. [...] Yes it may be time consuming and tiring, but it is the best thing we got’.

Among the movements – especially the water movement – there is a big discussion on how to put democracy in practice.

Photo 2: 9 April 2014. One of K136’s weekly assemblies during which direct democracy is practiced. Made by Lavinia Steinfurt

60 http://www.righttowater.info/rights-in-practice/rights-based-approach-for-practitioners/bolivia-mobilising-communities-the-cochabamba-war-for-water/

61 Interview Kostas of Water Warriors and supermarket Bioscoop on 14.3
When is an initiative bottom up? To what extent can the assemblies be open? And what happens to these principles when decision have to be made here and now? These questions are very urgent because of the upcoming water referendum. On the one hand it forces K136 and Water Warriors to cooperate with SOSte to nero, which came to be seen as a top down imposition that dismisses the autonomy of the other initiatives. On the other hand disagreements and splits are at stake, which are not necessarily a bad thing. As Kostas puts it,

[move]m[107]vements split anywhere and maybe the most in Greece. To a certain extent it is necessary to split [because opinions differ]. There is also a limit and there is only a thin line in between. Because of the split of Water warriors another 20 [people] were mobilized and became part of the greater struggle. So this is good. [... Yet] we are together in the water movement. We may have our own ideas but we all want the water not to be privatized. So we can do things together.

Despite the differences among K136, SOSte to nero and Water Warriors, the water movement is united when it comes to the adversaries, which are those who seek to privatize the water. Yet, the water struggle does not receive that much support from other movements due to internal disagreements and because K136's bid is perceived as another attempt to privatize the water – be it cooperatively. In conversation, privatization is often stated to be manifestations of neoliberalism and capitalism, which are arguably the founding adversaries. A similar dynamic is present in the food movement, where the food chain's intermediaries – those in between the producer and the consumer – take the position of the adversary. Not surprisingly, there are many that take part in both the water and the food movement.

3.3.2 Without middle men

It is always hard to tell where a movement starts and stops, however, on the food movement there appears to be a consensus that the initiative S.PAME., meaning 'we break', was the pioneer in Thessaloniki. As Maria, one of the ten members says, 'this was one of the first places that talked about the problem of the middle man even before the crisis. It was ignored for decades. Now the words 'without middle men' is used by everyone'. S.PAME. was inspired by a distribution network in Athens that sold the coffee of Zapatista cooperatives in Chiapas, Mexico to cooperatives and collectives in Greece. S.P.A.ME. became a non-profit collective in 2009 to raise awareness that the people have the right to fair food,
fair prices by simplifying the food chain. Fair food is connoted with healthy biological food that is produced by local cooperatives. After S.P.A.ME. many initiatives followed because in Thessaloniki – as elsewhere – the food chain is subjected to many intermediaries in between the producer and consumer. During one of the interviews the story was told that feta cheese was even cheaper in England than in Greece and from my personal experience in Thessaloniki this is no exaggeration. For the food production chain is saturated with middle men that sell the product to other middle men – who are all taking fees – so that the product that is bought by the consumer is much higher in price than the original value. These intermediaries press the producers such as farmers and agriculturalists to lower their prices, while overcharging the consumers by driving the prices up themselves. As the economic crisis makes food unaffordable for many households the middle men became an urgent issue. In total I interviewed eleven persons that were actively involved with the food initiatives that struggle against the middle men and for fair food, fair prices. I will start by discussing the commonalities among the eight initiatives I came across to address thereafter some of the characteristics that appear to define the food movement.

As the number of unemployment people accelerated and loans were pressed down, the discussion on middle man quickly spread across the city. In 2011 various neighborhood groups stepped in and started organizing the monthly markets without mediators in their district, because the poorest households could no longer afford to buy groceries. The first market was organized in the Toumba, East Thessaloniki. This market became a model for similar markets throughout the city.

---

64 Interview Philipos of food cooperative S.Pt.ME. on 6.4
65 Interview Kostas of Water Warriors and supermarket Bioscoop on 14.3
Thousands of people are said to visit these markets because the prices are much lower. As I visited one of these markets without mediators in Ambelokipi, in North of Thessaloniki, one of the organizers told me that five liters of olive oil – which supermarkets sell for 25 euros – costs only sixteen euros at these markets. The prices are without a doubt a major incentive to visit these markets. By now there are said to be between six and seven of such markets every Sunday spread over the city. What these markets have in common is a solidarity tax, which means that every producer donates a certain amount of his products that is in turn divided over about 25 poor families in the neighborhood. Next to these markets that became widely known to the public, the number of non-profit consumer cooperatives is growing simultaneously.

In 2011 after water initiative K136 came into existence the founders started to talk about a non-profit supermarket which soon received the name Bioscoop. This consumer cooperative opened its doors in November, 2013 as the 300 members invested 150 euros each (45,000 euros in total) besides lots of time and energy. What sets this supermarket apart from conventional supermarkets is that no profit is being made. The percentage that exceeds the cost price returns at the end of the year to the members in accordance the amount of products that each bought. The surplus of the products that are sold by non-members is planned to be reinvested in society or in the cooperative by hiring another employee – next to the four that are currently employed. Bioscoop has already an assortment of two thousand codes and a growing number of customers. Yannis, the environmental academic, and co-founder of K136 and Bioscoop, tells me that 85 percent of the products that are sold in Bioscoop have one or more of the following traits in common; they are from the region, from small producers and/or biologically or naturally produced. These principles are close to those of Allostropos, another non-profit cooperative that also started in 2011. However, Allostropos as well as the food collective Centrophia – as in the non-profit consumer cooperative that was illicitly established in Micropolis – face a harder time to keep their head above water. Yet, despite difficulties all these initiatives have expressed the use and need for a network among them.

The urge to interconnect resulted one year ago in the Open Network that linked sixteen cooperative initiatives to one another, including S.P.A.ME., Bioscoop, Centrophia and Allostropos. Aleka, who together with four others set up Allostropos – a store in the West of Thessaloniki where fair food is sold, chess tournaments are held, books are lend, clothes are given away, and where children of the neighborhood come to play – explains, ‘we are still trying to stand on our feet and make this viable. The Open Network will help and can help. [B]ut first you have to [be able to] exist before you become part of a

66 Conversation one of the organizers of the market without mediators in Ambelokipi on 9.3
67 Conversation one of the producers at the market without mediators in Kalamaria on 6.4
68 Interview with Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop and many others on 28.2
69 Biological concerns food products and natural concerns non-food products
The quote shows an important tension between the need for connecting to other initiatives and the need for focusing on one’s own initiative. Centrophia faces a similar challenge, especially since it is not officially registered yet. The latter consumer collective – which was not formally registered as a cooperative, yet functions as such – is located in Micropolis, a massive social center that was established by the anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa. Centrophia is one of the five collectives that is housed in Micropolis. During one of Micropolis’ assemblies, which goal was to connect the five collectives, the internal problems of Centrophia were shared with the other attendants. Micropolis has also a bar, restaurant, radio station, ceramics and soap studio and clinic for wild animals. Moreover, at its lectures, meetings and concerts anarchist and leftist people – and many others – are gathering from across Thessaloniki.

Similarly, the food movement brings together various people and initiatives that try in many ways to convince the public that it can and should defy the standards and prices set by supermarkets and other intermediaries. However the struggle and success must be proven by these initiatives themselves. Only when the initiative flourishes it can attract and persuade the public. Vice versa, non-profit consumer cooperatives must be able to persuade the public in order to be successful. This Catch-22 is becoming somewhat detangled since more and more groups set up similar projects. Take PERKA, an urban gardening initiative, which all together rules out money, involving over 200 people that cultivate their own food. Due to the many initiatives that are part of the food movement or related to it, the demand for fair food prices is gaining a foothold in Thessaloniki’s society. To a large extent the food movement and the upcoming labor movement try to put the virtues of a social solidarity economy into practice, meaning that an initiative puts the members and society before profits.

### 3.3.3 Demanding an equal living

The food, labor, and the water movement – in terms of K136 – take into account the principles of the social solidarity economy. When I ask for its meaning Yannis elucidates that social implies that the cooperative is to the benefit of its members, while solidarity means that the cooperative is also concerned with the well-being of society. However, the lack of and need for work seems to be necessary for cooperatives and the labor movement as such to thrive. Next to the many cooperatives I encountered during my fieldwork, I heard quite a few people interested in setting up a cooperative. Some of the previously discussed non-profit consumer cooperatives that sell food are also part of the labor movement, as they (aim to) provide employment for their members. While 1,500,000 people are officially unemployed in Greece, the number of people that do not receive a salary is

---

70 Interview Aleka of food cooperative Allostropos on 26.3
71 Conversation Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop and many others on 23.2
estimated to be much higher if not double the amount. With no jobs available people are urged to create their own employment. Surprisingly, the state seems to encourage this, as the law-4019 that was implemented in 2011 made it a lot easier for people to set up cooperatives (Nasioulas 2012). Before a cooperative had to have more than 20 members and the members could not earn a salary through it. Now it takes only six people to be registered as a cooperative, and next to a salary that is allowed to be earned some percentage of its surplus is to support other cooperatives.

The criteria of the 4019-law are that the cooperative’s statute declares its social benefit; that the individuals and labor are put over capital, that democratic decision-making is being employed, and that the members enjoy self-management (Ibid.: 165). Finally, the law does not rule out profit, yet the well-being of its members and society are a priority. Most cooperatives that I did research among were registered as such, however some were set up before this law came into effect. In other cases the members refused to register the collective, or set up an unofficial cooperative because the business form was still too unknown. For example, because the lawyer of Computerativa – an unofficial IT cooperative that started in 2013 – was not informed about the 4019-law, it is only now becoming an official cooperative, which will save insurance costs and exempt it from several taxes.

Computerativa is one of the seventeen labor cooperatives I studied. In total I interviewed 30 cooperative members. Fifteen of the seventeen cooperatives – that were functioning and often registered as such – were set up during or after the outbreak of the 2009 crisis. At first I was introduced to cooperative cafes, bookshops and restaurants. Later on I came across a much greater variety of cooperatives, from a law office to a designer cooperative and an online newspaper. During my stay the occupied factory VioMe also became a registered cooperative.

Although the cooperatives distinguish themselves in many ways, they have three pivotal traits in common; they are open to the public, value the principles of the social solidarity economy, and share the ideal of a cooperative economy that serves society. When I ask Aleka, one of Allostropos members, why the social solidarity economy matters, she answers ‘because I believe this is the way the economy should work’. George of water initiative K136 shares this belief in the social solidarity economy for ‘it connects, brings the alternative [of cooperatives] to work. It is necessary to propose an alternative. They just have a small image. But cooperatives need to be spread throughout society...’. Moreover, the interview with Zacharia – a member of cafe cooperative Domino – comes to a close with the words, ‘the cooperative, is and should be

---

72 Interview Philipos of food cooperative S.P.A.M.E on 6.4
73 Mentioned in various interviews and conversations
74 Interview Socrates and George of IT cooperative Computerativa on 8.4
75 Interview Aleka of food cooperative Allostropos on 26.3
76 Interview George of water initiative K136 on 23.3
spreading. And you also have to be clear and honest about what you are doing.

Many members express to have rather high hopes for the cooperatives to be an answer to the crisis. Nevertheless they do not conceal that many difficulties and insecurities come along when setting up cooperatives. Those involved in cooperatives—as well as in other movements—tend to call their initiative an experiment, a bet or even a test, to say that they cannot be sure that it will be a success, because they cannot be sure about the future. However, there is a strong desire among the majority of the participants to set an example for the rest of society in order to show that others can also make a living by taking part in cooperatives. As Yannis—co-founder of K136 and Bioscoop says, ‘the success of this experiment will be an example for non-profit cooperatives in the whole of Greece. That is what I want’.

For cooperatives to be an example, openness is required. Openness was mentioned as a commonality among the cooperatives, yet it comes in many different forms. Although all the labor initiatives I had contact with are considered to be open to the public—instead of closed and inward looking—not all made name as a cooperative because of their political views or because it would cost them credibility. Regarding the political view, ArtCore, an always crowded bar cooperative does not advertise its cooperativist character because the members believe that in a capitalist system you cannot live up to what a cooperative—or a collective as Petros calls it—should be. In terms of credibility, designer cooperative Point Blank and the cooperative law office Lawyer Partners were set up years before the crisis and do not propagate their cooperative character in contrast to the majority of cooperatives that is set up because of the 2009 crisis. The members of all the book, café and restaurant cooperatives I visited feel it is very necessary to make oneself known as such. For them being part of a cooperative is inevitably a political struggle that stands for taking labor—and thereby life—into your own hands.

Accordingly, the cooperative members who make up the labor movement have to convince the public that you do not have to work under a boss. For cooperatives can enable you to earn a living with dignity by working together as equals. To work amongst equals means that members view each other as equal. Yet, these work places may differ over the need for a labor division and a denominator to split the money. The cooperative members I interviewed—as well as participants of other movements—were greatly inspired by VioMe, the previously occupied factory that now turned into an official cooperative. It is the first factory where the workers took the so called means of production into their own hands, thereby defying capitalism’s foundations. The members are given the floor on

---

Interview Zacharia of cooperative café Domino on 25.2

Interview Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop and many others on 28.2

Because cooperatives or collectives used to be associated with squats which tend to be closed

Interview Petros and Manos of cooperative bar ArtCore on 14.3
stages throughout the world to be a source of inspiration for others. As Michael, one of VioMe members orates skillfully, ‘those who struggle can win or lose. Those who don’t struggle have already lost’. For the labor movement to mobilize the population, the cooperative character has to be advertised in order to show the population of Thessaloniki that they can do it to. Philipos, co-founder of S.P.A.M.E., sums it up poignantly by saying, ‘it’s important that these movements in Greece are examples. That.. as I did it you can do it. If we did it, you can do it’.

Photo 4: 2 February 2014. Some of the members of the cooperative factory VioMe and Tasos who is part of its solidarity committee on the left. Made by Lavinia Steinfort

3.4 IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

3.4.1 A matter of solidarity and equality

When people rise up they have reasons to do so. It could be a lingering gut feeling, the crystallization of a thought process, a straw that breaks the camel’s back, or all the previous combined. As movements in Thessaloniki and Greece go a long way back the water, food and labor movements did not emerge out of the blue. Movements appear to be manifestations of the ever changing process of claim making. As Tomas, a well-known activists describes it,

In the previous cycle of ‘99 the anti-globalization movement was going until 2003, 2004. People were waking up. People were more global and working for a better world system. But they did not realize that this needs to start local. Then we went back to consumerism. The

---

81 Interview Michael of cooperative factory VioMe on 21.2
82 Interview Philipos of food cooperative S.PA.M.E. on 6.4
previous mobilization included. This movement [of ‘99] also had knowledge of the previous movement of ‘68. Every cycle [of mobilization] leaves a legacy behind.

The movements could be understood as an accumulative struggle, where movements’ legacies are a source of learning. Such collective learning, over decades, can occur because the people involved are actively shaping and sharpening their thinking, by a lot of reading and reflection and by socializing with other people in the movements. Here I delve into the ideological underpinnings as in those thinkers and thoughts to which the participants involved occasionally referred, to lay the foundation for part four that contains the analyses where data and theory are interwoven. In the following I take note of how Thessaloniki’s social movements are responding and on what thoughts these responses are being based. I will come to treat Castoriadis’ notion of direct democracy, Marxist principles, ideas on commoning, Chomsky’s anarchism, and lastly, Klein’s argument in ‘The Shock Doctrine’ (2007) to finish off with a brief discussion on power.

The 2008 protests as well as the square movement of 2011 and 2012 attracted many people who had not been active before. Especially the young people I spoke experienced the protests as a turning point where they – together with thousands others – for the first time took part in a movement. Lykos, a conflict studies student, explains rather vividly how he was moved to take action in 2008, ‘When everything else around you is burning you cannot wait until also your house is burnt down. Until all houses are burnt down’. Lykos’ words notify that the situation forced people to wake up, that he could do nothing but participate. Aurora, a member of the always busy cooperative bar Belleville, explained her return to Greece in 2008, after studying abroad, ‘when I came back in 2008 I decided I have to see what was

83 Interview Tomas of VioMe’s solidarity committee, water initiative K136 and many others on 31.3
84 Interview Lykos, student and demonstrator on 25.3
going on. Before I was more theoretically involved, now I started going to assemblies and met people. I was so fed up with theory. I thought, let’s find a way to do some practice. Worsening situations because of deteriorating living conditions clearly ask for practice. For George, who is part of water initiative K136, it was also time to take action. He first learned about direct democracy at the square movement next to the White Tower. Thereafter he read for two years about direct democracy. George then joined K136, because he was searching for an example to distinguish theory from practice. Since George and others referred frequently to the French-Greek social critic Castoriadis, I will treat some of his ideas.

Castoriadis developed a theory of democratic society based on autonomy and anti-authoritarianism, which is commonly called direct democracy. He argues against representative democracy, because it rests on the constellations of bureaucracy, the concentration of elitist power and the increasing discrepancy between the capacity to get power and govern (Tovar-Restrepo 2012: 87) by which it ‘evolves fatally towards oligarchy’ (Castoriadis 1997: 75) He is opposed to the idea that representative democracy is necessary, because the modern organization of state and society make ‘real’ democracy impossible (Ibid.: 90). With an immense believe in the potential of reflective, self-instituting collectivities direct democracy is not only possible, but necessary for being free which in turn requires the constant configuration of one’s values (Castoriadis 1991: 162). Accordingly, democracy is said to endow ‘an expansive collectivity with increasing creative powers where individuals should participate with real conditions – not formal conditions – to modify the laws and decisions that concern them as social members of a society’ (Tovar-Restrepo 2012: 86). Direct democracy can be understood as a process of creation in which society is not instituted by frozen conceptions of what freedom, justice and equality is, but continuously reconsidering these concepts (Ibid). Through the reflective creativity of open collectivities a self-instituting society can be forged. Yet, new social forms have to be created that articulate the commons of a collective (Ibid). These new social forms would provide the collectivity with the tools for ‘conscious appropriation of the institution power of the collectivity’ (Ibid.: 88). In line with his theory, Castoriadis refrains from specifying how and which new social forms can remove representative democracy because – as the argument goes – such democracy is not based on active participation but on the passivity of voting for one’s representatives. He merely states that democracy must trust in the social movements search for self-institution (Ibid.: 89). When speaking to George the notion of direct democracy comes alive, ‘to not comply to the political system, direct democracy is [...] an alternative. To think all together, bringing ideas and fusing them, for people to participate in decision-making’. 

---

85 Interview Aurora of cooperative bar Belleville on 2.3
86 Interview George of water initiative K136 on 23.3
87 http://nome.unak.is/previous-issues/issues/vol3_2/rendtorff.html
88 Interview George of water initiative K136 on 23.3
Although some of the people in the movements were rather critical of the concept, the majority of the
initiatives I studied puts direct democracy in practice. It so happens that exactly this was experienced
as the foremost gain of the 2006/2007 student protests, the indignados and the square movement.

Early in his life Castoriadis came into contact with Marxist thought and the same happened
to many people that are part of Thessaloniki’s social movements. Marx has influenced the ideas and
practices of many participants in that his principles of equality, solidarity and revolution are often the
common sense of a debate. Some of the people who are involved in an initiative are also part of
political groups that have ideas based, in one way or another, on Marxism. The notion of revolution
prevails mainly among the Marxists and Trotskyists who are member of a political party. For them it
is most important that a new government takes seat that breaks with capitalism. However, the
principles of equality and solidarity are widespread among all the movements and initiatives I
encountered. Equality means that the economic classes have to dissolve or be turned over. In
Marxism, the equality amongst workers says to carry the (revolutionary) potential for an egalitarian,
classless society. As labor is said to define society’s power structures it is crucial that work is
designed by equality as well as solidarity, which go hand in hand. For equality is meaningful when
solidarity is put into practice. Put differently, solidarity among the workers and all others who do not
own the means of production can be the means to push for more equal social relations and ultimately,
an equal society in which solidarity is shown to anyone, anywhere (Sabia Jr 1988). The principles of
equality and solidarity defy capitalism and the notion of private ownership. Hence, both relate to the
idea that the commons – on which every life depends – should be managed by everyone.

Thessaloniki’s need for collectively articulating the commons is rather urgent as the mandate
of the Troika and its austerity measures push for the privatization of public utilities. Moreover,
human rights are eroding, as essential needs are being unaffordably commodified to pay for debts,
deficits and bailout plans. To different extents the commons – ranging from water, food, medical care,
and electricity, to housing, jobs and education – are all at stake and fought for by the city’s social
movements. When studying the movements the belief in direct democracy proved to be intimately
tied to the notion of taking back the commons. The widespread notion of the tragedy of the commons
can be countered by theories on the commons which argue that people often do not deplete resources
at the expense of the group, because they are able to govern the commons by collaboration to improve
joint efforts and outcomes (Ostrom et al. 2002: 157). Yet, people fight for commons and find ways to
start commoning not only to conserve resources, but also to avoid conflict (Ibid.: 324) and to resist
depprivation of social, political, and economic sorts. Commoning has been conceptualized by the
historian Linebaugh, who argues that people are ‘living in close connection to the commons’.
89 It can be best
understood as a practice, or even as a way of being according to Ristau, co-director of the On the
Commons strategy center.

89 http://onthecommons.org/work/what-commoning-anyway

---

64
The act of commoning draws on a network of relationships made under the expectation that we will each take care of one another and with a shared understanding that some things belong to all of us—which is the essence of the commons itself. The practice of commoning demonstrates a shift in thinking from the prevailing ethic of “you’re on your own” to “we’re in this together”.

The belief among the movements that a network of relations is not only desirable but essential is to show the rest of society that everyone can participate in deciding over the commons as they belong to all. Tomas clarifies such belonging by saying, ‘a common means that it belongs to everyone; that is actively maintained and produced by everyone’. However, since there are no set ways to get the commons into common hands, there is an ongoing discussion on the appropriate ways to take the commons back. Should they be demanded? Or may they also be bought as in cooperitized, like K136 proposes? Either way, certain ways of commoning receive much resistance from within and beyond the water movement. Some people resist K136’s proposal as they believe it is either unfeasibly or a popular way to privatize the water company EYATH. This may not come as a surprise for new social forms have to experiment to prove themselves. Yet, to experiment in times of accelerating urgency a conscious confidence may be required. As Tomas says vigilantly, ‘you will never be ready if you never get ready. We are already ready [to common]. We have to be aware of that’. The people involved in the movements are ready because, a sincere responsibility is felt to save the commons from austerity measures by moving the rest of the population, partly due to their strong convictions on anarchism and the radical Left.

3.4.2 Anarchism and the anti-Shock Doctrine

Anarchism and the radical Left, two prominent streams on which the movements are leaning, are informed by the activist scholars Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein. After some of Chomsky’s political ideas are discussed, Klein’s ‘Shock Doctrine’ (2007) and its imprint on the perceptions of the movements’ members is treated. Despite the many streams and differences among anarchism and the radical Left, I limit myself to Chomsky’s notion of anarchism. In ‘Notes on Anarchism’ (1970) Chomsky quotes Rudolf Rocker to say that anarchism concerns ‘freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement’. Chomsky urges his readers to create bottom up ways that

---

90 See footnote 89
91 Interview Tomas of VioMe’s solidarity committee, water initiative K135, and many others on 11.3
92 See footnote 91
93 http://www.chomsky.info/articles/1970----.htm
adhere to socialism by which people can make a living. George, member of K136, is rather familiar with Chomsky as he says to watch many of his videos on YouTube. During our conversations he often draws on his ideas, as the following note shows.

George is relieved that Chomsky is an anarchist, or more specific an anarcho-syndicalist, while not waving with black flags. For George he is the one who brought the important insight of opposing and taking part in developing an alternative, without an absolute belief in elections.

In watching some of Chomsky’s elaborations on YouTube, he formulates self-management and democratic control of institutions as viable alternatives to capitalism,

[w]ether they’re communities or work places or any others. Alliances among them, federal arrangements. These are all perfectly feasibly alternatives. There’s no economic or political theory that tells us there’s anything wrong with them. They conflict with the structure of existing power systems, but there’s nothing unthinkable about them. and you can work towards realizing them.

It can be said that Chomsky amplifies the magnitude of anarchism by showing its sensibility to a wider audience. Although anarchism is often still connoted with an ism that seeks to wipe out existing power structures, Chomsky shows that anarchism offers feasible proposals by which workers and anyone else can take control over their lives; proposals that the social movements readily explore.

The readiness of the various movements comes forth out of the need to take a stance and act according to it. The urgency is most apparent at the garbage and the anti-gold movement where the citizens – regardless of their political convictions – feel forced to defend their homes and livelihoods. To trace the anti-gold movement I went to Chalcidice where Maria, an impassionate activist, explains how its population rose up.

When there's conflict things become very urgent. and in an emergency your senses come alive. You ask more. [...] We were not a Left wing community. Now we are a Left wing community. [...] Shock doctrine came alive. Like we live after the book.
Klein’s book ‘The Shock Doctrine’ reconceptualizes what Milton Friedman calls capitalism’s core tactic, to reveal that capitalism uses crises to inject the free market ideology into society (2007: 6). For a state of emergency will make the liberalizations and privatizations, such as budget cuts, tax hikes and labor reforms look like the only way out of the crisis. This is the story that is being told to the Greek people. As Greece, including Thessaloniki and Chalcidice, is decreed by bailout plans and austerity – leaving an increasing part of the population without access to employment and health care – it is a living example of the Thatcherian conviction that there is no alternative. However, precisely because the people of the movements live under such decree they are gathering force to come up with alternatives and put them to the test. VioMe is one of the most successful experiments that often serves as a showcase for the social movements in Thessaloniki and elsewhere. For this reason Klein visited the factory in June 2013 to address VioMe as the anti-Shock Doctrine, by saying that the workers ‘refused to have their lives and livelihoods sacrificed on the altar of economic crisis, and instead found reserves of power and ingenuity’. For the movements’ initiatives, such as VioMe, SOSChalcidice and K136 to name a few, it is clear that they are exposed to capitalism’s Shock Doctrine which they have to combat all together.

These ideological underpinnings, despite substantial differences, have in common that they assign power to the people. The power structures that these authors reveal are accompanied by a belief that the people can negotiate, counter and even undo these power structures. Agencies are not assigned to individuals but to the population as a whole. They address all commoners as they have the power to join forces and do something about the injustices that these structures bring to bear. Power lies with the collectivity that can take action by standing together and practicing direct democracy, by living up to equality and solidarity to overturn capitalism, by communing public resources and allies work places, and by rejecting the crisis’ neoliberal injection as VioMe did. Aforementioned thinkers and thoughts radicalize democracy as a force through which people can strengthen alliances to take over the commons, self-manage society and perhaps, write their own history. Yet, do the people that are part of the movements also experiencing it as such? Before arriving at part four, which comes back to this question extensively, I will draw on the questionnaires to discuss the interrelations between movements, initiatives and their members. This part finishes with a brief account on the connections between the manifold social movements and the wider public.

98 http://www.viome.org/2013/06/naomi-klein-speaks-at-self-managed.html
99 SOSChalcidice is part of the anti-gold movement.
3.5 AN INDICATIVE OVERVIEW

3.5.1 Cross-cutting relations

A brief discussion on the interrelations between seven initiatives will give an idea of the way movements, initiatives and members experience each other. The many contrasting opinions got only more complicated as I asked the people I interviewed to fill the questionnaire. However, for making sense of the entangling relations I combine the data of the questionnaires with the information provided by conversations and interviews. For an indicative overview I include the market(s) without mediators and the consumer cooperative Bioscoop to represent the food movement (FM). The water movement (WM) is represented by K136 and SOSte to Nero. Cooperative bar Bellville and cooperative restaurant Kazani stand for the labor movement (LM). Lastly, I include the social center Micropolis, which was set up by Alpha Kappa, the anti-authoritarian movement (ATM) that is known nationwide. Micropolis is a social center where people from anarchist circles and the varied Left gather; a place at which many movement intersect. The arrows in Figure 1 highlight the different ties between these movements and initiatives. The colors show which initiatives belong to the same movement. Following, I will interpret these arrows to provide an indicative overview of the interrelations among Thessaloniki’s social movements.

![Figure 1: Relations among the food (FM), labor (LB), and water (WM) movements](image)

The initiatives that are part of the food, labor, or water movements, are despite similar claims not necessarily closer to each other. Actually, when groups make similar claims they can be more easily in conflict with each other. To illustrate, Bioscoop and K136 are much closer to each other because both initiatives are led by the same people, Yannis and Panos. The groups K136 and SOSte to nero are the least close, in spite of the fact that both of them are part of the water movement. Even though K136 as well as SOSte struggles against water privatization they are in each other’s way; the other’s ideas on how a citizens’ initiative should be organized, the proposal on who should be in
charge of the water, and the local support and international attention the other receives. The cooperatives Belleville and Kazani are also not particularly close. They got somehow wrapped up in an argument in previous collective efforts to build a network. However, according to the questionnaire, its members do agree with the other cooperative. The relation between the markets without mediators and Bioscoop are also not that strong. On an individual level the leaders of both initiatives agree and cooperate. Yet, members and leaders are cautious to support the markets without mediators, as the members of Syriza – the new radical Leftist party which is up and coming – supposedly have taken over the markets’ organization and labeled them as their political undertaking. Moreover, although most of the initiatives are positive towards Mircopolis they do not agree with Alpha Kappa’s political stance behind it. For Alpha Kappa is quite a powerful organization that, according to some, functions like a political party by labeling the efforts it is involved in. Although Alpha Kappa is not supported by everyone, many of the members of the initiatives below do visit its center Micropolis.

The filled questionnaires point out that many members agree and even cooperate with other initiatives despite disagreements. However, this is not always the case. Within and across movements members do occasionally disagree with and disapprove of other initiatives. Frederick, who organizes one of the biggest markets without mediators, disapproves of Belleville because the bar together with another cooperative said to obstruct the Open Network, which was an effort to interconnect sixteen of Thessaloniki’s food and labor cooperatives. He does agree with the restaurant Kazani, as well as with the water initiatives and Micropolis. Midas, an environmentalist who is active in K136 and Bioscoop, disagrees with Syriza and the initiatives Syriza is involved with. For this reason he is against SOSte to nero and many other groups not included in the figure. However at the same time he says that ‘people, also in Syriza, share the view to do it in a creative way’. Tomas, who is a member of K136, Bioscoop and many other initiatives, disagrees for the same reason with markets without mediators. However, he adds that when they are organized by the producers themselves – and not by Syriza – he does agree. Aurora, who co-founded Belleville, disagrees with initiatives that involve Syriza and quite a few other initiatives because of differing political ideas. She neither agrees with the anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa nor the overall water struggle nor the consumer cooperative Bioscoop. Aurora cannot agree with the latter because the supermarket has four workers and over three hundred members. In her view the workers are not self-organized because the members are more or less the workers’ boss. The cooperatives Belleville and Kazani are neither supported nor known by the same people. The members of Kazani think also differently about certain other groups. Kostas fills in that he and the restaurant disagree with Bioscoop. Luigi, another member, says he actively supports Bioscoop and that the restaurant also agrees with Bioscoop. Moreover, while Luigi disagrees with the water struggle Kostas agrees. These differences may be related to what – the
members think – K136 and SOSte to nero respectively stand for. Some respondents disagree with the whole water movement due to Syriza’s involvement in SOSte to nero. Others disagree with the water movement because they believe that all participants want to buy the water company EYATH. To clarify, only K136 proposed to buy the water with all of Thessaloniki’s residents. Generally, the members of SOSte to Nero and K136 agree with many other groups, even though they are unable to agree with each other. Whereas this account focuses on the disagreements, agreements are apparent.

The above focuses on seven initiatives to get a better understanding of the complex relations movements, initiatives and members have with each other. It tentatively points to the many kinds of disagreements that enmesh Thessaloniki’s struggles. I find it interesting that members more easily disagree when they participate in different initiatives of the same movement. Even though it may not come as a surprise, it is quite telling that one member believes that their cooperative agrees with another group, while another is sure that these initiatives disagree. It leads me to think that the disagreeing and supportive opinions of others influence the agencies and impacts of these groups. This issue will be extensively treated in the following chapters and parts. For it sometimes appears that it takes more effort to agree than to disagree. Whether initiatives could be more supportive of each other – if they are better informed about that the other groups stand for – remains unanswered yet.

### 3.5.2 Telling numbers

Despite the crisis and the efforts of Thessaloniki’s social movements, most inhabitants try to continue life as usual. That is how many respondents involved in the social movements experience it. When you are absorbed by the movements the world seems to have caught fire. When you are on the boulevard, at the cafes and near the shopping streets the practices of direct democracy, the focus on developing alternatives, and the efforts of building a network are more distant than ever. A world in which capitalism and consumerism are considered to be the greatest evils is very much apart from a world in which these ‘evils’ are taken for granted. It even could be said that they have been sustaining each other. Thessaloniki’s movements are known to distance themselves from anyone and any practice that conforms to (religious) traditions, (state) authority and capitalism. However, the crisis and preceding developments within society and within the movements have made the movements turn towards society. It is the mission of the water, food and labor movements to connect to those parts of Thessalonian population that do not envision and work towards a different society. By means of the population’s questionnaire, I try to understand the extent to which the movements have succeeded to familiarize society with their cause.

As I walked down the boulevard to approach people, I managed to find 67 persons to fill in the questionnaire. As Figure 2 shows below, less than one fifth of the population knows between zero
and three initiatives. Over forty percent of the people who are questioned is familiar with four to nine of the 25 initiatives. More than a quarter of the sample knows up to sixteen groups that are part of the movements. Twelve percent is familiar with 17 to 21 initiatives. Only one person knows nearly all the initiatives that the table includes. From these numbers I take that a substantial amount of Thessaloniki’s population is at least aware that various groups are fighting for certain causes. These results merely show that quite a few initiatives have been able to make their struggle one way or another known to a (greater) part of the public. Although people’s engagement with the movements could and should be even greater to change society, these percentages are an indication that the worlds that affirm and oppose capitalism are not that much apart. To get a better insight into which movements and initiatives are known to the sample I zoom in on ten prominent groups in Figure 3.

Figure 2: How many initiatives are known among the respondents (%)

Figure 3, below, shows how popular certain initiatives are among the 67 respondents. To explains the additional abbreviations, GM refers to the (anti-)gold movement and HM stands for the health movement. Nearly all persons who say to know a particular group are rather positive as they tend to give it a 1 (very positive) or a 2 (positive). The people who are negative were once personally involved and knew more groups which signifies that they are to some degree involved in the movements. It is striking that the factory VioMe, which has an exemplary role among the forty initiatives I got to know, is not known to respondents. It seems that you have to be inside the movements to know that the workers took over the factory. When looking at Figure 3 it stands out that the markets and the social solidarity clinic are known to over forty percent of the sample. Both SOSChalcidice that is part of the anti-gold movement and SOStero that is supposed to represent the water struggle are supported by the majority of the respondents. K136 is on the other hand known to only 2 percent of the sample, which may also imply that one has to be part of the movements to be familiar with this water initiative. Belleville, which is known to four percent of the respondents, is actually one of the best known and popular cooperative cafes. Yet, the public seems to be more familiar with Bioscoop, which is actually less known to many participants of the movements. From this figure I take that the urgency of a movement seems to increase the popular support, as the high degree of familiarity with the water, health, and anti-gold movement shows. The relation between
urgency and support is often confirmed during the interviews. Moreover, the popularity of SOSte to nero, Open network and Micropolis point out that a movement receives more support when initiatives group together. As aforementioned, these findings help to put Thessaloniki’s movements into perspective, whilst indicating that certain initiatives managed to familiarize the public with their struggle, at least to some extent.

Figure 3: Which initiatives are known to the respondents (%)

3.5.3 Finishing up

In part three I discussed the methodology of the fieldwork, the history of Thessaloniki and its social movements, the many contemporary struggles, and the water, food and labor movements in detail, together with their ideological underpinnings. At last, I presented an indicative overview to make sense of the interrelations between movements, initiatives and members, and between the social movements and the people in the street. As the fieldwork has been discussed I now move on to the analyses and answer the first four sub-questions by interweaving data and theory. In correspondence to the sub-questions, in the first two analyses, I frequently refer to the interviews. However, in order to work towards the discussion wherewith part four concludes, the third and fourth analyses are more theoretical. Although the analyses will draw on examples from the food, labor and water movements, the latter receives most attention due to its accessibility. Hence, part four kicks off with an analysis of how the social movements are being shaped by the crisis, the European Union and neoliberalism by interpreting the experiences of the people involved.
PART 4
ANALYSES
4.1 COUNTERING CAPITALISM

4.1.1 Wake up from passivity

As if we did the worst thing. But Greece is not an island. What is happening in Greece is related to Europe and beyond. It is matter a fact German companies that have debts in Greece, like Siemens [...] These are the kind of wars Europe fights.

I meet Katherina at a demonstration against the additional tax on electricity bills. When she became unemployed she began being more active in her neighborhood group, ‘which was a necessity because of the difficult living conditions’. She is in her forties and says she needs her mother to pay for her electricity. Katherina, like many other Greeks, feels deprived from the ability to lead a dignified life. She is enraged, because Greece and its people are being blamed for a situation the European Union and businesses are – at least in part – responsible for. In many conversations, Europe, both its union and currency, is said to be effectively governed by Germany’s chancellor Merkel. The thought goes that Germany triumphs as opposed to Greece that is losing out. Greeks, part and not part of the movements, distance themselves from Europe and the West as a whole. A dichotomy seem to have emerged where the affluent West turned its back – and the blame – on Greece and the other GIIPS countries. Among the movements it is known that Greece functions as a show case for the rest of Europe, to show what happens when one fails to obey to the EU’s rules, advice and policies. According to Zizek, the EU ‘acts as a regulator of global capitalism’ (2012: 46) that increases dependency between countries that lend and those that borrow, with the latter only sinking deeper into impoverishment (Stiglitz 2006). Accordingly, Thessaloniki’s movements attempt to strengthen the ties between the impoverished countries and people. Although Germany’s exports, such as cars and machinery, went up, the German population has been suffering from its government’s belief in labor reforms and public cut backs. Social movement participants realize this and show solidarity wherever injustice is fought. Since they do not experience the crisis to be solely a Greek issue they propagate a solidarity that reaches beyond Greece’s borders. To refer to Leach and Scoones (2007), Thessaloniki’s movements are strengthened through inhibiting a glocal space in which they engage with worker struggles in Germany, numerous citizens’ initiatives in Spain, and factory occupations in Argentina to name a few. In part two I already explained the interconnections between the Greek and European crisis, the workings of the EU and neoliberal governmentalities. To answer the first sub-question that asks how these interconnections shape the social movements, I will shed some light on

---

102 Conversation Katherina at demonstration against electricity bills on 5.3
103 See footnote 102
104 An argument frequently repeated in the interviews
the views I came across on the crisis, the EU and neoliberalism. Thereafter I will address the ways in which Thessaloniki’s social movements are responding.

The immediate effects of the crisis hit nearly everyone. Ever since its onset many of my interviewees have seen their neighbors rummaging through the garbage, whilst being unemployed and fighting depression themselves. However, what sets the people of the movements apart from the rest of the population is their belief that Greece’s crisis has a structural cause, which reaches back decades if not centuries, to the origins of neoliberalism and ultimately, capitalism. Alexandros, an agriculturalist who has been part of Micropolis’ food collective Centrophia, says that post-junta Greece from 1973 onwards has been raised with neoliberalism. According to Leonidas, who is involved in Micropolis’ radio station, Greece has always been in a crisis in which the rich are fighting the poor. For Manos, an unemployed writer with whom I briefly speak in Micropolis, neoliberalism can nothing but destroy us. Lykos, a student that has been active since the square movement, connects the crisis to EU’s imperialism, saying that ‘some countries, mainly Germany, its government, but also Britain and France have their suburbs, their slaves. The EU is the means to control the rest of the countries’. Yet, that the EU, and its Troika, are perceived to be dominating Greece, does not provide a carte blanche for the (Greek) state.

As neoliberal governance is – at least in Europe – founded on representative democracy and said to raise individual consumers, neoliberalism appears to be an ism that rests on socio-political passivity. Citizens have the sole duties of putting down their vote, fulfilling their role in demanding (cheap) products, and accepting the austerity measures of cut social welfare, privatized public utilities and deregulated labor markets. As long as economic competition proceeds, there is no need to exaggerate problems within Europe. For real issues, one must look outside Europe. However Maria, who is part of the anti-gold movement, can put these thoughts into perspective, saying ‘we have eaten everything around us and now we are eating up our home’. She furthers her argument by describing Greece as both invader and invaded, i.e. having adopted neo-liberalism and having been suppressed by it. During a chat on the bus, Tasos, who supports the labor movement and VioMe in particular, argues that in capitalism even – and perhaps especially – the so called capitalists are subjected to capitalism itself; in that they are endangered by being disposed to market forces and the principles of

---

105 Conversation Alexandros of Micropolis on 7.3
106 Interview Leonidas of Micropolis on 11.3
107 Conversation Manos of Micropolis on 28.2
108 Interview Lykos, student and demonstrator on 25.2
109 Interview Maria and Chara of SOSChalcidice on 4.4
110 See footnote 109

75
competition. These times of crises have been understood as ‘a race to the bottom’ in regulatory terms\footnote{\url{http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/a-race-to-the-bottom-assigning-responsibility-for-the-financial-crisis/}}, in which the majority of the population loses out against a lucky few who manage to withstand competition. Yet, it is not merely about winning or losing.

In the interviews and conversations it is generally acknowledged that, while being exposed to extensive deprivation, the majority of the Greek population has enjoyed much of the benefits from neoliberalism, and will enjoy them as long as possible. Greece was already dependent on loans from the EEC before it opened its markets and became part of the EU. In response, the supposedly Left ruling party PASOK got corrupted employing clientelism to win the people over by providing subsidies and welfare. The so called ‘old Leftist mentality’, which is associated with PASOK, is said to have rendered the people passive, because the party promised to save them and get things done, as long as they voted accordingly. The link between passivity and Greece’s politico-economic system, which embraces neoliberalism, is confirmed by many people in the movements who feel that Greek society has been asleep. As the student Lykos formulates it, ‘you see everything is [pre-]arranged and you only care about your own ass’\footnote{See footnote 108}. However the excesses of the crisis, which are believed to be a product of the politico-economic dynamics on both the national and the European level, have forced people to wake up and realize ‘... that my problems are not only mine’\footnote{Interview Tomas of VioMe's solidarity committee, water initiative K136 and many others on 31.3}. Many active people believe that only through solidarity and cooperation can capitalism – as the prime cause of the crisis – be defied. Finally, the relation between neoliberalism and capitalism is scrutinized by Aurora, member of cooperative bar Belleville, who sees the former as the principal enemy and capitalism as its source. She elaborates:

> When you start to blame the Troika, the memorandum and Germany, it will be not difficult to lose your target. Capitalism is the target and the other terms will change in name [...] To target capitalism, the basis is that everyone is equal, and that all people have what they need to live\footnote{Interview Aurora of cooperative bar Belleville on 2.3}.

Capitalism in all its manifestations is the prime adversary of the movements. For the people I spoke to it has brought about total destruction and a deep sense of despair\footnote{Interview Petros of Syriza's foundation Solidarity4All on 28.2}. The reaction of the various movements takes shape against the backdrop of capitalism. To illustrate my point I will discuss the opposites of capitalism's features. The social solidarity economy rebels against capitalism's mantra of growth; direct democracy strikes against its dependence on representative democracy; and a belief in
solidarity as such refutes its upshot of excessive deprivation.

4.1.2 Movements taking shape

The neoliberal mantra of growth is accompanied by the call to compete, to expropriate and to enrich oneself. The principle of a social solidarity economy combats each of these premises. Competition is set aside because it is a merciless matter of who can withstand competition and who is outcompeted. In order to outlast competition, resources – human as well as non-human – are expropriated. Then and only then can surplus continue to flow (Harvey 2011). Euphemistically put, austerity measures such as privatizations and labor reforms are the creative means of expropriating resources to make an (exorbitant) profit. The social solidarity economy is being shaped in defiance to expropriating surplus at the expense of people and the environment, by providing employment that takes the needs of the wider society into account (Wainwright 2013). According to Neamtan, the social solidarity economy dates back to the alter-globalization movement which, in a similar way as Thessaloniki’s current movements, responded to the neoliberal development model by proposing alternative schemes of economy, society and globalization (2002: 2). Yet, she acknowledges that since the industrial revolution social movements have been acting according to comparable principles. Instead of enriching the individual, the social solidarity model serves to contribute to collective wealth in that economic activities are valued in terms of social profitability; by enhancing the quality of life and the well-being of the population (Ibid). Hence, both in theory and in practice – as experienced in Thessaloniki – the social solidarity economy encourages citizens to actively participate in democratic decision-making in order to empower the individual, the communities and society at large. As such, those taking part in the social solidarity economy, perceive the crisis as an opportunity to take back control over one’s life and the commons that facilitate it.
Capitalism as the alleged necessity of economic growth is often defended to the same extent as the necessity to build a representative democracy. Both ideals are presented as the best of all possible worlds, or at least as the best we got. Whether or not this is the case, it is presented as if again – there is no alternative. Previously I argued that neoliberalism relies on the passivity of a population; a passivity that the people of the movements understand as a feature of (their) representative democracy. In response to a government that has long put the Greek people to sleep and – to draw on Klein’s Shock Doctrine – to the injection of neoliberalism in times of crisis, some thousands of people in Thessaloniki have now woken up. Due to increased deprivation which has resulted in states of dispossession, a number of movements took off to create – in opposition to a politics that discards the voice and well-being of the people, and a financial economy that treats them as disposable – the alternative of direct democracy in which the citizens are up to decide. Despite numerous complexities and nuances, the story of Thessaloniki’s movements narrates how passivity can be transformed into activity when greater urgency forces people to put direct democracy to the test. The feeling of having lost ownership of one’s life incited many thousands to rise up. The magnitude of the 2011 upheaval enabled a dialogue among the protestors in which direct democracy – as the legacy of previous uprisings – was key to setting up alternatives, such as social centers, neighborhood groups and markets without mediators, by which people take life into their own hands.

The movements counter the excessive deprivation that many people in Thessaloniki are suffering from by showing their solidarity with nearly every struggle. The people involved perceive solidarity as the glue that makes the initiatives and the movements stick. As Michael of the factory VioMe says, ‘the movements and solidarity are inseparable’. Although the ideal of solidarity is in practice often under attack, it serves to overcome differences and join forces, despite contradicting approaches. Solidarity can be understood as a means of transcending individual opinions and enabling collective claims on behalf of oneself, communities, and populations that are affected by the realities of dispossession. Despite disagreements, most of those involved with the initiative show solidarity wherever injustices are fought. Michael continues, ‘wherever there is a struggle, we are in’. Or as Katherina at the demonstration says, ‘we are committed wherever we can’. By means of solidarity movements can transcend differences and borders in order to be united across boundaries. That the members of the movements feel to be struggling for an even larger cause is exemplified by Nikki, who is part of the anti-gold struggle, and who believes solidarity can challenge a worse future.

116 A saying very often repeated among the movements
117 Interview Micheal of cooperative factory VioMe on 21.2
118 See footnote 117
119 Conversation Katherina at demonstration against electricity bills on 5.3
Poor countries are the pilots for what they [the powerful] want to establish in Europe. It is an international struggle. Nobody is alone. We are part of a big picture. In this we are together and fight together.

In the foregoing I explored the relations between Greece's debts crisis, the EU, neoliberalism and the movements to answer the first sub-question. First I illustrated how the people part of the movements perceive these phenomena, by analyzing the role of the Greek state. From there, the mantra of growth, the dependency on representative democracy, and excessive deprivation as the three cornerstones of capitalism were treated. Capitalism is the adversary of Thessaloniki's movements and is said to encompass the aforementioned mentioned phenomena. Pinpointing capitalism's features enabled me to describe how movements' appeal to the social solidarity economy, direct democracy and solidarity as such are combating them. While this analysis is not exhaustive and simplifies the many differences among struggles and initiatives, it may have shown how Thessaloniki's movements are taking shape in relation to the Greek debt crisis, the EU and neoliberalism. Yet, the way the movements show solidarity with each other depends on how the people of the various initiatives and movements experiences their own engagements. Moreover, the experiences members have with other initiatives and movements may bring to light the extent to which initiatives are united across differences. Upcoming discussion will be on the meaning and difficulties of these engagements and experiences.

4.2 EXPERIENCING MOVEMENTS

4.2.1 Collective belonging

'The occupation [of the factory] was a kind of psychological support. It was in a way necessary to move away from depression and get out of the miserable situation together.' Michael's words describe what the occupation means to him. To become part of an initiative – and movement – has been vital for many of its members. Participants have often had to endure health issues, unemployment and the inability to take care of one's family. For many taking part in initiatives and larger movements is a way out of feeling deprived and depressed. By occupying a factory or setting up a cooperative, a sense of being futureless can actually become the source of other possible futures. By experiencing collective dispossession neighborhoods, friends and other groups are impelled to join forces. Having little to nothing to lose draws people together and sparks off in bits of hope; in the belief that in concert something meaningful can be done. However, not all Thessalonians have translated protesting into getting...
involved with a movement. A repeated explanation for the fact that only some people join is that ‘you have to feel something is wrong. Most people may sense something is wrong but don’t know how to channel it’. Some who were not active before say that feeling alienated from their surroundings made them look for something meaningful. George, member of K136, describes how he experienced a distance from others.

I find myself very distanced from society. Friends do not understand what I am saying. So being in solidarity, inside social centers and participating in K136. I feel an active part of this. I can breathe in these social places. Because I have many things in common with these people. It is an important part of my life. Before, I felt very alone, leading to personal problems. Now being part of all this, I see that relationships are being created.

By becoming active in K136 and visiting social centers such as Micropolis and Sxoleio – a church that was squatted to be turned into a social center – George one can relate to others. These groups and places made George feel part of something. The engagement previous upheavals led to has become a source of (re)orientation, and further down the line into moments, places and struggles of collective belonging (Porta and Diani 2006: 26). Regardless of salary, the people working in cooperatives say they cannot imagine working for a boss again. Despite and because of feelings of commitment and belonging, some also express that the responsibility of being involved can be experienced as a burden. The account of Helena, a young woman I interview at Sxoleio, connects the themes of belonging and responsibility.

To have strength here. I feel this by being connected with people from other networks. [It’s a] burden on how at last a few people do a lot for society. [It’s] heavy to keep this alive and involve more people.

A large number of the people I interviewed says there is no option but to become engaged. The efforts of all people, initiatives and movements revolve around being open to society and involving more people. In connection to the way one experiences his or her personal engagement, the participants experience other initiatives and movements in a variety of ways. It may not come as a surprise that many – though not all – perceive the cause for which their initiative fights to have the priority over other issues. It makes sense to struggle for that injustice which you find most unsettling. However, it is also not an exception that participants put their engagement and many struggles that are being fought into perspective. Following I will discuss two perspectives; the first shows the need for a network and the second addresses the fruits and challenges of disagreements.

122 Interview Socrates of social center Sxoleio and anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa on 9.3
123 Interview George of water initiative K136 on 23.3
124 Interview Helena and Socrates of social center Sxoleio and anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa on 26.2
4.2.2 Network aspirations

The need for personal support makes the people of Thessaloniki's movements very committed to the struggles for justice. The fact that both parties – as in the members of an initiative who provide a service and those who are supported by a service – have needs to be fulfilled is a crucial dimension for the movements, as it implies mutual support that is based on equality. Many interviewees claim this to be the difference between charity and solidarity, while the former implies a hierarchy, the latter aims for equality. Bayertz says that solidarity is an emotionally informed common ground that bridges ‘what is and what ought to be’ (1999: 3). When being active in the movements, the commitment to what ought to be often encompasses one’s whole life, day in day out. The majority of the people I spoke to were not engaged with only one struggle, but involved in many simultaneously. Most of the initiatives’ struggles, from the social centers and anti-gold struggle to the water and labor movement, operate by means of assemblies. The most active members are in a hurry to go from one assembly to the next. Tomas explains that every Wednesday he has to go to the meeting of SOSChalcidice, K136 and the solidarity committee of VioMe. Practical limitations are often mentioned as a reason to not be engaged with every other struggle. You simply cannot commit to every movement, no matter how close you feel to the cause. To illustrate: the members of cooperatives are often so involved in setting up and maintaining the cooperative that they cannot be as active in strikes, protests, and demonstrations as they would like to be.

An even bigger issue is how to combine living both in- and outside of an initiative and movement, which will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter. For now I will address the need for being inside, the necessity of focusing on one’s own initiative, and the need for being outside, the necessity of creating a network among the groups. The people involved in one or more initiatives often perceive a need to connect to similar initiatives as well as to other movements. Those involved with starting an initiative have said to struggle with on the one hand focusing on their own project, and on the other hand reaching out to other projects. Some find it more important to engage in a network, while others put the emphasis on investing in one’s own group. Katherina explains, ‘it is important to work together, but we have to focus on our group to get the work done’ 125. In general it is acknowledged that one cannot do without the other, in that a movement, or a network of movements can only produce an effect when it is made up of well-functioning initiatives. This implies that groups first have to be ‘inside’ and make their own initiative viable before reaching ‘outside’ and taking part in a network. Whether possible or not, nearly everyone in the social movements expresses the need to be ‘outside’ and build networks among the initiatives and movements to affect society. According to Katcher, networks of social movements are indeed able to alter society, when they carry on long enough (2010: 52).

125 Conversation Katherina at demonstration against electricity bills on 5.3
The interconnections are said to enable groups to relate to broader movements, to generate shared political understanding, and to join forces to take action, disseminating information and increasing capacity (Ibid). For these reasons attempts have been made to create networks. As I mentioned, Open Network was set up a year ago and connected sixteen cooperative initiatives, including the most prominent initiatives in the food and labor movements, such as S.P.A.M.E., Bioscoop, Belleville and VioMe. Many reasons are given for the disbanding of the network, from being politically hijacked to ideological concerns of some partaking initiatives. During my time in Thessaloniki another attempt is made to join forces and create a network, such as the relatively dense and informal networks Porta and Diani (2006) argue for. As I attend the first assembly at Micropolis about five cooperatives are present, as well as a member of Computerativa who hosts the meeting, one of the founders of food cooperative Allostropos, the spokesman of VioMe, several members of Sxoleio and Micropolis that are involved with their internal collectives, and lastly, three members of the cooperative Non-governed Cities, a bookshop with mainly political, philosophical and historical literature. Two weeks later, at the subsequent assembly, many more cooperatives take part. The idea of the network is to put differences aside by starting a courier service in order to practically connect the initiatives, because it is not uncommon that networks fall apart due to ideological differences. As Katcher points out, networks have many roles to play in order to balance seemingly opposing approaches (Ibid.: 57). Such incongruities are a necessary part of any effort to bring people together, in Thessaloniki and elsewhere. Therefore it is most telling how these differences are dealt with.

4.2.3 The difficulties of difference

In Thessaloniki there are so many things going on that, even if they have the time, people cannot not keep up with the pace. Due to Greece’s crisis and following upheavals, society’s conditions are changing rapidly and in response the social movements as well. It can be said that every few weeks or even days a new cooperative, neighborhood group and citizens’ committee is set up somewhere in the city. Sometimes these are not new projects, but new alliances that reconfigure old ones. Even though most of my respondents are active in more than one movement, they cannot keep track of all the new initiatives that are popping up. As a result it is almost impossible to be familiar – let alone know thoroughly – the ideas and practices of every initiative. Moreover, some of the people that have been active for a while share troubling histories that can feed disagreements. Some groups communicate and others fail to communicate, therefore assumptions and misconceptions tend to consolidate and circulate among various initiatives and movements. Nevertheless, disagreements are perceived to be normal, especially in Greece according to the participants.

When speaking with members of different initiatives about the other initiatives, disagreements occur on every conceivable level. Sometimes people may disagree within an initiative, yet amongst initiatives more substantial disagreements are at stake. In K136 – as in other initiatives – arguments are usual, especially since the water referendum is coming up, requesting concrete actions.
Across different water initiatives many more disagreements are present, often due to preconceptions that influence new ones. The misunderstandings between K136 and SOSte to nero are building each other up. As mentioned, among initiatives and movements arguments can be major, when holding the approach of one initiative for the whole movement. For example, some cooperative members are opposed to the water movement either because it aims to ‘buy’ the water, while it is actually only K136 who proposes that. Within groups there is generally enough trust and communication to translate differences into solidarity. Yet, among certain movements and initiatives differences are converted into boundaries, by which internal criticism amplifies at solidarity’s expense. Especially K136 has to endure much criticism as it made a bid to buy the water. In order to meet the legal requirements of the bidding process, the initiatives excepted a controversial offer that involved the infamous businessman Robert Aphel and socially responsible banks. For many of the other initiatives this was unacceptable because they did neither trust Aphel nor the banks, and it seems to have cost K136 much popularity among the movements. Another example is the labor movement. Members of various cooperatives disagree on the extent to which they wish to propagate the cooperative character. Especially for cooperative cafés Belleville and Domino it is crucial to make name as a cooperative in order to inspire customers to do the same. According to some participants Open Network did not work out because these two cooperatives insisted that all cooperatives involved should sign the same declaration of cooperative principles, while other initiatives neither prioritized nor agreed with the declaration. Since many of the initiatives and alliances are strongly developed agreements are plenty. Even so, disagreements can appear to be even stronger. The last example occurs within the food movement. One of S.PA.ME.’s members says to disagree with Bioscoop because according to him most of the supermarket’s products are not from proper cooperatives. Yet, when speaking with the founders of Bioscoop they carefully research which products adhere to their biological, local, and cooperative standards. At times disagreements may look harmless, while having the potential to undermine struggles and movements all together. However, to disagree can also be viewed as something healthy, for when people do not agree arguments, practices and realities can be challenged and improved.

When drawing on Castoriadis’ thinking which emphasizes the real conditions and open ended character of direct democracy (Tovar-Restrepo 2012: 86), one can conclude that disagreements are an essential component of practicing direct democracy. For people to actively participate in decision-making it only seems healthy that disagreements arise, as long as they are openly and carefully addressed. Esterling et al. point out that ‘individuals are more likely to learn, to change their minds, to enjoy, and to regard worthwhile liberations in which there are moderate levels of disagreement’ (2010: 29). On the website of training center Seeds for Change it is explained that not only strong differences deserve

---

126 [https://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/12-1](https://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/12-1)
attention but also subtle agreements and disagreements. Including stronger and lesser disagreements can improve the discussion and the decision-making process as differing opinions and ideas potentially lead to a richer outcome (Deutsch 1973). In practice however, the balance between constructive disagreements and those that solely undermine the initiative or movement’s cohesion and decision-making is hard to find. When looking closely at the type of and reasons for differences amidst Thessaloniki’s movements, initiatives and people, dialogues seem crucial to get close to a balance that enriches the democratic dynamic. Zoller (2009) argues that ‘connectedness, respect, trust, and hope’ (2009: 193) are necessary conditions for sustaining a communal dialogue. Yet, otherness as in being different is also mentioned as a pivotal element of dialogues – and decision-making for that matter – in order to hear opinions different from one’s own. On the issue of openness Zollar writes, ‘[a]lthough openness is vital, the uniqueness of our social locations prevents a complete understanding of the other’ (Ibid). I would like to turn this around and argue that otherness as in others’ differences can only be accepted when there is a degree of openness. For collective action to be effective the scope of action would preferably be inclusive, flexible and open (Benford and Snow 2000: 618). Based on my experiences, as nearly all the people involved find it of utmost importance to be open, forge alliances and build a network, dialogues are only figured out by trial and error. In order to mobilize society and to reach out to its population it is widely agreed that movements’ initiatives should open up to each other. Yet to be open, both movements and initiatives need to function well for which dialogues are indispensable. That this is rather challenging in practice will be shown extensively in the next chapter.

The account above is an answer to sub-question two as I explained how the participants experience their involvement and touched upon the various ways other initiatives and movements are experienced. Many get involved because they and others around them are hit by the economic crisis. Becoming engaged is a means to deal with both personal and societal hardships. To take part in an initiative or movement can help one to connect to others and to experience a sense of belonging. However, in connecting to others obstacles are encountered. Nearly everyone emphasizes the need to build networks and many attempts have been made to be ‘involved in a dynamic, networked politics’ (Leach and Scoones 2007: 3/15). Disagreements are vital for democratic decision-making process, at least when they occur under the conditions of connectedness, respect, trust and hope. These conditions cannot be taken for granted, since the many disagreements risk overshadowing the many alliances, as will soon be shown. Finally, in order to understand the relations among people, initiatives and movements I elaborated on being different as the key to having a dialogue. Yet, the challenges dialogues pose relate to the issue of being in- or outside, which brings me to the third sub-question on how the articulation of multiple agencies may conflict.
4.3 CONFLICTING RELATIONS

4.3.1 Power practices

Dialogues are a promising ideal and to get anywhere near, we need to understand what obstructs them and how. Even though disagreements and otherness – be they constructive or destructive – are intrinsic to having a dialogue, they are challenging and can be understood as expressing friction. To recap, Tsing states that frictions feature the creative, unstable and unequal relations across difference (2005: 4). She understand frictions to be the engine behind change. On the one hand social movements can only arise because of the manifestation of friction. On the other hand friction can also cause movements' internal bonds to temporarily disconnect. Frictions are not solely a source of inspiration, creativity and mobilization that advances engagement; they can also inflict fragmentation, stagnation and immobilization. Although I already have mentioned some examples of disagreements, the friction does not stop there. To understand the threshold that separates constructive from destructive frictions the multiple faces of power have to be discussed.

Power is everywhere and as far as the dimensions involving Thessaloniki's movements are concerned I understand it as encompassing varying agencies. Varying, because the agencies that are at play have a personal and a collective dynamic, which do not necessarily go together. This research first located power within neoliberal discourses as neoliberalism shapes and is shaped by the institutions and practices of the EU, the Troika and the Greek government. Thereafter, another type of power was ascribed to the shaping of social movements, as in how these react to the hegemonic power structures. However, both fields – from neoliberal power structures to the responsive dynamic of Thessaloniki's social movements – are informed by multiple discourses, which make them appear to be opposites. Neoliberalism may be deeply engrained in society, as are the social movements which try to uproot this engraining. In other words, both sets of discourses are neither fully determined nor fully up to chance, which implies that the discourses of neoliberalism and social movements are under the influence of agency. I understand agency to be relational, which leaves room for purposive action (Cleaver 2007: 223). When reading reality discursively society appears to be determined, as such there is no room for the spontaneity of agency through which reality is experienced. Practice is not determined, yet merely structured by – be it patterned – power, which is key to understanding discourse and agency (Foucault 2000). Despite many differences between neoliberal practices and the practice of social movements, it is only practice that can do justice to the people who enact a variety of discourses and have some power to interrupt them. Thus, by means of agency people have the power to go against the discourses that make up neoliberalism. This means that there is another type of agency, one which can oppose the discourses that – again – shape and are shaped by Thessaloniki's social movements. To complicate things further, since agency is relational there are multiple agencies at work; some of which strengthen the movements, some of which risk undermining them. Overlapping, contradicting and limiting agencies of people, initiatives and movements expose
tensions among these units of analysis.

Although I presented these units as rather delineated fields by distinguishing initiatives and movements, reality is more diffuse. Most of the initiatives’ members refer to their respective projects as if it is a movement by itself. However, as claims largely overlap I came to understand that different movements fight for distinct, though related, causes. Besides neat analytic distinctions separating water, food and labor struggles, the initiatives and movements more often than not oppose each other. The issue of being inside or outside returns. Earlier I explained being in- or outside as the degree to which initiatives and movements reach out to one another in order to connect to Thessaloniki’s society. Concerning the extent to which agencies correspond and diverge, I also understand being in and out as the varying agencies of the participants, the initiatives and movements. These agencies imply a form of membership, i.e. the way in which people can be considered to take part in an initiative and movement. As I said, several respondents take part in a variety of initiatives and movements. Yannis is leading and participating in many of the initiatives that adhere to the social solidarity economy, from the water initiative and the non-profit supermarket Bioscoop to the solidarity committee of VioMe and the garbage movement that proposes cooperative processing sites. His multiple engagements influence the participants and supporters of K136 to also subscribe to Bioscoop. Initiatives converge and can gain in strength when participants take part in multiple struggles and encourage others to do the same. Moreover, the political struggle of many of the members of cooperative cafes, restaurants and bookshops is said to extend beyond the cooperative. Most have been active in the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement which finds its expression in protests and demonstrations. Besides, many of the people who are active in the social centers – such as Micropolis and Sxoleio – also take part in the anti-fascist/anti-racist manifestations, the anti-gold struggle and the food movement. The cross-cutting agencies of participants can amplify the collective agencies of initiatives and movements by which they are more interwoven ‘outside’ and have multiple entries into society. Yet, the agencies that connect participants and their networks of different struggles are limited. These agencies imply an identity which can contradict other agencies. Below I will elaborate on the – sometimes severe – implications of these frictions.

4.3.2 Interrupting agencies

The existence of many different initiatives taking part in the same movement goes together with numerous opinions, which more often than not disagree. I have come to understand these disagreements as exemplifying the tension between personal and collective agencies. These differences of opinion are often based on practical and political convictions. In other words, by speaking with the people part of the movements a continuum appears that runs from pragmatic to idealistic, which is again related to the issue of being in- or outside. Pragmatism favors practical decisions; that your initiative is ‘outside’ to connect to society. Idealism favors ideologically ‘pure’
decisions; that your initiative is ‘inside’ to be faithful to its own idealist ideology. Tomas explains the challenges of being either in- or outside convincingly.

By all the grassroots groups and assemblies there is no faith in election. They do not want to isolate themselves but they want to maintain their revolutionary purity. They don’t want institutional politics so they focus on their small struggle and are dedicated to their own niche. [...] The struggle has no outcome or relevance. It can be often the anarchists. They value their purity more. The other extreme are on the other side of the electoral process; [they] leave it up to the representatives and lose their touch with the base. This movement is doomed to disband or integrate into the political structure.

Thessaloniki’s legacy of social upheavals has been influenced by a multitude of political groups which resulted in turn from the splitting up of larger groups in anarchist circles and the varied Left. On the one hand people are pragmatic and feel that they need to make concessions to bring about change, for example by ‘conceding’ to capitalist frames and political reformism. On the other hand it is risky to embrace idealism, to cling to one’s own ideas too much, and to distance oneself from people whose thoughts seem too different from one’s own. The subsequent splits are a sign of the range of disagreements that circulate among the movements and of the desire to be pure revolutionaries, like Tomas says. The differences that cause politically engaged groups to split up are usually of an ideological kind. To illustrate, as Marx is widely read the interpretations of his thinking can be so different that approaches may have to differ as well. An example is given by Tasos who explains to me that the Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK), of which he is a member, argues from the standpoint of exploitation which creates power relations, while other groups believe inversely that the power relations are causing exploitation. Such differences are crucial to the people part of a political group. I call these differences ‘ideological disagreements’ as the arguers are bound to cling to their own ideal. I oppose them to ‘pragmatic disagreements’, which concern the practice of developing an alternative – be it to oppose capitalism all together or solely the austerity measures. Regarding pragmatism, as practical decisions involve adhering to institutions and favoring compromise, the deciding initiatives risk being co-opted by the authorities – as the next section will show. The initiatives within the water, food and labor movements and their members, have their own way of balancing ideological principles and pragmatic decision-making; a balance which may disapprove of others’ ‘balances’ and be disapproved of by other people and groups. Friction often occurs wherever people fail to find a common ground because they do not (want to) understand others’ approaches.

---

128 Interview Tomas of VioMe’s solidarity committee, water initiative K136 and many others on 31.3
129 Conversation Tasos of VioMe’s solidarity committee and Workers’ club on 25.2
130 However, to oppose solely austerity measures or capitalism as such is in the end an expression of an ideological disagreement.
wherein idealism and pragmatism – which are actually both evoked by ideology – are weighed differently. These situations tend to lead to one party blaming the other for being either too ideological or too pragmatic. I will first discuss some examples that illustrate this returning bind, to secondly analyze the role and function of criticism, drawing mainly on the water movement. This section will finish off with of some of the identity politics that time and again have obstructed the cohesion within movements.

The continuum running from idealism to pragmatism is visualized by Tasos, who is also involved in VioMe's solidarity committee, when he says that it ranges ‘from buying the water to VioMe. So buying the water would be the acknowledgement of private property and VioMe calls into question private property by taking over the factory’. To clarify, VioMe is the prime example for many of the initiatives because the act of occupying the factory lives up to the Marxist ideal of workers becoming the new ruling class by overtaking the workplaces. In contrast K136, which is known for its proposal to purchase the water, is met with much disapproval as it suggests to (cooperatively) buy the water – even though the ‘water is already ours’. These last words connote that water is either a commons, and therefore should be ours, or state owned, which is only half true. The water company EYATH, which constitutionally belongs to the state, came on the stock market in 2001 when 26 percent of its shares were sold to small investors. In 2011 and 2012 the remaining 74 percent were transferred to TAIPED in order to prepare the privatization process. Despite these developments, many of the people part of other movements or initiatives disagree with K136 because its proposal to cooperativize the water company is – supposedly – too compromisingly pragmatic, and goes too little against capitalism. A few other points of dispute are cooperatives that do not wish to use the name ‘cooperative’; organizers of markets without mediators who may not properly select the farmers; and the social centers which are perceived not to live up to the revolutionary expectations. These disagreements are heavily discussed among the participants. Many of the disputes are rather reasonable, however some of them get lost in crude bad-mouthing and name calling. For this reason a distinction must be made between constructive and destructive criticism. While constructive criticism indicates a dialogue as it contributes to the understanding and development of a collective approach, destructive criticism brushes aside different approaches. Although other movements revolve around similar dynamics, I focus on the water movement as the gatherings were open and its members were rather approachable. Among the water initiatives I came across intrigues and bad-mouthing, which will illustrate the

---

131 Interview Tasos of VioMe’s solidarity committee and Workers’ club on 7.4
132 A repeated claim by interviewees that are opposed to K136’s proposal to buy the water.
133 A frequently repeated rhetoric
134 See chapter ‘Following Movements’, section ‘The water is ours’
impeding power of destructive criticism.

As explained, the water movement consists mainly of three entities: the coordination body SOSte to nero, K136 and Water Warriors. The internal dynamics between these factions are rather problematic. SOSte is supposed to encompass all the initiatives that support the water struggle but according to the latter groups it fails to do so. The coordination body is accused of dismissing different initiatives, stances and identities. It is also criticized for being closed to the public, functioning undemocratically, and having a top down approach. In turn, K136 is accused of apostatizing SOSte through sabotaging its efforts to unite by insisting on its own cooperative identity. Water Warriors is often seen as an extension of K136, as they closely work together. Although much of the criticism may be justified, some of the leading figures of these three initiatives are so engaged in criticizing and working against the other initiatives that cooperation becomes nearly impossible. These words, ‘everybody knows about SOSte to nero. Now they say change this brand. They [K136] are nothing, [they’re] just a bunch of kids. I am strongly against them’, by a member of SOSte exemplify the destructive critique. Although some – and maybe even the majority – of the members of each initiative can relativize ongoing denunciations, the weekly assemblies are often filled with the voices of the more aggressive members who spill their harsh rhetoric onto the other initiative; either K136 or SOSte. At many of K136’s assemblies the attendants repeatedly emphasize the problems they have with SOSte. The bottom line of these frustrations is that the members of K136 feel discarded and worry that SOSte’s approach may overturn the democratic, bottom up politics of the water struggle. At an assembly of K136, Rea, one of its members, says she is tired of cooperating with SOSte and adds furiously, ‘fuck SOSte, if they appropriate our struggle’. The critique that SOSte to nero is undemocratic is brushed aside by its members as ‘ideological’. In SOSte’s view it is time to be pragmatic in order to get the upcoming referendum organized. When I address these ideological problems during an interview with Stavros, SOSte’s leader and president of EYATH’s union, he says ‘to talk about ideology, democracy.. We do not have time for that! It’s only theory. We have to organize the referendum now’. While the concerns on both sides are quite understandable, the back and forth criticisms risks to delegitimize each other’s efforts and thereby the overall struggle which is to get water privatization off the table.

The recurring accusations between mainly K136 and SOSte to nero appear to be an expression of identity politics, which is ‘found in the shared experience of injustice’. Ironically the injustice is not the attempt to privatize the water, but the wrong doings of the other initiative. For the identity of these

135 Interview Vivian of Solidarity4All and water umbrella SOSte to nero on 24.2
136 Assembly water initiative K136 on 12.3
137 Interview Stavros of water company EYATH and water umbrella SOSte to nero on 10.3
two initiatives and their will to power are at stake. As the referendum is coming up and decisions have to be made, the power struggle between SOSte and K136 intensifies. This power struggle is about recognition, locally as well as internationally. As both sides are internationally recognized, they blame the other for revealing the movement’s internal frictions to the international community. Also locally both initiatives try to top the other, not only by being more visible and getting a higher number of volunteers to organize the referendum, but also by impairing each other’s efforts. Some of the sabotages I witness are to neither inform nor invite the other party to an overall assembly, making decisions without the consent of the other initiative, and purposely impairing the communication between the other initiative and third parties. The framing of these actions by both initiatives illustrates not an objective reality, but the perception on either side that the other is personally and purposefully harming them. These actions are accompanied by bad-mouthing, by saying that the other initiative is just doing it for the popularity and to ultimately get into power.

At the assemblies of K136 the members blame SOSte to nero for using the water struggle to get Syriza into power. The boundaries between the two groups are further inscribed by pressing the identity of one’s own initiative in opposition to the other. Its leading figures repeatedly state that K136 is democratic, bottom up and open to the public, while explicitly reminding the attendants that SOSte to nero is not all these things, as their way of decision-making is closed, top down and undemocratic. Although it makes a lot of sense to delineate an adversary in order to create an exclusive collective identity and underline the meaning of your efforts, this repeated rhetoric may dwell too much on others’ deficits instead of scrutinizing oneself. Besides, these (re)actions are accompanied by emotions running high, people who withdraw to set up their own initiatives, and decreasing popular support. The prolonging destructive criticism within the water movement diminishes chances to communicate and address differences. Moreover, these internal frictions tend to weaken the support for the water struggle on a whole. Some people participating in the water initiatives as well as in other movements state that the water struggle is lacking support because its objectives are not clear. It is likely that the movements’ objectives are affected by these internal power struggles. The destructive criticism is intertwined with deliberate sabotages or at least with the experience of deliberate sabotages, which proves to be just as lethal. K136 and SOSte to nero are heavily entangled in a conflict spiral that not only delegitimizes the other’s efforts, but those of the water movement all together. As both are too busy fighting each other on ideological, pragmatic and identitarian grounds, this social movement is less effective in convincing the public of their common cause to counter privatization.

4.3.3 Interfering authority

The extent to which the agencies of the people, initiatives and movements correspond and conflict involves more than the already complex dynamics of citizens and civil society. Here, in the last section of this chapter, I will go into the interference of the municipality and political parties within the
water and food movements. Thereafter I will give an account of how power manifests itself within the movements and close off by interconnecting the varying agencies. It is not surprising that social movements have a troublesome relation with state authorities in general. On the one hand they have arisen because of the incapability of the authorities to fulfill the fundamental rights and needs of the population. On the other hand movements are or can become – at least in part – dependent on the willingness of authorities to cooperate (Goldberg 2010: 65). In Thessaloniki the radical Leftist coalition Syriza has a significant impact on the food and water movement. Due to the upcoming referendum, the latter is having a complex relation with the eleven municipalities in the region of Thessaloniki that are dependent on the services of water company EYATH. There seems to be a consensus among social movement theorists that the authorities’ tactics are ‘to control or incorporate movements’ (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1213). Many movements in Thessaloniki are familiar with this and the debates among especially the water and food initiatives exemplify the caution over and difficulties of dealing with the authorities.

In Thessaloniki as in the rest of Greece many people have put their faith in Syriza. Their popularity is explained by Wainright, an expert on Greece, who says that ‘Syriza activists are organizing neighbourhood assemblies, maintaining ‘solidarity kitchens’ and bazaars, working in medical social centres [..]’. Yet, that does not mean that the population and the movements – that aim to represent the public – are not being cautious. Over the last century the Greek population has been discarded by its government, the supposedly socialist party PASOK and the Center-right party New Democracy on a regular basis. For this reason the people involved in the movements find it hard to trust Syriza’s efforts to be part of

---

the movements; they express skepticism but also say that it is the only political alternative available. A few of the participants acknowledge the need of the movements to scale up and join a party. Others are firm to reject any kind of political cooperation. There is a great fear that Syriza has been hijacking the movements to win over the people and get into power. According to some participants of the food initiatives that work together with party members, Syriza got in the neighborhood groups that organized the markets without mediators to win votes; an interference that is said to impair the grassroots undertaking. Moreover, when one of the co-founders of the neighborhood group criticized Syriza’s approach she was thrown out of the party. Syriza is said to be everywhere. Participants say that its members have taken over SOSChalcidice, a committee that represents the anti-gold struggle; Steki Metanaston, a social center for immigrants; and SOSte to nero to name a few. Although the support from and collaboration with Syriza is not necessarily a bad thing, its influence risks that the movements are no longer carried from the bottom up but coordinated from the top down. Once a political party, such as Syriza, coordinates the social movements, bottom up participation will cease because top down involvement is highly distrusted. As Yannis, one of the leaders of Bioscoop and K136 says,

It has to come from the bottom. The political system cannot give the alternative. People have to get inspired, but they cannot be inspired by the government. It has to come from the citizens themselves. They have to participate. Without it’s impossible. It must come from bottom up.  

The water movement is explicitly confronted with the influence and interests of Syriza and the municipality. Many groups, especially K136, have a problem with Syriza’s influence on SOSte to nero, whose committee consists mainly of Syriza members. During one of K136’s assemblies it is said that ‘SOSSte and Syriza are incapable [of mobilizing society] because the people will see that it is just another top down procedure’. While only a few specify to have a problem with how some members of Syriza coordinate SOSte to nero, many members of K136 and Water Warriors say that SOSte to nero is Syriza. During the planning of the referendum, K136 is firm in excluding candidates running for the elections so that the party cannot label the citizens’ referendum as a Syriza effort. At the same time members of SOSte to nero and others are against cooperating with the municipalities to get the water referendum organized, for the eleven mayors would like to gain in popularity by supporting the referendum. Additionally, some of those that organize the referendum fear that their influence may cause ways to remunicipalize the water company in the long run. The differing opinions appear to be related to the perspective participants have on Syriza and the municipality and whether cooperation is – according

140 Interview Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop and many others on 19.3
141 Assembly K136 on 28.2
to this perspective – is either necessary or problematic. This implies that the many parts of the movements develop different relations with different authorities, and that the movements are not simply for or against collaboration. While the social solidarity clinic says to refuse any state assistance, the official cooperatives of the labor movements all comply to the fiscal and juridical authorities. Regarding the referendum and the necessary cooperation between the authorities and the water movement, when decisions have to be made and organization has to follow through, initiatives are necessitated to cooperate at least to some extent – be it with a great deal of intrigues and setbacks.

Again power struggles are everywhere, especially when it comes to social movements. In other words, movements revolve around power. Being violently subjected to the power of politics and capital has caused hundred thousands of people to stand up, and a few dedicated thousands to sustain the struggles. By getting involved and developing popular alternatives to political and economic powers, neoliberal discourses may be countered, but also reinforced. Reinforced, because the social upheaval is accompanied by severe police violence; countered, when the movements which are disseminated across Thessaloniki and the rest of the country provide an alternative outlook for the people exposed to the movements’ ideas and practices. Regarding the water movements, the way SOSTe to nero and K136 deal with the authorities exemplifies power as well as powerlessness. A degree of powerlessness might be involved because the examples of Syriza and the municipality signify that social movements are sometimes necessitated to cooperate. In the end SOSTe to nero had no choice but to cooperate with the municipality. The lack of independence may be understood as a lack of power (Sharp 1990: 7). Then again, is anyone ever independent? Numerous interrelations suggest the opposite. These examples may also be understood as a proof of power in that cooperation strengthens the movements efforts to involve the population.

The destructive criticism, bad-mouthing and identity politics are considered to be an expression of power; a power that yet undermines the efforts of other initiatives. These power struggles and misuses of criticism may outright delegitimize not only the efforts of the other, but of the water movement as a whole. Yet, the risks and effects of delegitimization and the occasional abuse of power are hard to pinpoint, because the values of equality, solidarity and cooperation – which many initiatives of the movement practice – are ‘usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful’ (Freeman 1972-1973: 151). The irony of the appraisal of an equal, democratic ideal is visible at K136’s assemblies, though not exclusive to K136. The claim that K136 is open, democratic and bottom up is contradicted by the authority of the people who most often make such a claim; by the difficulty that a repetition of rhetoric undermine the participatory potential; and by the risk that such identity marking drives people away. Of course it is inevitable that those who are the pioneers, leaders and spokesmen of the initiative are more powerful than its members. It becomes problematic

---

142 It is most likely that the irony of such power struggles is also apparent at other assemblies, initiatives and movements. However, due to the access to the water movement I can base this analysis solely on my encounters with water initiative K136.
however, when their rhetoric on direct democracy is masking their own power and the
delegitimization of the overall struggle, for such power can neither be criticized nor tackled. I have
spelled out these less bright dynamics within the food and water movements because they are pivotal
to understand the extent to which movements’ various agencies conflict.

4.3.4 Unavoidable tensions

‘Everybody [of the movements] is by themselves and against all the others’ 143. As Darius sees me writing down his
words he quickly adds that it is a joke. He is part of Ardin, one of the older social centers and within
the same minute he reminds me that their group works together with everybody. Darius remarks
illustrate the tension among various agencies. The people part of the movements are very much aware
of the need to cooperate. At the same time it is acknowledged that people disagree, criticize and split
too easily. His word illustrate the extent to which everybody is busy fighting each other over the
discrepancies between idealism, pragmatism and ideology instead of fighting common adversaries
such as the crisis, neoliberalism or the austerity measures together. As Porta and Diani (2006)
explained, the participants are conflictingly connected to distinguished adversaries. To that I can add
that some members may cling too much to their initiative’s defined identities to display the unity to
which these authors ascribe. The disagreements that are based on a lack of information, the
deconstructive criticism that undermines and disqualifies each other’s efforts, and the identity
politics that make collaboration nearly impossible, expose how power struggles risk to delegitimize
social movements on a whole. These multiple frictions among and within the movements are
manifestations of the inevitable tension between personal and collective agencies. With that I mean
that the agencies of people, initiatives and movements are always vulnerable to the frictions that
fragment collectives. Frictions cause cooperation to stagnate and can immobilize the overall struggle.

By analyzing the power struggles between K136 and SOSte to nero I have shown how
collective agencies are played out against each other. I also mentioned explicitly the impairing
potential of initiatives’ leaders who mask their own power by the rhetoric of a democratic, bottom up
and inclusive identity. Yet, all the people involved in the movements have the capacity to impair.
Firstly, when everybody criticizes all other initiatives, the personal agency seem to come at the
expense of the collective one. Secondly, as engagement is voluntary it is up to personal agency to leave
an initiative and set up a new one. Again one’s personal choices hold more weight than the agency of
the collective, or in this case that of the initiative. Third and finally, putting direct democracy into
practice means that everybody is encouraged to participate in the decision-making process, which
tends to imply that participation cannot be restricted. For it might happen that a few persons take
over the assembly at the expense of a dialogue amid the collective. One may attribute the lack of
limiting someone’s participation to direct democracy’s inclusive and open ended guidelines. However,

143 Interview Darius of Social center Ardin on 28.3
it can also be argued that such impairing dynamics occurs – to some extent – regardless of rules and restrictions.

These power dynamics pinpoint the unavoidable tensions between personal and collective agencies leading to frictions that may jeopardize the legitimization of the common struggle. For initiatives to be effecting and impact society personal agencies have to surpass themselves and intersect across initiatives in order to relate to collective agencies of networks and movements. To illustrate, it can be argued that the water movement requires an overarching identity that encompasses K136, SOSTe to nero and Water Warriors. Therefore the initiatives have to transcend themselves and seek for the commonalities of an identity that can be shared. This analysis, together with the preceding accounts, provides the answer to sub-question three, which asks after the extent to which agencies correspond and conflict. While initiatives’ collective agencies are able to cooperate with each other, they may as well conflict with the personal agencies of its members and with the collective agencies of other groups. When both collective and personal agencies conflict, initiatives and movements can be delegitimized all together. Yet, when agencies cooperate, they are able to contribute to the changes movements aspire to. The previous treated the antagonistic powers that harm the movement from within. I now turn to corresponding, cross-cutting agencies to understand some of the impacts of the social movements.

4.4 ENVISIONING CHANGE

4.4.1 Opening up to diversity

That Thessaloniki’s social movements are under pressure does not render them innocuous. To understand the societal impact and resonance of the movements, I zoom in on how some of the personal changes – that involvement in the social movements has led to – are related to the social. Thereafter I discuss how the crisis and vastly changing socio-economic conditions can engage people and incite societal change (Davis 2005). Next, some of the impacts the movements have on the socio-economic environment are analyzed whilst also considering some of their shortcomings. Then I go into the need of focusing on small changes and on the ultimate Change simultaneously, aspiring to the eventual transformation into a just society. By then I am able to conceptualize communal performativity and explore if and if so, how this concept is proficient in detecting societal change.

To find out how groups of people act, I will commence with describing what the participants are going through due to their involvement. To cut straight to the point, becoming part of an initiative in response to crisis can have a life changing impact on the personalities of the participants. As Helena, one of the members of the social center Sxoleio reveals, ‘it was a revolution inside of me. This is a
place of revolution. It really changes people. A revolution is when you change from the inside’ 144. When we later on come to talk about the broader social effect of the center Helena says, ‘we don’t expect a revolution. [But we] have strength here and feel this by being connected with people from other networks’. Whether or not the movements are a causing a societal revolution, the many accounts time and again reveal that personal changes revolve around the social in that the people involved change because they start to connect meaningfully with others. The crisis has turned the worlds of numerous participants upside down and the sense of being connected is empowering. I asked my interviewees how their involvement has changed them and what kind of lessons they have taken from this. Next, I present a few of these accounts to get an initial understanding of how personal and the social experiences of change can be interlinked.

No matter with which member of which initiative or movement you speak, stories of personal transformation are everywhere. When I ask Aurora, co-founder of Belleville, how the cooperative bar changed her she says, ‘[i]t was very overwhelming. I didn’t know what to expect. But it makes you feel empowered. To do this with a small group of people. To feel the solidarity. […] If it wasn’t for the [cooperative] I would have gone crazy’ 145. Aurora feels empowered because she feels connected to her colleagues and part of this group of people. The powerful sentiment of solidarity; of standing strong together returns during my many conversations and interviews. Elfi, who set up KOINO, Thessaloniki’s alternative coin, one of the successful markets without mediators and one of the most active neighborhood groups – shares with me what she has been going through. ‘Nobody knows what will happen. I am changed and changing. I am accused by [others that say] ‘you said [sometime else] that time’. Then I say ‘of course’. I should change. I was part of all the bad things that were happening in Greece. My actions have changed by becoming active.’ 146 Elfi’s account stands out because she is critical of herself and acknowledges that she carries responsibility for what Greece has been going through. Her words also exemplify the difficulty of change. Changes can be hard to digest and people can hold you accountable for changing stances. Her description shows that she experiences her becoming socially active to be closely related to her participation in the movements. As Elfi continues she reflects on what her engagement with her surroundings means to her.

I started to feel more part of a community. Whenever that happened before I didn’t value it. Now I do. Because the only way to change is to be part of a community. […] Before it was [about] how I can enjoy. But you cannot enjoy […] when someone next to you does not have

144 Interview Helena and Socrates of Sxoleio on 26.2
145 Interview Aurora of Belleville of cooperative bar Belleville on 2.3
146 Interview Elfi of alternative coin KOINO, neighborhood group Kalamaria and its weekly market without mediators, on 20.3
electricity. I hear a lot of people that want to return to where we were. It is the worst thing to hear. We suffer a lot and without change it would be a very big problem.

A sense of community is a necessary part of showing solidarity, for your happiness then becomes intrinsically related to the well-being of others. Elfi’s words also illustrate the recurring discrepancy between her belief in change and the opinion of some people in her surrounding who would like to return to the years before the crisis. The movements’ participants all have in common that they ‘want change’. However, for society to change it is widely acknowledged that the change should start with you, the participant. As Nikki, part of the anti-gold struggle, puts it, ‘we have to change our position’; for only when we are serious about changing our position and critical of ourselves we can start to realize an open community that shows solidarity, even with people that think differently.

In thinking about a community that intends to practice democracy differences are pivotal. Despite ample disagreements, destructive criticisms and identity politics the participants are in one way or another working towards communities that values difference. After Vivian, one of the leaders of Solidarity4All – Syriza’s foundation – and member of SOSSte to nero, bluntly criticizes K136, she explains that her involvement learned her to listen to others.

To be able to sit together with people with complete different visions of society, while believing in the collectivity. I learned that people need time and that they do it in their own pace.. I also learned to be more patient. Because people have so much wealth and things to offer. People want to take part. So we should trust people.

This duality is a vivid example of the contradictions among the movements. While people may not be able to support every approach of every struggle because of differing ideological and pragmatic grounds – which may in turn be related to a lack of interaction – they do try to value those that think differently. As such, I do not want to idealize the concept of community, which I neither understand as referring to ultimate unity nor as the mere commonality among a group of people. Community has often been criticized on the philosophical grounds that unity excludes difference (Adorno 1973; Derrida 1978; Young 1986). Despite numerous examples of differences that impede communication and a common ground, most participants do attempt and manage at least in part to look beyond their own perspective.

Even though power struggles are part of any social struggle, I argue that the urgency of the

---

147 See footnote 146

148 ‘I want change’ is Tomas’ profile picture on Facebook and a phrase which voices the prime sentiment among movements’ members.

149 Interview Nikki of the anti-gold movement on 5.3

150 Interview Vivian of Solidarity4All and SOSSte to nero on 17.3
crisis and a sense of solidarity facilitate communal experiences, which may slowly open up to difference. To extrapolate, some people or groups who were known to be opposed to every other approach, to everything that is slightly different from their own, have now opened up to different approaches. For example, Thessaloniki’s anarchists have long turned their back on society. Yet, due to the crisis some have set up labor cooperatives – such as bar Artcore and restaurant Kazani – for which they have to open up to the wider population. To draw this further, it makes a difference to be opposed to two other approaches instead of ten. Although it would be naive to idealize the degree of solidarity and community among the movements and believe that the struggles are or can be non-excluding, many of the participants are working on how they can deal with difference. It even seems that the crisis incites the various initiatives to be much more open to and cooperative with different initiatives, with whom cooperation was rather unlikely in the past. Also, some of the participants may agree to disagree on certain approaches. To illustrate, Achilles, one of the leaders of Micropolis who has never been shy to criticize the initiatives that are part of the social solidarity economy says during our last interview, ‘[i]t is good that the social solidarity economy exists. It is not what I have in mind, but you have to try all’ . At this stage it can be concluded that the initiatives can only be open to society if they are open to each other, which requires them to be open to different approaches. When I ask the majority of interviewees on their view of the many disagreements among the movements, it is said that differences are healthy and necessary for the practice of direct democracy. To that I would like to add that differences are only healthy when one is open to differences and able to discuss these respectfully. Although this cannot always be the case, it may be good to keep in mind that the desired networks among movements are more viable when differences are communicated. Once differences are understood they can contribute to the well-being of the part and the sum of parts. The acknowledgement of diversity, which characterizes human existence, turns out to be key in bringing about change.

4.4.2 Society in constant flux

At KOINO I already see steps towards solidarity. Everything is changing so fast. I can only follow the wave. I cannot make plans. [...] Nothing is solid. The conditions change. You never know if it’s good or bad. It goes forward and back.

Maria who is part of food initiative S.P.A.ME. and involved with KOINO, Thessaloniki’s alternative coin, describes how the movements and society’s conditions are unceasingly changing. The way in which social movements change the socio-economic environment of Thessaloniki can only be understood against the backdrop of a society that is in constant flux. Change can be defined as ‘to make

\[151\] Interview Achilles of social center Micropolis and anti-authoritarian movement on 9.4
\[152\] Interview Maria of food cooperative S.P.A.ME. and alternative coin KOINO on 2.4
or become different’. It is crucial that both the making and becoming are taken into account for change cannot only be understood as a rational, deliberate act. Any change is at the interplay between a doing and a being done; between choice and circumstance. Changes are partly in the hands of the people part of the struggle. As Marx once stated, ‘men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstance directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past’ (1963: 15). The extent to which the social movements are changing people and society are thus dependent upon these changing conditions. Socrates, who is part of Sxoleio, ventures ahead to see where possible changes are coming from, ‘in times of crisis the primary meaning of society ceases. So people create new meanings, carrying the possibility to create a new society. Before people did not doubt the society. Now they had to start thinking differently and had to change’. The crisis made it difficult for people to continue their lifestyle and sometimes living altogether; due to a shortage of capital, products and welfare the population’s day-to-day needs could no longer be fulfilled. The crisis created a vacuum where people, especially those that take part in the movements especially, can experiment. The movements’ efforts are often called experiments because nobody knows what the future might look like. The break with the past and within the present generates an openness to whatever is coming. Although nearly everyone has a vision of what they want the future to be like, they are aware that it takes many little steps, much time, and lots of work to go somewhere else; to walk a road that leads away from a capitalist, consumerist society. Below I will discuss how the city’s changing socio-economic environment can initiate sparks of societal change.

Because there is a great diversity of initiatives in which much (more) time and work must be invested, changes are multiple though subtle. Ideas and practices of the movements are disseminated across Thessaloniki. Since the influence of the movements on society is not clear cut, any change depends on the degree one is exposed to the initiatives and movements on a whole. The extent to which people or society at large are affected depends – at least in part – on proximity. Luigi, co-founder of the cooperative restaurant Kazani, explains the way moments of social upheaval disseminate across society, ‘depending on how far of close you are to these places. When you are far you are easily disappointed – and you do not see change. However, when something happens, people draw to the center’. During the square movement in the summer of 2011 many were exposed to the occurrence of demonstrations, rallies and mass assemblies, where the principles of direct democracy were being explored. The social centers, cooperatives and action groups that followed out of the square movements may be interpreted as the initial examples of change in Thessaloniki’s socio-economic landscape. Accordingly, this poses the question of how these initiatives in turn influence society. Many initiatives such as the numerous markets, social centers and labor cooperatives are not only withstanding time but even

---

153 Interview Socrates of social center Sxoleio and anti-authoritarian movement Alpha Kappa on 9.3
154 Interview Luigi of cooperative restaurant Kazani on 13.3
thriving as their number of visitors is still growing. They were set up because of a shared need to take back ownership over one’s life and the public resources, and their enduring existence is an expression of the fact that these initiatives are still needed. The citizens’ initiatives set the example as they inspired new action groups such as Water Warriors and cooperatives such as book café Poeta which only recently opened its doors. As they are an example for new initiatives, they also set standards of good practice for the wider surrounding. The members of cooperatives say that some of their friends, relatives and customers have expressed interest in doing the same. The initiatives inspire one another as the members of the many different initiatives know, visit and support each other. However, these changes are countered by the shifting interest and support shown by the broader public. A massive mobilization tends to change expectations (Biggs 2003: 218). When people have stood up they expect results and immediate change. Yet, results are not immediately visible just as change does not happen overnight. While many people have withdrawn, the people that are invested in the movements are prepared for a struggle that takes a long breath. They are aware of how much work and persistence it takes to have an impact on society. As I will explain shortly after, on the one hand one must focus on small changes as in the everyday accumulative achievements to see the point of one’s engagement. On the other hand change can never be completed but only aspired to, demanded and pushed for, which brings us back to the circumstances which one cannot choose.

4.4.3 Everyday gains and awaited Change

Movements want change (Klandermans 2004) and their claims express a desire for both small and all-encompassing change. Even as actual changes may be affluent, Change with a capital ‘C’ cannot escape the status of being still awaited. The promise of Change is one of ultimate transformation in which a just society is envisioned; a promise that can be kept alive by noticing the everyday achievements – and vice versa. First, the most significant gains will be treated, which enable the movements’ participants to continue. Then, their shortcomings will be discussed in order to finally grasp how the movements have the potential to change the socio-economic environment. Unfulfilled aspirations are an insatiable driving force that push movements farther to connect to that part of the population that is not yet affected by the social movements. Therefore, such aspiration are equipped to incite societal change. Various hopeful developments can be detected in labor, food and water movements.

The labor and food movements are boosted by the many cooperatives that keep popping up. Some of them are true success stories as they are widely visited by people who had previously never even heard of cooperatives. Cooperative bar Belleville and non-profit supermarket Bioscoop are prime examples, showing a wider public that equal work relations and different relations between consumers and producers are viable alternatives to work environments where people are only concerned with profit. Belleville’s ongoing popularity demonstrates that cooperatives are a viable way to make a living. As Bioscoop was open for three months it already had two regular customers against
one member customer, which means that people from outside the movements are visiting the supermarket. This gain may be related to the unmeasurable achievement of the food movement. S.PA.ME., as one of the initiatives that initiated the food movement, together with the many food cooperatives that followed, has managed to bring out the issue of the middle men. As Nadia says, ‘now the words ‘without middle men’ is used by everybody’. In relation to this, an increasing number of people is changing fields and have gone into farming and producing, cultivating the earth and making products such as marmalade and tomato paste. The idea that people can do it themselves, together with others is growing slowly but steadily, which may potentially translate into a mentality change. Besides these accumulating achievements in the labor and food movement, the water initiatives also enjoyed a substantial gain. A few weeks after my departure SOSste to nero, K136 and Water Warriors successfully organized the water referendum. They managed to mobilize 1,500 volunteers, the minimum to make the referendum happen, with a rather overwhelming outcome. Over half a million people voted for the local and regional elections, of which 218,000 people participated in the referendum. Whereas previous polls showed that up to 75 percent of the population were opposed to selling the water company EYATH, at this referendum 98 percent voted against privatization.156

Photo 8: 29 May 2014. Posters of SOSste to nero calling for the water referendum. Made by Lavinia Steinfort

155 Interview Maria of food cooperative S.PA.ME. on 2.4
156 http://www.tni.org/article/thessaloniki-greece-struggling-against-water-privatisation-times-crisis
The accumulative achievements of the water, food and labor movements are crucial for the respective members to continue and to sometimes even step up their engagement. However, these gains cannot be understood as conclusive change since aspirations neither are nor can be fully met. All movements cultivate this notion of all-encompassing Change that promises a just society, and they develop concrete approaches which work towards this goal. The aforementioned changes are yet only partial. Although the issue of middle men has become known among the public, the organizers of some of the markets explain that visitors still refrain from participation. It is said that people visit the markets without mediators because of the cheaper prices, not to engage in a relation with the selling producers. Many of the producers do not adhere to the principles of the social solidarity economy as they would rather earn money than donate their products to the less fortunate. The water movement may have succeeded in organizing the referendum, it took place in the midst of increasing distrust among the initiatives. With back and forth accusations and perceived sabotaging, the initiatives are far from united to overturn privatization all together. Regarding the labor movement, although some of the cooperatives enjoy an increasing number of customers, all of them continue to face problems in connecting to each another. As I mentioned, members of nearly every initiative recognize the foremost need for a strong network. To have an impact on society the initiatives and movements must stand together and be open to the society, whilst also persuading the public to join. Although everyday gains need to be acknowledged in order to push on, the movements’ partipants want to see Change; a different, just society based on solidarity and cooperation, in which the people actively demand their rights and participate to fulfill the needs of the individual as part of the collective. This vision relates to the principles of cooperativism as developed by Kioupkiolis and Karyotis (2013) and Ratner (2009) which put collaboration, active participation and solidarity at the center of society.

Thessaloniki’s social movements are step by step changing the socio-economic environment. If it is not on a large, united scale then at least on a number of smaller scales. The movements, which exemplify inclusive values and alternative ideas by disseminating the good practice (Rao et al. 2000: 273) of the many citizens’ groups, are one way or another affecting the social and economic dimensions of society. The near surroundings of the people involved appear already engaged with the water, food and labor movements. The wider public is becoming familiar with paying fair prices for their food, opposing the water privatization, and working cooperatively. As these ideas become part of common sense the step towards acting accordingly is more easily taken. Despite much disappointment (Jasper 1997: 226) among the movements and the population, and the prolonged hard living conditions, an increasing number of successful examples continues to urge on an increasing number of people to try similar alternatives. Although the effects may be diffuse and limited to a minor part of the population, the engaged part carries the seeds for change as in the potential of bringing about the awaited Change when it becomes connected to the rest of society. Yet, the everyday gains only have meaning in the light of larger Change – and vice versa. This higher cause appears to provide participants with an incentive to not only persist in the struggle for justice, but to
also endeavor involving the population at large.

The preservation of the movements and the drive to make small changes happen are intimately related to the belief in and experience of the potential of ultimate societal transformation. This Change is supposed to be all-encompassing as it comprises a combination of social, economic, political, and cultural changes which affect the collective and the individual simultaneously. In other words; the engagement of the many participants in based on the belief that – in part because of the crisis – a different world, a different system, or at least a different socio-economic structure is possible. The socio-economic dimensions are on the forefront for the initiatives that make up the water, food and labor movements. The participants are eager to change the relations among the population into bonds of solidarity, and also to change people’s socio-economic relations to food, work and public resources. There is hope that the above mentioned achievements are signs that especially in times of crisis different structures can take root. Homan aptly connects the crisis, and the system to change, by stating that ‘[a] crisis, a sudden and overwhelming onset of threats, shocks the system. The system is out of balance. The world has suddenly changed and the system must change as well. A system in disequilibrium is most open to change’ (2008: 53). As Smith and Wiest state, changes are most likely in times of crisis (2011: ii) and the aiming for the ultimate Change by means of everyday accumulative achievements empower the movements to open up and involve the wider society, for societal change can only happen through interrelations (Homan 2008: 54).

4.4.4 The communal in the performative

The movements’ desire to change Thessaloniki’s socio-economic dynamics, and their vision of a just society incites the members to involve the rest of the population. However, in order to have an impact on Thessaloniki’s inhabitants the struggles, movements and initiatives have to further alliances and increase cooperation. Their visions of Change are making them work towards networks that interrelate the various groups. The members of the water, food and labor movements have repeatedly tried to interconnect the initiatives to strengthen their efforts and enhance their impact on society. Yet, for groups to be interconnected they have to be open to each other. This openness is necessary for forging a strong network in which each member understands where the other is coming from. When initiatives are open to one another it can at least be communicated that one agrees to disagree. However, a limited openness and a lack of communication have allowed for numerous assumptions and misconceptions to blow up. While a shortage of communication inhibits the emergence of a strong and interwoven network, nearly all the initiatives are preoccupied with trying to reach out to one another. Whatever the success of these attempts, it can be said that the persistent aspiration to create a network is related to communality. In the following I will argue that the movements’ performativity is in need of a communal supplement, as the desire to open up is an inevitable part of breaking with neoliberal discourses. After a recap of Butler’s concept of performativity, I will explain my own understanding of communality. Thereafter I will discuss the value of communal
performativity for making sense of the power and potential of Thessaloniki’s social movements to break with neoliberal discourses.

To understand the agency of movements I have drawn upon the concept of performativity. Without dismissing the force and meaning of discourse, performativity demonstrates that one is able to break out of it through performative actions. In other words, to speak of neoliberal discourses treating the Greeks as a disposable resource, does not imply that the people are docile victims who are completely oppressed by the so-called system. The tighter grip of neoliberal discourses on Thessaloniki’s society actually brings about the reverse; namely a range of movements whose performativity breaks with neoliberal practices (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). Both discursive and performative actions constitute and construct social identities as well as politico-economic structures. While discursive action reproduces such structures, performative action negotiates or even negates power structures. With no essence or identity to precede us, the Sovereign I (Ibid.: 12) is replaced by the void performativity created; a void that is characterized by an openness towards the future and the other. As said earlier, by virtue of its performing, the I is from the onset intersubjectively related to other I’s. Thus the persons that make up society’s social fabric are defined by the way they are open to, interdependent on, and ultimately constituted by each other.

Taken as such, the concept of performativity already relies on an intersubjective reading that puts interrelated practices at the heart of society. For different reasons Butler has been blamed for succumbing to methodological individualism in that she based performatives on individual actions (Jagger 2008; Boucher 2006). The agency she assigns to the intentional person who deliberately acts (Boucher 2006: 119), being yet interdependent on others, has been doubtfully received. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to treat Butler’s notion of intentional agency, I do see a risk when one’s performative acts are the starting point of analysis. It can overemphasize the intentional agency of the one doing the action. Consequently, action may no longer be understood as the result of human intersubjectivity, as something arising out of a context and as responsive to discourses. To rephrase: intersubjective actions are still prone to be misread as subjectively motivated. To stress the fact that performativity does not rely on individual intentionality, I bring in the concept of communality. The combined notion of communal performativity allows for the agency as an intersubjective, socially shared power which is released in response to discursive pressures. The crisis has made many of Thessaloniki’s inhabitants turn towards each other which shows the potential of a community that is – ideally – able to involve society. The communal supplement underlines and explicates that people are dispossessively related in that they are fundamentally dependent on and open to one another. However, by stressing communality I do not mean to say that my understanding of intersubjective, communal agency declares subjectivity, intentionality and individuality irrelevant. Moreover, communality does not imply that there is mere cohesion among people. As I have shown Thessaloniki’s movements are at times severely plagued by destructive disagreements and worrisome power struggles. The contribution of communality is not only to affirm performativity’s
intersubjective underpinnings, but also to highlight the initiatives’ aspirations to act together despite the many frictions. Thus, communal performatives are the movements’ interdependent attempts and aspirations – including the efforts of initiatives and participants – that seek to break away from neoliberal discourses and become a united network. Although these attempts virtually never run smooth, over time and by showing persistence some of the initiatives and movements are (potentially) drawing closer.

Communal performativity refers to the groups’ acting towards becoming a network, a community that is founded upon the radical openness towards those beyond its boundaries. Actions that are intended to be open towards differences both in- and outside the movements. The prevalent desire to create networks – as infused by the vision of Change into just society – expresses the power and potential of Thessaloniki’s social movements to negate neoliberal discourses. Enacting on communal performativity incites initiatives to draw strength from – the aspiration of – a common ground. Thessaloniki’s labor, water and food movements are all empowered by cooperation as well as by the desire to align themselves with others groups. I understand their efforts to interconnect as an expression of communal performativity. Their ability and aspiration to join forces empower the movements to renounce neoliberalism, as those structures and practices that treat them and the rest of the population as disposable. Some of the food and labor movements’ achievements exemplify how openness and interconnectedness towards other initiatives enhance the impact on society. Although the Open Network no longer exists, the interrelations and collaborations it led to have been pivotal in strengthening the involved initiatives, inspiring new food and labor initiatives, and drawing popular attention to the middle men issue. In general, the intersecting that occur at the many social centers – where initiatives hold their assemblies and the cooperative members socialize – is a prime motivator of communal performativity. Then and there the power and potential of a common ground can be experienced. Amassed performatives incite initiatives’ members to break away from the neoliberal austerity measures such as budget cuts, privatization and labor reforms. Alternatives are developed that aim to put solidarity and an economy based on that into practice to persuade society that Change is possible, when the population gets involved, that is. Even though openness towards to the other initiatives and society is neither instantly achieved nor always feasible, communal performativity shows that the openness among social movements can ripen and enhance the impact on Thessaloniki’s socio-economic landscape.

This chapter started out by relating the movements’ influences on the personal level to the social level. Consequently, I discussed the crisis, functioning as the movements’ context, to understand how altered conditions create the possibilities for societal change. Then, I went into some of the gains of the activities of the water, food and labor movements to show how everyday achievements and their shortcomings are intrinsically related to the pursuit of envisioning the Change towards a just society. Their intersecting works as a driving force to open up to society and to involve those beyond the movements. However, in order to do this, initiatives’ members realize that they have
to open up to each other’s opinions. The movements have been working towards interconnecting the many groups and struggles. Although the efforts of opening up have not always been as successful, the desire and persistence to join forces is resulting in various alliances and collaborations that amplify the effect social movements have on society. By means of communal performativity I have tried to comprehend the ability and aspiration of Thessaloniki’s movements to move society together. As such, I hope to have answered sub-question four on the ways movements’ engender change and on the aspiring potential of communal performativity to lay the ground for a discussion in which I challenge the contribution of communal performativity and argue for the emancipatory potential of social movements. The crisis has made the people involved see that they are dependent on one another, and that the efforts of acting upon these interdependencies is drawing them closer to the society they seek to change; the society they are all a part of. ‘For the many streams have to become one big river.’

4.5 DISCUSSION

4.5.1 Contributions challenged

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the practice of social movements involves breaking with neoliberal discourses. This practice, which I understand as performativity, expresses the potential of social movements. The movements’ potentiality does not rely on individuals but on intersubjectivity, since the interrelations between people that empower initiatives and movements alike allow for the development of alternatives to counter neoliberalism. With the concept of communal performativity I have aimed to show that communality is already inscribed in the workings of performativity since people are, as aforementioned, already open to, dependent on, and constituted by each other. However, communality refers not merely to the sum of parts, it also refers to participants’ aspirations to be the sum of parts. It captures the desire and ability of individuals to act in concert with others. The vision of societal change, as in overcoming capitalism through an all-encompassing combination of social, economic, political, and cultural changes including the individual as well as the collective, is upheld by the everyday accumulated gains of Thessaloniki’s movements – and vice versa. Initiatives’ members realize that to approach the future and involve the population, they have to open up to society and each other. The persistent aspiration of the movements’ participants to interconnect can be understood as an expression of communal performativity. Yet, what can challenge the notion of communal performativity?

Communal performativity is an experiment of which the values and potential need to be scrutinized and assessed. In developing this concept I touched upon the debated issues of community, power and agency, which pose a challenge to the very notion of communal performativity. As

157 Conversation Panos of the social solidarity clinic and immigrant center Seeki Metanastion on 13.3
communal performativity refers to community it may connote the ultimate unity that is inward looking and excluding difference. Although I argue that the movement’s communality is all about opening up, showing solidarity with different approaches, and reaching out to the public, communality is still put to the test by the difficulty of ideological differences and by the need of focusing on one’s own initiative. Perhaps, communality can be best understood as something to strive for rather than to attain, especially since its exact aim is to surpass one’s own community to become part of a greater struggle for solidarity. However, in practice solidarity has its limits. Therefore it is up to performativity, and its practitioners, to be self-reflexive and surpass the initiative’s boundaries. The issue of power comes with the focus on practice. I have localized power in neoliberal discourses, in discursive practices which reproduce neoliberalism, and in performative practices that interrupt the reproduction of neoliberal discourses. A tense dichotomy appears between the power that perpetuates power imbalances and the empowerment of performatives that have the potential to adjust power imbalances. This may not do justice to the many nuances and contradictions which gives shape to power in all its varieties. Whilst communal performativity may reproduce this dichotomy, it may relate and nuance these opposites as well. As power, practice and communality are central to the notion, I believe that the ever-changing group effort that is key to communal performatives is already a way to diversify empowerment and show the means and necessity of going up against neoliberal discourses together. Both approaches of power are complementary in that the power to which people are to some extent subjected cannot go without a power that negotiates such subjection. Hence, when power is understood as practice neoliberalism is no longer a mere ism but also a doing that can be undone communally.

Both performative and discursive readings of reality are founded upon an agency that is relational. Although relational agency constitutes communal performativity, it is an ongoing challenge to argue against an agency that is intentional, since the view of a rational, autonomous agent – dating back to the 17th century’s rise of modernity – is for many common sense. Therefore performativity and even communal performativity risk being taken for an action that is done by one or many individuals who seek to break with discourses purposefully. This is a risk because communal performativity can only be understood in relation to the discursive contexts against which it springs off, and by the virtue of interrelations between people. In the above I have contextualized the crisis, neoliberalism and the movements to show that humans do act, but not under circumstances chosen by themselves. When the context and conditions are taken into account agency can no longer be ascribed to the rational, willful individual. For relational agencies do not only explicate the ties in between people but also the intertwining between people with their environment. The dimensions are two-fold: on the one hand people, movements and society at large are embedded in and shaped by encompassing politico-economic structures, and on the other hand, in connection to each other and the involved power discourses, we have an amount of agency to negotiate, oppose and resist these structures. Thus, the notion of relational agency brings in a perspective that interconnects the realms of structure and
agency.

The connotations of agency, power and community contest the preliminary notion of communal performativity as these elements are key to its effectiveness. Communal performativity is a concept that could improve our understanding of many contemporary social movements because it accentuates the relational base and shows how movements are being shaped by as well as shaping the socio-economic environment. The power of social movements can be researched through communal performativity, as it combines their empowering ability and aspiration to break with neoliberal discourses by interconnecting with others. Lastly, communal actions highlight the movements desire to show radical solidarity with other struggles for justice and to reach out to the population to change society. The reference to community is the bottleneck of the communal performativity of Thessaloniki’s social movements as it addresses the need to deal with differences within and between movements in order to move the society which it is part of.

As my findings are inconclusive they leave open many questions for further research. As a suggestion, more work can to be done to comprehend what and who communal performativity risks excluding. I already touched upon the difficulty of connecting with society and of connecting the initiatives that make up social movements. The need to connect to other struggles and society can go at the expense of connecting to similar groups that take part in the same struggle. Additional research is required to understand the relation between including the population and excluding similar struggles on grounds of differences. Besides, in further developing the concept of communal performativity, one can ask the extent to which communal performatives are a prerequisite for change to occur. In other words, are movements’ potential and persistence to build networks indispensable for inciting societal change? Therefore, one should find out which (other) dynamics are necessarily at play for societies to change. Moreover, in order to enhance our understanding of the impacts of movements’ communal performativity – which theorizes the potential break with neoliberal discourses – concepts need to be developed that can move beyond the break. As I introduced the notion of communal performativity to Aurora, co-founder of cooperative bar Belleville, she says that it does relate to what they do. However, she feels that their initiative moves beyond the rupture as they also provide an alternative: ‘the hope for something different’.  

4.5.2 Emancipatory potential

The social movements are valuable assets for Thessaloniki’s society. The many social centers, neighborhood groups and action committees provide necessary services for the people of the movements and beyond. From healthcare and reconnected electricity, to cheaper if not free healthy food and lawsuits that delay the water privatization, the initiatives try to show the population that there are practices available to reject capitalism, which put social and environmental concerns before

---

158 Interview Aurora of cooperative bar Belleville on 30.3
economic gains. It can be said that as a result of the vastly changing conditions of society and numerous efforts of many movements and initiatives, hundreds of thousands of people are one way or another exposed to the communal performativity of these forces. That an increasing number of people are slowly becoming aware of the options to receive healthcare that is based on solidarity, to set up a cooperative, and to go to a market without mediators underlines the emancipatory potential of the movements. Even though direct democracy may guide too little to work for everyone, everywhere, it does make a people more familiar with the need to be aware, to participate, and to be in charge of the resources needed to fulfill everyone's day-to-day needs. Previously I have already stated the relevance of these developments for other European societies. On top of that it can be argued that the challenges faced by the food, water and labor movements raise a problem that is spread throughout Europe, especially among those parts of the populations that are usually critical of the operations of the state and market, i.e. the varied and extensive Left. The discussion will end with a brief account on how Thessaloniki’s social movements – and to some extent Europe’s Left on a whole – could improve their impact.

The difficulties faced by the water, food and labor movements are neither restricted to Thessaloniki nor social movements nor Southern Europe. The movements’ foremost aim of involving the population is challenged by passivity, strong disagreements, and plenty of doubts within both the movements and society. These troublesome dynamics are germane to most European societies today. Perhaps the continuum running from idealism to pragmatism is again applicable to Europe’s divided Left, as well as others that do not agree with the predominance of capitalism and neoliberalism. The 2014 European elections pointed to a gain for both the extreme Right and the radical Left, as two opposed ways of responding to a neoliberal politics and economics that leave an increasing number of people dispossessed. Although it remains to be seen whether the European Left is really on a rise, it can be argued that the people – from moderate reformists to the more radical anarchists – that disagree with the current handshake between state and market are as numerous as divided. The picture of a continuum in which idealism and pragmatism are diametrically opposed represents the today’s impasse to cooperate, surpass one’s own efforts, and form a united, more inclusive front against neoliberalism, the crisis and its austerity measures. While so called pragmatists and idealists are striving towards the same justice and against similar adversaries – from the root of capitalism to its upshot of poverty and unemployment – they are more often in each other’s way than recognizing the similarities of their ways. Despite countless good reasons for accusing others of being either too pragmatic or too idealist, it should be realized that this impasse only gives further liberalization free rein. To effectively counter the discourses of capitalism and neoliberalism one should realize that the idealist versus pragmatist bind of the divided Left might outlive the urge to stand up, the desire to cooperate, and the efforts to build networks. Although the water, food and labor movements as well as the other struggles may be troubled by passivity, disagreements and doubts, their persistent aspiration to cooperate and build network are a lesson for those parts of the European and Dutch
populations, which seek to circumvent capitalism by breaking away from a neoliberal climate.

Without a blueprint for interconnecting across differences, some guidelines on how to build networks could be helpful. To strengthen movements’ networks, endurance and impacts, a number of characteristics can be set forth of which some are already present among Thessaloniki’s social movements. As Katcher brings to light, people, initiatives and movements need to keep the wider struggle in mind to be able to ‘stick together for the long haul and advance interests that extend beyond a single-issue campaign’ (2010: 54). By understanding the common and long-term interests, issues can be united. However, for that to happen the members of the many citizens’ initiatives need to align their efforts towards more encompassing struggles for justice. This is already the case among many Thessalonian initiatives as they generally support the anti-gold, health and garbage movements. For a network to be created, initiatives and their members need to contribute to and agree on a shared vision of values and principles (Ibid.: 55). With regard to the social movements in Thessaloniki, solidarity, cooperation and citizens’ participation provide the grounds for a common vision to enhance communication and approach the ideals of dialogue and direct democracy. Finally, a network should be flexible and its boundaries permeable for social movements to draw on the whims and waves of support from its members and society at large. Yet, opinions differ on when one is either too adaptive or not adaptive enough. To illustrate, it can be said that the Open Network – the recently undone network that consisted of sixteen cooperatives – was either inflexible, as it was not resistant to the inflexible call of a political declaration, or too flexible as it was reportedly hijacked by Syriza. While flexibility could be easily misused, it could also remind the people involved to enhance the intercommunication within and between movements in order to become aware of the range of possibilities that the common grounds of networks allow for. Recent efforts of the food and labor movements to build a network by means of a courier service provide another lesson in being flexible, and another chance to surpass differences, unite efforts, and realize the movements’ emancipatory potential. To recall Katcher, networks of social movements require flexibility ‘so that they can answer the call to each critical moment’ (Ibid.: 59) in which another Greece, another Europe and another Netherlands can be built.

4.5.3 Close to conclusion

Previous chapters comprised the analyses required to answer the first four sub-questions. This part concluded with a discussion on the relevance of the movements within the European context together with an assessment of the notion of communal performativity. Now it is time to draw this thesis to a close. What remains is part five, which starts with the conclusion wherein I recap the way Greece’s economic crisis and broader neoliberal contexts have given shape to Thessaloniki’s social movements, and summarize how the arguments on the power of discourse and the power of performativity are complementary. At last, I will briefly evaluate this research and reflect upon the influence its insights have been having on me.
PART FIVE

CONCLUSION
5.1 CONCLUSION

Thessaloniki’s social movements can be associated with a *rhizome* root, a botanic concept, used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to make sense of the multiple and surprising ways social forces take root and take off. The movements I studied comprise a chaotic and unstable field in which the conditions, the engagement and the possibilities are in constant flux. The food, labor and water movements on which I focused, arose out of the neoliberal discourses that left an increasing number of people dispossessed (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). Due to the 2009 crisis and the following austerity measures, healthcare, food and electricity became unaffordable. This urged the people of Thessaloniki, as well as those elsewhere in Greece and Southern Europe, to stand up, to gather forces and to form initiatives in order to counter the neoliberal politico-economic system that favors capital at the expense of people (Wainwright 2013). Community centers, labor cooperatives and solidarity kitchens have multiplied to function as social safety nets and to fulfill the day-to-day needs of the population. The initiatives that make up Thessaloniki’s social movements are committed to their struggle – be it for dignified work, fair food, fair prices or access to healthcare – in order to set an example for society to follow. By coming back to my research question on the relation between the movements and the debt crisis, the extent to which agencies correspond, and the socio-economic impacts, I will conclude with the lessons to be drawn from the challenges faced by Thessaloniki’s social movements.

The 2009 debt crisis exposed a structural dependency between the Greek state and foreign – both governmental and corporate – powers. Greece’s economy was restructured by the United States after World War II and its budget has been kept in check by IMF and EU since the nineties (Close 2002). This may have brought prosperity initially, yet it also inscribed Greece’s position of dependency upon foreign economies and institutions. Although opinions on what caused the crisis differ, it is likely that the socio-political differences among core and peripheral economies of Europe, the encouragement to take loans, and the lack of economic protection once the Euro was implemented (Hadjimichalis 2011), contributed to widespread conditions of corruption and clientelism by which the Greek economy deteriorated (Panageotou 2011). As neoliberal discourses and governmentalities were being shaped, economic growth came to be seen as a magic bullet for overall development (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). The crisis showed the severe downsides of such a belief and pressured the population of Thessaloniki and many other South European cities to take to the streets in the 2011 (Rocamadur 2011). In response to two bailout plans and numerous austerity measures experienced activists and the newly engaged got together to develop alternative practices, which defy the values of capitalism, consumerism and individualism that preceded the recession (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013). The social movements were shaped by the 2009 crisis as they experiment with the ethics of the social solidarity economy rebelling against the mantra of growth;
with the principles of direct democracy striking against the dependence on representative democracy; and with the belief in solidarity as such, refuting the crisis’ upshot of excessive deprivation. As cooperation and solidarity are cornerstones of both the social solidarity economy and direct democracy, the members of initiatives reach out to other initiatives in order to join forces and build a network capable of engaging the broader public (Kioupkiolis and Karyotis 2013). However, the need for and emphasis on cooperation and solidarity conceal the prevailing power struggles impairing the movements’ efforts and impacts.

Many of the people that take part in Thessaloniki’s movements are involved in more than one struggle. Those that participate in a labor cooperative are usually also active in the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement. All of the initiatives I have approached are supportive of the previously occupied factory VioMe. Most of my interviewees also showed solidarity with the health and anti-gold movements. Moreover, the majority of the participants of water initiative K136 are also a member of the non-profit supermarket Bioscoop because both were set up by the same founders. Initiatives and their members have to be open to other groups and agree to some extent in order to cooperate. Yet, whether initiatives’ members agree or not, they almost always have an opinion about the other initiatives and movements. Their agency is relational as both movements and initiatives – for better or worse – affect each other. When, for example, participants take part in K136 as well as Bioscoop the relational, cross-cutting agencies empower the causes of the struggles, the efforts of these initiatives, and the impact of the labor and food movements. However, as unfounded destructive criticism, bad-mouthing and identity politics hinder SOS to nero to connect and collaborate with K136 – and vice versa – the power of persons and groups that excludes cooperation goes at the expense of the movements’ relational agencies and their overall impact. Such power struggles are often expressed by
accusing the other group of being either too idealist or too pragmatist. An idealist approach is considered to be too focused on ideals to relate to other approaches and ultimately the wider society. A pragmatic approach is accused of being too compromising by adhering to market forces and political parties. Despite many good reasons for an absence of cooperation, power struggles delegitimize the efforts of the water initiatives and the water movement on a whole. A lack of communication causes a lack of understanding the others’ approach, which impedes efforts of solidarity. Since showing an openness towards differences is necessary in order to interconnect initiatives and build networks.

For social movements to be effective, networks are pivotal. Thessaloniki’s movements acknowledge that they have to involve the population in order to change society. Although various attempts have been made to forge a network, the initiatives are troubled by the difficulties of being simultaneously in- and outside – which are often equated with being either an idealist or a pragmatist. Being inside connotes focusing on one’s own initiative to make it practically viable or staying close to one’s own ideal. Being outside connotes focusing on the society to comply to politics and the market or connecting to the population to change society. These connotations are a matter of perception, wholly dependent on the relations among initiatives and their members. The movements’ gains – be it the discussion on the middle men, the popularity of cooperatives or the success of the water referendum – stand by the openness to, the interrelations among, and cooperation between initiatives and across movements. Moreover, participants can push for everyday achievements by envisioning the ultimate Change of a just society that is based on solidarity and cooperation, in which the people actively demand their rights and participate to fulfill the needs of the individual as part of the collective. These gains and such an ideal are interdependent and rise out of the movements’ relational agencies, which in turn can result in communal performativity as in the power and potential to break with neoliberal discourses. In making sense of the dynamics and effects of social movements people’s intersubjectivity has come to the fore as the participants acknowledge the need of acting in concert. Thus, the notion of communal performativity expresses the movements’ desire and ability to move away from neoliberalism all together. Despite destructive speech and actions that risk delegitimizing initiatives efforts, the groups’ persistent aspiration to connect, build networks, and open up to society enables the people, initiatives and social movements to carry on, to involve the population and to impact Thessaloniki’s socio-economic landscape.

Before arriving at some final reflections, the fifth sub-question concerning the challenges on the road ahead, will be discussed in the next section. Here I will argue that challenges can be overcome by committing to improving the communication. The movements are troubled by the many disagreements that may rest on minor differences, the difficulty of balancing between being in- and outside, and the thin line between constructive and destructive criticism. Acknowledging that the impact of the movements can be enhanced by improving the communication may incite initiatives’ members to be open to differences, and to ultimately understand where another initiative – its efforts
and approach – is coming from. Improved communication among those initiatives’ that bad-mouth, criticize, or simply disagree with each other could really strengthen the interrelations among the initiatives and increase the possibility of building a common ground. In order to create as well as expand networks solidarity can and should be strengthened, within the movements to begin with. Once opposing initiatives dare to open to each other, Thessaloniki’s social movements can be open to the society they seek to change. For a common ground to be found, I avow the words of Anthony, co-founder of the cooperative bookshop Ungoverned Cities, ‘we have to say ‘us’ – we are something in order for change to happen’.

5.2 THE ROAD AHEAD

5.2.1 Perceived challenges

We need to surpass differences. This may be more important than to survive as a [single] group. For real construction there needs to be destruction. You need to surpass and destroy your own group. There is the political need to destroy the perception that everything is safe in my world of Leftist people. We need to break boundaries and be closer to society. […] What can be improved are the closer connections within the movement. Stronger solidarity. Being in communication. And trying to put up a common fight for unified struggles.

Panos is part of the political group Intervention. As a medical student he is involved in the social solidarity clinic. His comment captures many of the issues I have touched upon throughout this thesis. It highlights the urge to improve communication and cooperation, in order to unify and draw closer to society. In this final analysis I briefly recap three major challenges Thessaloniki’s movements are facing to suggest that enhanced communication can be used to combat these. This chapter will wrap up with a short account of how communication can engender networks and augment the power of communal performativity. This is meant as advice for enhancing the impact of these and other movements.

Differences are abundant within and among the initiatives, and healthy as long as they do not impair communications, cause misconceptions and render alliances impossible. In Thessaloniki differences and disagreements are so common that they are likely to escalate. Many people part of the movement find the amount of disagreements problematic. They agree that the amplification of these differences impede efforts to join forces. To understand the trouble with these disagreements Freud’s

160 Interview Anthony of cooperative bookshop Ungoverned Cities on 1.4
161 Interview Panos of the social solidarity clinic and immigrant center Steki Metanaston on 25.3
theory of the narcissism of minor differences as treated by Blok (1998) and Kolsto (2007) can be applied. According to Blok, the slightest differences can create animosity between people who are closely akin. Kolsto elaborates this thought by stating that one cannot tell if groups are apart without considerable differences between them (2007: 153). Subsequent power struggles may then be a way of installing identity boundaries in between the initiatives. This not to say that the differences among struggles and groups are trivial by definition, but to note that the initiatives are more alike than apart. To get an idea of why members have the experience that different approaches exclude each other I return to the debates on being in- or outside, which have to do with tensions between pragmatist and idealist approaches.

The common denominator of most of these differences is the challenge of being in- or outside, and the difficulty of being in- and outside simultaneously. Movements want to change society for the better and to engage the population to join them in these efforts. Yet, in order to move the citizens of Thessaloniki the initiatives have to be practically viable and set an example for others to follow. At the same time a network must be built to link the numerous initiatives. Groups have a lot more impact on society if they interconnect and stand strong together (Katcher 2010). The challenge of being both inside and outside is a practical concern which relates to the recurring stalemate between idealism and pragmatism, which both refer to ideology one way or another. When groups accuse others of being either too idealist or too ideological, it implies that they are of the opinion that the other initiatives is focused ‘inside’ by clinging too much to its own ideas, by being unable to cooperate with other initiatives, and by therefore being incapable of engaging society. When groups are accused of being too pragmatic they may be ‘outside’ but in the wrong way. Leaning towards pragmatism implies that the initiatives are perceived to be too eager to concede to political reformism and capitalist frames, through which the sincerity of their motives for change are put into question. Such destructive disagreements can arise out of details. It goes to show that there is a constant, balancing effort involved with being in- and outside. As Panos argues, it proves to be very difficult to be loyal to one’s own principles and to be able to surpass one’s own group. It may be an even greater difficulty to acknowledge that others are trying the same. To accuse others of being neither out- nor inside, is motivated by perception. Our perceptions of others are crucial to engender a network. By disagreeing, accusing and criticizing other initiatives chances of cooperation diminish.

We have to be critical of everything. It is a fundamental thing to move things forward. Generally in this situation we have to examine if the criticism promotes things or criticizes only to criticize because it is an inadequate answer [...] to the people's problems. I criticize, so I don’t have to participate. So I don’t have responsibility. [...] They are hiding behind the
criticism. There's not one solution, there are [many] alternatives.

The third and last challenge concerns the contradictions of criticism. Panos, the medical student, addresses the need to be critical of criticism. His quote exemplifies the thin line between constructive and destructive criticism. Although destructive criticism is not necessarily a deliberate act, it is part and parcel of the ongoing power struggles within the movements, of which the identity politics among the water initiatives is illustrative. During an interview, a member of one of the labor cooperatives says to not agree with the anti-authoritarian group Alfa Kappa because its members do not agree with him. Besides a fair amount of reasonable and well-founded criticism, much of the critiques that circulate among the movements are ill-founded and built upon previous assumptions and misconceptions. Since there are many factors that complicate criticism, such as complex histories of power relations, the speed with which initiatives appear and disappear, and the lack of communication, one has to criticize wisely and cautiously. A lack of communication is perhaps what all these challenges boil down to. As long as there is no direct, open and respectful communication it will be very hard to overcome minor differences, ameliorate the problem of being in- or outside, and exchange constructive criticism. Thus, improving the communication among the members, initiatives and movements is pivotal for meeting challenges and joining forces in order to build an encompassing network.

5.2.2 Common grounds

The lack of communication among the movements is caused by the way members of initiatives perceive, value and judge their own and other initiatives. When the efforts and intentions of other people are misunderstood it is easy to misjudge them. To actually understand a person or a group of persons there needs to be good will and trust. Generally there is enough trust within an initiative to make decisions and move forward. However, within and among movements the amount of trust and good will is not sufficient for understanding the actions and approaches of other groups. A common understanding is based on 'connectedness, respect, trust, and hope' (Zollar 2009: 193) which are necessary conditions for enabling a dialogue, and which can be taken as the epitome of good communication. Once communicating with and understanding of others further improves, the openness towards both idealist and pragmatic differences is expected to increase. As said before, the openness towards different ideas and deeds has already improved, in part due to the crisis. The 2009 crisis has urged many active people in Thessaloniki's numerous Left wing and anarchist circles to be more open towards others in order to stand together in the fight against capitalism and its austerity measures.

162 See footnote 161
163 Interview Luigi of cooperative restaurant Kazi on 13.3
However, communication has to further improve to enhance the movements’ impact on the city’s socio-economic conditions. In order to do that commonalities should be addressed.

The movements have a whole lot in common. All the members I have spoken to use a similar rhetoric, saying that people should take life and public resources (back) into their own hands. For many, direct democracy is the way to do that because it requires people to actively participate in decisions that concern their wellbeing. The initiatives aim to listen carefully to the needs of the population in order to bring about grass roots engagement in that the common citizens realize that they have to roll up their sleeves. Although some groups have felt the necessity to speed up the decision making process in order to organize a referendum or to join forces with socially responsible banks to meet legal requirements, this does not mean that they are anti-democracy or pro-capitalism. Sometimes an approach requires greater concessions than preferred, but on most occasions initiatives’ approaches and values of serving people before profits correspond. For the people part of the movements it may be a major challenge to find and focus on the commonalities with certain other groups, since one’s own group has to be surpassed. However, as soon as the people involved are able to acknowledge that what they have in common with their fellow members is more important that what sets them apart, the movements will be empowered to strengthen interrelations and networks to engage the citizen, to mobilize the population and to move society towards the envisioned Change.

The need to unify, cooperate and create networks among Thessaloniki’s initiatives and movements could not be emphasized enough. Strengthening interrelations is a priority for a growing number of people as it could engage grass roots initiatives. Enhanced communication enables the building of networks, therefore strengthening the movements’ communal performativity and impact on society. As mutual understandings among initiatives and movements improve their cooperation, communication can empower their efforts, augmenting the impact of Thessaloniki’s social movements. As the previous showed, disagreements between and within movements are often linked to the disagreements among initiatives and their members. The other way around, communal performativity is a doing in which agreements between members and initiatives can build up to agreements, communication and cooperation among social movements. The concept of communal performativity expresses members, initiatives, and movements’ combined ability and aspiration to join forces. Thus, improved communication can convert aspirations into the ability to actually team up and forge networks that work towards societal change.

All in all, networks can indeed be a means to improve the communication with the movements, while allowing the initiatives to choose their own approach and focus on their own efforts when necessary. Whilst movements elsewhere have undoubtedly taken shape under different conditions, some of the challenges initiatives in Thessaloniki face are expected to be largely similar. To any extent, every social movement is probably troubled by the narcissism of minor differences, the stalemate of being both in- and outside, and the risk of lapsing into destructive criticism. Power is
everywhere and in order to turn a power struggle into an empowered struggle for justice, networks are prone to be key.

5.3 REFLECTIONS

Thessaloniki’s social movements have had a tremendous impact on me. They showed me that people can move mountains when they are able, urged and willing to do so together. Besides feelings of disappointments, severe power struggles, and plenty of shortcomings in communication, I came to believe that the water, food and labor movements are developing vital ways to enable society to revert the crisis into its opposite. Pressing situations in which an individualist population could no longer fulfill its own needs forced people to be open to situations in which the population starts showing solidarity with itself.

During the research process it began to dawn on me that these developments are not only pertinent for the Greek context and social movements elsewhere. The movements seem to possess one of the keys to a problem that many if not all European societies face. Their response to the 2009 crisis addresses the populations’ passivity to which neoliberal discourses have contributed. For societal change to happen – even in societies that are not yet that heavily hit by the crisis, I have been persuaded to believe that the populations should get engaged to stand up for their rights and participate in matters which concern everyone’s wellbeing. Experiencing the movements first hand colored my findings and analyses to the extent that this thesis is arguably more normative than a Master thesis tends to be. Although normativity undoubtedly has its shortcomings, veiled norms may be even more worrisome as they negate the subjective and political underpinnings of academics. I wanted to give a nuanced account of Thessaloniki’s social movements to draw attention to the multitude of seemingly contradictory perspectives, to the difficulties of these contradictions, and the potential of the multitude (Negri and Hardt 2004). However, the risk is that I have sketched too positive a picture to argue that social movements matter and can make a difference.

Moreover, my influence on the research field should not be left unmentioned. In formulating research questions I assumed that participants would be subjected by the group, as in the initiatives, that together with other groups, make up movements. During my research I realized my one bias towards individualism – in that the person should be protected against group pressures. In the field I experienced that the agency of the group can actually be more easily undermined by the so called individual as it takes one person to disturb an assembly, to leave a group, or even to destructively criticize the efforts of other initiatives. In my understanding these actions can delegitimize the efforts of the initiatives and movements on a whole. This critique of the so called individual may seem at odds with my argument on intersubjectivity – as the critique ironically appears to affirm the individual. Nevertheless, these insights could enable one to be perceptive to the way a person is able to both
disrupt and contribute to group efforts and bring about social emancipation. Throughout this thesis I have pressed that the people involved in the movements – and in general – are intersubjectively related to each other, to underline that agencies are relational and as such capable of bringing about communal performatives that combat neoliberal discourses. These analyses are, like the movements they cover, an experiment to interconnect structure and agency by means of various readings of power that I regard as being complementary. For power is not only in discourse but as much in the interconnected practices that seek to break with discourse.

At last I turn to a more personal issue this research raised. The criticism I came across, made me reflect upon my own criticism and the extent to which I fail to surpass my own opinion and to engage with a common ground that is open to differences. This helped me to analyze the criticism we all employ in our daily conversations and its power to both halt and further engagement. Although my engagement has risen out of criticism, criticism can also be the downfall of my engagement. As social movements rise out of criticism, it can also become their downfall.


Faulk, K.A. (2008) ‘If They Touch One of Us, They Touch All of Us: Cooperativism as a Counterlogic to Neoliberal Capitalism’, Anthropological Quarterly, 81:3.


APPENDIX

I. Movements, initiatives and participants*

*To get an overview of the interviewed participants, see appendix II and the list of interviews.

Water movement

1. Water initiative K136
   Aristotle and Olympus 32
   www.k136.org
   • Yannis, Dimitris, Panos, George, Midas, Rea

2. Coordination body SOS to nero
   Vassileos Georgiou Avenue 1
   http://sostetonero.blogspot.gr/
   • Stavros, Sophia, Vivian

3. Initiative Water warriors
   http://waterwarriors.espivblogs.net/category/uncategorized
   • Kostas, Michael

Food movement

4. Consumer cooperative Bioscoop*
   Karamanli 42
   http://www.bioscoop.gr/
   • Yannis, Panos, Kostas, Midas

5. Social center Micropolis/ collective Centrophia *
   Benizelou & Birakleiou 18
   • Achilles, Leonidas, Alexandros, Manos

6. Community gardening PER.KA
   Karatasou
   http://expeditionfreedom.org/2013/04/02/thessaloniki-perka-make-garden-not-war/
• Christos

7. **Consumer cooperative Allostropos***
   Chalkidikis 77
   https://www.facebook.com/pages/AllosTropos/320759924688271
   • Aleka

8. **Fair food initiative S.P.A.M.E.***
   K. Melenikou 29
   http://www.spame.gr/
   • Philipos, Maria

9. **Market without Mediators**
   Kalamaria
   • Frederick, Elfi

10. **Markets without Mediators**
    Ambelokipi
    • Dimitris, Vivian (informal)

11. **Open Network***
    http://anoixtodiktio.gr/
    • Elfi

*The initiatives Bioscoop, Centrophia, Allostropos, S.P.A.M.E. and Open Network are part of the food and the labor movements.

**Labor movement**

12. **Cooperative factory VioMe and its solidarity committee**
    www.viome.org
    • Micheal, Tomas, Anthony, Tasos, Yannis

13. **Cooperative bookshop Non-governed Cities**
    Alexander Svolou 28
    http://akyberntespoliteies.org/
• Anthony

   Aristostatelous 34
   • Christos, Stavros

15. Cooperative bar Belleville
   Philippou 80-82
   • Aurora

16. Cooperative café Domino
   Philippou 80
   https://www.facebook.com/ntominocafebar
   • Zacharia, Kostas

17. Cooperative bar Artcore
   Makedonikis Aminis 5
   • Petros and Manos

18. Cooperative restaurant Kazani
    Ioulianou 24
    http://kazanipoubrazei.org/
    • Luigi, Kostas

19. Online newspaper Egnatia post
    Valaoritou 20
    http://www.egnatiapost.gr/
    • Tasos, Dimitris

20. Cooperative Lawyer Partners
    Orfanidou 2
    • John, Elsa, Dimitris, Statha
21. Designer cooperative Point Blank
    Diamanti Olimpiou 20
    http://www.pointblank.gr/en/
    • Stelios

22. Cooperative Computerativa
    Agiou Nikolaou 10
    www.computerativa.org
    • Socrates, George

Remaining initiatives and movements

23. SOSChalcidice committee/ anti-gold movement
    http://soshalkidiki.wordpress.com/category/in-english/
    • Maria, Chara, Nikki

24. Social solidarity clinic KIA/ health movement
    Aisopu 26
    http://www.kiathess.gr
    • Margaret, Panos

25. Neighborhood group/ garbage movement
    Efkarpsia
    • Dimitris

26. Social center squat Sxoleio
    http://sxoleio12.wordpress.com
    • Socrates, Helena

27. Social center Eterotopia
    Ptolemaiwn 42
    http://left.gr/eterotopia
    • John, Isabella, Dimitra, Angeliki

28. Immigrant center Steki Metanaston
Ermou 23  
http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/  
- Yannis, Panos  

29. Social center Ecopolis  
Ptolemaic 29A  
http://oikopolissocialcenter.blogspot.gr/  
- Stella  

30. Social center Ardin  
Valouritou 1  
http://ardin-rixi.gr/  
- Darius, Jorgos  

31. Solidarity4all  
http://www.solidarity4all.gr/  
- Vivian, Petros  

32. People’s university  
Aristotle and Olympus 23  
- Yannis, George, Aeneas  

33. PROSKALO  
http://www.proskalo.net/  
- Yannis, Panos  

34. Alternative coin KOINO  
- Elfi, Maria  

35. Squat Terra in Cognita  
http://terraincognita.squat.gr/
• Luigi, John

36. Occupied channel ERT
http://ertlive.weebly.com/ert-3-live.html

• Stavros

37. Neighborhood group
Kalamaria

• Elfi, Frederick

38. Neighborhood group
Toumba

• Petros and Luigi

39. Club for Workers and Unemployed
Filippou street

• Tasos

40. Self-help center
Mitropoleos 10

• Alexandros

II. List of interviews
In chronological order
1. Interview with Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop among others on 17.2
2. Interview with Dimitris of water initiative K136 and water company EYATH on 18.2
3. Interview with Micheal of cooperative factory VioMe on 21.2
4. Interview with Vivian of Syriza’s foundation Solidarity4All on 24.2
5. Interview with Anthony of book cooperative Non-governed Cities on 24.2
6. Interview with Panos of water initiative K136 and supermarket Bioscoop on 24.2
7. Interview with Lykos, student and demonstrator on 25.2
8. Interview with Luigi and Kostas of cooperative restaurant Kazani on 25.2
9. Interview with Zacharia of cooperative café Domino on 25.2
10. Interview with Helena and Socrates of social center Sxoleio on 26.2
11. Interview with Petros of Syriza’s foundation Solidarity4All on 28.2
12. Interview with Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop among others on 28.2
13. Interview with Margaret of the Social solidarity clinic on 1.3
14. Interview with Yannis of immigrant center Steki Metanaston on 1.3
15. Interview with Aurora of cooperative bar Belleville on 2.3
16. Interview with Achilles of social center Micropolis on 2.3
17. Interview with Christos and Stavros of cooperative book café Poeta on 4.3
18. Interview with Sophia of water umbrella SOSte to nero on 5.3
19. Interview with Nikki of the anti-gold movement on 5.3
20. Interview with Kostas of cooperative café Domino on 6.3
21. Interview with Magda and Katherina of the Social solidarity clinic on 7.3
22. Interview with Leonidas of social center Micropolis on 9.3
23. Interview with Socrates of social center Sxoleio on 9.3
24. Interview with Stavros of water company EYATH and water umbrella SOSte to nero on 10.3
25. Interview with Micheal of Water Warriors and Bioscoop on 11.3
26. Interview with Tomas of K136, VioMe's solidarity committee among others on 11.3
27. Interview with Stavros of water umbrella SOSTe to nero and water company EYATH on 12.3
28. Interview with Luigi of cooperative restaurant Kazani on 13.3
29. Interview with Costas of Water Warriors and supermarket Bioscoop on 14.3
30. Interview with Petros and Manos of cooperative bar Artcore on 14.3
31. Interview with Aeneas of the People’s university on 15.3
32. Interview with Alexandros of social center Micropolis/ food collective Centrophia on 16.3
33. Interview with Vivian of Syriza’s foundation Solidarity4All on 17.3
34. Interview with Frederick of Kalamaria’s neighborhood group and its without mediators on 17.3
35. Interview with Sophie of social center Ecopolis on 17.3
36. Interview with Dimitris of water initiative K136 and water company EYATH on 18.3
37. Interview with Midas of supermarket Bioscoop and water initiative K136 on 18.3
38. Interview with Isabella, Dimitra and Angeliki of social center Eterotopia on 18.3
39. Interview with John of social center Eterotopia on 18.3
40. Interview with Dimitris of online newspaper cooperative Egnatia Post on 19.3
41. Interview with Yannis of water initiative K136, supermarket Bioscoop and many others on 19.3
42. Interview with Elfi of Open Network, KOINO and Kalamaria’s market without mediators on 20.3
43. Interview with George of water initiative K136 on 23.3
44. Interview with Dimitris of the garbage movement in Efkaripia on 24.3
45. Interview with Panos of the Social solidarity clinic on 25.3
46. Interview with Ilias of food initiative PER.KA on 25.3
47. Interview with Aleka of food cooperative Allostropos on 26.3
III. Interview questions

Context

1. What impact does/ did the Greece debt crisis have on Thessaloniki’s society?
2. How do you see the influence of the Troika; European Commission, European Bank and IMF?
3. What have been the effects of the crisis and the austerity measures?
4. What impact does/ did the crisis have on you and your community?
5. How are the debt crisis and the emergence of the social movement related?
6. What does neoliberalism mean for you? How is it related to the emergence of your project and of the social movement?

Your project / social movement as a whole
7. What are the goals of the project? How are these goals related to the goals of the social movement?

8. Under what conditions and by what means does the project hope to achieve these goals?

9. How is the project organized and how does it operate?

10. How does your project relate to Thessaloniki’s society?

11. What kind of responses does your project from Thessaloniki’s society? What responses is the social movement as a whole receiving?

12. Which role does citizen’s participation have in your project?

13. How will improvements be financed and what are the barriers to obtain finance?

14. Which main challenges does your project need to overcome to achieve improvement/success? What can your project and other initiatives learn from these challenges?

15. What is key to approach improvement/success?

16. What does your project (not) have in common with the other initiatives of Thessaloniki’s social movement?

17. What needs to happen on local, national and international level to create an optimal environment for public water to succeed? How does your project approach these levels and how are they interrelated?

18. What can the international water justice movement do to support your project as well as other initiatives?

Personal

19. What are the main characteristics your project is trying to develop? What defines your project?

20. Which role do you have in the project?

21. How do you experience your involvement with the social movement and your project in particular?

22. What roles do solidarity and competition play in the project and in the social movement?

23. How would you describe the role of each individual in the project?

24. How were you mobilized? How does the project mobilize people/ get people to participate?

25. Does the project empower people? If so, in what ways?

26. Do you agree with where the project is heading to?

27. What happens if some of the people involved disagree?

28. What kind of internal arguments is the movement and the project experiencing?

29. How are arguments dealt with, and perhaps solved?
30. Is there any hierarchy/ power division in the project and in the social movement as a whole?

**Impact**

31. How can the team improve itself, enhance its strength and impact on society?
32. How is the project/ social movement change you and the other people involved?
33. What impact is the project having on Thessaloniki’s society?
34. What lessons can be drawn for the successes and challenges your project and the social movement as a whole are facing?

**IV. Questionnaires**

**a. Initiatives’ questionnaire**

Name:

Own initiative(s):

1: active, 2: agreeing, 3: not familiar with, 4: disagreeing, 5: disapproving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>Personal relation</th>
<th>Relation between initiatives</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikropolis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social solidarity clinic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market without mediators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eterotopia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSste to nero</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water warriors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket bioscoop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-governed cities bookshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazani restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poeta bookshop cafe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleville bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domino cafe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcore bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSChalkidiki committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steki Metanaston</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood group(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecopolis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egnatia post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerativa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Population's questionnaire

| BIOME | ΛΑΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
| MIKROPOLIS
| ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ (12ο)
| KIONIKO IATREIO
| ANOIKTO DIKTYO
| AGORA XORIS MESAIZONTES
| ETEROTOMIA
| K136
| SOSTE TO NERO
| water warriors
| SuperMarket Bioscoop
| Akubernites politeies
| Kazani pou vrazi
| Poeto kafé-bibliotheki
| Belleville Cafe
| Domino Cafe
| Artcore cafe
| SOS HALKIIDI
| steki metanastwn
| omades geitoniwn
| Ecopolis
| PERKA
| EGNATIAPOST
| COMPUTERATIVA |