'IF YOU CAN'T, WE CAN!': LABOUR AS COMMONS, THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT ON THE MARGINS – A CASE STUDY ON THE WORKER-RECUPERATED COMPANY, VIO.ME, IN THESSALONIKI, GREECE

ANTHONY NICHOLAS PRASSOULIS

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASER OF ARTS**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

May 2018

Abstract

This Master's Thesis analyzes the worker occupation and takeover of the Vio.Me factory in Thessaloniki, Greece in a context of widespread business closures brought on by the economic crisis. The recuperation of the Vio.Me factory set in motion a deeply transformative process, as workers converted their bankrupted firm into a socially-oriented workers' cooperative. In this paper, I explore the ways in which the worker recuperation has transformed the abandoned factory into a common space for building and sustaining community, and the labour activity of workers into a process of commoning. I argue that while the Vio.Me takeover initially emerged as a defensive reaction against unemployment and poverty, it has become an offensive class-based struggle against power and representation in the workplace and beyond in pursuit of autonomy and the commons. I aim to demonstrate how the commons and commoning constitute a vehicle for transformative community and human development 'from below'.

Key words: Vio.Me, worker-recuperated company, autonomy, workers' control, the commons and commoning, solidarity economy, community and human development, Greece

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank all of my participants, especially the workers of Vio.Me and members of the Solidarity Initiative of Vio.Me, whom without this research would not have been possible. To the workers of Vio.Me, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your hospitality, candour, and most of all, for your inspiration in showing us all that another world is possible. I would also like to thank the Social Science and Humanities Research Council for supporting this research project. To my supervisory committee members, Sakis Gekas and Darryl Reed, thank you for continued support and helpful feedback throughout the entire research process. To my supervisor, Viviana Patroni, thank you for believing in me and supporting me over all these years, from my undergraduate studies through to the completion of this Master's Thesis, you have always been someone that I could turn to for advice and encouragement. To Margarita Sanchez, thank you so much for putting up with me through my frequent bouts of writer's block and self-doubt and for reading all of my drafts and discussing my ideas with me. Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family, my parents, brother and sister, and grandparents, for their unwavering support over the course of my academic career and for always accepting me for who I am and for never pushing me to do anything other than what I love to do. I would certainly not be the person I am today had it not been for them.

In memory of my late grandmother, Evdokia Prassoulis

<p style="text-align:center">Table **of Contents**</p>

List of Abbreviations

All Workers Militant Front (PAME)

Civil society organizations (CSOs)

Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

Confederation of Civil Servants (ADEDY)

European Central Bank (ECB)

European Union (EU)

General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE)

Global financial crisis (GFC)

Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)

Gross domestic product (GDP)

International financial institutions (IFIs)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Memoranda of Understanding (MoU)

Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC)

New Democracy (ND)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Pan Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)

Pan Hellenic Socialist Workers Organization (PASKE)

Public Benefit Program (PBP)

Radical Coalition of the Left (SYRIZA)

Social Insurance Institute (IKA)

Social Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep)

Solidarity Initiative (SI)

Social solidarity economy (SSE)

Worker recuperated company (WRC)

Chapter 1: Introduction

The global financial crisis (GFC) that erupted in 2008-09 in the heartland of neoliberal

capitalism spread to the semi-periphery and periphery of the global economy with devastating

effects. In Southern Europe, several countries were soon engulfed in sovereign debt crises that

warranted the economic intervention of international financial institutions (IFIs) and

supranational governance bodies, including the European Union (EU) and the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), to provide financial assistance made conditional upon a strict adherence

to neoliberal policy prescriptions. The severe austerity measures and structural reforms imposed

on the countries of the European South had terrible consequences for the vast majority of people.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in Greece. Since 2010, consecutive Greek governments

have agreed to the conditionality of the 'troika', which consists of the European Central Bank

(ECB), the EU and the IMF. The structural adjustment imposed in Greece led to a deep and

prolonged economic depression which triggered a rapid expansion in unemployment, poverty

and social exclusion. During the era of austerity, the quasi-welfare state has been significantly

rolled back, enclosures of 'the commons' have increased dramatically through a sweeping

program of privatizations and drastic cutbacks in public spending, and a full frontal attack has

been waged on labour rights and protections in order to create a more flexible and precarious

regime of employment relations that is favourable to capital.

However, coupled with the negative consequences of the so-called 'Greek crisis', there

has been an explosion in popular participation and social creativity in resistance to neoliberal

induced austerity. With the onset of the crisis, we have witnessed the emergence of a

constellation of new political and social forces in Greece, including militant grassroots trade

unions, workers' collectives, social movements, and solidarity initiatives and networks, among others, that not only aim to address pressing social reproduction needs in times of crisis, but also challenge liberal representative democracy and neoliberal capitalism through their alternative economic practices and horizontal prefigurative politics. Many of these emergent projects, especially those dealing directly with the crisis of reproduction in Greece, have the constituent elements of commons systems (De Angelis, 2017).

1.1 Economic Depression, De-Industrialization and its effects on Employment

The city of Thessaloniki, the second largest metropolitan area in Greece located in the northern region of Central Macedonia, had long been in recession prior to the outbreak of the economic crisis in Greece after 2010 (Gialis & Leontidou, 2014, p. 10). As part of the broader de-industrialization of the Greek economy beginning in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, hundreds of regionally-based industries have left the city of Thessaloniki and relocated their production units in neighbouring Balkan countries to take advantage of the cheap labour supply (Gialis & Leontidou, 2014, p. 10). The neoliberal response to the crisis has only exacerbated this situation, as it has triggered the widespread bankruptcy and closure of small and medium-sized enterprises all over the country, with a total of 224,712 businesses disappearing from the Greek economy from the beginning of the crisis up until 2015 (Bellos, 2016).

The austerity measures and structural adjustment policies imposed in Greece have further exacerbated the decline of Greek industry and led to a significant contraction in construction and manufactory activity (Gialis & Leontidou, 2014, p. 14). Productive activity in the construction and manufacturing sectors sharply declined after 2009 by 12.5 percent and 32.3 percent, respectively (Gialis & Tsampra, 2015, p. 178). For that reason, construction and manufacturing have witnessed the highest total employment losses across all sectors of the Greek economy

(Gialis & Tsampra, 2015, p. 178), with these sectors shedding 156,100 and 230,000 jobs, respectively, between 2008 and the first quarter of 2013 (Antonopoulos, Adam, Kim, Masterson, & Papadimitriou, 2014, p. 20). As Tagaris (2017) describes it, the marks of austerity "are visible on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, where a once-thriving industrial zone that drew in thousands of workers now looks like a wasteland, overgrown with weeds and with company gates rusting away" (Opportunity in crisis, para. 3). It is in this context that we should understand the Vio.Me workers' struggle to occupy and takeover their abandoned workplace.

1.2 The Case of Vio.Me: A Short Introduction
This case study focuses on a worker recuperated factory, Viomichaniki Metaleftiki (Vio.Me), a subsidiary of the multinational company Filkeram-Johnson S.A., owned by the Philippou family, which is located in the outskirts of Thessaloniki in the municipality of Pylaia-Hortiatis. Since its establishment in 1982, the Vio.Me factory produced complimentary items for the construction industry, including adhesives, mortars and plasters (Avramidis & Galanopoulo, 2013). In the midst of the pre-crisis construction 'boom' in Greece, the Vio.Me factory was an economically viable enterprise that ranked among the top 20 most successful businesses in Northern Greece from 2000 to 2006 (Avramidis & Galanopoulo, 2013). The construction and manufacturing industries, however, have been among the hardest hit sectors of the Greek economy during the crisis, which, together with the blatant economic mismanagement of its owners, led to the decline of Vio.Me starting in 2008 and the subsequent bankruptcy and closure of the factory in 2011 (Avramidis & Galanopoulo, 2013). Faced with the real prospect of unemployment and poverty in the context of the economic crisis, forty Vio.Me workers collectively decided to occupy the abandoned factory and in 2013, they took over their company and restarted production under workers' control. Today, there are 26 worker-members in the Social

Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep) of Vio.Me who have been successful in self-managing their factory over the past five years.

1.3 Labour as a Commons and Worker Recuperated Companies

In the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008-9, we have witnessed the defensive reaction of workers to capitalist crisis manifest itself in the increasing number of factory occupations and worker takeovers across the globe. While factory occupations and takeovers had been commonplace in South America since the early 1990s, and especially after the turn of the century, particularly in Argentina, this kind of autonomous and direct action taken by workers had not occurred in the 'developed' countries of the global North nearly on the same scale. The GFC of 2008-09, however, acted as a catalyst for the emergence of worker occupations and takeovers in the northern hemisphere, with recuperated companies surfacing in the United States, France, Italy, Turkey and of course, Greece (Azzellini, 2015b). But what is a worker recuperated company (WRC)? First and foremost, it is important that we do not reduce WRCs to the continued existence of troubled firms on the verge of closing that merely change ownership from one to many owners (Azzellini, 2015a, p. 69). Rather, what distinguishes WRCs from other seemingly similar forms of worker organization and ownership is that they provide an alternative perspective on how to organize production and society and directly challenge private property and representative forms of democracy (Azzellini, 2015a, pp. 69, 93).

As I will demonstrate in chapter 3, I think that the conceptual framework of the 'commons' provides the most appropriate lens through which to view WRCs, as it adequately captures the transformative potential of recuperated companies and avoids the pitfalls associated with traditional Marxist thinking on workers' cooperatives. From being employees of a capitalist firm to becoming self-managed workers, the protagonists in struggles to recuperate their

companies are transformed into 'commoners' who pool their material/immaterial resources into a 'common pot' (De Angelis, 2017, p. 127) and, in turn, (re)produce the community of commoners, both materially and socially, through their 'commoning' activity, which I will elaborate on in much detail in chapter 4. In what follows, my intention is to demonstrate how the Vio.Me workers have transformed their company and the collective creative capacity to create, or their labour-power, into a commons by analyzing the organizational practices, norms and structures the workers have established in the decision-making and labour processes to create and maintain the labour commons. Given that I view Vio.Me as a distinctly anti-capitalist commons (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014), and worker cooperatives as transformative vehicles for community and human development, my purpose here is also to discuss the ways in which Vio.Me constitutes an antagonistic social force outside the dictates of the market and state and how their commoning praxis is contributing to real human and community development 'from below'. My main argument is that while the Vio.Me workers' struggle emerged as a defensive reaction it has transformed into an offensive struggle to create and maintain the commons in order to achieve the goals of human and community development amidst a deep crisis of social reproduction in Greece.

1.4 Why is this Research Important?

As mentioned above, the neoliberal response to the crisis has failed to bring about a renewed period of economic growth, employment and 'development'. On the contrary, it has directly contributed to widespread under- and unemployment, increased levels of poverty, growing precarity and loss of labour rights and protections, and the dismantling of the social state. In this context, it seems now more necessary than ever to explore alternatives to the dominant neoliberal model of development and the precarious regime of labour relations being constituted in Greece

today. With the roll back of the developmental and social welfare functions of the state, and the failure of market-led development, an alternative development strategy independent of both market and state, which is people-centred and ecologically and socially sustainable, is much needed. I think that this case study on Vio.Me puts forward some of the elements of such an alternative development strategy and provides an empowering example for workers dispossessed by the crisis to take their lives into their own hands in order to reclaim the power to decide on matters that directly affect their lives and ultimately, to have control over their own destiny.

I believe that the findings of this research study will make important contributions, both theoretically and practically, to the emerging scholarly work on WRCs in the context of Europe and more broadly, to contemporary analyses of workers' control. From a theoretical standpoint, drawing on an autonomist Marxist perspective, this research study contributes to the development of an alternative perspective on cooperative labour within the dominant capitalist economy that challenges the so-called 'degenerative thesis' and the orthodox Marxist school of thought on class struggle and social change. Furthermore, this research contributes to the growing body of scholarly work that views human labour-power and WRCs as distinctive 'commons' and attempts to draw out important connections between 'commoning' and community and human development. Practically, on the other hand, this detailed case study on Vio.Me provides a living example for the mass 'reserve army of labour' in Greece today that occupation and self-management is a real alternative to the unemployment, poverty and social exclusion brought on by the crisis. What is more, with over 1,000 abandoned industrial spaces in Greece today, the empirical evidence gathered in this research project suggests that the Greek government should create a legal framework to support workplace recuperations and to provide financial assistance to self-managed workers without infringing upon their autonomy. With that

being said, I believe that the findings of this research study also show that autonomous workers are capable of making significant gains to improve their economic and social conditions without being dependent on official trade union bureaucracies and mainstream political parties, and do so independently from the dictates of the free-market and the capitalist state.

1.5 Aim and Objectives

- ➢ Aim: To explore the relationship between the process of workplace recuperation and community and human development.

- ➢ Objective #1: To understand the motivations of the Vio.Me workers in recuperating and self-managing their workplace.

- ➢ Objective #2: To critically examine workers' perceptions on how the nature of work and their workplace has changed under workers' control.

1.6 A Road Map for the Thesis

Following this introduction, in chapter 2, I provide a rationale for the methodological approach deployed in the process of conducting this fieldwork, analysing the data collected and presenting my findings. My aim is to explore the ways in which I have attempted to merge academic research with activism through active participation in the 'field' and a (re)presentation of the data collected through what Routledge (1996) calls the 'third space' of critical engagement. I argue that there is a need to reconceptualise reflexivity in order to shift the focus away from a narrow articulation of the researcher's identity and positionality toward a more material/institutional focus, which acknowledges the economic, political, and institutional processes and structures that impact fieldwork, and places greater emphasis on the motivations, values, and moral/ethical standards that guide research practice.

In chapter 3, in an effort to build on the context provided in this introduction, I look at the so-called 'Greek crisis' and the material consequences of neoliberal austerity and structural reforms in Greece imposed under three consecutive Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between Greek governments and the country's creditors. More specifically, my aim is to examine the effects of the neoliberal response to the crisis which has resulted in the explosion of unemployment, rising levels of poverty and growing flexibility and precarity in the labour market. Then, I take a look at the deep crisis of representation that started with the December Riots of 2008, which has been exacerbated during the years 'in crisis', and the emergence of a new constellation of political and social forces in Greece. The final section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the history of Greek cooperativism and workers' control, focusing specifically on the politicization of the cooperative movement by mainstream political parties and the intrusion of the state, and the emergence of a new autonomous cooperative movement in Greece today.

In chapter 4, I begin with a brief theoretical overview of Marx's understanding of human labour-power, the alienation, domination and exploitation inherent in capitalist social relations of production, and his views on cooperative labour and system change. Here, my aim is to provide a review of the extant literature on worker-managed enterprises, focusing on WRCs in particular, from the competing theoretical perspectives of orthodox Marxism, on the one hand, and autonomist Marxist and other leftist critics of capitalism, on the other. Then, I outline the conceptual framework of the 'commons' and its relationship to WRCs, the solidarity economy, and community and human development.

In chapters 5 through 7, I present the empirical findings and engage in conversation with the existing literature. In chapter 5, I explore the circumstances that propelled the Vio.Me

workers to take autonomous and direct action in collectively deciding to occupy and takeover their workplace after the owners abandoned it. Consistent with the extant literature on WRCs, I argue that although the Vio.Me workers' struggle initially emerged as a defensive reaction to unemployment and poverty, through the process of struggle itself, it has shifted gears toward a wider transformative project for workers' and social self-management. In doing so, I critically examine the relationship between Vio.Me and the legal state, official trade union bureaucracies, and political parties of the 'left' in Greece, including the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the Radical Coalition of the Left (SYRIZA). Here, I deal with some of the tensions that have emerged out of these relationships and compare and contrast the opposing views of Vio.Me's critics with the way workers themselves perceived their own struggle, in particular focusing on the dichotomy between solidarity and charity.

In chapter 6, my aim is to critically examine the two moments of commoning outlined by De Angelis (2017), that is, the process of decision-making and social labour in common, as it relates to the case of Vio.Me. Here, I explore the ways in which the recuperation of the Vio.Me factory has constituted the workers' coop into a 'labour commons' (de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2010) and the impact it has had on workplace democracy and the collective de-alienation and self-development of workers through practice.

In chapter 7, my intention is to examine the commoning practice of the Vio.Me workers' cooperative as a practical and effective self-help strategy in times of crisis. Drawing on the relevant literature and my empirical findings, I discuss how commoning in the case of Vio.Me is a vehicle for transformative community and human development, as the Vio.Me workers expand the commons to bring in new worker-members and incorporate the cultural, economic, and social needs of the wider community into their cooperative business model. I argue that the process of

recuperation has transformed workers into community-minded individuals and their workplace into what Vieta (2014) has termed a 'transformative community organization'.

In the final chapter, I summarize the arguments presented in this thesis and provide some concluding remarks. I also propose avenues for further research on the case of Vio.Me and the topic of WRCs in general.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This research project is based on fieldwork conducted over the course of three and a half months, between May 15th and August 31st 2016, in various locations throughout Greece, but mainly in the two largest urban centres, Athens and Thessaloniki. To gather the data for this study, I deployed an ethnographic case study approach focusing on a self-managed factory, Vio.Me, in the northern city of Thessaloniki that was abandoned by its owners in 2011 and subsequently occupied and reopened under workers' control in 2013. I employed qualitative methods commonly used in social science research, including non-participant observation, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews, in order to explore the lived experiences, as well as "unconscious and unarticulated practices" research participants perform in their local context, which are difficult to acquire through quantitative methods of inquiry (Bosco & Herman, 2003 p. 204; Watson and Till, 2003, pp. 122, 131). Adopting a multi-methods research approach in conducting this study was a part of a strategy to triangulate the data collected in order to better ensure the reliability of the results. As Ayoub, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millan (2014) suggest, "by utilizing multiple methods, data resources, theories, and/or observations, scholars can better account for and overcome the limits and biases inherent in studies that employ a single method, theory, data source, or observer" (p. 67).

Prior to departing for the 'field', I established a few initial contacts in Greece via email, providing them with some information about myself and the purpose of my research study. Making these initial contacts proved to be crucial in gaining access to key participants during my fieldwork. In particular, an Athens-based activist that I met, Christina Papadopoulos, who is a member of the workers' collective *kafenio* (coffee shop) at Akadimia Platonos, as well as the Integral Cooperative of Athens, became a 'gatekeeper' introducing me to social movement life in

Greece and providing me with the names and contact information for a number of other activists, volunteers and workers that would later participate in this research. As I began to understand the dynamics of the 'field', I purposefully selected participants in an attempt to capture the complexities involved in the case of Vio.Me, including their relationship with trade unions, political parties, and the state, the various legal and political challenges workers continue to face, and in what ways the self-managed factory has been embedded in the networks of the solidarity economy movement that has emerged in Greece during the crisis.

2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

For this study, I conducted 31 semi-structured interviews with participants that I have categorized into the following groups: academics, government officials, trade unionists, members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), members of the Solidarity Initiative (SI) of Vio.Me, participants in the solidarity and cooperative economy, as well as the main subjects of this research, the worker-members of the Vio.Me cooperative. All of the semi-structured interviews conducted were tape recorded, with the informed consent of my participants, and later transcribed and coded. With the intention of gathering detailed accounts of my participants' experiences, I used semi-structured interviews to facilitate flexible and collaborative, as opposed to interrogative, conversations with interviewees (Longhurst, 2003, p. 118; McDowell, 2003, p. 163). When I conducted interviews I made a conscious effort to intervene as little as possible in order to allow participants to direct the course of the interview in a way they saw fit and to bring to the fore the issues they believed to be most pertinent to their individual and collective experiences (Longhurst, 2003; McDowell, 2003; McLafferty, 2003). Nevertheless, I did have some broad themes and specific questions that I wanted to explore in the interviews I conducted with my participants. Interview questions were custom tailored according to each individual

participant and their various affiliations and roles. For the most part, however, these interviews touched on the following issues: the impact the 'crisis' has had on working populations; the reaction of trade unions and political parties to the dismantling of labour rights and protections; the emergence of the solidarity economy; and the relationship between the SYRIZA government and the solidarity economy movement.

In the interviews with workers from Vio.Me, I drew on the approach used by Vieta (2014) in conducting interviews with Argentine workers from WRCs, focusing on the transformation in workers' subjectivities and their organizations that emerged in the process of converting their troubled firms into worker cooperatives. More specifically, given the aim and objectives of this project, I focused mainly on the following two topics in great detail. First, I examined the personal changes in workers' attitudes, practices and values, in addition to their motivations for participating in the occupation and self-management of their workplace, and how they understood and experienced work differently after the recuperation of the factory. The interviews also delved into the changes in the relationships between co-workers and between workers and the community, including how connected workers felt to the surrounding neighbourhood, their concern and interest for, as well as how they participated in, community development initiatives (Vieta, 2014, p. 196). Secondly, I focused on the changes in the organization of labour, and the decision-making process, in the workplace and its effects on workers' informal learning processes and self-development, the practices of direct democracy, horizontality and egalitarianism among workers, and the collectivization of the labour process in administrative, commercial, and productive activities. Although this approach to conducting semi-structured interviews allowed for the collection of rich data on participants' experiences, it does raise some methodological concerns. Like Kokkinidis (2015a) reports on the use of semi-

structured interviews in his research study on three Athens-based workers' collectives, employing flexible interview structures gives participants the opportunity to engage in ways of self-reporting. Therefore, the subjective interpretations of participants on the decision-making and organizational processes in worker-controlled enterprises are certainly limited by "their intention to reveal or conceal information as well as to reflect on any potential gaps between their desire to create an autonomous and democratic space and their actual practices" (Kokkinidis, 2015a, p. 8). In my fieldwork, I encountered similar challenges when interviewing workers from Vio.Me, as it appeared that individual participants often times provided one-sided, positive accounts of their aspirations for, and experiences with, workers' control. For that reason, I think participants' were able to produce affirmative collective self-representations during interviews. With that being said, however, I do believe that I was able to mitigate the negative impact of these potential sources of bias by using non-participant observation and participant observation during my fieldwork, as part of an effort to produce more reliable accounts of participants' experiences through the triangulation of data, as mentioned above.

2.2 Non-participant Observation

Non-participant observation was one of the methods that I used throughout this research. Over the course of my fieldwork, I visited various solidarity initiatives and worker cooperatives in both Athens and Thessaloniki, on a number of occasions in some cases, observing their daily activities and engaging in informal conversations with their members. I also attended several political festivals during my fieldwork, including the B-Fest 5 and the Solidarity and Cooperative Economy Festival in Athens, as well as the No Border Camp in Thessaloniki, where I had the opportunity to listen to presentations given by academics, activists and refugees as well as participants in solidarity economy initiatives and alternative labour organizations, including the

workers of Vio.Me and members of the SI of Vio.Me. The use of non-participant observation proved to be an effective method for gathering rich data on the collective ideological and political beliefs of these groups and how they managed to merge their visions of an alternative model of economic and social life into their everyday practices. During my several visits to Vio.Me, I observed the interactions between workers, the distribution of tasks within the organization of work, and the community-based activities that workers engaged in within the common space of the factory. These observations allowed me to check what the workers of Vio.Me had repeatedly told me during informal conversations and formal interviews, which is that the factory has been opened up to society and that the nature of work has changed drastically under self-management. During my time in Thessaloniki, I also attended the weekly meetings of the SI of Vio.Me at the Micropolis social centre, which allowed me to observe how workers interacted and collaborated with community members and the ways in which their values of autonomy, direct democracy, and equality were put into practice in this open assembly. Overall, being able to observe my participants' activities in these different spaces, which allowed me to become closer to the workers of Vio.Me, as well as the members of the SI, over the course of my fieldwork, I began to understand how their everyday practices were situated in a broader agenda of radical social change. However, as Laurier (2003) points out, it is not enough for researchers "to watch what is going on and then write down their observations" without having been "involved in … the things they are observing" because, inevitably, the analysis produced will lack the descriptive depth and insight into the daily activities, social relations, and spaces that participants are embedded in (p. 135). With this in mind, I consciously made an effort to combine forms of non-participant observation with more active forms of participation while in the 'field'.

2.3 Participant Observation

When I arrived in the capital city of Athens, the first interview I had arranged, via email from Toronto, was with Christina Papadopoulos from the *kafenio* at Akadimia Platonos, whom I mentioned earlier. After the interview, Christina and I sat for a couple of hours, while she attended the bar, discussing everything from politics and social movements in Greece to the sharing of autobiographical facts and stories that often placed emphasis on a common 'Greekness'. The *kafenio* became a place I frequented during my time in Athens and with the 5th Solidarity and Cooperative Economy Festival fast approaching, Christina asked if I would like to volunteer and I enthusiastically accepted her offer. I thought being a volunteer would give me the chance to move beyond the position of a detached observer toward a more engaged role as an active participant capable of drawing greater insights into the lived experiences of my participants (Laurier, 2003, pp. 134-135). However, my decision to participate in the Festival was much more than a methodological tool used to collect 'better' data; rather, it was part of an ethical commitment to engage in egalitarian and participatory forms of research practice in order to avoid being overly 'extractive' and to give back to my participants in whatever way possible.

After a short time in Toronto, I returned back to Thessaloniki in October 2016 to participate in the Second Euro-Mediterranean Meeting for the Workers' Economy, where I presented the preliminary findings of this research. This three day event, which occurred between October 28th and 30th 2016 at the Vio.Me factory, was organized by the workers of Vio.Me, alongside the SI of Vio.Me and the Network of Athens Worker Collectives, providing fertile grounds for participant observation. As part of a workshop, "In dialogue with Vio.Me," I had the opportunity to receive feedback from my participants on my interpretations of the workers' struggle and to further engage in collaborative research practice, which is important for horizontal forms of knowledge production. I believe that having the workers of Vio.Me be active

participants in this research not only gave me the ability to develop more reliable representations of my participants' experiences, but it also provided a way to transfer the egalitarian research practices employed in the process of data collection into the production of knowledge itself. Moreover, I also participated in a working commission, "Democracy within worker-run companies," where the discussion centred on the issue of workplace democracy, which created a space that allowed for the sharing of ideas and experiences among participants that would later contribute to the closing session of the Meeting. During this workshop, I engaged in a dialogue with my participants, including worker-members from the Vio.Me cooperative, the Micropolis social centre, and the Pagkaki workers' collective, which, as opposed to the semi-structured interviews I had conducted earlier during my fieldwork, created an open space for fruitful discussion and debate.

2.4 (Re)Defining Reflexivity

The shift toward post-positivism in the social sciences has rejected the orthodox perspective of a detached and neutral researcher. Instead, it is now commonly accepted "that the researcher is a central figure who influences, if not actively constructs, the collection, selection and interpretation of data" (Finlay, 2002, p. 212). In view of this, qualitative researchers are encouraged to be more attentive to the issues of identity and positionality, as well as the differences which exist between researchers and their participants, through engaging in reflexive practice (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kobayashi, 2003; Wills, 2007). Reflexivity is an ongoing process of self-awareness and self-analysis that involves a constant negotiation and reflection on the researcher's identity and position (Pillow, 2003, p. 178), and a conscious acknowledgment of the ways in which "one is inserted in grids of power relations and how that influences methods, interpretations, and knowledge production" (Sultana, 2007, p. 376).

The process of engaging in reflexive analysis is always problematic and consequently, it has come under intense scrutiny from researchers claiming that it advances a privileged and self-indulgent focus on the self to the exclusion of participants' voices (Finlay, 2002, p. 215; Kobayashi, 2003, p. 348). As Pillow (2003) suggests, reflexive strategies often "provide the researcher with a form of self-reflexivity as confession that often yields a catharsis of self-awareness for the researcher, which provides a cure for the problem of doing representation" (p. 181). In a similar vein, Nager and Geiger (2007) maintain that the more frequent engagement in reflexive practice in the wake of the 'crisis of representation' in fieldwork-based research has now reached an 'impasse' and if the aim is to create "politically transformative knowledge across social divides," it is necessary for researchers to rethink how we use and reproduce these concepts and to what end (p. 269). This would accordingly require a shift in the concept of reflexivity from an insistent focus on, and privileging of, the identity of individual researchers toward a more material/institutional focus, which brings greater attention to the "economic, political and institutional processes and structures that shape the form and effects of fieldwork" (Nager & Geiger, 2007, p. 270). I would add to this (re)conceptualization of reflexivity a greater focus on our motivations as well as our core values and moral/ethical standards, given that these undoubtedly have an impact on all aspects of research (Wills, 2007, p. 133).

From the outset of this research, the choices I made with regard to how, where, why, and with whom, I conducted my fieldwork were primarily motivated by my sense of identity and my interest in alternative forms of labour organization and resistance. I wanted to know what, if any, transformative potential workers' movements still had in the era of neoliberal globalization, which has led many to "prematurely pronounce the death of the working class" (Silver, 2014, pp. 48-49). As a Greek-Canadian embedded in a transnational social field, I am constantly engaged

in ways of being and belonging that continuously (re)shape my evolving transnational consciousness and hybrid identity, as it oscillates between 'here', 'there' and the spaces 'in-between' (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, pp. 1010-1011). Hence, as a researcher, I was already always positioned as both an 'insider' and 'outsider' even before I entered the 'field'. Given the contemporary 'crisis' in Greece, I felt a strong moral responsibility to take this opportunity to simultaneously engage in academic research and activism *with* and *for* resisting others in a context of political struggle against economic dispossession (Routledge, 2002, p. 478). Here, I followed Routledge and Dickerson's (2015) invitation "for aspiring scholar-activists to enter the logic of an insurrectionary imagination … to let our core values … and feelings directly inform our research" (p. 396). I wanted to provide what I felt was a much needed counter narrative to the dominant representations of the mainstream media that portrayed Greeks as 'corrupt', 'lazy' and 'living beyond their means', which had real material consequences for everyday Greek people, given that it provided a moral justification for the imposition of severe anti-social austerity and structural adjustment policies. In addition, with all the negativity surrounding Greece in the media, from the economic depression to the refugee crisis and the rise of the extreme right, I wanted to shed a light of hope on a very dark situation through the struggles of everyday people in Greece, whose voices are rarely heard outside of certain activist and academic circles, that have taken their lives into their own hands in an attempt to build an alternative people-centred solidarian society in, against, and beyond the 'Greek crisis'.

2.5 Defining the 'Field': Difference and Power Relations

Quite early on during my fieldwork, I met Kostas Charitakis, an Athens-based worker-member of the Vio.Me cooperative, at B-Fest 5, a political festival organized by Babylonia magazine. Kostas was participating in a discussion on self-management and later on that night, we sat down to do an interview when he told me that many of the workers of Vio.Me would be travelling to Athens as part of the Caravan of Solidarity and Struggle to stage a protest at the Ministry of Labour. As a result, I decided to change my plans so I could stay in Athens, rather than travel to Thessaloniki to visit the factory as I had previously intended to do, in order to participate in a demonstration demanding the legal operation of the factory under workers' control and the immediate stoppage of auction procedures by the courts. In this way, I believe that the uneven power relations between myself and my participants, whereby I maintain the authority as a researcher to define the field and "what constitutes inside and outside that field," were disrupted by the forms of protest and resistance adopted by the workers in their everyday struggle for self-management (Routledge, 1996, p. 408).

During the first days of July, my research site shifted to the Ministry of Labour in Athens as the workers of Vio.Me, and those in solidarity with their struggle, occupied the public space outside the government building. As workers and activists began to setup tents and discuss how they would get food and water through local solidarity networks for the following days of protest, the class differences between myself and my participants were brought into stark relief. My lived experiences were so different from my participants, which demonstrated that despite our cultural, ethnic, and linguistic similarities, I could not consider myself to be an 'insider' in this context (Gilbert, 1994, p. 92). In a conversation with workers from Roben of the Woods, a second occupied factory in Greece, Nikos and Socrates asked me what kind of research I was doing in Greece and if I was receiving funding to conduct fieldwork. I responded candidly,

reciprocating the sincerity and trust workers had expressed when sharing their personal

experiences and emotions during interviews, explaining to them that I was doing research on

workplace recuperations and that I had received funding from York University and the

Government of Canada to conduct this research. An uncomfortable silence arose, along with a

mutual sense of bewilderment, as to why a young Greek-Canadian graduate student was being

funded to study what those same workers interpreted as a simple act of desperation to reclaim

their dignity and livelihoods in the crisis, especially at a time when the workers were in desperate

need of capital to restart production and keep the factory in the hands of the workers.

2.6 Blurring the Boundaries: The Spaces of Betweeness

During the early days of my fieldwork, it quickly became evident to me that I was neither an

'insider' nor an 'outsider' in this context but instead, I found myself somewhere in the space

between (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). Certainly, the differences between myself and my

participants were always visible throughout the research. However, as Nast (1994) puts it, to

express "guilt that centres merely on the existence of this inequality and not on how the

inequality can be transformed is therefore unproductively paralyzing" and that, in fact,

"difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions that requires that we are always

everywhere in between or negotiating the worlds of me and not-me" (pp. 57-58). It appeared to

be more constructive to find ways to build on the common ground I shared with my participants,

albeit from vastly different positions, in standing against austerity and economic dispossession,

rather than essentializing our differences (Katz, 1994, p. 70; Kobayashi, 1994, p. 76; Routledge

& Derickson, 2015, p. 392). In fact, the issues of difference and distance between myself and my

participants did not figure so prominently in this research, and those which did persist in the

course of my fieldwork, I believe were at least partially bridged through building relations of

solidarity in a struggle against structures of dominance and oppression that all of us are embedded in, albeit in vastly different ways (Routledge, 1996, p. 411). In order to negotiate and meaningfully engage with difference in a potentially transformative way, I believe it is necessary to adopt a relational ethics of research that takes into consideration the social context in which the research and the researcher are situated and acknowledges "that our responsibility to others and to difference is connected to the responsibility to act" (Routledge, 2002, p. 487).

During the protests at the Ministry of Labour, I offered to help distribute leaflets to pedestrians in the busy streets of central Athens and following the first general assembly, I decided to answer the call for volunteers to take four-hour shifts, on a daily basis, to sit-in at the demonstration. Unfortunately, earlier that morning, the protest was met by the violent attacks of the riot police, known as the Units for the Reinstatement of Order (MAT); I scrambled to evade their swinging clubs, and covered my face to stop the tear gas that began to fill the street from entering my mouth, throat and eyes, whilst attempting to take pictures and videos that captured the coercive arm of the neoliberal state cracking down on a peaceful demonstration by workers. I vividly remember Dimitri Koumatsioulis, a worker from Vio.Me, saying to me at the time 'you will write of all of this'! This description of my experiences with political activism in the 'field', however, should not be misinterpreted as an egoistic self-acknowledgment for being an 'academic-activist' that is *with* resisting others, nor as a self-reflexive confessional account that aims to make claims to more 'accurate' or 'valid' data collected through the lens of an 'insider' perspective. Prior to my fieldwork, I followed the workers' struggle from a distance; whereas activists, local community members, and researchers in solidarity with the workers of Vio.Me had campaigned to collect food and raise money for workers in desperate times of need, resisted the attempts made by police to physically evict the workers from the factory and blocked auction

procedures in the courts on a number of occasions. Here, my intention is simply to acknowledge that this research study is influenced by my own position in and commitment to the Vio.Me workers' struggle.

The performed identity of an activist in the 'field' gave me the opportunity to participate in forms of protest that not only challenged structures of dominance and oppression, but also had the effect of disrupting the power relations embedded in the 'researcher-researched' relationship, as it forged bonds of solidarity across social divides. For Maxey (1999), the social world is continuously produced through the everyday actions and thoughts that each of us engages in and therefore, he understands "activism to be the process of reflecting and acting upon this condition" (p. 201). In conducting this fieldwork, I adopted what Maxey (1999) refers to as a 'direct action attitude', which "means doing as much as I can from where I am at" (p. 201). I did not have the capacity, by any means, to mobilize significant resources, but I did have the time to participate while in the 'field'. I believe that being together with my participants at the protest in Athens, and other events throughout the course of my fieldwork, positively impacted our relationship in ways that influenced the collection of data. When I visited the factory in Thessaloniki a couple of weeks after the protest, the workers I met in Athens introduced me to their co-workers, saying: 'he is one of our boys' and 'he was with us' in Athens. With that being said, however, I could not help but at times feel that I was constantly imposing myself on the time and space of the workers. Although I knew that my participants were committed to setting an example for other workers that self-management is both necessary and possible in the crisis, I felt that they must have been suffering from some degree of 'research fatigue' by this point. After all, I was just another researcher among many who had come and gone before me, with it still being unclear what material benefits have been procured by the workers. Hence, I certainly

recognize that the outcomes of the present research study will inevitably be more beneficial to me than it will be for my participants (Katz, 1994, p. 72).

Through direct engagement in political activism, I positioned myself in a way that allowed me to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of the Vio.Me workers, and the structures of dominance they face in their daily struggles, than would have been possible had I reserved myself to a more detached and neutral researcher role (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 74). More importantly, I believe that engaging in political activism presented an opportunity to build *situated* solidarities, "which seek to reconfigure our academic fields in relation to the 'fields' that our 'research subjects' inhabit," so that the research project intersects and is politically aligned with the objectives of resisting others, avoiding the pitfalls of 'extractive' research that use other people's struggles for the purpose of (re)producing academic discourses, or patronizing attempts to 'give voice' to others that seemingly lack the agency to act and speak for themselves (Kobayashi, 1994, pp. 76-78; Nager & Geiger, 2007, p. 273). For me, the intention was never to 'give voice' to the workers of Vio.Me, especially considering that the workers themselves, in addition to the SI, have a much broader audience and the influence to raise awareness for their ongoing struggle across international borders than a novice researcher such as myself does. I agree with Routledge (1996) that it is very problematic and "all too easy for academics to claim solidarity with the oppressed and act as relays for their voices … [which] raises the danger of an uncritical alignment with resisters on the assumption that they know all there is to know," reducing the researcher's role to "that of helping them seize the right to speak" (p. 413). My aim in the analysis that follows is to engage in a way of *speaking-with* my participants (Nager & Geiger, p. 270) through occupying what Routledge (1996) refers to as the 'third space' of critical engagement. According to Routledge (1996),

the third space is a place of the third voice, an amalgam of subject positions, of academic and activist voices … [which] holds out the possibility that "insider" and "outsider" voices may coalesce into a new perspective, one which is not just counter-hegemonic or simply oppositional … but which opens a new arena of negotiation, meaning, and representation" (pp. 413-414).

Engaging with the 'third space', I think that as a researcher I am better situated to work towards a "commitment to deconstruct the barrier between the academy and the lives of the people it professes to represent" in a way that contributes to "redefining scholarly endeavours, as a means not only of interpreting, but also of effecting, social change" (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 73).

3.1 The 'Greek Crisis' and its Consequences

The now infamous Great Recession of 2008, which started in the United States as a sub-prime mortgage crisis, would rear its ugly head shortly thereafter in the periphery of the Eurozone. In Greece, as in other Southern European countries like Portugal, Italy and Spain (the so-called PIGS), the GFC manifest itself in the form of a 'sovereign debt crisis', "implying that the Greek state and (of course) its citizens had to take responsibility for paying off the debt that had been incurred" (Rakopoulos, 2013, p. 102). In 2009, the Greek debt problem became evident when the newly elected social-democratic government revised the budget deficit figures reported by the previous conservative government from 3.7 percent to 15.7 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the public debt from 99.6 percent to 126.8 percent of the GDP (Matsaganis, 2012, p. 407). The social effects of this latest structural crisis of global capitalism surfaced in Greece after 2010, when the Pan Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government, led by Prime Minister George Papandreou, signed the first MoU, accepting the conditionalities of its international creditors in return for a 110 billion euro financial 'bailout' package (Matsaganis, 2012, p. 407). Since then, following the agreement of successive Greek governments with so-called 'troika', an additional two MoU have been imposed in Greece. As Dimitris A. Sotiropoulos, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Athens, explained to me:

> The Memoranda have now proven to be unavoidable … there was no other way so, unfortunately, the survival of the Greek economy depended on three Memoranda, which means we have a positive effect which is coupled, of course, with a negative effect. The positive effect is that Greece has not gone bankrupt as did Argentina and Ecuador ... Now, the negative effect, of course, is very visible; we have a rapid extension of poverty,

we have also a phenomenon of social exclusion much more acute than we had before the crisis started, and what is even more worrisome, is that we have a soaring rate of unemployment that doesn't look like it will decrease in the next few years as a result of current government policies (D. Sotiropoulos, personal communication, July 11, 2016).

The Memoranda strategy of the 'troika' in Greece has prescribed a strong dose of fiscal austerity measures and structural adjustment policies, resembling those imposed on countries of the global South by IFIs in the 1980s and 1990s, which failed miserably in dealing with the root causes of economic crises and had severe economic and social consequences for the vast majority of people.

During the pre-crisis period, according to the quasi-Orientalist dominant rhetoric on the 'Greek crisis', the 'lazy' and 'profligate' Greek people were 'living beyond their means' while enjoying an 'excess of labour rights' and the benefits of an overly generous social welfare system (Markantonatou, 2013, p. 62; Ntampoudi, 2014, pp. 6-7). This dominant narrative of 'Greek exceptionalism' has been deployed by domestic and European elite through the corporate-dominated media in order to "prove a connection between (a fundamentally rotten) Greekness and the economic crisis" that could moralize the emergency politics of austerity and the disciplinary agenda of the 'troika' (Mylonas, 2014, pp. 310-311). As Theodoros Karyotis, a member of the SI of Vio.Me in Thessaloniki, puts it:

the idea of Greece being in trouble because it has not adopted the rational laws of the market is pure ideology. On the contrary, Greece has adopted, in the past two or three decades, exactly the dictates of the market … the debt crisis is used as an opportunity to reach a new level in this kind of dispossession. The problem is there is no such thing as the Greek crisis. This is totally an imaginary thing the 'Greek crisis'. First of all, it's not

Greek. There is nothing Greek in this situation. It has been applied in dozens of third

world countries in the past using sovereign debt as an excuse for extreme policies of

dispossession. Only now, it is imported closer to the European centre. This is the new

thing, but it's not a Greek thing, and of course, it's not a crisis. A crisis would mean an

extraordinary event; a situation where the system is in a disequilibrium and it is trying to

find an equilibrium. But this is not a crisis because this is precisely the new equilibrium,

or the new normality. It is a new mode of accumulation for capital which is spreading

throughout the world right now (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016).

In Greece, the typical IFI adjustment programs had to be modified given that it was the first time

that a 'developed' economy within a monetary union had been called upon to implement such

harsh austerity measures and far-reaching structural reforms (Papadatos, 2014, p. 71).

Nevertheless, the standard ingredients of the neoliberal policy recipe have been imposed by the

'troika' Memoranda, including a sweeping program of privatizations, fiscal consolidation,

excessive taxation of the middle- and lower-classes, and the deregulation of the labour market, in

order to enforce the restructuring of Greek capitalism from a state and public sector dominated

system toward an export-oriented economy led predominantly by the private sector (Papadatos,

2014, p. 67).

In the context of a deep global recession, however, instead of reviving Greek capitalism,

the neoliberal policy reforms implemented by successive Greek governments, under the strict

supervision of the 'troika', has plummeted the Greek economy into a vicious cycle of "austerity-

recession-more austerity" (Laskos & Tsakalotos, 2013, p. 94). After six consecutive years of

recession starting in 2008 (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 36), the Greek economy had

contracted 25 percent by 2013 and what is more, the public debt continued to grow reaching

175.7 percent of GDP, "despite the fact that the majority of memorandum commitments were

met on time" (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 4).[1] It is evident, therefore, that the policy measures

adopted in Greece during the Memoranda era (2010-present) have failed to bring about

improvements in economic growth and employment (Antonopoulos et al., 2014, pp. 9, 15).

Since 2010, the imposition of three MoU in Greece has pushed the country into a deep

economic depression, which has led to skyrocketing rates of unemployment and the rapid

impoverishment of the middle- and lower-classes. Although the effects of the GFC had surfaced

in Greece during the pre-'troika' period (2008-2010), it is clear that the neoliberal policy

prescriptions of the latter exacerbated the impact the economic crisis would ultimately have on

the Greek economy and labour market (Antonopoulos et al., 2014). In comparison to the pre-

crisis period, when the unemployment rate in Greece had fallen to 8 percent, the imposition of

the Memoranda strategy led to a rapid expansion in unemployment to 28.1 percent by 2013, with

71 percent of these people being unemployed for more than one year (Antonopoulos et al., 2014,

p. 12; Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 5). In addition, youth unemployment climbed to an extraordinary

62.1 percent (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 5), which has exacerbated the 'brain drain' migration from

Greece, as it is now estimated "that 200,000 Greeks younger than 35 are employed abroad, a

300% increase since the crisis" (Kesisoglou, Figgou, & Dikaiou, 2016, p. 75). As a study

conducted by Antonopoulos, Adam, Kim, Masterson, and Papadimitriou (2015) points out, as of

the first quarter of 2013, "out of the 1.32 million unemployed persons, 239,800 had been out of

work for more than four years; 330,200, for two to four years; and 344,000 for one to two years"

(p. 10). The above statistics suggest that unemployment in Greece has now become a structural

---

[1] Page numbers are from an electronic version of this publication originally consulted under the title "Anti-austerity mobilization and protest 2010-2014 in Greece."

phenomenon (R. Antonopoulos, personal interview, August, 31, 2016). Moreover, for the unemployed, Law 4046/2012 set the monthly benefit to just 200 euros, payable for up to a maximum of twelve months, and because of the 'gaps' in the fragmented Greek social protection system, less than 16 percent of the unemployed population had access to benefits and social assistance at the height of the economic crisis (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 394; Dimoulas, 2014, p. 55).

Unemployment and involuntary underemployment in Greece has had a significant impact on the incomes and standard of living of Greek working people. Since the onset of the crisis, the purchasing power of Greek wage earners has declined sharply by 37.2 percent, as per capita income fell from 17,374 euros in 2008 to 12,354 euros in 2013, while the prices of staple consumer items continued to remain high (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 36; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016, p. 3). Consequently, those at risk of falling below the poverty line climbed to 35 percent (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 37), while the number of people materially deprived in Greece rose to 33.4 percent of the population from 21.8 percent in 2008 (Papatheodorou, 2014, p. 190). The minimum wage in the private sector has been lowered by 22 percent, and for workers under the age of 25 it has decreased by 32 percent, effectively reducing the net base salary for Greek workers to 489 euros, and even worse so for young workers (15-25 years old) who saw their wages fall to 427 euros (Antonopoulos et al., 2014, p. 29). To make matters worse, the austerity measures imposed to achieve fiscal consolidation and increase state revenues have led to excessive taxation which disproportionately affects low- and middle-income earners (Matsaganis, 2012, p. 415).

The social effects of exclusion from the labour market caused by widespread unemployment in Greece transcend the loss of income and material wellbeing suffered by

working people in this context. As Vaiou and Kalandides (2016) suggest, "the labour market is much more than just a means to earn money. It is a space of interaction and integration, of social exchange and human dignity" (p. 5). It is unsurprising, therefore, that such an abrupt and drastic expansion in unemployment has had its concomitant psychological side effects, with generalized feelings of uselessness and exclusion on the rise, reflected in the shocking amount of new cases of depression and mental illnesses in Greece during the crisis (Gounari, 2014, p. 193; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016, p. 5). In 2011, there was a 40 percent increase in the reported number of suicides attributed to economic hardship in Greece, with the vast majority of cases involving males between the ages of 35 to 60, leading the overall number of suicides during the years of crisis to double, in "a country that traditionally recorded one of the lowest suicide rates in the EU" (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012, p. 220). For this reason, there appears to be a correlation between depression and mental illness, as well as the corresponding figures on suicides, and the composition of unemployment in Greece today. The vast majority of unemployed persons (1,171,500) are those aged 25 years old and over, representing a 226 percent increase between the first quarter of 2009 and the second quarter of 2013, with the most vulnerable group in terms of numbers being those aged between 30 and 44 years old (R. Antonopoulos, personal interview, August, 31, 2016; Antonopoulos et al., 2014, pp. 27-28). It is precisely the economic and social conditions in Greece during the crisis, especially given the direct correlation between unemployment and poverty, which pushed the Vio.Me workers to occupy and takeover their bankrupted company, as it seemed to be the only alternative to preserve the livelihood and dignity of workers and their families in hard times.

3.2 The Greek Labour Market

Since 2010, the Memoranda strategy in Greece has led to a drastic decline in labour conditions and workers' rights (Kornelakis & Voskeritsian, 2014, p. 208). The liberalization policies implemented to reduce the 'rigidities' in the Greek labour market have significantly reduced the cost of labour and led to the establishment of a new regime of increasingly more flexible and precarious labour relations (Wood, Szamosi, Psychogios, Sarvandis, & Fotopoulou, 2015, p. 705). Under the IMF-EU conditionality, the Greek government enacted legislation with the aim of reshaping the process of collective bargaining, which, in effect, removed the role of national collective bargaining and gave priority to firm-level agreements (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 395; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012, p. 10). Law 4024/2011 established the legal framework allowing employers to bypass unions and instead, negotiate agreements on wages and working conditions with 'associations of employees' (AoE), comprising only 60 per cent of the firm's workers, which takes precedence over sectoral agreements (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 395; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012, p. 10). As Boukalas and Muller (2015) point out, "it is estimated that about 90 per cent of Greek businesses, employing 80 per cent of private sector workers, have no collective agreement of any kind, but operate on terms determined unilaterally by the employer" (p. 395). During the Memoranda era, more than 60 percent of newly employed workers in Greece have been hired on an atypical basis, while the number of employment contracts that changed from full-time to part-time grew by 126 percent, with the total of new part-time and job rotation contracts, respectively, increasing by 329 percent and 716 percent (Gialis, 2015, p. 221; Ioannides, 2015, p. 206; Kesisoglou et al., 2016, p. 74).

The growing insecurities and fear among Greek working people has led to the rapid expansion in the ranks of what Standing (2011) refers to as the 'precariat'. While Standing (2011) suggests that "the precariat has *class* characteristics … it has none of the social contract

relationships of the proletariat, whereby labour securities were provided in exchange for subordination and contingent loyalty, the unwritten deal underpinning welfare states" [emphasis in original] (p. 8). The 'precariat' consists of all those people that lack fundamental labour and social income security, as well as the work-based identity, typically associated with 'industrial citizenship' and therefore, are more accurately depicted as 'denizens' "who … have a more limited range of rights than citizens do" (Standing, 2011, pp. 10-14). Given the rise of the 'precariat', the Greek state began to 'roll out' a "range of microregulatory interventions to ensure persistent 'job readiness'" (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 392) among the unemployed, and to impose corrective social policy and activation in the labour market in order to "discipline the work force for the new requirements of capital" (Wacquant, 2012, p. 72). Accordingly, there has been a 'roll out' of 'workfare' programs in Greece aiming to 'activate' those on the outside of the labour market in both the public and private sectors.

The Public Benefit Program (PBP), a workfare scheme co-funded by the Greek state and the European Social Fund, aimed to mobilize unemployed 'beneficiaries' through a five month contract in the public sector, monitored by the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), in return for an 'informal allowance' (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 396). This 'informal allowance', paid in three installments, is conditional upon the "success of the specific placement program and the beneficiary's performance therein" (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 396). In the private sector, on the other hand, capital is also reaping the fruits of the state's workfare programs through the so-called Training Voucher Schemes. These are programs that aim to mobilize the unemployed, through the provision of a 1,100 euro voucher, which is used to receive training from a private sector employer (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 397). As with the PBP, instead of unemployment benefits, the apprentices in the voucher program are granted a

training 'allowance' by the state that amounts to 400 euros for university graduates and 373

euros for those that have graduated from high school and/or vocational training programs

(Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 397). Under the voucher scheme, both large and small firms are

able to recruit up to 30 and 70 percent, respectively, of their workforce from these state-

sponsored 'training programs' (Boukalas & Muller, 2015, p. 398). Given that structural

unemployment in Greece is the result of a severe economic depression, and lack of demand for

labour in the private sector (Antonopoulos et al., 2014), it is evident that these 'training

programs', as Boukalas and Muller (2015) argue, are not designed to "train unemployed people

nor to reduce unemployment ... they are designed to aid capital and to make the country

'attractive' to private investment by providing free labour" (p. 398). For this case study, it is

important to keep in mind the current labour market conditions in Greece, as it provides a

context from which to understand just how the alternative economic practices and structures of

the Vio.Me workers' cooperative diverge significantly from the increasingly precarious nature of

employment relations in the country.

3.3 Greek Civil Society and the Political System after 2008

Since the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974, the Greek political system remained under

exclusive two party control up until 2008. The two major political parties which took turns being

in power during the *metapolitefsi* (post-dictatorship) era, PASOK and New Democracy (ND),

laid the foundations of a social contract that maintained its legitimacy through the reproduction

of extensive patron-client networks (Huliaras, 2015, p. 14). The mainstream political parties,

especially PASOK after coming to power in 1981, invested heavily in the building of mass party

organizations with large memberships that provided the social networks and formal structures

necessary to facilitate clientelistic exchanges, as both political parties aimed to capture power of

the state and its resources in order to distribute political rents as form of electoral mobilization (Afonso, Zartaloudis, & Papadopoulos, 2015, pp. 318, 325; Pappas, 2013, p. 40).

During the *metapolitefsi* era, the clientelistic networks of the two major political parties, in particular PASOK, greatly influenced the Greek trade union movement. They established close ties with union leadership in the two major trade union confederations, the Confederation of Civil Servants (ADEDY), which represents public administration employees, and the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), which represents unions in the private sector as well as the state-owned sectors of the economy (Kretsos & Vogiatzoglou, 2015, p. 224; Trantidis, 2016, p. 1469). Since the early 1980s, both the GSEE and ADEDY have been controlled by the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Workers Organization (PASKE), while the KKE has maintained its power on the left and its stronghold on the unions in the construction and industrial sectors (Kretsos & Vogiatzoglou, 2015, p. 223; Kritidis, 2014, p. 64). Consequently, Greek political parties have held significant sway over mainstream trade unions creating the conditions for the informal subordination of unions to political parties, which, along with the fact that unions remain partially dependent on funding from the state, has greatly contributed to an erosion of the autonomy and internal democratic functioning of the trade union movement (Kornelakis & Voskeritsian, 2014, p. 347; Mavrikos-Adamou, 2015, p. 58). During the crisis, with the dismantling of the previous configuration of employment relations brought on by the policies of the 'troika', as mentioned above, the traditional repertoire of mainstream trade union action has proven to be ineffective in combating the growing precariousness in the labour market, as "the political and economic elite have mobilized their resources to the maximum level in order to sustain the Memoranda" (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). The fact that official trade union bureaucracies in Greece have been politically compromised,

and the traditional repertoire of trade union action has been ineffective in protecting workers' rights and interests during the crisis, will be important to keep in mind when understanding the reasons for the lack of support, or even open hostility, on the part of both the social democratic and communist trade union factions in Greece toward the idea of workers' occupation and self-management.

The hegemony of neoliberal policies among the two major political parties in Greece had been the status quo prior to the onset of the economic crisis and the imposition of the Memoranda strategy. Despite a period of sustained growth in Greece between 1998 and 2007, in which the economy grew at an annual rate of 4.2 percent, "the well-promoted case for prioritizing the enlargement of the pie, with the expectation that the increased income would 'trickle down' to the lower income classes never seemed to take place" (Kaplanis, 2011, pp. 217, 221). Rather, the rise of neoliberalism in Greece beginning in earnest during the early 1990s corresponded with the rapid expansion of precarious employment relations and growing levels of socio-economic inequality and poverty in the years leading up to the crisis. In fact, the 'manufactured consent' between Greek society and the political system that characterized the *metapolitefsi* period started to breakdown even before the crisis (Pantazidou, 2013, p. 761; Giovanopoulos & Dalakoglou, p. 93). On December 6 2008, the fatal shooting of a young sixteen year old boy, Alexis Grigoropoulos, in the central Athens neighbourhood of Exchariea, acted as a catalyst for a popular uprising that embodied a much deeper expression of popular discontent among a 'lost generation' of young people, migrants, and precarious waged workers in Greece, which had been growing increasingly more dissatisfied and frustrated with a life characterized by alienation, insecurity, and fear (The Children of the Galley, 2011, p. 116). Reflecting on the December Riots of 2008, Theodoros Karyotis explains,

It was situation which was brewing for the last decade. So you had a whole new generation of people that were really disenchanted with the political system. Also, you had a whole middle class that was living a way of life that was totally unsustainable getting deeper and deeper into debt and living a totally superficial life. Sooner or later, this was going to explode. There was the deep realization that this model of life was a dead-end and around 2008, after the killing of Grigoropoulos, those riots also served to radicalize a whole new generation of people and empower many of the already existing organizations, but also it served as critique of the existing social movements up to then, of their practices and their discourse. So you had a huge rearrangement; new organizations forming, with new kinds of practices … an explosion of squats, new social centres and radicalization in neighbourhoods (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016).

It soon became evident that 'December', as Pantazidou (2013) has noted, "was not a moment of explosion but of implosion: a system that could no longer sustain itself had collapsed" (p. 762). The December Riots represented a radical departure from the ways in which demands and popular protest had previously been expressed and it opened the space for a new era of popular participation and social creativity in Greece (Pantazidou, 2013, p. 761). 'December' in many ways acted as a "prelude to the methods, the tactics and the strategies of the anti-austerity movement" and spread the practices and ideas of direct democracy, horizontality and self-management beyond the confines of the anarchist political space in Greece (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016).

The starting point of the anti-austerity movement in Greece coincided with the general strike of 5 May 2010 announced by both GSEE and ADEDY (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 8). Despite

an escalation of mass mobilizations in 2011, the government continued to ignore the will of the

Greek people and imposed unpopular austerity measures (Sitrin & Azzellini, 2014, p. 69). In late

May 2011, there were multiple calls disseminated through social media platforms, like

Facebook, for the mobilization of peaceful protests against the Memoranda, which proved to be

very successful as thousands of people took to the streets and central squares in more than 38

cities all over Greece (Simiti, 2014, p. 5). The composition of the Greek Square Movement

displayed significant diversity, as participants came from a broad range of socio-political

backgrounds, different generational groups ranging from students to pensioners, and for many of

the movements' participants, it marked their first time participating in direct action and street

politics, reflecting the collective feelings of anger and real hardship of everyday life in austerity-

stricken Greece (Simiti, 2014, p. 16). This mass popular movement symbolized a conscious

rejection of the conventional representative and professionalized tactics of organizing and top-

down mobilization linked to the mainstream political parties and trade unions in Greece

(Pantazidou, 2013, p. 762; Sergi & Vogiatzoglou, 2013, p. 224). The participants of the Greek

Square Movement made it clear that the 'usual suspects', including mainstream political parties

and the official trade union bureaucracies, were not welcome to participate in the popular

demonstrations, given that these actors were viewed as being major contributors to the problems

Greece was facing (Simiti, 2014, p. 20; Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 15). Out of the Greek Square

Movement emerged a new political culture and way of doing politics in localized spaces through

the prefigurative practices and values of direct democracy, self-organization, horizontality and

equality (Pantazidou, 2013, pp. 766-767; Sergi & Vogiatzoglou, 2013, p. 224). The Greek

Square Movement represented a watershed moment that resulted in significant cognitive and

emotional shifts in Greek society and led to a redefinition of the meaning of politics and the

emergence of new political and social forces in the country (Kretsos & Vogiatzoglou, 2015, p. 226; Simiti, 2014, p. 28).

The popular protest movements that emerged in response to the crisis, which is not exclusively economic but also cultural, political and social, suggest the conditions of what Gramsci called an 'organic crisis' (Kouvelakis, 2011, p. 24; Leontidou, 2015, pp. 94-95). The deep crisis of representation, which preceded the crisis, intensified with the imposition of austerity measures and structural reforms by successive Greek governments eventually leading to the collapse of the post-1974 social contract and the relatively stable two party political system. The popular demonstrations of the Greek people in 2011-12 were not just spontaneous reactions to governmental policies, but also embodied an expression of profound distrust and dissatisfaction among the Greek people toward political institutions, including both the national and European parliaments, and the two major political parties, PASOK and ND (Jones, Proikaki, & Roumeliotis, 2015, p. 37; Mavrikos-Adamou, 2015, pp. 56-57).

In the May 6 2012 elections, the conservative party, ND, lost 14 percent of the vote when compared to 2009, but the main change in the Greek political landscape came with the dissolution of PASOK (Y. Milios, personal communication, June 15, 2016), which lost more than 30 percent of their 2009 vote (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, pp. 6-7). In this context, a space opened up that allowed for political parties positioned outside of the mainstream discourse and party structure to enter the Greek political scene. SYRIZA, a marginal left-wing party that functioned as an umbrella organization encompassing several smaller political parties and associations, emerged as the major opposition party, with its electoral support rising from 4.6 to 16.8 percent, replacing the KKE as the dominant party on the Greek left (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 7). In a worrisome outcome, however, the formerly marginal neo-Nazi Party, Golden Dawn, managed to

win almost 7 percent of the vote and 21 seats in the Parliament (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 7; Kyriakidis, 2016, p. 10).

Prior to 2009, SYRIZA had a relatively weak membership base and very limited influence in electoral politics and civil society organizations (CSOs), like students' associations and trade unions, which remained under the control of PASOK and the KKE (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 25). Accordingly, in an effort "to increase their influence and reach new constituencies," SYRIZA made a 'turn toward civil society' in the mid-2000s, but especially after 2009, when confrontational forms of political activism became increasingly more common in reaction to the crisis, the party offered its support to popular protest movements "to create [the] impression that it was the 'vanguard' of a range of social and political forces" (Huliaras, 2015, pp. 20-21). This proved to be a very effective strategy for SYRIZA, as "it was successful in becoming the favoured party of any kind of activism with an anti-establishment political message," giving social protest movements a channel into the political mainstream and contributing significantly to the electoral gains of the party (Huliaras, 2015, p. 21). Following the May 2012 elections, SYRIZA invested heavily in the grassroots 'social solidarity structures' that began to emerge in response to the crisis, forming a solidarity fund and a non-governmental umbrella organization, Solidarity4All, to provide an infrastructure designed to coordinate, promote and support independent solidarity initiatives and networks across Greece (G. Bekridaki, personal communication, June 10, 2016; M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). In the January 2015 election, running on an anti-austerity platform, SYRIZA came to power forming a coalition government with the small right-wing party, Independent Greeks (ANEL), with Alexis Tsipras as Prime Minister (Kyriakidis, 2016, p. 11). Six months into its term of office, after a series of unfruitful negotiations with its international creditors, the SYRIZA-

ANEL government announced a referendum for July 5 2015, which led to the now infamous 'Oxi' (No) of the Greek people to IMF-EU conditionality (Kyriakidis, 2016, p. 11). Despite this, however, the third MoU was agreed to in August 2015 by the new government, causing many of the participants in this research study to express an extreme disillusionment with political project of SYRIZA. At first glance it would seem that the rise of SYRIZA to power would create a more favourable environment for workers' occupations and takeovers in Greece; however, this has not been the case. SYRIZA has implemented the neoliberal policies of its social-democratic and conservative predecessors, and deployed the coercive mechanisms of the neoliberal state to crackdown on alternative practices and resistance, making the state a site of oppression rather than an emancipatory tool for agents of social change, even with a 'progressive' government in power.

3.4 Social Solidarity Structures

The popular protests that emerged in Greece after 2008 contributed to the formation of new practices, ideas and experiences that were "translocated and continued in other spaces" when these movements lost their initial momentum and eventually began to fade out (Pantazidou, 2013, p. 762). As Theodoros Karyotis explained to me, there is always an 'excess' that remains from cycles of social creativity and resistance, such as those outlined above, that is not automatically incorporated within the dominant order but rather, creates the conditions for the next cycle of struggles (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). In Greece, this has led to the emergence of a "multitude of independent structures … that also have an aspect of social reproduction, which is something new" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). From 2012 onward, the goals and strategies of the anti-austerity movement shifted toward more 'productive' activities, which focused on providing goods and services to large segments of

the population that could no longer solely rely on their personal income, the retreating welfare state, or the weak voluntary and not-for-profit sector, to meet their everyday needs (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, pp. 22, 37). Instead of setting up NGOs, which have acquired a very negative image in Greece on account of their close ties to the clientelistic party system and their dependence on state funding, activists and volunteers chose to create informal social solidarity structures that were locally-based and horizontally-organized as a constructive response to the crisis (Frangonikolopoulos, 2014, p. 5; Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 44).

In contrast to the so-called 'third sector', social solidarity structures maintain their autonomy vis-à-vis the apparatuses of the state and political parties, yet are deeply political, creating new antagonistic practices and social relations based on the principle of solidarity, as opposed to charity or philanthropy, with the intention of not only addressing the immediate consequences of austerity, but also to bring into question the root causes of the crisis and to prefigure an alternative economy and society (G. Bekridaki, personal communication, June 10, 2016; Vathakou, 2015, pp. 173-176). Georgia Bekridaki, a member of Solidarity4All, told me that the creation of social solidarity structures in Greece:

> made visible something new … something totally different from the philanthropy that the church was doing until then or different from civil society with its NGOs … they were offering practical solidarity but, at the same time, they were creating new places of practicing democracy and they were trying to focus a lot on reciprocity and mutuality between the beneficiaries, let's say, the ones that use the services and the volunteers the provided them. These roles were many, many times one and the same; the one that was working there was also the one that was receiving help and support (G. Bekridaki, personal communication, June 10, 2016).

Since 2012, social solidarity structures have been created in various fields, including solidarity clinics, pharmacies, grocery stores, soup kitchens, exchange bazaars, direct producer-to-consumer networks, schools and many more (Vathakou, 2015). The increased participation in these social solidarity structures, not only among activists but also everyday Greek people, has also proven to be very important in dealing with the mass influx of refugees in Greece after 2015 (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). In the case study on Vio.Me that follows, it is important keep in mind the context of Greece after the December Riots of 2008, and especially following the imposition of the Memoranda strategy and 'movement of the squares' in 2011, given that the occupation and self-management of Vio.Me has not taken place in a vacuum. In reality, the Vio.Me workers' struggle has been deeply influenced by the new culture of social movements in Greece and the proliferation of alternative 'commoning projects' (Varvarousis & Kallis, 2017) which seek to address the crisis of reproduction, but also strive to build another economy and society here and now.

3.5 A Brief Overview of Greek Cooperativism and Workers' Control
History of Cooperative Movement

Over the course of modern Greek history, there has been a strong tradition of social economy organizations that were "prominently active in the nation building process of the 19th and social development visions of the 20th century" (Nasioulas, 2012, p. 152). The Greek cooperative tradition is amongst the oldest in Europe, with one of the first modern agro-industrial cooperatives, the *Common Company of Ampelakia*, being founded in 1772 (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 300; Nasioulas, 2012, p. 156). The first law on cooperatives (*Law 602/1914*) in 1914 marked the beginning of a large agricultural cooperative movement, bestowing upon the newly formed Greek state the capacity to organize the cooperative movement and agricultural

policy, leading eventually to the further institutionalization of state intervention during the interwar period (Nasioulas, 2012, p. 158). The rise to power of PASOK in 1983, and its introduction of a major agricultural reform program, with the aim of using coops "as vehicles for the socialist transformation of society through the creation of agro-industrial complexes" (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 301), led to increasing efforts at cooptation by the state and the extreme politicization of the cooperative movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Nasioulas, 2012, p. 159). Consequently, agricultural coops became deeply embedded in the political patronage and clientelist system of the major political parties in Greece, especially the socialist and communist left (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, pp. 300-302; Nasioulas, 2012, p. 159). As Nasioulas (2012) has noted, "political parties have occupied cooperative activity in order to control and disseminate political power at the national, regional, local and sectoral level" (p. 160), which has proven to be a major obstacle to the development of an autonomous cooperative movement in Greece (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 301). According to Theodoros Karyotis, the Greek cooperative movement:

> has suffered since the start from a very problematic legal framework that allowed for the concentration of power in the hands of a few people, which were actually linked to the clientelistic networks of PASOK and they were put in place by PASOK in many cases just to be their local patrons. The problem is that they were conceived from the very start as very top-down structures. There we no processes of bottom-up control that was happening, nor was there a culture of bottom-up control either, so they became synonymous with corruption and theft. So, in the past five years or so, we have been struggling against this popular conception of cooperatives as totally top-down processes" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016).

With the onset of the crisis, there has been a 'boom' of cooperatives and self-managed projects that aim to maintain their independence from the apparatuses of the state as well as mainstream political parties and trade unions, as I will discuss below, resembling the new culture of social movements in Greece.

In 2011, the law on the "Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship" (4019/2011) was introduced in an effort to provide a structure and organizational capacity to the underdeveloped not-for-profit, social economy sector in Greece (Nasioulas, 2011, p. 5). Under this law, the "Social Cooperative Enterprise" was created as new legal entity of the social economy, which is defined as "the sum of economic, entrepreneurial, productive and social activities, undertaken by juridical entities or associations whose statutory goal is the pursuit of collective benefit and the service of wider social interests" (Nasioulas, 2011, pp. 5-6). In 2012, according to the very broad definition stated above, there were a total of 7,197 cooperatives, 11 mutual societies and 56,000 associations, foundations, and other non-profit and voluntary organizations operating within the social economy sector in Greece (Nasioulas, 2012, p. 152). It is important to note, though, that the actors and activities of the social economy in many cases consist of "initiatives that are actually promoted by the dominant system precisely as a way of providing a safety-net for society when the safety-net of the welfare state is removed" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). Therefore, the values and goals of the social economy, although their activities overlap, are ultimately inconsistent with those of the emerging solidarity economy in Greece, "which is politically oriented and antagonistic to market and state politics" (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 309). The social economy, as Georgia Bekridaki puts it, "doesn't have an antagonistic role in the economy it's something supplementary so it can coexist forever with the capitalist system," whereas the solidarity economy, on the other hand, is a more

radical political concept and praxis that brings into question the root of economic and social inequalities, the rule of the market over society and private property ownership (G. Bekridaki, personal communication, June 10, 2016). As many of my participants claimed, even though the law on the "Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship" places emphasis on social impact and democratic management, there remains a gap in the legal framework for the emerging workers' collectives in Greece that have been experimenting with alternative forms of labour organization and economic activity.

In Greece, workers' collectives are part of the broader anti-neoliberal movement with no connections to political parties or mainstream trade unions and, for the most part, do not rely on the legislation of the social economy nor do they accept funding from financial institutions, the state or the EU (Kokkinidis, 2015b, p. 430). These initiatives promote a different model of organizing labour and product distribution that is not primarily motivated by profit but rather, aims to meet human needs in an alternative way (Petropoulou, 2013, p. 76). These workers' collectives are experimenting with alternative labour practices that give emphasis to the collective nature of work and the building of reciprocal relations based on horizontality, equality and cooperation (Kokkinidis, 2015b, p. 430; Petropoulou, 2013, p. 77). The aim of these workers' collectives is to redefine traditional producer-consumer relations and create alternative networks of distribution without intermediaries, or 'middlemen', in order to grow the eco-system of the solidarity economy inside the existing system of neoliberal capitalism (Elias, personal communication, June 4, 2016). The core principles of solidarity economy are firmly embedded in the Vio.Me workers' project and it is at the forefront of this budding movement in Greece today.

Workers' Control in Greece

The history of industrial relations in Greece provides very few examples of self-directed workers' involvement and participation in the management of their enterprises (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 303). There are few cases in modern Greece of workers' participation, for instance the workers' councils established by emery miners in the 19th century on the island of Naxos and the factory councils that were created in the shoe and tobacco industries between 1920 and 1936, before the start of the Metaxas dictatorship (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, p. 303). After the rise to power of PASOK in 1983, the socialist government introduced new legislation that promoted workers' involvement and participation in management; however, the socialist party's approach to co-management was completely top-down and as a result, it failed to make any real advances towards a genuine movement of workers' control (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016; Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 304). As Kioupkiolis and Karyotis (2015) note, the state-driven policies on workers' participation were ultimately unsuccessful because "there was little independent mobilization on the part of employees themselves and their actual input was overshadowed by the involvement of government agencies, political parties and trade union factions" (p. 304). However, despite this, there are some examples during this period in which factories heavily overburdened by debt, and on the verge of closing down, were spontaneously taken over by their workers and subsequently run under workers' control (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, pp. 304-305). In the area of Thessaloniki, two such cases occurred in the early 1980s, the I. Pantelemidis company and the Koulistandis Textile Company, where self-organized and self-directed workers, independent of political parties and official trade union bureaucracies, effectively managed their enterprises without any formal structures or a legal framework for their economic activity (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, pp. 304-305). In the recent years of crisis, there has been an intensification in workers'

47

struggles that have moved beyond the traditional protest tactics exhausted by the official trade

union bureaucracies toward more antagonistic and creative forms of workers' resistances that

have led to occupations and, in some cases, even the takeover and self-management of

workplaces. These include the nine month strike and occupation of the steel factory, Halyvourgia

Ellados, in Aspropyrgos; the occupation and self-management of the Greek Public Radio and

Television Network (ERT); the self-governing hospital in Kilkis; the self-managed newspaper,

Efimerida ton Syntakton (Newspaper of the Editorial Journalists); and the worker occupation of

two factories in northern Greece, Roben of the Woods in Veria, and the self-managed factory of

Vio.Me, in Thessaloniki.

Chapter 4: A Review of the Literature and Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

4.1 Theoretical Framework: Marx(ism), Worker Cooperatives and System Change

In the broader literature on worker-managed enterprises much of the debate is centred on the transformative potential of these alternative forms of labor organization in constructing a post-capitalist economic and social order. On the whole, the existing literature on worker-managed enterprises, and its assessment of the emancipatory trajectories of these social experiments, draw the basis for their analysis from the work of Karl Marx. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1975/1992), Marx asserts that free conscious labour activity defines the species-character of human beings and that labour, therefore, constitutes the essence of our species-being (p. 328). For Marx, labour is the activity which allows us to demonstrate our most distinct qualities, as well as creative capacities for self-expression as human beings, and it is through labour, then, that we should be able to fashion the objective world in accordance to our own needs and wants (Reinhart, 2006, p. 15). Under the capitalist mode of production, however, Marx (1975/1992) claims that through the commodification of labour, and its subsequent sale in the market to the owners of the means of production, workers are alienated from the product and process of their labour as well as from their own human nature and from other workers in society.

In *Capital Volume 1* (1976/1990), Marx argues that useful labour, that which alters nature's materials with the assistance of the instruments of labour to produce the use-values that fulfil the wants of people, "is a condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society" (p. 133). Useful labour, or 'productive labour in general', is transformed under capitalism into a social relation of domination and exploitation in which human labour-power is consumed by the capitalist in the process of production with the purpose of producing and selling commodities containing exchange-value in order to realize the surplus-value generated through

this process. While Marx (1976/1990) certainly acknowledged the alienating and exploitative nature of capitalist production, he also noted the significant productivity and efficiency gains created by combining labour, and consuming the means of production in common, through cooperation in the capitalist labour process. According to Marx (1976/1990), cooperation in the labour process is a characteristic of different historical modes of production, from hunting peoples and the agriculture of Indian communities to the modern capitalist factory (p. 452). However, as Marx (1976/1990) points out, in the former case, it is the common ownership of the means of existence and a community's organic connection to the immaterial and material resources essential to their reproduction that distinguishes it from capitalist cooperation, which is "a method employed by capital for the more profitable exploitation of labour, by increasing its productive power" (p. 453).

According to Marx (1976/1990), the isolated efforts of the individual worker could not possibly have the same effect as combined labour consuming the means of production in common, a social force "that is developed when many hands co-operate in the same undivided operation" (p. 443). He adds that "not only do we have here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but the creation of a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one" (Marx, 1976/1990, p. 443). For Marx (1976/1990), the productive power of social labour is a direct result of cooperation itself and thus, when "the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species" (Marx, 1976/1990, p. 447). Evidently, cooperation is a form of social labour that creates a collective productive power with the potential for being a fundamentally de-alienating praxis and therefore, cooperative labour for Marx constitutes a powerful social force that embodies within it the possibility to bring about a change in the mode

and relations of production and real human development. In his *Inaugural Address of the International Workers' Association* (1864), Marx said of the nascent cooperative movement that "the value of these great social experiments cannot be overrated" and that, "by deed instead of by argument," worker cooperatives embody the possibility for 'associated labour' to supplant capitalist domination and exploitation in the process of production (p. 6). In spite of this, Marx (1864) still believed that the transformative potential of worker cooperatives would remain unsatisfied "if kept within the narrow circle of the causal efforts of private workmen" as opposed to being "developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means" (p. 6). For Marx (1864), therefore, the emancipation of the working classes, and the development of a new mode and relations of production that would ultimately supersede capital, still depended upon the conquest of political power by the working classes (Marx, 1864, p. 6).

Marx's mixed views on cooperative labour and system change has led to the emergence of conflicting attitudes among Marxists on the transformative potential of worker cooperatives. According to Jossa (2005), ever since the Paris Commune, and especially after the Bolshevik Revolution, Marxists have paid scant attention to the cooperative movement, as socialism more often than not came to be associated with the nationalization of the means of production (p. 13). Despite Marxist critiques which suggest that the cooperative movement would make workers into 'their own capitalists' and lead to the emergence of 'producer capitalism', Jossa (2005) correctly points out that "a system of producer cooperatives is fully consistent with Marxist thought and can no longer be viewed as a disguised form of capitalism" (p. 16). As will be demonstrated below, the debate in the literature on the transformative potential of workers' cooperatives, and WRCs in particular, takes place along these clearly defined ideological lines.

Autonomous Marxism

Much of the criticism of the orthodox Marxist perspective on social change has come from autonomist Marxists. For proponents of this school of thought, it is the prefigurative politics of the everyday revolution and the development of 'power-to', rather than the taking of power and the transition toward socialism, which embodies the creative capacity and potential to bring about radical social change here and now. De Angelis (2014) argues that there exists inherent methodological fallacies in the traditional Marxist analysis of radical social change and thus, he suggests that it is essential to replace the concept of *political* revolution with that of *social* revolution, which cannot be reduced to a momentary event or the 'seizure of power', but instead, is "the actual *production* of another form of power … being constituent of new social relations reproducing life" [emphasis in original] (p. 301). In his view, *social* revolution does not imply the replacement of the current system with another, given that "systems are not implemented … they emerge" through the interrelated processes of political and social revolution that result in the emergence of alternative economic and political structures (De Angelis, 2014, p. 302).

For Holloway (2010), an anti-capitalist revolution should be focused on the transformation of human 'doing,' what Marx calls useful labour, rather than "the revolutionary replacement of one system by another [which] is both impossible and undesirable" (p. 11). Revolution, then, is taking responsibility for our own lives to build a new social reality here and now, prefiguring the future through the negation-and-creation of an other-doing that goes against-and-beyond the discipline of abstract labour under the logic of capital (p. 19). For Holloway (2010), revolution is a process of interstitial movements that emerge in the cracks of capitalism – "a moment in which relations of domination [are] broken and other relations created" – and through the evolution of struggle, and the multiplication and expansion of these

cracks, a radically different social reality could possibly be manifested (p. 31). In *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002), Holloway contends that human 'doing' always involves a conscious projection-beyond that which already exists, and through negation of the contemporary social reality, it is possible by way of 'doing' to prefigure a much different world (p. 12). For Holloway (2002), transforming human 'doing' into abstract labour serves to maintain the alienation and domination of the human 'power-to-do' and consequently, the 'social flow of doing' is broken under capitalist social relations of production (pp. 12-13). In order to liberate the human 'power-to-do', however, Holloway (2002) claims that a political project aimed at taking state power is bound to fail in bringing about radical social change, and dissolving asymmetrical power relations in capitalist societies, because "the attempt to conquer power involves the extension of the field of power relations into the struggle against power" (p. 8).

4.2 Defining Key Concepts: What is a Worker-Controlled Recuperated Company?

Before going forward, I would like to highlight some key conceptual distinctions that will inform the discussion below in order to ensure the utmost clarity and avoid conceptual muddling. First of all, it is crucial for me to illustrate the difference between *workers' control* of production and *workers' participation* in decision-making and management (Gunn, 2011). On the one hand, the call for greater workers' participation surfaced in parallel with the decline in Fordist systems of production, and the subsequent rise of the neoliberal model of capitalist accumulation, which propelled a relentless attack on hierarchism and bureaucracy in capital's drive toward leaner and more flexible production in search of greater profitability at labour's expense (Gunn, 2011, pp. 320-322). Evidently, then, workers' participation emerged out of capital's strategy to overcome the crisis of over-accumulation and restore class power (Harvey, 2005), not as method that afforded workers greater control over their working lives, despite the post-bureaucratic rhetoric

of autonomy, freedom, and self-management at work (Kokkinidis, 2015b, p. 850). Workers'

control, on the other hand, implies a fundamental change in the relationship between labour and

capital in which "those who produce control the product, the process, and the rewards of their

work" (Gunn, 2011, p. 324). Specifically, all those who work in a firm under genuine workers'

control would be directly involved in decision-making, on the basis of a one-person, one-vote

democratic process, on all worker-related matters, including administrative, technical, and

financial tasks, and most importantly, distinguishing it from workers' participation, is that

workers themselves determine how to distribute and reinvest the surpluses generated (Gunn,

2011, pp. 319, 324-325). In order to demonstrate the difference between the two concepts, Gunn

(2011) explains that "Workers' participation is granted by capital, logically when capital stands

to gain from the participation by getting more value from its workers without ceding control to

them" (p. 326). In contrast, then, "Workers' control of production can only exist when workers

have independent access to the resources we call capital" (Gunn, 2011, p. 326).

     Second, and most important for this research, is the need to clearly define the concept of

recuperation. According to Azzellini (2015a), recuperated companies are not strictly motivated

by economic factors, but also socio-political and environmental concerns as well (p. 69). He

therefore argues that there is a need to establish a basic criteria from which to understand what

constitutes a genuinely worker-controlled recuperated company in order to distinguish it from

other seemingly similar forms of worker organization (Azzellini, 2015a, p. 69). For instance, he

argues that workers' buyouts, which resemble the organizational structure and functioning of

traditional cooperatives with internal hierarchies and individual property rights, unequal

distribution of ownership and decision-making power, or with external investors and

shareholders, should not be considered as genuinely worker-controlled recuperated companies

(Azzellini, 2015a, p. 69). Fittingly, it is worth quoting Azzellini (2015a) here at length, as he correctly points out that:

> such calculations reduce the concept of recuperation to the continued existence of a company originally destined to close that has merely changed ownership from one to many owners, some of whom work in the company. Companies following these schemes can hardly be considered recuperated in that they do not provide a different perspective on how society and production should be organized" (p. 69).

It is precisely the prefiguration of alternative forms of organizing economic and social life in common that distinguishes WRCs from worker buyouts and traditional cooperatives, as well as workers' participation in decision-making and management without ceding control (Azzellini, 2015a, pp. 68-69). Obviously, both workers' control and recuperation are two central concepts for the present research study, as I will draw on these to analyze the case of Vio.Me from a perspective that is consistent with the workers' own perceptions of their experiences, as well as the literature that distinguishes worker-controlled recuperated companies as an alternative form of labour organization with a distinctly post-capitalist trajectory.

4.3 Perspectives on WRCs

In the context of the recuperated business movement in Argentina, Sitrin (2012) claims that the emergence of WRCs represent a break within the dominant capitalist mode of production and the creation of alternative forms of value production that are opposed to the logic of the market (p. 126). In self-managed workplaces, Sitrin (2012) argues that decisions regarding production are made collectively through democratic and horizontal organizational structures in accordance with the needs and desires of workers and those of surrounding communities. According to Sitrin (2012), workers' control over the product and process of labour has resulted in much less

55

alienated and exploitative experiences for workers and even though these workplaces still

operate within the capitalist market, they have resisted the reproduction of capitalist social

relations and value production while simultaneously creating the building blocks for alternative

social and solidarity economies (p. 177). Similarly, Ozarow and Croucher (2014) argue that,

although WRCs in Argentina emerged as a defensive reaction against the fear of unemployment

and poverty amidst the severe economic crisis of 2001-02, these social experiments present

viable and sustainable alternatives to capitalist forms of organizing labour and production (p.

993). In the aftermath of the crisis, they maintain that not only have 87 percent of WRCs

survived, but also the number of recuperated workplaces has increased and subsequently,

expanded its rank-and-file, despite the structural barriers erected by market forces and the

attempted cooptation of WRCs by the corporatist Argentine state (Ozarow & Croucher, 2014, p.

996). Despite facing chronic shortages of capital and under-production, Vieta (2010) argues that

WRCs in Argentina demonstrate innovative alternatives for reorganizing productive and social

relations that challenge the hierarchal division of labour, as well as the production and

appropriation of surplus-value, through relations of horizontality in the decision-making and

labour process. In addition, Vieta (2010) points out that self-managed workers give precedence

to the socialisation of revenues generated from production in order to address workers' social

reproduction needs and community development initiatives rather than the accumulation of profit

(p. 311). Furthermore, he claims that these social experiments are prefiguring alternative

economies of solidarity that are based on collaboration and sharing between WRCs and that the

networks of solidarity built with local communities provides greater protection against the

expropriation of recuperated workplaces by the state and/or its former bosses (Vieta, 2010, p.

313).

At their core, Vieta argues (2014) that WRCs are deeply transformative learning organizations, with workers being necessarily engaged in intensive and experiential processes of "learning through struggle" when converting their troubled firms into worker cooperatives (pp. 187-188, 194). The shared experiences of economic hardship and the constant struggle that workers go through in occupying their workplaces, as well as the new cooperative skills and values workers acquire through collectively learning how to self-manage their firms, cultivates and solidifies new worker subjectivities and forges strong bonds of comradeship in the workplace (Vieta, 2014, pp. 198-201). The "deep ethic of the other" that emerges from the process of recuperation extends beyond social relations developed and practiced in the workplace, as workers become genuinely concerned with the social, cultural and economic needs of surrounding communities, transforming workers into community-minded individuals and their companies into transformative community organizations (Vieta, 2014, pp. 199, 205). Most importantly for this study, though, is the three broad transformations he identifies in the case of WRCs; that is, the transformation in workers' subjectivities, their workplace and surrounding communities, all of which Vieta (2014) suggests are "a direct result of their struggle to convert the firm" into a workers' cooperative (p. 204). It is Vieta's (2014) conception of transformation through struggle which offers a useful frame through which to understand the changes that have occurred at Vio.Me since the worker occupation and takeover of the factory, as the interview data collected suggests similar transformative processes in this case.

Much like Vieta (2010), Restakis (2010) argues that WRCs in Argentina "became integrated into the life of the community," modifying production specifically to incorporate the cultural norms as well as the economic and social needs of surrounding neighbourhoods, given that they "felt obliged to reciprocate [solidarity] when they were strong" to those who had stood

by their side in their moment of need (Restakis, 2010, pp. 200-201). Similar to Ozarow and Croucher (2014), Restakis (2010) asserts that workplace takeovers emerged as defensive reactions to desperate circumstances and were not in the least motivated by politics nor did they have any connection to the culture, history or attitudes of cooperativism (p. 196). He also recognizes, however, that WRCs "were not only saving jobs but remaking the nature of work itself, humanizing labour through the application of democracy and reciprocity in the workplace" (Restakis, 2010, p. 208). Most importantly for this study, though, Restakis (2010) sheds light on the fact that the official trade union bureaucracies, as well as large segments of the Argentine cooperative movement, did not provide much support to workers attempting to recuperate their companies (pp. 208-210). The reason for this was that both the official trade union bureaucracies and the coop movement in Argentina were politically compromised, which is similar to the case of Greece, with strong connections to the Peronist power structure, and therefore, deeply committed to maintaining the status quo (Restakis, 2010, p. 210).

In line with Restakis (2010), Azzellini (2015b) points out that the vast majority of the 350 companies recuperated since 2000 in Argentina have been the direct result of autonomous workers' struggles to occupy and takeover their workplaces, "since unions rarely engage in conflicts outside a legal framework regulating the conflict and guaranteeing a successful outcome or a mediated settlement" (pp. 11-12). In the case of recuperated companies, Azzellini (2015b) claims "union support is an exception" and that, in fact, the rather limited scope of traditional trade union action makes them ineffective vehicles for representing the interests of unemployed workers and even less so for workers who dispose of the bosses when they decide to take over their workplaces and self-manage production themselves (p. 12). In the case of Vio.Me, the focus of the present research study, Azzellini (2015b) shows that the KKE has been

openly hostile toward the idea of company recuperations in Greece and has even gone as far as to accuse the Vio.Me workers of being petty bourgeois and collective capitalists after restarting production under workers' control (p. 12). Similar to Ozarow and Croucher (2014) and Restakis (2010), Azzellini (2015a) recognizes that, in contrast to earlier cases of worker occupations and takeovers as part of offensive struggles, contemporary examples of worker recuperations in different geographical regions, including Europe, South America and Asia, have all surfaced as defensive reactions led by workers dispossessed of their means of subsistence by capitalist crises and restructuring (p. 68). Nevertheless, "in this defensive situation," as Azzellini (2015a) argues, "workers not only protest or resign; they take the initiative and become protagonists" who set out to reinvent the capitalist businesses they reclaimed from the bosses, develop and practice new social relations in and beyond their workplaces; invent new products and methods of production, forge relations of reciprocal solidarity with surrounding neighbourhoods, and establish linkages with different social movements and political and social organizations (p. 95). Both Restakis (2010) and Azzellini (2015a, 2015b) will be important for my analysis of Vio.Me because they demonstrate that autonomous workers are capable of making great strides despite not having the backing of traditional institutions of worker representation.

Alternatively, in contrast to the lack of support shown to WRCs by mainstream political parties and trade unions, as outlined by Azzellini (2015a, 2015b) and Restakis (2010) above, Vieta (2014) argues that valuable inter-cooperative social bonds emerge informally from the sharing of experiences and knowledge that occurs through the extensive solidarity networks built between WRCs and various social movements, political and social organizations, and community-based groups (p. 197). As Vieta (2014) argues, during the "first days, weeks, and months, which is the period of the highest political conflict and economic direness for its

workers," it is local grassroots political and social organizations and movements that "come to

support workers occupying a plant, offer solidarity and sharing with them how to go about taking

over a firm and subsequently self-managing it" (p. 198). Likewise, as Monteagudo (2008) points

out, the workers that decided to occupy and takeover their troubled firms were, for the most part,

"mainstream people without an alternative vision of society" acting out of desperation to protect

their livelihood and maintain some degree of dignity in hard times (p. 194). Therefore, workers

in recuperated companies drew inspiration for their organizational practices and structures from

the new political culture of social movements that arose out of the economic and political crisis

of 2001-02 in Argentina (Monteagudo, 2008, pp. 194-195). According to Monteagudo (2008), as

workers in recuperated companies traversed the different phases of their struggle, from

occupation and resistance to production and commercialization, it was the neighbourhood

assemblies, unemployed worker movements, and other recuperated companies who came to the

aid of workers to resist eviction and repression and to assist them in implementing the structures

and practices of self-management (Monteagudo, 2008, p. 195). Both the articles by Monteagudo

(2008) and Vieta (2014) will be very important in the forthcoming data analysis, as they

demonstrate, similar to my findings on Vio.Me, that it is grassroots social and political

movements and community-based organizations that express their solidarity and provide tangible

support to workers attempting to recuperated their companies, while traditional institutions of

worker representation remain indifferent or even openly opposed to self-directed workers'

initiatives.

  As noted above, it is clear that there is support in the extant literature on WRCs that

recognizes the transformative potential of these alternative labour organizations. However, as

some authors below point out, the extent to which the (re)organization of labour and decision-

making procedures occurs in WRCs, given that these social experiments still operate within the capitalist economy, is certainly limited by the necessity of worker-controlled recuperated companies to engage in commodity production for the market. In a study of four recuperated companies in Argentina, Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007) find that re-organizing the labour process in order to reduce the hierarchal division of labour and specialization in the workplace, as well as maintain democratic and horizontal decision-making and labour processes, is inevitably restricted by the external discipline of the market, particularly in the sphere of circulation, in which workers have far less control over in comparison to production (p. 655). They argue that the central tenets of workers' control are weakened because of the need to produce and sell commodities with exchange-value, and that the competitive pressures of the market have reproduced capitalist social relations of production within self-managed workplaces. As a result, Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007) maintain that the division of labour between administrative/commercial and productive workers is reproduced and that workers are often engaged in self-surveillance, -discipline and -exploitation in order to respond to market demand and opportunities (pp. 665-667).

Moreover, Atzeni (2013) argues that the external pressures of the market create structural barriers to democratic decision-making and horizontal labour processes within the workplace, given that the time and resources necessary to maintain such practices "conflicts with the need to produce on time and at a required quality level," eventually leading to the reproduction of centralized authority and hierarchal structures in worker-controlled enterprises (p. 173). Consequently, Atzeni (2013) stresses that "the survival of worker-managed workplaces will be in fact … increasingly dependent on the goals of efficiency, productivity and profitability" and therefore, consistent with the traditional Marxist analysis on workers' control, he claims that the

"initial emancipatory power common to the majority of experiences of self-managed workers' co-operatives has tended to disappear and to be subsumed under the logic of the market" (p. 175). Contrary to this, however, Ozarow and Croucher (2014) argue that WRCs actually continue to maintain "their central values, even while being forced to interact with the market and the state. Managerial decisions are made and applied within a framework of non-capitalist ideas" (p. 1003).

In the context of the recuperated business movement in Argentina, Petras and Veltmeyer (2002) maintain that in order for these 'islands' of success within the capitalist system to be a catalyst for broader socio-economic changes, self-managed workplaces must align with leftist parties and other social movements to form a political organization capable of challenging state power. In a similar vein, Farber (2014) claims that occupied factories are merely defensive struggles that cannot prefigure a future post-capitalist economic and social order because the competitive pressures of the market eventually penetrate these autonomous spaces, re-imposing the dominant logic of capital and breaking down the central values and social relations fundamental to workers' control. Like Petras and Veltmeyer (2002), Farber (2014) stresses the importance of the state in the revolutionary process of social change and criticizes Holloway (2010) for avoiding the realities of power and failing to acknowledge that the capitalist "state will tolerate 'cracks' only up to the point when they threaten its power and the power of capitalism" (Prefigurative politics and revolution, para. 6).

4.4 Worker Cooperatives: Is Degeneration Really Inevitable?
There are different perspectives on the so-called 'degeneration thesis', but for our purposes, it will suffice to look at the traditional Marxist analysis on the causes of degeneration in worker cooperatives. From this perspective, it is argued that isolated worker cooperatives operating

within the capitalist economy, given that they cannot alter the wider forces and relations of the dominant mode of production, will eventually surrender to the need to maximize profit and consequently, be forced to adopt the organizational form of conventional capitalist enterprises in order to survive (Cornforth, 1995, p. 489). Consistent with this line of thinking, in the case of the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC), Gasper (2014) claims that as the cooperative has become further integrated into the circuits of global capital its core values and practices of cooperativism have deteriorated and the horizontal decision-making structures implemented under self-management are now far more centralized, resembling instead the organizational form of conventional capitalist enterprises. Therefore, mirroring Marx's (1864) analysis on worker cooperatives and system change, Gasper (2014) maintains that because individual cooperatives cannot challenge the capitalist system, the transformative potential of workers' control can only be realized through a political strategy aimed at taking power of the capitalist state and expanding cooperative labour on a national-scale.

However, as Gibson-Graham (2003) argue, most of the studies outlining the historical development and experiences of the MCC, especially from leftist critics of capitalism, have always been articulated within a *capitalocentric* framing and as a result, the cooperativist model's lack of a strategic trajectory for replacing this system "only seems valid if one is blinded by a vision of the economy as singular and capitalist" (pp. 156-157). Taking as their point of departure that "the economy [is] always and already diverse," Gibson-Graham (2003) claim that the case of the MCC presents an empirical counter to the 'degeneration thesis' (Gibson-Graham, 2003, pp. 135, 157). They argue that the example of the MCC demonstrates that worker-owned cooperatives can be successful in the long-term provided that economic practices remain

embedded in a commitment "to community survival over and above individual interest" (Gibson-Graham, 2003, p. 154).

For Cornforth (1995), it is far from inevitable that worker cooperatives will degenerate and, in turn, be forced to "adopt the same organizational forms and priorities as capitalist businesses in order to survive" (p. 488). Nevertheless, Cornforth (1995) claims that degenerative tendencies may still occur informally in worker cooperatives, given that structure cannot be totally abolished and that power continues to be exercised even in seemingly 'structureless' organizations (p. 506). As a result, he argues that an informal elite may accumulate power within worker cooperatives based on expertise and knowledge and that, due to a lack of structure and formal procedures, "it is extremely difficult to place limits on their power or to hold them accountable" (Cornforth, 1995, pp. 506-507). Importantly, Cornforth (1995) points out that despite the introduction of greater specialization and a division of labour in the four worker cooperatives he studied, the effect of these organizational changes did not undermine workplace democracy and that members of the worker cooperatives were capable of countering degeneration through processes of constructive regeneration (pp. 514-515).

In his analysis of three Athens-based workers' collectives, Kokkinidis (2015b) finds that self-managed workers' projects are actively experimenting with alternative ways of organizing labour and decision-making which simultaneously rejects the capital-labour relation and places emphasis instead on the collective nature of work and the importance of autonomy in the workplace (p. 848). Kokkinidis (2015b) argues that active participation in the horizontal and egalitarian decision-making procedures of workers' collectives fosters strong feelings of community and a spirit of cooperation, as well as a greater sense of ownership and commitment among its members, all of which create barriers against exclusion and the tendency toward

hierarchy (p. 858). According to Kokkinidis (2015b), it is more important for the members of workers' collectives "to ensure the widest possible consensus over any work-related matter" than it is to respond swiftly to market demands and opportunities, as Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007) and Atzeni (2013) would have it, given that "consensus is not just about reaching an agreement but in fact creating a space where people can express themselves truly as equals" (pp. 863-864). However, as Monteagudo (2008) reminds us, it is important that we do not overly romanticize the workers' assembly as "a space of total equality or horizontality" but instead, reflect upon it as a space of "contention and problem-solving, where members negotiate their interest" (p. 206).

Furthermore, Kokkinidis's (2015b) case study illustrates two very important findings for the present research study. First, all members have the same rights and responsibilities within workers' collectives. For instance, in the case of Pagkaki, Kokkinidis (2015b) claims that the members are not individual shareholders of the company but rather, that "there is a completely different approach to ownership rights where control is not based on property rights but … labour control" (p. 861). Secondly, Kokkinidis (2015b) points out that, in the case of Syn.all.ois, despite the members' intention to perform all labour tasks on rotational basis, a division of labour did eventually emerge along the lines of individual members' experiences, skills and knowledge (p. 857). In spite of this, Kokkinidis (2015b) argues that "neither the knowledge nor the outcome of their individually performed tasks is viewed as an individual possession" but rather, is conceived of as part of the greater common effort of each and every member in the collective (p. 857). In what follows, this will prove very useful to analyzing the ways in which the worker-members of Vio.Me perceive work as a collective endeavour and how they have established common 'ownership' of the means of production based on labour control as opposed to individual property rights.

4.5 Conceptual Framework: The Commons and Commoning

In this section, I will outline the conceptual framework of 'the commons' which I will draw on

extensively in the data analysis presented in the coming chapters. Therefore, it is important to

clearly define what I mean when I use the term 'commons' from hereon. In the extant literature

of the commons, there is a widespread consensus that the concept refers to a diverse set of

management practices and relational values that develop in the process of 'commoning', a

distinctly social process, rather than narrowly understanding the commons as a particular kind of

'thing', an immaterial/material resource, or a form of property (De Angelis, 2017; Fournier,

2013; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 2016; Helfrich & Bollier, 2014). The above

categorization, as Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) suggest, represents a *capitalocentric* formulation

on the commons which "privileges formal and abstract legalities at the expense of actual

practices of maintaining or creating the commons, or commoning enclosed or unmanaged

resources" (p. 7).[2] Instead, they argue that the commons is better understood as a relational

process of commoning that is practiced by a community that self-manages collectively held

resources (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 4). This anti-capitalocentric approach to the commons

proposed by Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) will prove to be vital to the data analysis that follows,

as it provides a conceptual lens through which to examine the management practices and

relational values constituted by Vio.Me in creating and maintaining the commons, which

fashions new ways of being and relating in the process of self-managing their recuperated

company.

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that the commons, as Fournier (2013) suggests, is

not simply a model of resource-management and governance, but, more importantly, a form of

---

[2] Page numbers are from an electronic pre-publication version of this chapter downloaded from
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299720121_Commoning_as_a_postcapitalist_politics.

social organization "through which common resources are (re)produced" (p. 438). According to Fournier (2013), 'commoning' challenges in practice the concept of private property ownership given that access to the commons is based on the rights of use among 'commoners', rather than its accumulation as capital by individual appropriators, and therefore, "relies on a collective process of self-management which is independent of market or state authority and through which communities decide how the use of a particular resource is to be distributed and (re)produced" (p. 447). For Helfrich and Bollier (2014), the commons is characterized by the social commitments, knowledge, and practices that are developed and practiced in the process of 'commoning', which is "focused on solving concrete problems and meeting people's needs by providing effective self-governance of a shared resource or space" (Helfrich & Bollier, 2014, p. 76). Basically, there can be no commons without a community and, as I will show below, there can be no commons without the commoning activity that reproduces both of these constituent elements of commons systems (De Angelis, 2017). To illustrate this point, Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) argue that "the community that commons is not pre-given; rather, communities are constituted through commoning" and it is the self-constituted 'commoning-community' that negotiates access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility for the development and sustainability of the commons (p. 5), as I will further elaborate on below.

According to Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013), it is important that property be reconceptualised "as a relationship between people with respect to things" and that it be recognised that "ownership of property is largely a legal matter and does not deter land or other resources from being managed as a commons" (p. 132). In order to *take back property*, they maintain that a community must establish a set of rules or protocols to effectively maintain and share a resource in common, which is essential to its continued reproduction and the survival of

the community itself that is connected to the commons (p. 131). Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) put forward the *Commons Identi-Kit* as a way of understanding what constitutes a commons, which identifies five interconnected aspects of commoning. Importantly for this study, the *Commons Identi-Kit* proposed by Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) will be a useful tool for analyzing the worker occupation and takeover of the Vio.Me factory has successfully reclaimed *access* and *use* of the property allowing workers to secure their economic subsistence, distributed the *benefit* from the workers' commoning activity equitably amongst workers and surrounding communities and, for that reason, *care* and *responsibility* for the factory has understandably been shouldered by workers and the solidarity movement (pp. 131-132, 135).

De Angelis (2017) understands commons as social systems comprised of three interrelated elements: pooled material/immaterial resources, or 'commonwealth', a self-constituted community of commoners, and the activity or praxis of commoning as a form of social labour "through which commonwealth and the community of commoners are (re)produced together with the reproduction of stuff, social relations, affects, decisions, cultures" (p. 119). For De Angelis (2017), there are two moments that inevitably take place in the reproduction of commons systems, which consist of social labour in the form of commoning and secondly, the decision-making process carried out by a community of commoners to determine the operational norms and rules to be adhered to in the collective self-governance of the commons (pp. 122-123). While commoning and capitalist work are both cooperative forms of labour, De Angelis (2017) correctly points out that they are distinguished from one another by the very fact that "commons establishes its own autonomous measures of what, how, when and how much labour, while for capital all these measures are prevalently defined from the outside conditions of market, competiveness and the particular needs of capitalist profitability" (p. 210). He also

argues that, in contrast to abstract labour under capital, there exists an organic connection between the 'commonwealth' and the community of commoners that materially and socially reproduce themselves, and their 'common goods', through the activity of commoning (De Angelis, 2017, p. 251). In the data analysis chapters that follow, I will draw on De Angelis (2017) to critically examine the two moments of commoning as they relate to the case of Vio.Me, but also in order to understand commoning as a distinctive of form of organizing and expending human labour-power that is a fundamentally de-alienating praxis.

It is important to note, though, that while the commons as a social force has a completely different trajectory than capital, they still interact with the environment of capital and state social systems, which aim to adopt and coopt commons for their own purposes (De Angelis, 2017). As De Angelis (2013) argues, the most recent "economic crisis is a capitalist crisis of social stability" and consequently, in order to address the impasse it is currently facing, capital requires a 'fix' that goes beyond those normally employed during cyclical crises of over-accumulation and recession (pp. 603-605). Instead, he suggests that capital needs a *commons fix* to help manage the devastation and crisis of social reproduction engendered by neoliberal capitalism (De Angelis, 2013, pp. 603-605). Although the commons may very well be co-opted, or even actively promoted by capital and state, this powerful social force could potentially have the exact opposite effect for capital given that it "could create a social basis for alternative ways of articulating social production independent from capital and its prerogatives" (De Angelis, 2013, p. 606).

4.6 Labour as a Commons

Recently, an increasing number of scholars have proposed that labour be reconceptualized as a commons (Azzellini, 2016; De Angelis, 2017; de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2010; Kioupkiolis

& Karyotis, 2015; Wainwright, 2014). Wainwright (2014) argues that the interdependent

individual and collective human capacity to create, or socially productive human activity, must

be recast as a distinctive commons of creativity (Wainwright, 2014, pp. 75-76). Similarly, in the

context of WRCs, Azzellini (2016) maintains that the practice of commoning "unleashes the

workers' creativity" and the way in which "labour power is used is determined in a process of

commoning" (p. 8). de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford (2010) employ this understanding of labor as

a commons to the worker cooperative as a distinct organizational form. Importantly, de Peuter

and Dyer-Witheford (2010) call attention to the fact that commons politics have often been

disassociated from the issues of "work and wealth, class and poverty," which are of course

central concerns for labour politics (p. 32). For de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford (2010), the

workers' cooperative constitutes a distinctive labour commons "in which the workplace is an

organizational commons, the labour performed is a *commoning practice*, and the surplus

generated, *a commonwealth*" that is equitably and democratically distributed among worker-

owners who collectively 'own' and operate the means of production [emphasis in original] (p.

45). Even though they acknowledge the potential for the co-optation of worker cooperatives

within the dominant capitalist mode of production, de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford (2010) claim

that practices of inter-cooperation within the cooperative sector could possibly reduce the

dependence of worker coops on conventional capitalist enterprises and markets and effectively

promote the building of a parallel economy that continuously increases, in degrees, its autonomy

in relation to the dominant system (p. 44).

For Kioupkiolis and Karyotis (2015), it is fundamental to the emancipatory trajectory of

the solidarity economy, which I will discuss further below, that labour be reconceptualised as a

self-managed commons, rather than the property of the individual labourer and a commodity to

be exchanged in the market, which distinctly institutes labour as a "plentiful resource that a self-constituted community can tap into so as to secure its subsistence" (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 317). In the case of Vio.Me, the focus of the present research study, they maintain that in addition to workers' control over production, the establishment of the SI of Vio.Me, an open assembly for the active participation of the wider community in support of the occupation and self-management of the factory, has created a space for the implementation of greater social control over production (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, pp. 318, 324). For Kioupkiolis and Karyotis (2015), the network structure and open assembly are vital components in the collective self-management of labour as a commons, as well as the development and sustainability of the solidarity economy, "linking different collectives together … mutually sustaining themselves, to expand and start to build autarkic economic spheres of production and distribution outside the market and the state" (Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015, p. 323).

4.7 An Alternative Development Strategy: Community Development and Solidarity Economy

Solidarity Economy Alternative

In recent years, the 'social and solidarity economy' (SSE) has received a significant amount of attention from development practitioners, policymakers, and scholars alike. Therefore, it is necessary to dissect the umbrella term SSE in order to distinguish its two constituent parts from one another. Williams (2014) argues that the solidarity economy alternative aims to dissolve the separation of the economy from the political sphere in an attempt to establish a much deeper social embeddedness of the economy in the needs of people and the environment (Williams, 2014, pp. 42, 51). Although the solidarity economy and social economy certainly overlap in certain respects, Williams (2014) maintains that the solidarity economy diverges markedly from the social economy, which works within the confines of the market economy to ameliorate the

negative effects of neoliberal restructuring, given its transformative vision of moving beyond the capitalist system (pp. 45-46, 50-51). For Williams (2014), the solidarity economy embodies "a series of experiments, becomings, emergent possibilities and prefigurative practices … that seeks to overcome capitalism through a democratic, pluralist process of worker and popular control of the means of production, distribution and consumption" (p. 51). Much like Williams (2014), Dacheux and Goujon (2012) argue that the solidarity economy is not a charitable economy intended to act as a complement to alleviate the social dislocations of the market economy, but a diversity of alternative economic practices which aim to re-embed the economy into society through a process of democratic deliberation and citizen regulation (pp. 206-209, 211-213). According to Dacheux and Goujon (2012), the solidarity economy alternative "is a project designed to reinforce democracy by increasing participation in civil society, by involving citizens in the political decision-making process and by embedding democracy in the economic system itself" (p. 212).

Cooperatives and Community and Human Development

Bhattacharyya (2004) argues that the extant literature on community development is conceptually vague and mistakenly conflates community with a specific place or territory, in effect, reducing it to a catch-all concept that evades an agreed definition (pp. 7-9). In response, Bhattacharyya (2004) puts forward a teleological theory of community development that "advocates a particular kind of social order and a particular methodology for getting there" (p. 10). For Bhattacharyya (2004), the ultimate goal of community development is the promotion of solidarity and agency, given that "people have an inalienable right to agency and that solidarity is a necessity for a satisfying life," with both aims being achieved simultaneously through the methods of self-help and participation in identifying and addressing people's needs through

collective action (pp. 10-14). Community development, therefore, aims at fostering a critical consciousness among agents through their "inclusion in the processes of defining the problems to be solved and how to solve them" as opposed to merely participating in the implementation of a solution that has been defined and imposed from above (Bhattacharyya, 2004, pp. 21-23).

Here, we can see the similarities between the commons and community development. As Kratzwald (2016) argues, both the commons and community development take as their starting point the importance of people's felt needs and share the belief that human beings as agents, in cooperating and acting collectively, are capable of taking matters into their own hands in order to solve community problems (pp. 238-242). However, while there are certainly similarities between these two concepts, it is the post-capitalist trajectory of the commons that distinguishes it from community development, given that "commoners are profoundly critical of the system and the state and seek to transform existing structures" (Kratzwald, 2016, pp. 242-243). Community development, on the contrary, is committed to "empowering people within the current system" and therefore, does not aim to challenge the "existing market, state and civil society structures" (Kratzwald, 2016, p. 243).

For Majee and Hoyt (2011), community development is a process of resource mobilization and capacity building that aims to bring about improvements in the social and economic conditions people face in their community, which actively involves community members in identifying and addressing their own problems and needs (pp. 48-49). Based on this definition, Majee and Hoyt (2011) argue that the cooperative business form, seen as an incubator of economic, human and social capital, is an effective vehicle for achieving the goals of community development (p. 51). According to Majee and Hoyt (2011), cooperatives have proven to be successful in mobilizing people and resources into a 'critical mass' that is employed by less

powerful actors in order to "gain power to participate in and influence market forces and community development" (p. 58). Furthermore, they argue that "cooperatives may be an option that lifts groups, rather than individuals, out of poverty as a result of their ability to create and sustain bonding and bridging social capital for groups of cooperative members" (Majee & Hoyt, 2011, p. 55). In the data analysis that follows, I will draw on Bhattacharyya (2004) and Majee and Hoyt (2011) to lay the ground for my understanding of community development and the organizational form of the workers' cooperative as an effective vehicle for improving the economic and social conditions of the 'commoning-community' of Vio.Me workers, as well as the local neighbourhood surrounding the recuperated factory, which is directly a result of the conversion of their bankrupted company into a worker-controlled enterprise.

In line with Majee and Hoyt (2011), Spear (2000) suggests that there are a number of economic and social advantages integral to the cooperative business model. He argues that cooperatives are by nature participatory organizations whose emphasis on 'voice' "empower people and thereby make a more effective use of the resources that those people bring to an organization" and that coops are flexible and resilient, respond effectively to market failures and state crises, as well as generating positive economic and social benefits within their communities (Spear, 2000, pp. 520-522). Importantly, Spear (2000) demonstrates the efficacy of the so-called 'social capital advantage' that is fostered in the process of organizing and operating a cooperative business enterprise which, given their strong links to surrounding communities, provides a "uniquely favourable basis for the utilization of social capital, its reproduction and accumulation" (p. 519). As Spear puts it (2000), weaker actors in the market "are able to use their social networks to raise finance, help establish a new business and its local market, and access relevant expertise; in other words social capital may reduce the economic cost of

establishing a new enterprise" (p. 513). Both Majee and Hoyt (2011) and Spear (2000) argue social capital is a critical 'resource' for the creation and growth of cooperatives and community development. However, given that the use of 'capital' in the term is a potential cause for confusion, it is better to think of social capital as a resource, "a modern academic tag put onto age-old processes that permit a healthy community to function" (Kay, 2006, p. 167).

Self-help is another fundamental aspect in the development and sustainability of cooperatives and processes of community development (Bhattacharyya, 2004; ICA, n.d.; Spear, 2000). According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), self-help, self-responsibility, social responsibility and caring for others are among the central principles guiding the organization and operation of cooperatives (ICA, n.d.). In a similar vein, Bhattacharyya (2004) argues that "self-help is the opposite of helpless dependency" and human beings, by their very nature, are agents that "are willing and able to take care of themselves, to reciprocate, to be productive, more predisposed to give than receive, are active rather than passive, and creative rather than consuming" (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 22). It is important to note, however, that while self-help may be a potentially effective and empowering way of mobilizing people and resources, "it can also be a mere cost-cutting and socially regressive approach" that provides a defence of the current structures of power and inequality and shifts blame onto the poor for not helping themselves out of conditions of poverty and social exclusion (Berner & Phillips, 2005, p. 27). Therefore, as Berner and Phillips (2005) argue, "self-help approaches can and should be part of strategies to tackle exploitation and marginalization, but should be considered as compliments, not as alternatives, to accessible public services and the redistribution of income and wealth" (p. 27-28). While this argument is certainly important, and should not be ignored in community development theory and practice, it is also crucial to remember that 'commoners', as Caffentzis

and Federici (2014) suggest, aim to recapture control over the means of existence and aim to increasingly unshackle their lives from both the market and state (p. i101). The kind of self-help that takes place anti-capitalist commons do not provide an accommodative fix for capital and state systems but rather, create a constituent social force that challenges them through the prefigurative praxis of commoning.

For me, there are certainly connections between commoning and community and human development which can only be realized through collective action 'from below'. According to Mukherjee Reed (2008), dominant top-down approaches to human development fail to acknowledge that "agency is mobilized irrespective of *the degrees of access* agents have to social and political power" [emphasis in original] (p. 29). She understands human development as a set of processes that have as their aim "mobilizing social and political power to affect relationships of structural inequality," focusing specifically on altering uneven social relations in the division of labour and material (re)production, decision-making processes, norms/culture/values, and the ownership of knowledge/production (Mukherjee Reed, 2008, p. 28). Similarly, Lebowitz (2010) criticizes liberal reformist perspectives on human development for the scant attention they pay to the relationship between human activity and the development of our capabilities and potentials (p. 49). Lebowitz (2006, 2010) describes this connection as the 'key link' between human development and practice, which, drawing on Marx's concept of 'revolutionary practice', has as its result the "simultaneous changing of circumstances and human activity or self-change" (Lebowitz, 2010, p. 49). Obviously, as Marx (1976/1990) has also as noted, capitalism is completely antithetical to human development as it reduces human beings to a mere means to the end of capitalist profitability (Lebowitz, pp. 18-20). For Lebowitz (2010), the 'key link' between human development and practice is based on "the premise that the development of human

capacities can only occur through democratic, participatory, and protagonistic activity in every aspect of our lives" (p. 22). Therefore, Lebowitz (2006) argues that human development requires practice, it does not drop from the sky as he puts it, but instead is the result of "all of our activities – the products of our struggles (or lack of the same), the products of all the relations in which we produce and interact" (p. 18). Importantly, it is this conception of human development proposed by Lebowitz (2006, 2010) that I will draw on to understand the 'revolutionary practice' of the Vio.Me workers, which has led to the simultaneous changing of their circumstances and the emergence of new worker subjectivities cultivated through the process of struggle itself.

Chapter 5: 'If you Can't, we Can' – Occupation and Worker Takeover of Vio.Me

During the economic crisis, the parent company of Vio.Me, Filkeram-Johnson S.A., like so many other enterprises in Greece, especially those in the collapsing construction and manufacturing industries, immediately ran into financial difficulties. Even though the owners of the factory, the Philippou family, claimed that Vio.Me's profits had fallen significantly, between 15-20 percent according their estimations, the workers would later find out that it was a loan that Vio.Me officially made to Filkeram-Johnson which in reality contributed to the start of the company's downfall (Azzellini, 2015a, pp. 80-81). According to Dimitrios Koumatsioulis, a worker in paste production since 2004 at Vio.Me:

> the business started having problems in 2009. Actually, it was Filkeram-Johnson that started having problems. Although they received subsidies, they started firing people. That was the first part, which also affected us negatively because from the moment Filkeram-Johnson attempted to declare bankruptcy, they would take money from Vio.Me, which was viable, and give it to Filkeram-Johnson. Up until today, they have taken 2,700,000 euros from Vio.Me. That was the beginning of our troubles. (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

Given the company's worsening financial situation, the workers came to an agreement with management in 2010 to go on unpaid leave for 4-6 weeks (Azzellini, 2015a, p. 80). Evidently, the company's troubles would have both immediate and tangible consequences for the workers of Vio.Me, as delays in payment and a reduction in wages by nearly half stirred up intense feelings of anxiety and insecurity on the shop floor (G. Theligiannis, personal communication, July 16, 2016). The prospect of falling into the ever-growing ranks of the unemployed and 'new poor' in Greece loomed over the heads of the Vio.Me workers every time they punched in for

their shifts. With job security and working conditions in the factory growing more precarious by

the day, the workers' union, a primary trade union formed by workers in 2006,[3] decided to take

direct action in order to defend the rights and interests of workers who recognized the potential

of losing their unpaid wages, or even their jobs, and with it the ability to support themselves and

their families. The workers' union reacted forcefully by imposing numerous work stoppages and

repeated 48-hour strikes in an effort to collect the unpaid wages workers were owed (M.

Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016). Unfortunately, the factory's ownership

had already set in motion a plan to let outstanding debts accumulate, which had reached

22,000,000 euros in 2011, leave workers unpaid and file for bankruptcy, in order to avoid its

financial obligations to its workers and those of its subsidiary companies, including Vio.Me, and

money owing to the Social Insurance Institute (IKA) (D. Koumatsioulis, personal

communication, July 4, 2016).

In May 2011, the Vio.Me factory was abandoned by its owners leaving workers jobless

and owed 1,500,000 euros in unpaid salaries and compensations (Karyotis, 2014). To make

matters worse, according to Greek bankruptcy law,[4] as a lawyer for Vio.Me, Olga Harpidou,

explained to me, the workers of Vio.Me, as employees of a subsidiary company of Filkeram-

Johnson, could not have the outstanding wages owed to them satisfied through the liquation of

the parent company's assets (O. Harpidou, personal communication, July 20, 2016). In the case

of auction procedures, the Vio.Me workers would not have a stake in the wealth of the parent

company and could only receive compensation from the sale of the Vio.Me factory's machinery,

---

[3] The Vio.Me Workers' Union is part of the Sectoral Union of Chemical Industry Workers of Northern Greece.
[4] With the introduction of the Memoranda, there has been a significant change made in Greek bankruptcy law, which stipulates that the order of parties satisfied by auction liquidation procedures has been reversed from the previous ordering of workers, state, and banks to the current arrangement which sees banks and the state satisfied before workers of a bankrupted company.

which would be sold off by the kilo at alarmingly low prices, according to Olga (O. Harpidou, personal communication, July 20, 2016). The workers of Filkeram-Johnson, on the contrary, remained dependent on the liquidation of the whole industrial complex as a single unit, including the space currently occupied by the Vio.Me workers, in hopes of receiving unpaid salaries from their former employer. "All that the Filkeram-Johnson workers are interested in is for the factory to shutdown, to get their money and leave," Dimitrios Koumatsioulis exclaims:

> They don't care what happens tomorrow or the following year. All they want is to get their money, which, at the end of the day, they won't get. There's no chance of them getting any money because the factory and the estate will become completely devalued. (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

In the early stages of the workers' struggle, the Vio.Me workers' union put forward a proposal to the ex-employees of Filkeram-Johnson to help the workers take the first steps to move toward self-management themselves; unfortunately, they remained unreceptive to the proposals of the Vio.Me workers (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). Like many other trade unions in Greece, as mentioned in chapter 3, the Filkeram-Johnson union was being influenced by mainstream political parties, in particular PASOK and ND, which have failed to adequately represent workers' interests, especially during the crisis, and are totally opposed to workers' occupations and genuine self-management (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). The official trade union bureaucracies, namely the two major confederations, ADEDY and GSEE, are basically representatives of the interests and policies supported by employers and the government within the trade union movement (N. Theodorakis, personal communication, June 14, 2016).

As discussed in chapter 3, the working populations in Greece have been devastated by the consequences of the economic crisis, which led to a very sudden and rapid expansion in unemployment and a corresponding spike in the rate of poverty. In fact, a very direct correlation between unemployment and poverty has become strikingly apparent in crisis-stricken Greece. As Rania Antonopoulos, the Alternate Minister of Labour, told me:

> when we look at Greece today, what you see is that the poverty rate among the miserably paid employed people is about 13 percent, whilst among the unemployed, it is 45 percent. So poverty in Greece has a very clear face and that is the face of an unemployed person. (R. Antonopoulos, personal interview, August, 31, 2016)

For the workers of Vio.Me, the prospect of losing their jobs meant the real possibility that workers and their families would almost undoubtedly fall into poverty and social exclusion. Faced with bleak employment opportunities in a collapsing labour market, the forty members of the Vio.Me workers' union, most of whom have been lifelong wage-labourers now in their 40s and 50s, held a general assembly in which 97 percent of the workers voted in favour of occupying the factory in order to prevent the owners from selling off the machinery before workers had been properly paid (Karyotis, 2014). Also, the workers were well aware of the slim chance they had of collecting the wages owed to them from auction procedures, which further reinforced in their minds and hearts the importance of fighting to keep the factory in workers' hands. In the meantime, the Vio.Me workers' union sought out solutions to their problems through negotiations with the Ministry of Labour and official trade union bureaucracies, which ultimately proved be to unsuccessful (Karyotis, 2014). Given this, the Vio.Me workers could not perceive an alternative solution that would provide direct relief from the dire economic consequences brought on by the imminent closure of their workplace, so the workers collectively

decided to take direct action and occupy the factory (A. Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Under the current labour market conditions, the workers of Vio.Me had very little chance, as individuals, of finding employment outside the walls of the occupied factory but collectively, on the other hand, the workers could take control over the means of production and make use of the productive capacity of the factory in order to guarantee a minimum level of economic security and decency in hard times. As Tasos Matzaris, a 50 year old forklift operator at Vio.Me for the last fifteen years, candidly puts it:

> this all happened from the need to survive. Because most of us working here are of a certain age. Go out and find work, where? You have to maintain your dignity, we all have families. So, whether we wanted it or not, this happened. (T. Matzaris, personal communication, July 16, 2016)

At the height of the economic crisis, there was no alternative to occupying and self-managing the abandoned factory for the workers of Vio.Me. Accordingly, the autonomous self-organization of the workers' union would prove to be crucial to operating the occupied factory under workers' control.

5.1 The Significance of Workers' Autonomy and Self-Organization

In July 2012, the workers' union made an open call for participation in a large assembly to announce their decision to go forward with self-management in the occupied factory (Karyotis, 2014). At the assembly were gathered representatives from the official trade union bureaucracies and mainstream political parties who were entirely against the decision taken by the Vio.Me workers' union (Karyotis, 2014). Obviously, self-managed workers challenge traditional forms of worker representation and therefore, political parties and trade unions often consider worker-controlled enterprises as a potential threat to their authority and control (Azzellini, 2015b, pp.

11-12). In the similar case of WRCs in Argentina, Restakis (2010) argues that mainstream trade unions had a stake in maintaining the status quo, as their power came from their collusion with owners and the government and, for that reason, trade unions did not offer much practical support to self-organized workers who "explicitly rejected the top-down power patterns that were the ruling logic of these union organizations" (pp. 208-209). In the case of Vio.Me, the KKE and its trade union affiliate, the All Workers Militant Front (PAME), which has a stronghold in the unions of the construction and industrial sectors (Kritidis, 2014, p. 64), were openly hostile to the struggle of the Vio.Me workers. In fact, despite their claims of supporting workers' control and protecting workers' rights and interests against austerity measures and the forces of capital (N. Theodorakis, personal communication, June 14, 2016), the KKE and PAME have fervently opposed the self-initiative of workers in the industrial sector wanting to experiment with self-management (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016). When I asked Nikolas Theodorakis, the International Secretariat of PAME, about the union's position on Vio.Me, he responded that:

> we supported them in every demand they made to the Ministry to get their salaries paid
> and have their rights protected. But we were very clear from the start that we are not in
> support of the position that the workers become owners of a capitalist enterprise and
> become part of capitalist competition. (N. Theodorakis, personal communication, June
> 14, 2016)

The above excerpt is a very clear representation of the deep-seated problems of the Communist left in Greece today, which continues to cling to the very dogmatic ideology of 20th century socialism and its inherent skepticism towards genuinely worker-controlled enterprises as vehicles for system change (Jossa, 2005). As Memos (2009) puts it, the KKE has become "A mere

shadow of its former militant self, it could be labeled as Communist or Marxist only very loosely

… [it] has been reduced to a Stalinist-Leninist Party, a completely reactionary and repressive

organization" (pp. 222-223). The KKE's understanding of revolutionary change as a process of

capturing power of the state, and implementing a centrally-planned economy dominated by the

Central Committee of the Party, represents a very paternalistic, top-down manner of managing

economic and social life, which leaves little room for the autonomous self-initiative of workers

in their blueprint for social change.[5] On the basis of this "very deranged idea of Marxism," as

Christos Manoukas from the SI of Vio.Me puts it (C. Manoukas, public speech, No Border

Camp, July 16, 2016), the KKE and PAME have an extremely narrow interpretation of the

working class, considering only those directly embedded in a capital-labour relation as workers

to the exclusion of self-managed worker-members of cooperatives. To illustrate this point, they

have accused the workers at Vio.Me of being collective capitalists that have merely stepped in to

take the place of the bosses, instead of genuinely self-organized workers managing the occupied

factory in common (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016), which is consistent

with the views of orthodox Marxism on workers' cooperatives (Jossa, 2005).

     Consistent with the literature on WRCs (Azzellini, 2015a, 2016; Ozarow & Croucher,

2014; Restakis, 2010; Sitrin, 2012; Vieta, 2010), the struggle for the occupation and self-

management of the Vio.Me factory emerged spontaneously as a defensive reaction of workers

deprived access to the means of subsistence by capitalist crisis. As Zibechi (2012) argues, in the

similar context of Argentina, "The worker takeovers came not as a result of ideological debates

… but out of urgent need" (p. 91). In the beginning, the workers' struggle did not necessarily

---

[5] See Grollios (2018) and Moraitis (2014) for insightful autonomist Open Marxist critiques of the KKE, its social theory and political program.

have a conscious ideological or political substance, although a very small minority of workers

had previous experience in class-oriented organizations beyond their firm-based union and its

activities. For the most part, though, the Vio.Me workers were mainstream people who did not

know much about the values of cooperativism or worker self-management as an alternative to the

capitalist organization of work. Commenting on the antagonism of the KKE toward the Vio.Me

workers' decision to occupy and self-manage the factory, Christos Manoukas recalls that:

> the Communist Party came every week to the factory to talk to the open assemblies …
>
> the last time they came, the last time forever, it came to a point where their opinions hit a
>
> ceiling. They were asked over and over again, okay so what do we do now? You say
>
> leave this crazy idea and abandon this place, don't occupy it, and struggle with the
>
> Communist Party. Okay, so what should we do tomorrow? And one of the workers asked,
>
> 'do you think we should be unemployed'? And the answer, the last answer this man gave
>
> was, 'of course, you have to be unemployed to build a big unemployed workers'
>
> movement'. So it's not enough for them to have like one and a half million people
>
> unemployed … you need even these forty workers from Vio.Me to join your imaginary
>
> unemployed workers' movement, which unfortunately, does not exist in Greece today.
>
> This doesn't make any sense to me. Unfortunately, these people have great power in the
>
> unions. Many enterprises are governed in the unions by these people and in the end, they
>
> leave these people unemployed and without their pay because the occupation of the
>
> factory is at the same time a resistance not only against being unemployed but to losing
>
> your wages as well. You occupy the machines even if you do it just to take back the
>
> money they owe you, because if you lose the machinery, there's nothing left for you and
>
> they will forget you. And there is no judge, no legal system, and no government, and no

state that can help you because the system is built for their profits and their interests and not for us. (C. Manoukas, public speech, No Border Camp, July 16, 2016)

Evidently, had the Vio.Me workers paid attention to the opinions of their critics, the result would have been the certain closure and liquidation of the factory, leaving the workers unemployed, or exposed to precarious working conditions, and at risk of falling into poverty. This is made evident by the fact that the majority of the workers that chose not to participate in the occupation and self-management of the factory are still unemployed today (A. Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016).

In the grips of a severe economic depression, with more than 1,000 abandoned industrial workspaces in the country (L. Mourgi, personal communication, June 10, 2016), and hundreds of thousands of other closed businesses across all sectors of the economy, it is hard to believe that there is only a single recuperated company in Greece today. By comparison, in Argentina, which underwent a similar economic and political crisis in 2001-02, there are 15,000 workers who collectively run 350 recuperated companies today in various sectors of the economy (Azzellini, 2015b, p. 3). When I asked Theodoros Karyotis to draw some comparisons between the case of Argentina and Greece, he explained that:

The first recuperated companies in Argentina emerged in the 90s within a very hostile environment like we have here [in Greece] because the workers' movement in Argentina was also very bureaucratic, very top-down and very closely linked to Peronism, so it was not favourable to this kind of activity. It needed a very disciplined and law abiding workers' movement that would just be in negotiations with the government through formal avenues but not an autonomous workers' movement. And this is what we have here now, we had it in Argentina in the 90s, but what changed this situation was that

there were many successful recuperations that actually made a change in people's lives.

So when the moment came, when the crisis erupted … they had another model in mind.

(T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

Notwithstanding the differences, there are certainly similarities between the context of Argentina in the 1990s, when the recuperated company movement first emerged there, and contemporary Greece during the crisis, where the idea of workers' occupations and takeovers is still rather eccentric and a movement of workers' direct action and economic self-activity is still in its infancy. In the case of Argentina, as Restakis (2010) puts it, "worker takeover, expropriation and the creation of a co-operative have now become part of the mental vocabulary of workers and surrounding communities. When factories go bankrupt, the possibility of worker ownership is a natural part of the equation" (p. 216). Right now, this is far from the reality in Greece. In my view, as I will discuss below, the Vio.Me workers are well aware of the fact that they are setting an important example for other workers faced with the closure of their companies that occupation and self-management is a real alternative to unemployment and poverty.

Besides the hostility of mainstream political parties and the official trade union bureaucracies toward workers' control in Greece, the overall low levels of unionization in the private sector (Kretsos & Vogiatzoglou, 2015, pp. 222-224) has also acted as a considerable barrier to the widespread recuperation of companies. When asked how come we have yet to witness more examples like Vio.Me in Greece, Georgia Bekridaki responded:

When Vio.Me started the workers were members of a union we tend to forget. It means that workers were somehow already organized … Many factories that got abandoned didn't have any kind of trade union … Often, there was no fertile ground for workers to believe that they were part of a union, or a collective within their factory, in order to have

a common vision and strong relations to fight for something together, so when the bosses

wanted to just abandon the factory, they found workers kind of helpless and unorganized.

(G. Bekridaki, personal communication, June 10, 2016)

In the case of Vio.Me, as Georgia points out above, this is a very important factor that directly

influenced the way the workers reacted to the closure of their factory and ultimately, their

decision to occupy and self-manage the abandoned factory, which I believe has not received

enough attention in the literature on WRCs. Similarly, in the interviews conducted with the

workers of Vio.Me, particularly those who instigated the occupation and takeover, they placed

great emphasis on the importance of the role played by the workers' union throughout the

process of recuperation and self-management. It is important to note that although there is

definitely an element of spontaneity in the workers' defensive reaction, the presence of a militant

primary trade union in the factory since 2006 gave workers the chance to begin to build strong

bonds of solidarity, reciprocity, and trust with their co-workers, and to experiment with direct

democracy and horizontality in practice, prior to when the real need to recuperate the factory

came about during the crisis. The protagonistic role of the workers' union in this struggle has

been indispensable to its success, as Makis Anagnostou, a worker at Vio.Me for the past 18

years, explained to me:

it was everything, because if it hadn't been for the union and its direct democratic

procedures, we would have nothing tangible today. But we had the union, it created a

reaction in the means of protest and when the issue of the self-management of the factory

came up, the union's decision-making process really helped us to implement everything

to run the factory. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

On the whole, the literature on WRCs supports the view that workers react spontaneously when their workplaces closedown in order to find urgent solutions to micro-level crises at the point of (re)production (Azzellini, 2015a, 2016; Ozarow & Croucher, 2014; Restakis, 2010; Sitrin, 2012; Vieta, 2014). While this is certainly true, the protagonistic role of the workers' union in the case of Vio.Me demonstrates the significant impact that the prior autonomous self-organization of workers at the firm-level can ultimately have on workers' decisions, as well as the collective conviction and capability to act, in taking the initiative to occupy and self-manage their factory after the bosses abandoned it. With that said, however, we must acknowledge the importance of the solidarity shown by various political and social organizations and community-based groups that offered their support to the Vio.Me workers throughout the process of recuperation, both materially and through the exchange of ideas, practices, and experiences, which encouraged the workers to continue on with their struggle and to learn along the way how to self-manage their company without the bosses. After all, it is the inter-cooperative social bonds and experiential learning which informally occurs between WRCs and solidarity movements that help workers to implement the structures and practices of self-management, which distinctively reflect the culture of the autonomous social movements in their surrounding context (Monteagudo, 2008; Vieta, 2014). While workers had practiced direct democracy and horizontality within their firm-based union, sustained communication and cooperation with other anti-systemic movements firmly embedded the core values of autonomy and horizontality into the workers' struggle.

5.2 Charity or Solidarity?

The Vio.Me workers' struggle, despite the lack of support from mainstream political parties and trade unions, has received a great deal of moral and material support from individual activists, grassroots movements, workers' collectives, and ordinary citizens that have come together to

build a strong solidarity movement around Vio.Me. During the span of the occupation, the

workers of Vio.Me were legally entitled to a monthly work retention benefit of 480 euros,

between September 2011 and September 2012, from the OAED (D. Koumatsioulis, personal

communication, July 4, 2016). "That phase lasted one year," Dimitrios Koumatsioulis recalls:

> after which we didn't receive money from any source; it was a small benefit, so we asked
>
> for help from society. Then society, seeing we were attempting to achieve something
>
> worthwhile, was activated. They sent us money, they sent us food, but naturally, we
>
> didn't wish to remain inactive in the factory. What we did, was to say instead of sitting
>
> guarding the factory, we will start producing; if the bosses can't do it, we can! (D.
>
> Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

The solidarity received from the people of the city of Thessaloniki, and from all over Greece and

abroad, has been very important for the Vio.Me workers' struggle. At the side of the workers

since the very beginning of their struggle for self-management has been the SI of Vio.Me. As

Theodoros Karyotis affirms, the SI played:

> a very central part in fundraising, political campaigning, organizing resistance; the
>
> spreading of information, forming of texts and announcements, and in practical issues as
>
> well, helping set up the factory because it took the workers some time to have the
>
> confidence they have today because they went through a long time of real hunger. They
>
> had nothing to eat for themselves and their families. Many of them left along the way. So
>
> the first thing that the solidarity assembly had to do was to confront this kind of lack of
>
> morality. So for about one year the solidarity assembly's main goal was to sustain these
>
> people materially. So we had collection points for food all over the city where people
>
> came to put a bag of spaghetti or a bag of rice or potatoes, which we then distributed

among all the workers of Vio.Me. In many different ways being there for them and showing them that if they decide to go ahead with this, we are going to be by their side and they'll never be alone. We may not be very powerful but we are very decided to do this. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

As shown above, it is evident that without the support of the solidarity movement the Vio.Me workers could not have come as far as they have and that those in solidarity with the workers' struggle have played a major role throughout the process of recuperation. Echoing the sentiments of several other participants, Dimitrios Koumatsioulis powerfully exclaims that "it is solidarity that binds us. Without solidarity we wouldn't be here. It is the strength that kept us together and gives us the strength to go on with our fight" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016).

On 12 February 2013, after more than a year in conflict with their ex-bosses and the state, the workers of Vio.Me restarted the engines of production in the occupied factory under the infamous motto 'Occupy, Resist, Produce!'(Vio.Me, n.d.). Drawing on both short and long memory, the workers of Vio.Me took inspiration for their struggle from contemporary international examples of workers' occupations and takeovers, particularly in Argentina, as well as the history of Greek cooperativism which preceded the formation of the modern state, for instance the *Common Company of Ampelakia* (D. Nikolaidis, personal communication, July, 23, 2016). After the factory takeover, representatives from the worker recuperated ceramic tile factory, FaSinPat (formerly Zanon) in the province of Neuquen in Argentina, came to visit Vio.Me to show their support and solidarity with the workers' struggle and to share important experiences and knowledge to help the workers of Vio.Me with self-management.

The collective decision of the workers' union to begin experimenting with self-management revealed a strong desire among workers to get back to work and reclaim a sense of meaning and purpose, given the destructive psychological effects caused by economic hardship and exclusion from the labour market (Gounari, 2014; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2012; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016). "The crisis has affected us, as it has affected the rest of society," said Dimitrios Koumatsioulis, "but what we have achieved is it to keep depression at bay simply because we didn't hide in our homes. We have taken responsibility for our work and we have the power to produce" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). In personal interviews, the workers of Vio.Me all expressed a significant amount of gratitude for the solidarity shown by society to their struggle and as a result, the workers felt a strong obligation to reciprocate that solidarity in a way that would have a direct social impact for working populations and local communities devastated by the economic crisis. As Dimitrios Koumatsioulis puts it, "we all thought that we should produce something but the idea was also to change our environment, to change our health, to change society and ourselves" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Dimitrios captures the new attitude embraced by the workers of Vio.Me after the recuperation of their workplace, which has inspired them to imagine new ways of organizing production, directly contributing to community development, and reinventing the use-value of their products. The factory already had the capacity to produce chemical-based cleaning stuffs; however, the workers of Vio.Me restarted production with the intention of doing things differently than the capitalist enterprise they had taken over. In recuperated companies, as Azzellini (2016) has noted, "Workers improve production processes, build replacements, and invent new products and new activities" (p. 8), as have the workers of Vio.Me. The workers had confidence in their experience, know-how and

skills on the shop floor, after all, "even under the bosses the workers were the ones producing," so they knew that the machinery could be employed in an alternative fashion and the factory's production could be changed in order to be more socially-oriented and environmentally-friendly (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016).

The workers' union of Vio.Me, together with the SI, convened a large assembly to discuss people's needs in surrounding communities and how the Vio.Me factory's production could be re-oriented to help address the identified needs. As mentioned in chapter 3, the purchasing power of the average person had been severely curtailed in the years of crisis (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016), which rendered mainstream channels of consumption for everyday items unaffordable for many. In dialogue with local communities, the workers of Vio.Me were made aware of the need for affordable household cleaning agents. In view of this, the workers collectively decided to change the factory's production from the chemical-based construction materials Vio.Me previously manufactured under the bosses to organic cleansers, detergents and soaps that are not hazardous to workers' health or the environment and are affordable for working people. As Makis Anagnostou recalls:

> The proposals were made by community leaders and students, who were around us due to the solidarity shown towards Vio.Me, for a product that was needed by society at the time. People could not go shopping at the grocery stores, because everything was too expensive. So, they asked Vio.Me to provide. We searched the internet and elsewhere. Through some acquaintances in the solidarity movement, we found some recipes. Nothing secret, of course, they were simple recipes you could find anywhere. We simply managed to offer our products to people at a very low price. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

The workers of Vio.Me pride themselves in their ability to address people's needs through their work and to reciprocate the solidarity their struggle has received from society in a meaningful way. However, it should be made clear that the workers of Vio.Me do not produce these new products to be purchased as a form of charity, given that the workers have come to see themselves as potential agents of social change as opposed to passive victims of their present circumstances.

For critics of Vio.Me, the workers' cooperative portrays a false hope that workers faced with a similar situation can successfully self-manage their abandoned workplaces inside the dominant capitalist economy and that, in reality, the workers' project is, to a great extent, dependent on the charity of others (N. Theodorakis, personal communication, June 14, 2016). As Nikolas Theodorakis says of Vio.Me, "Whenever it is possible, with the contributions of other people, they produce a few things just to sell by whatever means possible to survive" (N. Theodorakis, personal communication, June 14, 2016). In sharp contrast to the views of the KKE and PAME, the workers of Vio.Me do not perceive what they are doing as simply a survival strategy dependent on charity in times of crisis, nor do they want to be passive recipients of the philanthropic good will of others without reciprocating something of value in return. In response to its critics, Makis Anagnostou claims that Vio.Me:

> offers a product and gets its equivalent. You give something, you take something. That's why we say what we are doing is about solidarity. It's not solidarity when you just offer something or you just receive it, right? Here is the difference in what we do. We offer a product in order get something in return. That's why we call it solidarity. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

What Makis is addressing here is the distinction in the popular discourse, which has emerged during the recent years of crisis, between charity and solidarity (Theodossopoulos, 2016). It is clear that the motivation of the Vio.Me workers is not to receive the one-sided charity of local communities and the solidarity movement but rather, the workers wish to build a meaningful and impactful relationship with consumers that is based on the practices and values of mutual aid, trust and reciprocity and to earn an honest living from their work, which I will elaborate on in chapter 7.

For five consecutive years, the workers of Vio.Me have managed to receive what they consider a 'solidarity amount', the equivalent of the unemployment benefit in Greece, which today is just 360 euros per month, and is only receivable for up to a maximum of one year (R. Antonopoulos, personal communication, August, 31, 2016; D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). In personal interviews, the workers all responded that the current salary they received only provided for a minimal level of economic security and decency, but that in reality there was no other prospect for them (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). Some of the Vio.Me workers, especially during the early days of the workers' struggle, left in search of paid work outside of the factory and others have been forced to hold down multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Based on the decision of the workers' assembly, individual workers could leave when paid work elsewhere came up and still be able to return to work in the factory (T. Matzaris, personal communication, July 16, 2016), or even do a 'double-shift' after the end of the work day at Vio.Me, like Andreas often did. For one of the workers, Alekos Sideridis, who started as a lifting equipment assistant at Vio.Me back in 2006, financial need forced him to search out employment opportunities wherever they presented themselves, including a state-sponsored 'work-for-welfare' program (A. Sideridis, personal communication,

July 4, 2016). "I happened to work for two months for the Local Authority in my municipality,"

Alekos explains, "generally in garbage collecting, beyond those two months, as a 'garbage

collector', that's what I called it, I worked another two months in a cotton mill where I operated

lifting machinery" (A. Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016).

Even though the Vio.Me workers only receive the equivalent of the unemployment

benefit, this is actually a salary that offers a dignified existence, according to workers, given the

drastic decline in the standard of living for Greek working populations in the context of the crisis

(S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). Being a worker-member at Vio.Me offers

job security, a stable income, and decent working conditions, which are far from the norm for the

vast majority of Greek workers today. "Obviously we are trying to raise the amount we are paid

to reach a point of greater dignity," says Dimitrios Koumatsioulis, "but dignity is what we have

in there when we produce. That's what empowers us" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal

communication, July 4, 2016). The Vio.Me workers are confident that if their economic self-

activity in the factory is legalized by the state they could significantly improve productivity and

efficiency, improve existing products and create new products through 'research and

development', and provide more job opportunities for workers expelled from the labour market.

5.3 Issues of Legality and Autonomy from the State

In Greece, beyond the few cases in Thessaloniki during the 1980s discussed in chapter 4, the

worker takeover of an industrial space is almost without precedent. Unsurprisingly, then, there is

no legal framework in Greece today for the recuperation of abandoned workplaces, as there is in

Argentina.[6] For the workers of Vio.Me, the lack of an adequate legal framework for their

---

[6] See Ruggeri and Vieta (2014) for more details on the Argentinian legal framework for workplace recuperations and its problems and shortcomings.

economic self-activity has deprived workers of the right to legally operate the machines in the occupied factory and technically, in the eyes of the law, the workers continue to be illegal 'squatters' in their workplace without the bosses (O. Harpidou, personal communication, July 20, 2016). Given the absence of a legal framework that acknowledges genuinely worker-controlled recuperated enterprises, after overcoming several bureaucratic and legal obstacles, the workers formed a Social Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep) in 2014 (Karyotis, 2014), which made the distribution of Vio.Me's products legal but still, oddly enough, did not legalize the workers' use of the means of production. The Vio.Me workers' demands of the previous and current government is to have the factory's property socialized by the state, given that workers do not wish to be private owners of the means of production but rather, as I will discuss below, demand legal entitlement to access and use the means of the production and collectively manage the factory as a commons. For this reason, the workers of Vio.Me remain in a constant state of legal limbo and continue to face the imminent threat of auction procedures and their eviction from the factory. The workers of Vio.Me, together with the strong solidarity movement which has grown around the workers' struggle, have managed to resist the physical eviction of workers from the factory grounds and blocked auction procedures in the courts on numerous occasions. It is evident that the lack of a legal solution, and the total absence of tolerance toward the workers' project by the state, as I will discuss below, has relinquished workers to a position of illegality which confines them to a constant state of vulnerability and precarity.

While in opposition, at least at a rhetorical level, the 'radical left' SYRIZA party openly expressed its support for the workers of Vio.Me. As mentioned in chapter 3, SYRIZA pursued a strategy of building linkages with popular protest movements and social solidarity initiatives and networks in order to create the impression that it was the vanguard of new political and social

forces in Greece. Nonetheless, the workers of Vio.Me refused to hitch themselves to the political bandwagon of SYRIZA and made the conscious decision, instead, to maintain the collective autonomy of the workers' project from mainstream political parties and trade unions, even those on the 'left', in the spirit of the new political culture of social movements in Greece which have surfaced in response to the deep economic and political crisis of recent years. After assuming governmental power, the workers of Vio.Me would soon become disillusioned with the SYRIZA-led government and its lack of practical support, or the proposal of a legal solution, for the workers' economic self-activity in the factory (M. Vogiatzoglou, personal communication, June 14, 2016). According to Theodoros Karyotis,

> Vio.Me never had too much faith in SYRIZA and SYRIZA never showed too much interest in Vio.Me, so there has been a mutual indifference really. Of course, there were many people within SYRIZA who pretty much understood what was going on because for many people they don't even understand what occupation and self-management is … But many of these people left when SYRIZA was transformed into an enforcer of neoliberalism, so we now have less and less people who understand within the government and the governing party … Of course, Vio.Me is going to keep pushing SYRIZA for a political solution the same way it was pushing the previous governments. There is no special relationship with this government it's pretty much the same as before with all other governments. A lot of empty promises on their behalf and a lot of struggle and political pressure on our behalf, nothing has changed. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

In reality, the only concrete concession the workers have gained from the SYRIZA-led government is a six-month suspension in the factory's auction procedures in 2016 (Vangelis,

personal communication, July 4, 2016). The workers of Vio.Me, and the members of the SI, are clearly aware of the fact that a 'leftist' government is by no means a solution to the workers' troubles.

The continued operation of the Vio.Me factory under workers' control depends on the autonomous initiative of the protagonists of this combative workers' struggle which, by and large, is opposed to a symbiotic relationship with mainstream political parties, trade unions, and the state. The Vio.Me workers have passed through a threshold; they are no longer submissive to forms of authority, power and representation, either inside or outside their workplace, coming to realize that "the bosses weren't so indispensable after all" (Restakis, 2010, pp. 196-197). During personal interviews, the workers of Vio.Me made it very clear that they did not imagine, nor did they necessarily desire to have, an active relationship with vertical political organizations and the state, regardless of the political party in power. The workers of Vio.Me want to be legally allowed to continue to access and use the means of production in the occupied factory without the constant threat of eviction. However, as Theodoros Karyotis explains, "it's not just about creating a legal framework, it's about just letting it be" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). As is evident in the case of Argentina, the introduction of a new bankruptcy law in 2011 (26.684), despite its supposed intent to give precedence to 'productive continuity' over asset liquidation and to facilitate the establishment and consolidation of WRCs, in reality it has had the opposite effect of prolonging the period of conflict and increasing the legal precariousness of workers attempting to recuperate their troubled firms (Ruggeri & Vieta, 2014, pp. 93-96). The SYRIZA-led government has been unwilling to sponsor the recuperation of abandoned workplaces even through co-management, which became evident when a project to recover three abandoned factories of the Lanaras S.A. textile company in Northern Greece was

put to a halt. "For me it's just another proof that SYRIZA," as Theodoros Karyotis asserts, "is not even ready to do projects that are even less radical than Vio.Me. If SYRIZA isn't even willing to dare with [Lanaras], imagine how outside their scope Vio.Me is!" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016).

With the rise of SYRIZA to governmental power, a political party with an anti-austerity agenda and supportive of the new social and political forces in Greece, it would appear that the workers' struggle for self-management was taking place within a favourable political environment, but SYRIZA's policy-making has lacked any particular progressive tendencies to date. In all fairness, in the context of a state increasingly undermined in its capacity to implement domestic policy, given that decision-making power has been upscaled to the supranational level, it is important to point out that the coercive character and uncompromising neoliberal policy prescriptions of the Memoranda has drastically shrunk the autonomy of the Greek government vis-à-vis the 'troika' (Souliotis & Alexandri, 2016, pp. 3, 9). Under the reign of the 'troika', as Panageotou (2017) forcefully puts it, "Greek sovereignty is a chimera, existing only in name … the Greek government will continue to legislate on domestic matters, but its range of decision making will be confined and defined by the … memorandum and the imperatives of private capital" (p. 372). In contrast to the orthodox Marxist school of thought on workers' control outlined in chapter 4, for the self-managed workers of Vio.Me, the capitalist state is perceived more as a site of oppression rather than an emancipatory tool for radical social change. 'Take your life into your own hands', as the Vio.Me workers say, do not lie in wait for solutions to your problems to come 'from above'. Even with a 'leftist' government in power, the Vio.Me workers remain committed to maintaining the collective autonomy of their project from vertical political organizations, like political parties and trade unions, and the apparatuses of the capitalist

state, given that it is fundamentally a struggle against all forms of power and representation. In contrast to this, Theodoros Karyotis goes on to say that:

> SYRIZA wants to control everything. It has this conception that the state should be the ultimate instrument for changing reality and that the law should be adhered to. This actually makes it more right-wing than previous governments and less willing to tolerate things that fall outside this scope … So, to a great extent, we have a statist, governmentalist kind of attitude that's only detrimental to what has been going on in the previous five years in Greece and all the resistances that were created, which to a great extent, were responsible for sending SYRIZA to power, today, are actually fought by SYRIZA itself. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

One of the motivations of the Vio.Me workers is to actively build an autonomous workers' movement that promotes the ideas of occupation and self-management in Greece. The movement that workers are actively trying to build is not about 'taking power' but instead, it is part of the everyday revolution of people that have the 'power-to' prefigure an alternative post-capitalist reality here and now (Holloway, 2002).

5.4 Setting an Example to Build a Movement

The Vio.Me workers' union is attempting to spearhead a national movement in Greece with the aim of spreading the notion of occupation and self-management as a real alternative for workers facing the grim realities of unemployment and poverty after their workplaces have been abandoned by the bosses. Several of my participants maintained that the workers' struggle is part of the broader labour movement, both in Greece and internationally, but that it is also fundamentally connected with the struggles of the "99% of the oppressed," including the struggles of refugees 'stuck' in Greece and the anti-mining movement against Canadian giant,

Eldorado Gold, in the Skouries forest in Halkidiki (S. Sgouras, personal interview, July 15, 2016). In the recent years of crisis, the Vio.Me workers' union has played a central part in the autonomous self-organization of the Greek labour movement, with examples of strong labour solidarity and coordinated action taking place around protest initiatives co-organized by the Vio.Me workers (L. Mourgi, personal communication, June 10, 2016). The first Caravan of Solidarity and Struggle, between 3-6 of April 2015, witnessed a broad-based, cross-sector coalition of workers travel across the country to stage demonstrations and raise awareness for their struggles, including Vio.Me, the occupied and self-managed public broadcaster, ERT, the laid off workers from AGET Heracles cement factory in Chalkida and the Aluminum of Greece factory in Viotia, as well as the fired cleaners from the Ministry of Finance and the sacked school-keepers and suspended teachers (Vio.Me, n.d.). While conducting this fieldwork, I participated in the third Caravan of Solidarity and Struggle, co-organized by the workers of Vio.Me and a second occupied factory, Roben of the Woods, the former Pagouras-Papadopoulos, an abandoned timber factory in the city of Veria. During the demonstration outside the Ministry of Labour, I asked Christos Manoukas to describe the collective goals of the Caravan, to which he responded:

> the Caravan is a coalition of workers' struggles and social movements and there are three
> important issues that it promotes: first of all, the occupation and self-management of
> factories and enterprises and, as a matter of fact, in this regard, we are looking up to the
> Argentinian movement of occupied factories. Secondly, we promote the idea of workers'
> autonomy and independence from the unions, from the 'yellow' unions, and the unions
> that are in fact occupied by the state and different political parties. And lastly, we fight all
> this with direct democracy; the workers' unions and social movements that depend on the

free will and needs of people who fight. We believe that we must be ready to take our

lives into our own hands and of course, therefore, we do not support any means of giving

up the authority, the right to do things for our lives, to others. We are not expecting

anything from anyone, we are fighting for workers' and social rights, here and now, for

us. (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016)

As Christos explains, the workers of Vio.Me and the SI aim to advance their struggle for

autonomous self-organization and self-management beyond the gates of the occupied factory.

Through the process of struggle, the workers of Vio.Me have developed a heightened

class consciousness which has reinforced both their identity as workers and their commitment to

the cause of working people, both in Greece and abroad. The new collective experiences,

practices and knowledge that workers acquired through struggle has contributed to the

advancement of a radical post-capitalist imaginary and the belief that another economy and

society, which is collectively self-managed by workers and communities themselves, is not only

possible but necessary. "It can be done," says Giorgos Theligiannis, a forklift operator at Vio.Me

since 1995,

the proof is in everything we do here, the demand for our products and people's

continued support. Our existence is proof that it's not some impossible dream, it's not

something created by our imagination. It can happen. Of course, to prove our point, we

need other factories to move toward self-management, not just Vio.Me. (G. Theligiannis,

personal communication, July 16, 2016)

This interview excerpt captures the motivation of the Vio.Me workers to promote and support

occupation and self-management as a new way of organizing productive and social life in

common. In the personal interviews I conducted, several of my participants emphasized the importance of the Vio.Me workers' experiment for Greek workers and society, as it presents a feasible alternative for workers, their families and communities affected by business closures and unemployment. The Vio.Me workers' project "sets an example," says Spiros Sgouras:

> it demonstrates that we are really able to do things better, that we can manage better without the bosses. Maybe, there is a possibility for Vio.Me to act as a trigger, which is what we're fighting for; and these days, here [in Athens with the Caravan of Solidarity and Struggle] we are fighting for it consciously and directly, rather than waiting for someone to announce the charge on the Winter Palace before we can self-manage. (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

Echoing this sentiment, Christos Manoukas exclaims:

> The most important thing about this struggle, and this is why it's so hated by the bosses of other enterprises, is that it presents an example to a collapsing economy and society, with millions unemployed in Greece to regain power over the means of production. It's a bad example for them … I think that the other bosses fear what will happen if more enterprises close and there is more unemployment and, at the same time, there is a living example of what to do when they close down a factory or an enterprise; you take over the means of production, occupy, take your life into your own hands. This is a bad example for them and this is why we cannot stop with the struggle of Vio.Me. (C. Manoukas, public speech, No Border Camp, July 16, 2016)

As both the accounts of workers and members of the SI demonstrate, the protagonists of this class struggle are hopeful that their project can provide an empowering example for other

workers and act as a catalyst that sets in motion a wide scale movement of occupation and self-management in Greece.

The impact of the Vio.Me project as an example for other workers faced with the imminent closure of their workplace became evident when a second factory occupation, just an hour to the west of Vio.Me, was launched in early 2016. On 29 January 2016, the workers at Roben of the Woods (formerly Pagouras-Papadopoulos), faced with the real possibility of falling into unemployment and poverty, collectively decided to occupy their workplace when the owners' intention to abandon the troubled factory became obvious to them. For the fourteen workers that instigated the occupation, the recuperation at Vio.Me offered a real life example to look up to in their fight to reclaim their factory. Through my conversations with the workers of Roben of the Woods, it quickly became evident how significant the example of Vio.Me had actually been for them. As Nikos, a worker at Pagouras-Papadopoulos for the past 37 years, recalls:

> Vio.Me has been a great example for us. It is like a university which we attended and learned a lot, through the assemblies, through discussions, through the sharing of ideas and experiences … It is a model which we have been following, I believe, 100%. (Nikos, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

Vio.Me, in a spirit of mutual aid, reciprocity, and solidarity, has offered the workers from Roben of the Woods practical advice and financial support, as the workers of Vio.Me themselves received from other workers' collectives and the solidarity movement in the early stages of their struggle. In contrast to the early days of struggle, the Vio.Me workers' project now constitutes a much deeper political project and social experiment that actively promotes the autonomous self-

organization and self-management of everyday people who take control over their lives to build a better future here and now.

6.1 Making the Commons and Commoning

The free-market economy, institutions of worker representation, the legal system and state have all failed the workers of Vio.Me. As a result, the workers have come to the realization that there is a better way of organizing economic and social life outside of the dominant market-state configuration. The creative resistance that is embodied in the everyday activism and practices of the Vio.Me workers gives their struggle a deeply transformative potential. What began as an instinctive reaction by workers in times of crisis, through the process of struggle (Vieta, 2014), has transformed into an offensive class-based resistance against all forms of power and representation, while simultaneously creating autonomous spaces within the 'cracks' of the current system. In this way, the Vio.Me workers' struggle has transcended its initial stage, when the workers defensively occupied the abandoned factory in order to escape unemployment and poverty, moving toward a much more constructive phase of struggle in which workers are actively seeking to build an imagined and hoped future in common.

After the ex-owners abandoned the factory, the private ownership of Vio.Me factory did not prevent the workers' union from struggling to reclaim access to and use of the means of production in common, given the fact that ownership is largely a legal matter that does not necessarily preclude resources from being collectively managed as a commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 132). For the workers of Vio.Me, the right to work takes precedence over the protection of private property, which ultimately maintains "capital's denial of commonality via private control of the means of production" (de Peuter & Dyer-Witheford, 2010, pp. 31-32). As several authors have pointed out (Azzellini, 2015a, 2016; De Angelis, 2017; Kioupkiolis & Karyotis, 2015), WRCs transform their workplace into a commons, and the labour activity of workers into a distinctly social process of commoning, when they collectively decide to take

over their troubled firms and restart production under workers' control. This view allows us to understand how the process of worker recuperation has reconstituted the Vio.Me factory into 'common property' (Azzellini, 2015a); the workers' collective labour power into a commoning activity or practice; and the workers' assembly into a 'commoning-community' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016) that collectively self-manages the development and sustainability of their pooled immaterial and material resources, or 'commonwealth', and reproduces social relations between community members, or 'commoners', and between commoners and the 'common goods' they lay claim to (De Angelis, 2017).

Before going forward, it is important to reiterate here that 'the commons' is fundamentally a collective form of social organization with respect to shared resources and space and therefore, is better understood in terms of the management practices and values established by a community in the process of commoning as opposed to a particular kind of 'thing' or a form of property (Fournier, 2013; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Helfrich & Bollier, 2015). Drawing on an anti-capitalocentric approach to the commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016), it is possible to transcend narrow formulations of the commons as strictly a form of property and thus, to view the commons as a diverse set of management practices and values developed in the process of *making* the commons, that is, as a relational process of commoning (pp. 5-7). This opens up the possibility for different types of property, as well as material and immaterial resources, including human labour-power, to be collectively self-managed in common. Hence, as Theodoros Karyotis accurately describes it,

> in order to define the commons you have to use the words community, resources, democratic decision-making and horizontal processes. So you can have a factory that's occupied, collectively managed, and to an extent, we don't even care who the owner is;

it's not a matter of deeds, papers that state that you have a legal claim to the land, it's a matter of management and practices. So I think that, to a great extent, you can view labour as a commons … an occupied factory, or a collectively-owned business or cooperative, then, can also be a commons and if we decide to get together and take decisions on what we produce and how we produce it and what we do with the surpluses of what we produce, this has no difference from any other commons around us. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

As Theodoros points out, at the heart of the process of 'making the commons' rest the management practices and values of direct democracy, horizontality and egalitarianism in all aspects of collectively administering resources and space, as well as the surpluses generated from it, by a self-constituted community of commoners. According to De Angelis (2017), there are two moments in commoning: social production taking the form of commoning and the decision-making process in collectively determining the values, norms, and rules for managing the commons (pp. 122-123). In the next two chapters, I will examine these two moments of commoning in the case of Vio.Me. Drawing on Vieta (2014), I will highlight the ways in which the recuperation of the Vio.Me factory has resulted in three broad social transformations: the transformation of workers, the organization of their workplace, and the wider community in which the workers' coop is embedded. In what follows below, I will describe in what ways the recuperation of the factory has reconstituted Vio.Me into a 'labour commons' (de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2010) and its effect on workplace democracy, the collective de-alienation of workers and their self-development through practice. Also, I will look at the 'rules and tools' the Vio.Me workers have implemented to protect against the informal accumulation of power and the emergence of hierarchy in the workers' cooperative. Then, in the next chapter, I will explore

the connections between commoning, the solidarity economy, and transformative community and human development in the context of crisis.

6.2 Workplace Democracy: Commoning in the Decision-Making Process

The Vio.Me workers' assembly is the main decision-making body in the occupied factory. It operates on the basis of direct democratic participation, horizontality and equality in decision-making power among all worker-members of the cooperative, with each individual worker-member having one vote in the workers' assembly as opposed to individual property shares in the ownership of the cooperative (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016). Every morning prior to starting production, the workers hold an informal assembly meeting for approximately one hour, while drinking their morning coffee together, to discuss the day's work ahead. Once a week, a more formal workers' assembly is organized, together with co-workers located in Athens, who run a distribution warehouse for their products, via Skype, to discuss and debate the long-term economic and political goals of the workers' project. By taking decisions in common, the community of workers at Vio.Me have taken control over their daily working lives and reclaimed the power to decide what to produce, how it will be produced and for whom; to autonomously determine the operational norms, priorities, and rules that guide the self-management of the commons (De Angelis, 2017), as well as how to equitably distribute the surpluses generated from their commoning practice among workers and surrounding communities.

Under workers' control, the community of workers at Vio.Me aims to maintain the collective autonomy of the workers' coop in all decisions regarding the production and distribution of its products, and the self-management of the workers' commoning activity and the common space of the occupied factory (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016).

What is important, though, is not necessarily the ways in which decisions are made in the workers' assembly but rather, the active participation in democratic debate and deliberation among co-workers that emerges in the consensus-based decision-making process. This debate and deliberation is imperative to creating and maintaining a democratic and cooperative organizational culture, avoiding the (re)emergence of hierarchies, and (re)producing the most horizontal-egalitarian space possible for individual worker-members to exercise 'voice' and agency within the collective. As Spiros Sgouras explains,

> The process has to do with how the assembly operates … decisions are made through direct democratic procedures. We are in an assembly where we are all equal and we find the best way to decide. Generally speaking, unanimity is the least democratic way – it grants excessive power to the one vetoing, the one who disagrees, but voting and making a decision that is close to 50-50 isn't the most democratic way either. Some balance is required. It is important that the decisions made, are made through real dialogue. In order to genuinely understand what our decisions mean and get a majority vote, we want even the person who disagrees to understand what it is the others have decided. Self-management and direct democracy means that everything is a result of deep discussion, it's not the manner of decision-making. (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

Essentially, commoning in the decision-making process demands a distinct way of being and relating with one another and therefore, should not necessarily be reduced to the structures and procedures, or manner of decision-making, implemented by a 'commoning-community' in negotiating a mutually agreed upon decision. As the excerpt from the above interview shows, the equal exercise of power in decision-making within the workers' assembly, and the deliberation

needed to come as close as possible to reaching a general consensus, or a majority vote, is fundamental to the process of self-managing the factory in common (Kokkinidis, 2015b). As Alekos Sideridis puts it, "It's the assembly that determines everything. We actually have a boss and it's the assembly" (A. Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). As Kokkinidis (2015b) argues, despite the criticism that consensus based-decision making is rigid and inflexible, workers' collectives would rather achieve the greatest possible consensus on all labour-related issues than respond quickly to market demands and opportunities (p. 863). The Vio.Me workers place significant emphasis on the importance of democratic debate and deliberation among co-workers, and given that the products of the workers' commoning practice are distributed through the networks of the solidarity economy, which I will discuss in the next chapter, the decisions made in common by the workers' assembly may potentially be constrained, but are not entirely determined by, external economic factors (Cornforth, 1995, p. 490). In contrast to Atzeni's (2013) claim that external economic factors largely determine the internal organization and behavior of worker cooperatives, Vio.Me continues to make management decisions within a framework of non-capitalist ideas and practices (Ozarow & Croucher, 2014), which have a difference set of norms, measures and values than those of productivity, efficiency and profitability.

The Vio.Me workers' assembly is a space of deliberative democracy that creates the conditions for maintaining horizontality and equality while, at the same time, protecting against the accumulation of power and the emergence of a hierarchy within the workers' coop. However, it should be pointed out, as Monteagudo (2008) rightly does, that the workers' assembly is not a space of complete equality or horizontality but rather, it is a space of contention and problem-

solving in which worker-members of the cooperative resolve differences of opinion and reach mutually agreed upon decisions in common (p. 206). Reflecting this, Spiros Sgouras argues,

> It isn't that there are no clashes, arguments, misunderstandings, or competition amongst us; however, if the assembly operates in a manner of true direct democracy, with immediacy, even if extra effort is required to solve problems, you manage to lower tensions and find solutions. This doesn't really happen in normal businesses, no matter how hard you try and it is very important for everyone to try and eradicate competitiveness and dissatisfaction amongst workers. (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

As the above excerpt suggests, the collective experience of self-management in the occupied factory has made the worker-members of the coop well aware of the fact that contention and extensive deliberation are necessary to facilitate the active and equal participation of all in the process of consensus-based decision-making and to find constructive ways to solve collective problems. As Cornforth (1995) points out, the reproduction of an active, committed membership through everyday practices, and maintaining an openness to conflict and diversity through meaningful participation, is essential to contesting processes of degeneration in the democratic organization and management of cooperatives (pp. 515-516). In contrast to representative democracy, which, in reality, "(re)produces, rather than alleviates, hierarchal structures and authoritative forms of governance" (Kokkinidis, 2012, p. 250), the power to decide is equally distributed and shared amongst the worker-members of Vio.Me, preventing the accumulation of power in the hands of a few that have the authority to impose their will on others (Stavrides, 2016, p. 44).

However, the informal and fluid structure of the workers' assembly, as Cornforth (1995) warns, opens up the possibility for the emergence of informal hierarchies and an informal elite that could place constraints on the individual exercise of 'voice' and agency within the collective. The informal and fluid structure of the workers' assembly could potentially make it "easier for those with greater knowledge or stronger personalities to dominate" and that access to expertise and knowledge may in fact be "exacerbated by the lack of structure and formal procedures" in democratically-organized worker cooperatives (Cornforth, 1995, p. 507). The potential for the emergence of informal hierarchies, however, has not been lost on the worker-members of Vio.Me. According to Spiros Sgouras, the process of self-management must of necessity include:

> the breaking of existing informal hierarchies, for example when somebody has greater or more specialized knowledge, either at the level of production or a political level. You need to try and break that, to support another co-worker who might not be very talkative to express his opinion … we have to make certain we do not drown anyone out and that's not at all easy, it is extremely difficult. It is something that causes me great concern. There are many rules and tools to avoid informal hierarchies but we also have to be determined ourselves to avoid it and be cautious that it is not only an issue of rules and tools. (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

Power is an inherent feature of human relations, as Stavrides (2016) reminds us, but through the practice of horizontality, it is possible to prevent individual advantages from being deployed as a form of domination, or to impose a hierarchy, within a collective (p. 272). From my interviews and observations, it became evident that among the Vio.Me workers, both those who participated in the initial takeover of the factory and the new worker-members who joined the coop later on,

there are individuals with more dominant personalities, greater knowledge of and experience in

political activism and social justice issues, as well as specialized knowledge and expertise in

specific aspects of production than other worker-members. With that being said, however, I

found that the workers' assembly, as a 'commoning-community' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016),

has collectively established a set of 'rules and tools', to use Spiros' words, that function to

maintain horizontality and equality in the process of commoning.

As the broader literature on the commons (De Angelis, 2017; Gibson-Graham et al.,

2013; Helfrich & Bollier, 2015) suggests, a set of rules must be collectively established, and

adhered to, in order to ensure the reproduction of the commons and prevent the risk of

degeneration, or a so-called 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin, 1968). In the Vio.Me workers'

coop, all workers are members and all members are workers (S. Sgouras, personal

communication, July 5, 2016), dissolving the internal social hierarchies and individual property

rights typical of privately-owned capitalist firms and even some cooperatives, in effect,

converting the factory into 'common property' (Azzellini, 2015a, p. 69) that is collectively self-

managed by workers themselves. Importantly, the worker-members of Vio.Me are not private

shareholders of the cooperative; instead, in line with international cooperative principle of one-

member, one vote (ICA, n.d.), they exercise their 'ownership' rights by participating in the

democratic debate and deliberation of the workers' assembly whose decisions guide the self-

management of the commons (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016). "We are

workers," Spiros Sgouras declares, "who are cooperating together; we are not shareholders of the

company, and we are definitely not bosses. We are all equal" (S. Sgouras, personal

communication, July 5, 2016). The Vio.Me workers' coop, therefore, not only challenges the

private ownership of the means of production, but also liberal forms of 'democratic' governance

and representation (Azzellini, 2015a, pp. 69, 93). Since the takeover, the Vio.Me workers'

assembly has implemented a completely egalitarian pay scheme in the self-managed factory,

regardless of seniority or specialization, preventing the (re)emergence of a wage hierarchy that

would result in the unequal distribution of the surpluses generated from their commoning

practice. In this case, with the dissolution of capitalist property relations under common

ownership, and the removal of a hierarchy based on wages and skills, the tendency toward

egoistic and opportunistic behaviour is to a certain degree mitigated, thus limiting the room for

individual interest to be placed ahead of the collective goals of community longevity and well-

being (Gibson-Graham, 2003). Furthermore, the 'rules and tools' collectively determined by the

Vio.Me workers' assembly require that all worker-members must actively participate in the

commoning activity of the coop; that is, the process of decision-making and social production in

common. As Makis Anagnostou explains,

> Self-management is being able to manage the wealth you're making yourself. To manage
>
> it together with the people you've teamed up with. And to set out some ground rules, like
>
> the Vio.Me workers did, that no member is allowed not to be a worker, and no worker is
>
> allowed not to be a member; no man is paid more than another, everyone is paid equally
>
> and has equal rights and responsibilities, along with the obligation to participate in the
>
> assembly. These are the terms. The only obligations you have. You must participate in
>
> the assembly. When you don't, you participate in nothing. When you do, you take part in
>
> everything. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

Here, using the 'Commons Identi-Kit' proposed by Gibson-Graham et al. (2013), we can

understand how the Vio.Me factory has been transformed into a commons. The workers'

assembly determines *access* to and *use* of the means of production, equitably distributes the

benefit generated through commoning, and takes the *responsibility* and *care* for the reproduction of the commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 135). Now, I will turn my attention to the second moment of commoning in the case of Vio.Me, which is social labour in the form of commoning.

6.3 The Labour Process: Social Labour in the Form of Commoning

Since the takeover, the Vio.Me workers have transformed the labour process in the cooperative with the aim of decreasing specialization and increasing multi-tasking and skill sharing among co-workers. Self-management requires workers to assume a wide range of responsibilities and tasks, while continuously developing new skills and knowledge on the shop floor through informal and experiential processes of learning by doing (Vieta, 2014, p. 188). The labour process in the occupied factory is radically different than before, as the workers have transformed production into a process of collaboration through commoning. As Tasos Matzaris explains,

> Working with the bosses is completely different from working without them … because in here you no longer work just as an individual. You work for everybody. All work for one, and one works for all, team effort is a big deal. That wasn't the case when we were working in the factory with the bosses here. Every man was working for himself … each one had a specific job post, a different task. We now do everything in here. I may be in production and then move from production into the office and then come out to sell products. It's very, very different. (T. Matzaris, personal communication, July 16, 2016)

Reflecting the views of many participants, Tasos captures a fundamental aspect of commoning in the occupied factory, which is that each individual worker-member is capable of performing most tasks and co-workers regularly rotate job positions in order to avoid complete specialization

117

and encourage informal learning and knowledge sharing in the workplace. From my observations, I witnessed firsthand the horizontal de-specialization of the labour process in the Vio.Me factory. On one of my many visits to Vio.Me, I remember entering the storage warehouse area, which is now also a space of production, cultural activities and events; hosts an informal market without middlemen and an improvised parking lot for workers, where I found Giorgos and Spiros in a small office answering phones and punching away at their keyboards. Suddenly, I noticed Giorgos jump out of his black leather chair and climb into a nearby forklift to move around some cardboard boxes filled with Vio.Me's products. Later on, he secured the boxes in plastic wrap to prepare them to be shipped and then returned back into the office with Spiros. Personally, this was an 'aha' moment in the 'field' when the views my participants expressed during informal conversations and personal interviews came to life in their everyday practices of self-management.

The case of Vio.Me confirms the findings in the existing literature on WRCs (Azzellini, 2015a, 2016; Ozarow & Croucher, 2014; Sitrin, 2012; Vieta, 2010), which suggest that self-managed workers develop innovative ways of organizing work based on democratic values, horizontality and cooperation. However, as several participants alluded to, it is not practically possible to completely eliminate the division of labour in the self-managed factory, as each individual worker-member has their own unique set of skills and specialized knowledge, which the workers' collectively acknowledge provides for greater productivity and efficiency when collaboratively combined and managed in common. Marx (1976/1990), too, acknowledged the productivity and efficiency of combining labour and consuming the means of production in common, effectively creating a new productive power that is inherently collective (p. 443). As Spiros Sgouras puts it, "self-management is not just about not having a boss, it is about

collaborative work inside the factory" (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). In a

similar vein, Dimitrios Koumatsioulis says that "in here, we are one production piece, we operate

collectively" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). It is important to note,

therefore, that despite there being a division of labour in the process of production, as Kokkinidis

(2015b) argues, the knowledge and product of each individual workers' capabilities, and the

labour performed, is not perceived by worker-members of Vio.Me as an individual possession

but rather, as being part of the collaborative labour effort of the workers' cooperative (p. 857).

As Spiros Sgouras affirms,

> We cannot totally escape some form of division of labour … each of us in Vio.Me, with
>
> our individual specializations and talents helps out and discuss things with one other – it
>
> helps us all have a clearer perception in order to be able to do all jobs. But it is isn't
>
> possible to achieve this 100 percent, to rotate through every single post, but through
>
> discussion and the learning we receive from each other, we generally manage to
>
> understand what each one of us does and we are able to help each other out. (S. Sgouras,
>
> personal communication, July 5, 2016)

As the above excerpt demonstrates, even though there is a division of labour in the process of

production, the exchange of knowledge and skills through informal and experiential learning by

doing (Vieta, 2014, p. 188), in addition to the ethos of cooperation and mutual aid in the

workplace, converts the individual labour-power of workers into a process of conscious

collaboration through commoning. In the case of Vio.Me, contrary to the findings of Atzeni

(2013) and Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007), a hierarchy between administrative/commercial and

productive workers within the coop has yet to (re)emerge, as the example of Giorgos above

shows, and the workers have maintained their management practices and values of direct

democracy, horizontality, and egalitarianism under workers' control. A degree of specialization and division of labour, therefore, should not be attributed to the breakdown of cooperative value practices in the face of external pressures from market forces, as Atzeni (2013) and Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007) would suggest, but, on the contrary, reflects the collective decision made by the worker-members of the coop on how to best secure their own economic subsistence and to ensure the long-term development and sustainability of the commons. Greater specialization and a division of labour, as Cornforth (1995) argues, does not inevitably lead to the emergence of a managerial elite or the undermining of democracy within cooperative workplaces (pp. 517-518). Similarly, De Angelis (2017) claims, "When carried out in the commons, a division of labour does not need to be the instrument of alienation and exploitation and hierarchy of conditions of labour" (p. 211). In this regard, commoning is a way of countering degeneration through collective decision-making and labour activity that aims to meet workers' immediate subsistence needs, but also the individual workers' need and desire for self-development through practice (Lebowitz, 2006, 2010).

6.4 Collective De-Alienation: Human Development through Commoning

Under the rule of the bosses, as discussed above, the decision-making process in the Vio.Me factory was vertically structured and the organization of production was completely specialized. The workers worked "under the supervision, direction and control of the capitalist" and therefore, the workers did not have control over the product and process of their labour activity (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 17). Rather, the workers took directions from above on how and what to produce with the ultimate goal of maximizing profits as opposed to realizing the workers' own need and desire for self-development (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 17). Ultimately, the goals of capitalist production are in no way conducive to the full development of human capabilities and potential

through practice (Lebowitz, 2010, p. 16); rather, the worker under capitalism "is depressed …

both intellectually and physically to the level of a machine, and from being a man becomes an

abstract activity and a stomach" (Marx, 1975/1992, p. 285). Since the recuperation of the Vio.Me

factory, the workers have taken control over all aspects of management, including

administrative/commercial and production activities, which gives workers the power to

determine the product of their commoning activity, as well as the autonomous capacity to self-

regulate the labour process according workers' wants and needs. The commodification of labour,

as Marx claimed, deprived workers of control over the product and process of their labour

activity, thus surrendering all property rights over the products they have produced to the owners

of the means of production (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 17), resulting in the alienation and exploitation of

workers. "Working under the bosses is real oppression," as Alekos Sideridis exclaims, "from the

moment you get to work in the morning, till the moment you leave, you feel oppressed … you're

always afraid … command, command, command, they think you're a pawn, nothing more" (A.

Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016).

Under workers' control, the hierarchal command structure of the previous capitalist

enterprise has been dissolved and as result, workers experience a much greater sense of control

and freedom, or autonomy, in their everyday working lives. As De Angelis (2017) tells us, "The

freedom that the commons gives you is a freedom you will find nowhere else: that is, the

freedom to shape, together with others, the condition of your doing … Freedom as auto-

determination" (pp. 204-205). As Vangelis, a young chemical engineer who became a worker-

member of Vio.Me in 2015, affirms:

Vio.Me is an exceptional case in this capitalist system we live in. Here, you can make

decisions about what you are going to produce, how you are going to produce it, how you

will distribute it, and how you are going to monitor all of this. This is a job where you feel no danger of being fired, you don't have a manager hanging over your head to say 'why are you late, why did you take a break to smoke now, why did you go to the bathroom, why aren't you working harder'. (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

As the literature on WRCs suggests (Azzellini, 2015b, 2016; Ozarow & Croucher, 2014; Sitrin, 2012), the more control workers have over the decisions concerning their working lives, the less alienating their experience of work. Accordingly, work becomes much more enjoyable and fulfilling for workers rather than something that is dreaded, yet tolerated, in order for workers to meet their subsistence needs. In the case of Vio.Me, work has ceased to be a burden, as Makis Anagnostou told me:

We have so much freedom in working how we want that we don't get exhausted. You've been here a few days, you've seen the relaxed job process. We'll sit down for lunch together to have some coffee or drink some beer if we get tired. If you go to capitalist factory, you won't see this. You won't see people smiling. They'll all be frowning and focused on their jobs …We are proud to be coming to work every day and having a good time. We leave happy from work. This is such a big deal. If I don't make it to work for a day, I feel down, like I'm missing out on something. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

The Vio.Me workers' lived experiences of work in the occupied factory is totally different than it had been under the bosses. Their attitudes toward work, as well as the meaning they attribute to it, and the sense of self-realization and fulfillment acquired through their commoning activity, has markedly changed workers' perceptions of their workplace and the nature of work. When

asked if work is more meaningful and satisfying under self-management, Andreas, another young chemical engineer who joined the workers' coop together with his friend Vangelis in 2015, responded:

> Yes, definitely. What we make is from our own hands, our own ideas, and it is not someone else's property. If we do something well, it returns to us and if people say good things about our products, especially our new products, we will be very happy because we would have made Vio.Me a better example against capitalism. We feel that our work here makes sense and makes our lives much better. (Andreas, personal communication, July 14, 2016)

As the above interview excerpt demonstrates, under self-management, the Vio.Me workers have been able to "combine the conception of work with its execution," reuniting head and hand, mental and manual labour activity, in producing directly and consciously for other people's needs, which is necessary for the full development of human capabilities and potential to be actualized (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 65; Lebowitz, 2010, p. 57).

The autonomy workers have gained over their working lives by converting their recuperated company into a 'labour commons' (de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2010) has allowed for workers to express their creativity through their own self-conscious labour activity. As Holloway (2002) points out, the transformation of human 'doing', or 'productive labour in general', to use Marx's terminology, into abstract labour serves to maintain the alienation of, and domination over, the human 'power-to-do' (pp. 12-13). After the recuperation, the Vio.Me workers have become actively engaged in a simultaneous process of negation-and-creation of another form of social labour activity, that is, commoning, which seeks to move beyond abstract labour and through workers' control, is breaking with the alienating aspects of work and

liberating the collective creative capacities and potential of the workers' social production, or 'doing' in common (Holloway, 2010, p. 19). Likewise, De Angelis (2017) argues that, paraphrasing Marx, commoning as a social activity differs from abstract labour in that "it is ultimately human labour power expended *with* regard to the form of its expenditure, and *with* regard to the goals and orientations defined by the community itself" [emphasis in original] (p. 251). Working under self-management, as Makis Anagnostou affirms,

> You are no longer just a worker, having someone telling you 'do this or do that', being obliged to do it, and having to do it anyway even if you disagree with it. We are now only doing what we want, and apart from that, what we produce we consider it to be a creation, not just the product of some job you are forced to do. It's a creative product because it goes through the process of being selected and judged by us and given to society to evaluate as well. It's an entire process that puts us in a transitional place as people. We are no longer just workers, we are creators. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

The transitional phase that Makis articulates here is the passage of the Vio.Me workers along a transformative journey from being managed employees of a capitalist enterprise to defensive unemployed workers set on saving their jobs and now, to *becoming* 'commoners' and protagonistic agents of social change (Vieta, 2014, p. 207). Breaking with the capital-labour relation under self-management, the Vio.Me workers have greater freedom to convey their creative capacities through self-expression, in an ongoing process of overcoming abstract labour and alienation on the path to realizing their species-character as human beings. Thus, work is no longer just a source of earning an income to satisfy workers' most basic social reproduction needs; instead, as Azzellini (2015b) argues, "when workers are in control of the work they do,

work is a means of self-expression. The creative capacity inherent in every human being is unleashed in the labour activity" (p. 18). Effectively capturing this, Spiros Sgouras describes that "when working for a self-managed business what is very important is what we Greeks call 'meraki'. We have a feeling inside that we are producing products, not merchandise … working with self-management you feel really creative" (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). Meraki is a central aspect of work in the Vio.Me factory as it allows workers to reclaim their creative power and to make products with care and in good taste, in stark contrast to the uncreative, monotonous and repetitive nature of work in the capitalist factory (Tragaki, 2013). Meraki is to do something with love, soul, and creativity and to put a piece of yourself, or better said, an expression of your essence, into your work (Moore, 2009).

Chapter 7: The Commons, Solidarity Economy and Transformative Development

7.1 Commoning: Self-Help and Community Development

As discussed in chapter 5, the occupation and takeover of the Vio.Me factory emerged as a survival strategy in response to the threat of unemployment, destitution and exclusion in the crisis. By reclaiming the factory from the bosses, the workers transformed their abandoned workplace into 'common property' (Azzellini, 2015a) collectively managed by workers themselves and put the machines back into operation in order to gain their economic subsistence through the activity of commoning. In this process, the Vio.Me workers have reconstituted themselves into a 'commoning-community' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016) that solves problems collectively in order to meet workers' needs and desires through the self-management of shared resources and space (Helfrich and Bollier, 2015, p. 76). Here, community is understood not as a place or territory, but as a social configuration with a shared identity and set of norms and values (Bhattacharyya, 2004, pp. 11-12), which is not pre-given, but constituted through the process of commoning (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 5). As Majee and Hoyt (2011) argue, "As people work together in a cooperative, they build up community identity, establish community norms, learn to trust each other and commit to providing benefits for each other" (p. 52). After the recuperation of the factory, the Vio.Me workers pooled their material and immaterial resources into a 'common pot' (De Angelis, 2017, p. 127) that workers would collectively manage and share in order to ensure the social reproduction of workers, as well as the long-term development and sustainability of the commons. The Vio.Me workers strongly believe that, by taking their lives into their own hands, they can solve their own problems themselves, independently of both the market and state. They are also confident in their ability to successfully manage the factory without being dependent on external actors and traditional institutions of worker representation for solutions to their problems. The defense of worker autonomy is of the utmost importance at

Vio.Me and accordingly, in line with the international cooperative principles of self-help and self-responsibility (ICA, n.d.), the workers collectively decided to self-finance production after the takeover of the factory in 2013.

At first, the workers collected and recycled leftover materials, including aluminum, paper and nylon, from the occupied factory to raise some of the capital necessary to restart production under workers' control (G. Theligiannis, personal communication, July 16, 2016). Individual worker-members, each according to their ability, made financial contributions toward the start-up capital needed to restart production and afterward, through retained earnings, the workers continued to reinvest in the coop. Initially, the Vio.Me workers were able to tap into the extensive networks of solidarity and informal social bonds created within the city of Thessaloniki, with other solidarity economy actors across Greece and abroad, and grassroots political and social movements, in order to raise capital through crowdfunding and build an alternative market for the distribution the coop's products, as I will discuss below. During my fieldwork, all of the workers' collectives, social centres and squats I visited had organized fundraising and awareness-building events for the workers of Vio.Me. As Spear (2000) points out, 'social capital' can be activated by weaker actors to take advantage of social networks in order to raise finance and to establish a market for an emerging coop, which, in effect, reduces the economic cost for its members (p. 513). For Vio.Me, the cooperative principles of self-help and self-responsibility (ICA, n.d.) were adopted not only as practical solutions for a resource-strapped community of workers to survive in the crisis, but more importantly, as a collective decision taken by workers to avoid relations of dependency with external actors and to maintain the workers' autonomy of action as active agents with the power to decide on matters that directly affect their lives. As Makis Anagnostou explains,

From the beginning we took on the burden of self-financing this whole process … This

involves a heavy responsibility because, for at least a period of time, you have to accept a

much lower salary. But this was our choice from the beginning. We preferred to finance

our project ourselves, instead of being prisoners of the banks or some European Union

programs. (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

Echoing this sentiment, Vangelis proclaims:

We have no desire or intention of being under the protective umbrella of the state, nor are

we seeking inclusion in a National Strategic Reference Framework program, nor do we

need assistance to receive a loan, or anything else. We have proved, after so many years

of work, that with our hands and our minds we have managed to operate a factory that

has been abandoned by its owners; we have been successful in finding customers for our

products and in continually increasing the number of our supporters as well as increasing

sales and reaching a point of … having secured for some years, a survival income. And,

of course, there is the real prospect of this amount increasing to become a salary of

dignity. In other words, we have no need for either state or European funding to be able

to continue doing what we have done all these years ourselves. (Vangelis, personal

communication, July 4, 2016)

In sharp contrast to the views of the KKE and PAME, Vio.Me has been able to efficiently

operate the occupied factory, and continuously increase productivity and surpluses, without

being dependent on public funding (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016). The

autonomous workers of Vio.Me have proven to be capable of identifying and addressing their

own needs through their commoning activity rather than being passive subjects who give up

control over their economic lives to traditional institutions of worker representation, like

bureaucratic trade unions and mainstream political parties, which have failed to protect the interests of Greek workers in the crisis.

The commons created and maintained by the Vio.Me workers in the process of taking over their abandoned factory has proven to be an effective strategy of collective resource management that has given workers the opportunity to secure their economic subsistence and to gain control over their working lives. The practice of commoning, however, is not only an effective strategy of resource management in desperate times, but has also been a self-empowering experience for the Vio.Me workers who have taken their lives into their own hands to transform a defensive situation into a protagonistic struggle for worker autonomy and transformative community development. Drawing on Bhattacharyya (2004) and Majee and Hoyt (2011), I understand community development as a democratic and participatory process that aims to mobilize material and immaterial resources to improve economic and social conditions in a community through the promotion of solidarity and agency in addressing collective problems by way of commoning. For Bhattacharyya (2004), the promotion of solidarity and agency essential to community development is realized through the agency-generating activity of self-help and participation in addressing felt needs (pp. 22-23). Bhattacharyya (2004) argues that "the people must have the opportunity to own the problem by feeling and defining it, and also to apply their knowledge/material resources for solving it" (p. 24). For the 'commoning-community' of Vio.Me workers, pooling their resources together and managing them in common, allowed for the exercise of agency in feeling and defining their problems and acting in solidarity to mobilize these resources in order to find collective solutions to managing the occupied factory without the bosses. The so-called 'self-help advantage' of coops, as Spear (2000) describes it, provides less powerful actors in society with a means of achieving collective

economic empowerment by lifting groups, rather than individuals, out of unemployment and poverty (Majee & Hoyt, 2011, p. 55). While the Vio.Me workers have been able to benefit from the 'self-help advantage', it is important to acknowledge that self-help is a potentially reactionary and dangerous concept which may provide an apologetic defence for regressive neoliberal austerity policies (Berner & Phillips, 2005), such as those being imposed in Greece today, as opposed to acting as a catalyst for transformative community and human development. As Berner and Phillips (2005) argue, "the self-help campaign risks being transformed from a survival strategy in the face of government unconcern into a defence of such unconcern" (p. 21). Evidently, community self-help strategies can be accommodative to neoliberalism and similarly, cooperatives can easily become commons initiatives cooped within the dominant system for its own purposes. However, as Theodoros Karyotis argues,

> There is always an element that makes [commons initiatives] inherently unstable and inherently threatening to the dominant order, to the extent that they have autonomy of action, and they spread new kinds of practices that are not conduit with the dominant mode and in a sense, for neoliberalism, these kinds of practices are a double-edged sword. On a systemic level, enough tamed commons initiatives will create a safety-net and will help neoliberalism … so its commons in the service of neoliberalism. But too much of it means that they create a different pole within society and different kinds of practices, values and empowerment. Empowerment, in this sense apart from the political connotations, is always an economic empowerment. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

It is precisely the alternative value practices and new social relations that have developed in the process of recuperation which situates the workers' coop as an antagonistic, rather than

accommodative, commons initiative emerging within the 'cracks' of neoliberal capitalism. The Vio.Me workers' coop is an 'anti-capitalist commons' (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014) that is increasingly disentangling the lives of workers from the dominant state-market configuration (p. i101). The Vio.Me workers' project is not merely a survival strategy that provides a defence of government unconcern but instead, it is a collective exercise of solidarity and agency to improve economic and social conditions for the community of workers *despite* the unconcern of government, bureaucratic trade unions and mainstream political parties in times of crisis.

7.2 Expanding the Commons: The Inclusion of New Worker-Members in the Workers' Coop

Worker cooperatives are created to provide stable employment opportunities and improve working conditions (Zeuli & Radel, 2005, p. 51), which is very important in a crisis-stricken country where under and unemployment is prevalent and precarious employment relations constitute the norm. The immediate concern of the Vio.Me workers' takeover, as discussed in chapter 5, was to protect jobs in a context of widespread unemployment and heightened insecurity in the labour market. In the process of recuperating their workplace, however, the Vio.Me workers' motivations have moved beyond rescuing their own jobs to include the creation of new worker-member positions in the coop and to reciprocate solidarity toward the wider community affected by the crisis, as I will discuss below. The recuperation of the Vio.Me factory by its workers has converted the previous capitalist enterprise into a transformative community organization in many ways (Vieta, 2014, p. 205), including the creation of new employment opportunities when both the private sector and state have failed to reintegrate unemployed workers back into the labour market and to provide decent work. Since restarting production in 2013, six new worker-members from within the solidarity movement have joined the workers' cooperative, providing much needed job opportunities for other workers and their families to

secure their economic subsistence. As Cornforth (1995) points out, self-managed organizations need to reproduce an active membership by developing and maintaining a shared meaning and commitment to the cooperative's aims and practices in order to constructively deal with the tendency toward degeneration (pp. 515-516). In the case of Vio.Me, I think that the "careful selection and socialization" of new worker-members from the within the solidarity movement has been critical to preventing degeneration and activating processes of regeneration, as it reproduces among worker-members "a commitment to cooperatives principles and ideals in a society where these principles and ideals are not dominant" (Cornforth, 1995, pp. 515-516).

Among the new worker-members who joined the coop in 2015 were two young chemical engineers from the city of Thessaloniki. As mentioned in chapter 3, sky-high levels of youth unemployment in Greece, reaching 62.1 percent at the height of the crisis (Vogiatzoglou, 2016, p. 5), has led to a significant 'brain drain' among young educated professionals in search of work opportunities abroad (Kesisoglou et al., 2016, p. 75). As Vangelis explains,

> This is a great experience being responsible from day one as a chemical engineer in a
> productive factory. It has its difficulties but also advantages, an experience I wouldn't be
> able to acquire elsewhere, given the fact that in Greece, particularly in Thessaloniki, my
> home town, it is virtually impossible nowadays for a young chemical engineer to find a
> job. Everyone – many fellows students, are heading aboard, in hopes of finding
> something there. Otherwise, here in Greece, the situation in my field is extremely
> difficult. (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

The conversion of a troubled capitalist firm into a genuinely worker-run coop has not only saved existing jobs, but also directly created meaningful and secure employment opportunities for workers in a collapsing labour market. As Spiros Sgouras argues,

Vio.Me began as a struggle against the 'executive' right to open and close the business, to offer jobs and then cancel them; we vetoed this right of the bosses … what is certain is that, through self-management and control of factories by the workers, it is possible to recover all jobs and to make full use of the production base in a more alternative fashion, to turn it into a space offering paid work and this happens in recuperated businesses. Not only are lost positions recovered, because not everyone participates in self-management, so it is necessary - as was my case - for others to fill in these posts, but other alternative positions are created as well. (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

Given that the Vio.Me workers reject the capital-labour relation, the workers' assembly collectively decided that all new members would formally join the coop as full worker-members, as opposed to waged workers, under the same rights and responsibilities, equality in decision-making power, wages and working conditions within the coop, as the original workers that initiated the factory occupation and takeover (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). As Vangelis explains,

Of course, from day one, when we joined Vio.Me, our colleagues made it clear that we would all receive the same pay, there was no question of them having been there longer, and us receiving less money because we were new, or not getting paid at all, the way ordinary companies do it; that is, a probationary period until you join properly. So, from day one we have been paid the same. From day one again, we were equal members of the assembly. We could propose, agree, disagree and vote, exactly like all other workers. (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

If the workers of Vio.Me were genuinely collective capitalists, as the Communist left accuses them of being, the coop would have simply hired waged labourers to increase their workforce

133

and distribute the higher surpluses created from production among an inner circle of cooperators, in effect, privatizing the surpluses generated by their commoning activity. Increasing productivity, efficiency and the surpluses generated from the commoning activity of the workers' coop does not have as its goal the accumulation of profits for profit's sake, or individual gain, but rather, widening *access*, *use* and *benefit* from the commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) to include new worker-members in the coop amidst heightened levels of unemployment and poverty. Therefore, the Vio.Me workers' cooperative challenges "the neoclassical theory of the firm as a profit-maximizing entity and of individuals as being driven primarily by motives of self-interest" (Kokkinidis, 2015b, p. 848). Profits, in the traditional sense of the term, are no longer created in the workers' coop, given that the private ownership and capital-labour relations characteristic of the formerly private-owned enterprise have been dissolved under common ownership and workers' control. Rather, the aim of solidarity economy actors, like Vio.Me, is to create 'social surpluses', as Theodoros Karyotis puts it, "an excess that society is the real proprietor of … and find ways to make them social" (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). Hence, the Vio.Me workers' coop has taken the surpluses, or 'excess', created through their commoning practice and made them 'social' in effort to contribute to community and human development through the creation of meaningful and secure employment, but also, as I will discuss below, by opening up the factory to society and creating joint initiatives with other commons to address the current crisis of social reproduction.

7.3 Solidarity Economy Network

The concept of the social economy has been coopted and instrumentalized by major institutions and governments within the hegemonic global development apparatus (Satgar, 2014, pp. 3, 16) as a 'commons fix' (De Angelis, 2013) for the ongoing crisis of neoliberal capitalism. In the

context of the EU, and likewise in Greece with the introduction of the first law on the social

economy and social entrepreneurship (4019/2011), social economy enterprises constitute a

'distinctive business model' oriented toward the goals of growth, inclusion of excluded and

marginalized groups into the market economy, building 'social capital' and promoting a

competitive Europe (Satgar, 2014, p. 14). The solidarity economy, on the other hand, according

to Williams (2014), puts forward a transformative vision and practice that aims to move beyond

capitalism, and its embedded power relations, toward another economy and society based on

workers' and social control of the means of production, distribution and consumption (p. 51).

According to Kostas Charitakis, one of the new worker-members based in Athens, the Vio.Me

workers understand their commoning project as being part of the:

> Social-solidarity and sharing economy and not a social economy as it is defined by the
>
> European Union and the government. For us, a social-solidarity and sharing economy is
>
> an economy revolving around the interests of workers and society. An economy that
>
> produces, trades and distributes goods based on its own autonomous production and
>
> consumerist structures. This also means that such an economy has an entirely different set
>
> of criteria than the profit-driven, ever-exploiting capitalist economy. (K. Charitakis,
>
> Vio.Me press conference, Centre of Athens Labour Unions, Athens, Greece, July 6, 2016)

One of the core principles of the solidarity economy, which distinguishes it from the social

economy, is workers' and social control (Dacheux & Goujon, 2011; Williams, 2014). As the

above excerpt shows, the worker-members of the Vio.Me cooperative distinguish, both in

discourse and practice, their alternative economic activity and distribution networks from the

ameliorative initiatives of the social economy, which aims to address the negative social effects

of a disembedded market economy; "indeed, its existence is based on the neoliberal restructuring

of the economy and the retreat of the state" (Williams, 2014, pp. 49-50). The Vio.Me workers'

commoning project, on the contrary, through workers' and social control, aims to re-embed

economic activity into social life by addressing real human needs in an ecologically sustainable

way (Williams, 2014, p. 49). As mentioned previously in chapter 5, after the recuperation of the

abandoned factory, the Vio.Me workers' assembly collectively decided, in collaboration with

local communities and the broader solidarity movement, to change the factory's production from

chemical-based construction items to environmentally-friendly cleaning agents geared toward

meeting the needs of popular families whose purchasing power has been dramatically reduced in

the years of crisis. The Vio.Me workers' coop, through 'solidarity production' and distribution,

is directly and consciously producing for the needs of others in society and thus, their self-

managed economic activity is directly linked to human needs and ecological sustainability rather

than profit-making and growth.

　　As mentioned above, in order to re-embed democracy into economic activity, workers'

control of production must be coupled with worker and social control of distribution and

consumption. As Dacheux and Goujon (2011) point out, "the solidarity economy is a response to

unbridled speculation" and "the use of money as an end in itself, rather than as a facilitator of

economic transactions" (p. 212). One way this occurs is through the speculative practices of

intermediaries, or 'middlemen', in the sphere of circulation in the capitalist market. Thus, the

worker-members of the Vio.Me coop have collectively decided that their products will strictly be

distributed through the networks of the solidarity economy so as to avoid the speculative

practices and excessive commercial markup created in the conventional channels of the capitalist

market, for instance, in large retail outlets and supermarket chains, in order to provide basic

necessity items to low-income families at an affordable and fair price (S. Sgouras, personal

communication, July 5, 2016). To the greatest possible extent, the Vio.Me workers' coop aims to circumvent intermediaries, or 'middlemen', in the distribution of its products by selling directly to the final consumer from the factory, through their online e-shop and at political festivals and events where workers setup makeshift stands to sell their products. However, when this is not possible, the workers' assembly has collectively decided that Vio.Me's products will be sold through a maximum of a single intermediary between the workers' cooperative and the final consumer (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). This situates Vio.Me within the broader 'anti-middlemen' movement that has emerged in Greece since the onset of the crisis.[7] As Spiros Sgouras argues,

> One of the problems of the capitalist market as a whole is that it creates intermediaries
>
> and spaces for speculation by middlemen … we cannot always sell to the final consumer
>
> but we will only accept one intermediary between us and the final consumer. So this can
>
> be done through fair trade shops, social centers and squats, small neighborhood shops,
>
> through our e-shop, which is selling directly to consumers, and workers' collectives, like
>
> other cooperatives and workers' unions that can organize the distribution of our products.
>
> (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016)

The Vio.Me workers are well aware of the potentially threatening effects that external market pressures and capitalist competition present to the long-term development and sustainability of their worker-controlled company. In view of this, the workers' assembly has collectively decided to circumvent, to the extent in which this is actually possible, the capitalist market through what the workers term 'solidarity production' and distribution. In doing so, Vio.Me is actively constructing a parallel economic network, in collaboration with other solidarity economy actors

---

[7] See Rakopoulos (2013) for more on the anti-middlemen movement in Greece.

in Greece and abroad, providing a degree of autonomy for the workers' coop from external market forces and creating the informal structures necessary to build an alternative solidarity-based economy. The networking model of the solidarity economy is a constructive way of resisting cooperative degeneration and through practices of 'cooperation among cooperatives' (ICA, n.d.), lays the foundation for the development of a non-capitalist subsystem that may continuously grow its autonomy and counter-power vis-à-vis the dominant mode of production, distribution and consumption (de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2010, p. 40). It is important to note, though, that while Vio.Me has attempted to circumvent the capitalist market through the alternative and autonomous networks of the solidarity economy, and despite its different operational norms and rules, priorities, measures and value practices, the functioning of the workers' coop is still constrained, but not entirely determined by, the dominant capitalist market. As Theodoros Karyotis explains,

> The fact that so far we have avoided the capitalist market and yet, we have managed to make Vio.Me viable is quite a feat, it's quite an accomplishment. It's a big argument against those that say that these kinds of endeavours are bound to be absorbed by the capitalist market or those people that say that there actually is no alternative to the capitalist market and that it is the only way that you can have the distribution of products. Okay, lets qualify this, actually this way of distribution doesn't mean that it is not affected by the capitalist market, it doesn't mean that it is unambiguously outside the capitalist market. Of course, even if it's not sold in commercial spaces, the prices of raw materials, the prices of the final products, etc. are affected by the capitalist market but in a sense, it shows that there can be some kind of space in these markets to create spaces where the principle role is not profit but solidarity and possibly, to expand them in some

sense. So if there was not one Vio.Me but one hundred Vio.Me, and you had an alternative market for all kinds of products, it would still be a market, it would still be to a great degree dependent on the capitalist market, but at the same time, to an extent, it would be subject to political processes and decisions, to values, etc. So this idea of counterpoising value with values, this idea of against the capitalist market putting political processes and ethical and moral processes, it is not an absolute idea, it's an idea that can be implemented in degrees. You can have a degree of autonomy, a degree of the implementation of different values and practices. (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016)

"The commons … are never romantic outsides," as De Angelis (2017) reminds us, "but *situated* outsides, social systems that must negotiate their way in an environment in which predator capitalist systems are ready to enclose or subordinate commons" [emphasis in original] (p. 33). While Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007) correctly point out that self-managed workers have less control over the sphere of circulation than in production, their focus on the structural factors of *the* market, as being singular and capitalist as opposed to plural and diverse (Gibson-Graham, 2003), fails to take into consideration that there is space for alternative markets with different measures, practices and values to co-exist with the dominant capitalist economy. In the case of Vio.Me, the networks of the solidarity economy create a space, with a degree of autonomy from the capitalist market, which to an extent insulates the international organizational structure and democratic functioning of the workers' coop from the hostile external environment of capital and state social systems. Still, the workers of Vio.Me are not under the illusion that self-managing production in the occupied factory, as "a hotspot in an ocean of capitalism" (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016), can itself generate systemic changes within the dominant

139

capitalist economy. The workers do maintain, however, that by increasing the flows of inter-cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity through active solidarity economy networks, the autonomy and sustainability of an alternative solidarity-based economy may grow within the 'cracks' of the dominant system. The transformative potential in the expansion and multiplication of these 'cracks' (Holloway, 2010), however, can only be realized through "the multiplication of spaces in which commons systems operate" (De Angelis, 2017, p. 287). As Makis Anagnostou proclaims,

> We think that what we call the solidarity and cooperative economy can work in parallel … we believe in a network of many factories, of several production units, in order to, through networking, transport our products all together so that we can achieve cheaper prices. It's an open process for all to participate, in which both the raw materials and transportation will cost much less. And, of course, in the end, the consumer can buy an affordable product, since the commercial part of the business will not create huge profits.
>
> (M. Anagnostou, personal communication, July 15, 2016)

In a similar vein, Spiros Sgouras argues that "the network is the real answer for how we are going to self-manage not only production, but also the distribution of products" (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). As both Makis and Spiros point out, networking with other solidarity economy actors is fundamental to creating autonomous economic spaces "which are anti-, despite-, and post-capitalist" (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010, p. 475). In the case of Vio.Me, interaction and sustained cooperation within active networks of solidarity economy "*produces structural coupling between and among different commons*" [emphasis in original] (De Angelis, 2017, p. 291), which ultimately gives shape to what De Angelis (2017) refers to as commons ecologies. According to De Angelis (2017), the social force that creates and sustains

commons ecologies, such as active solidarity economy networks or joint initiatives between different commons that aim to meet the primary health care needs of communities, which I will discuss below, are generated through *boundary commoning* which "is that type of commoning that crosses boundaries, activates and sustains relations among commons thus giving shape to commons at larger scales, pervading social spaces and intensifying the presences of commons within them" (De Angelis, 2017, p. 287). Here lies the immense transformative potential of scaling the solidarity economy horizontally to create and sustain self-reproducing commons ecologies which constitute a growing social force against and beyond capital at multiple scales.

As mentioned above, the Vio.Me workers' cooperatives, together with the SI of Vio.Me, has created vibrant networks of solidarity exchange within Greece and abroad, in collaboration with other solidarity economy actors, providing a market outlet for the factory's products. The workers are motivated to multiply the nodes in existing solidarity economy networks to build more autonomous economic spaces across borders through communication and cooperation with other workers' collectives. In October 2016, the Vio.Me workers, in collaboration with the Network of Athens Worker Collectives, hosted the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of the 'Workers' Economy' to further discuss the issues of cooperativism, solidarity distribution and logistics, as well as the creation of a solidarity fund among recuperated factories in the region (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). One of the main objectives of the 'Workers' Economy' meeting, which included other worker-controlled recuperated factories, militant trade unions and workers' cooperatives, among others, was to develop the already existing symbolic networks of solidarity in the region in an effort to build a transnational political and economic network with real material affects (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). The emergence of recuperated factories in the region since the onset of the GFC in 2008-09, with

recuperated factories in Marseille (Scop-Ti), Milan and Rome (Ri-Maflow and Officine Zero respectively), as well as Istanbul (Kozava Tekstil), there is the potential to collaborate in order to use the existing infrastructure and solidarity movements to grow the autonomy of a transnational solidarity economy network (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016).

Social Control

In the case of Vio.Me, worker control over production and distribution, as outlined above, has been supplemented by consumer participation, or 'social control' as the workers of Vio.Me and members of the SI refer to it as, in the democratic decision-making process of the workers' coop. Social control at Vio.Me is embodied in the role played by the 'solidarity supporter' in the workers' cooperative. The 'solidarity supporter' is someone who pays 3 euros, or 1.50 euros if they are unemployed, to help workers in covering the basic costs of operating the self-managed factory, including electricity and water, in exchange for a bundle of Vio.Me's products (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016). In return, the 'solidarity supporter' receives an advisory vote in the decision-making process of the Vio.Me workers' coop, as the workers organize a large assembly every few months to receive feedback from consumers and take into consideration new proposals to meet social needs and wants through the factory's production (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016). In this way, social control has created more interaction with, and influence for, consumers in the production of the workers' coop, which radically alters traditional consumer-producer relations, further embedding the economic activity of Vio.Me into the satisfaction of human needs through democratic deliberation and collaboration with surrounding communities (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). Today, there are more than 1,100 people officially registered as a 'solidarity supporter', both in Greece and abroad (C. Manoukas, personal communication, July 6, 2016), making

consumers direct 'stakeholders', to use the language of 'development', in the reproduction of the commons. Fittingly, the workers have extended *access*, *use* and the *benefit* (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) of *making* the occupied factory into a common space that is open and shared with the wider community as a way of reciprocating solidarity.

7.4 Common Space and Community Development

Since the worker takeover, in addition to reorienting the factory's production toward people's needs and creating new job opportunities for unemployed workers, Vio.Me has transformed the abandoned factory into a 'common space' (Stavrides, 2016, p. 168) that is open and shared with others for the purpose of community and human development, converting Vio.Me into a transformative community organization, as mentioned earlier (Vieta, 2014, p. 204). As Dimitrios Koumatsioulis explains, Vio.Me "is no longer a factory just for production, it is a social factory offering other things besides its production … the factory does not belong to us, it belongs to society" (D. Koumatsioulis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Similar to the Argentinian recuperated factory movement, Vio.Me has opened up the gates of the occupied factory in order to integrate the cultural, economic, and social needs of the wider community into their cooperative business model (Vieta, 2014, p. 204). The deep sense of connection and commitment felt by the Vio.Me workers to care for the well-being of the wider community has emerged organically out of the workers' struggle to convert the abandoned factory into a workers' coop (Vieta, 2014). It is important to point out, therefore, that the conversion of the workplace into a common space for the wider community, as Vieta (2014) argues, is not a strategy of corporate social responsibility (p. 204), such as those deployed by conventional capitalist enterprises, but a genuine expression of solidarity and a way of reciprocating, or giving back, to the local communities and solidarity movement, which have supported the workers unconditionally ever

since the beginning of their struggle. As Vangelis expresses it, "we actively demonstrate our solidarity towards others the way many segments of society have demonstrated their solidarity towards us. We offer solidarity the way we received it" (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Here again, we see that solidarity is a two-way reciprocal relationship as opposed to the one-sided focus of charity, as I will discuss more below.

In the midst of a multifaceted economic, humanitarian, and refugee crisis, the Vio.Me workers have expanded the boundaries of the 'common property' of the recuperated factory to increase *access*, *use* and *benefit* (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) to the wider community to meet their subsistence needs and to engage in authentic and meaningful processes of transformative community development. Once every month, the workers' coop hosts a market without middlemen in the occupied factory to give local producers and consumers access to a common space to buy and sell products at a fair price through direct trade (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). In this way, Vio.Me is giving the opportunity to small producers in Northern Greece to gain their own economic subsistence and for consumers, on the other hand, to buy staple products, such as basic foodstuffs, at an affordable and fair price through alternative economic transactions grounded in mutual aid, reciprocity, trust and solidarity as opposed to individual gain and profit-making. The Vio.Me factory, therefore, *becomes* a common space not only for the social reproduction of workers and their families, but for the economic empowerment and social inclusion and engagement of members of the wider community dispossessed by the crisis. Furthermore, when the refugee crisis broke out in the Mediterranean in 2015, the massive influx of migrants into Greece gave rise to an urgent need for the storage and transit of humanitarian aid to refugee camps and social solidarity initiatives and networks in and around the city of Thessaloniki. Ultra-nationalist and racist, xenophobic

groups, some with connections to the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, distribute basic necessity items only to Greek citizens in need (Sotiropoulos, 2014, p. 26), thus further excluding and marginalizing migrant and refugee populations living in ultra-precarious conditions. In contrast, the Vio.Me workers have provided tangible support to immigrant and refugee populations by opening up a space in the occupied factory for the collection, storage and transport of basic necessity items, including clothing, food and medicine, for displaced persons in need (C. Manoukas, public speech, No Border Camp, July 16, 2016). In addition, the workers of Vio.Me also created a space for the temporary residence of refugees within the occupied factory (C. Manoukas, public speech, No Border Camp, July 16, 2016). This demonstrates, as Rakopoulos (2016) suggests, how solidarity as a form of sociality acts as a temporary bridge that connects the different realities of Syrian refugees and Greek citizens, effectively re-humanizing the 'other' (pp. 143-145). "At the highest level," Bhattacharyya (2004) reminds us, "solidarity demands that we feel concern for every person in the nation and the world as a whole (the solidarity of the species), extending solidarity to people we do not know" (p. 14). Taking collective action to create and sustain a caring society is a central focus of the Vio.Me workers' project and with the ongoing crisis in health care during the era of austerity, the workers' coop is practicing solidarity by identifying and addressing collective problems through their commoning activity.

The Vio.Me 'Workers' Clinic': Commoning and the Crisis of Health Care

As outlined in chapter 3, the neoliberal austerity measures imposed in Greece has resulted in significant cutbacks in public expenditures. In particular, the public health care system has experienced drastic reductions in government spending since 2009, as the per capita spending on health dropped 25 percent by 2013, and changes in entitlement, benefits and user charges have further restricted access to health care services during the crisis (Karanikolos & Kentikelenis,

2016, p. 1). To make matters worse, given that access to health care is largely determined by employment status (Karanikolos & Kentikelenis, 2016, p. 1), in a context of widespread joblessness, it is estimated that between 1.9 and 2.4 million people are without social security coverage in Greece today (Vathakou, 2015, p. 174). For the workers of Vio.Me, and other individuals and families living under precarious conditions in the local neighborhood, either without social security coverage or who cannot afford the increasing cost of health services, the chance of receiving adequate health care in the crisis has been severely restricted. The cooperative principles of social responsibility, concern for community, and caring for others (ICA, n.d.) have become deeply embedded in Vio.Me's commoning project, and given the support workers received in the process of recuperating their abandoned workplace, reciprocating solidarity is a practical way of addressing social reproduction needs in the crisis. In 2016, the Vio.Me workers' assembly, in collaboration with the Social Solidarity Clinic of Thessaloniki, created a community-based health care clinic in the common space of the occupied factory to address the primary health care needs of workers, their families and those in the surrounding neighborhood (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016). The 'Workers' Clinic' brings together members of the Vio.Me workers' cooperative and the Social Solidarity Clinic of Thessaloniki, as well as volunteer doctors, health workers and solidarity supporters, which have established a new commons initiative which operates through its own independent assembly on the basis of direct democratic participation, horizontality and equality (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Here we once again see the practice of boundary commoning where people come together to create and sustain commons ecologies which forge interconnections between different reproduction commons in order to build mutual support and greater resilience amongst them (De Angelis, 2017, pp. 293-294). The participants in the

Workers' Clinic pool immaterial and material resources, and collectively manage these resources and space in common, taking active measures to solve the pressing health issues facing workers and residents of the local neighborhood. The Vio.Me factory is located in a working class neighborhood where many of the local residents are either unemployed or no longer have access to adequate health care services because they are uninsured (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016). Like the Social Solidarity Clinic of Thessaloniki, the Vio.Me Workers' Clinic is totally self-organized and self-managed by the members of its assembly; it remains independent of "the state and the EU, the church, political parties and the market … nor is [it] affiliated with NGOs or charity associations … [and] it accepts donations only from persons, social collectives and associations" (The Social Clinic of Solidarity Thessaloniki, n.d.). The commoning project of the Workers' Clinic provides a means not only for addressing the social reproduction needs of vulnerable groups in the crisis, but also challenges "dominant perceptions and practices of charity and philanthropy" and (re)produces social relations "that aim to empower and transform 'passive' recipients of support into 'active' participants of struggle" (Arampatzi, 2016, pp. 8-9). The Workers' Clinic puts forward an alternative vision and practice of health care, as Vangelis states,

> the aim is to practice holistic medicine – that is, an effort is made to deal with 'visitors', as we call them, not patients, as an entity. So the first step, when someone visits the workers' clinic for the first time, is to interview him or her for over half an hour or so noting down everything on a designated information card. The information includes financial and social status, family situation, whether any other family members are unemployed … how they feel within their social surroundings, if they are facing any psychological issues and, based on that information, an effort is made to achieve the best

possible results for the visitor. I should point out that the workers' clinic doesn't only

meet the needs of Vio.Me and their families, we have also opened up toward the

neighborhood. It is a neighborhood with a lot of unemployed and uninsured people. We

have approached other businesses and visited with workers; we have run a campaign to

mobilize the neighborhood and let all those who have no primary medical care know they

can come to Vio.Me for help. (Vangelis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

By *making* the recuperated factory into a common space for community and human

development, the Vio.Me workers' coop is directly contributing to the improvement of the health

and well-being of residents in the local neighborhood. It is important to point out here the

difference between community development initiatives and the practice of commoning. As

Kratzwald (2016) reminds us, while both community development and commons initiatives aim

to achieve the collective self-empowerment of communities through identifying and addressing

people's needs and solving community problems collectively, community development seeks to

empower people within the current system, whereas the post-capitalist trajectory of the commons

aims to transform existing structures of exclusion, power and inequality (pp. 238-243).

Therefore, we should understand the Workers' Clinic, as Daskalaki and Kokkinidis (2017) argue,

as a new socio-spatial configuration of resistance that challenges "hegemonic constructions of

privatized, hierarchal or enclosed health care spaces, and engages in an inclusive, open and

democratic initiative, both in the ways that the health care provision is organized and

relationships between patients and healthcare professionals are managed" (p. 1316).

Here again, however, we run into the problem connected to self-help and commons

initiatives, which is that of being coopted and transformed to provide a 'commons fix' (De

Angelis, 2013) for capital's ongoing 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2004) and

absolving the state of its responsibility for social welfare provisioning in the crisis. This line of

thinking is supported by the KKE and PAME, which argue that the social solidarity initiatives

and networks that have emerged in the crisis have intervened in fields of social reproduction that

should be the sole responsibility of the state (L. Mourgi, personal communication, June 10,

2016). The so-called 'Communist argument', as one of Theodossopoulos' participants terms it,

frames social solidarity structures in a way that understands volunteers in humanitarian aid

initiatives as being exploited by the 'system' and not-for-profit organizations, while absolving

state inaction and leaving the structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty in society untouched

(Theodossopoulos, 2016, pp. 169, 179). In the context of a deep economic depression, and the

neoliberal structuring of the quasi-welfare state in Greece, however, there are immediate human

needs that have to be covered through self-organization and collective action in the face of

government unconcern in the midst of a devastating humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, the

workers do not naively think that such a self-help response is adequate to address the crisis in

health care and they also acknowledge the fact that the government is attempting to exploit social

solidarity structures in the crisis for its own purposes. As Spiros Sgouras puts it,

> I believe that social clinics played a crucial role over these years since the crisis because
>
> they really offered solutions and answers. They provided assistance to many people.
>
> During the past few years conditions got even harder, because there are people who
>
> although insured, don't have the money required by the system to purchase medication.
>
> For a very long period, health care for the general population was kept at a minimum,
>
> especially for the groups who were impoverished. Present-day governmental policies are
>
> attempting to take advantage of this situation by presenting it as a solution, that is,
>
> through the collapse of the national health care system, things just shift to the sphere of

the private economy and any further needs are expected be met by volunteer work. To the

extent that the movement can't deal with this it will be a great blow if we expect health

issues to be met through volunteer work, rather than through society and workers

providing services (S. Sgouras, personal communication, July 5, 2016).

The Vio.Me Workers' Clinic offers practical solidarity in addressing people's needs in the local

neighborhood but, as the above interview excerpt demonstrates, the workers understand that

humanitarian aid is not a solution to the present-day crisis in health care and that it is important

for there to be more permanent structures in society for providing health care services. However,

for the workers of Vio.Me, this does not necessarily mean a return to the social state but rather,

the self-organization and self-management of essential services by workers and communities

themselves. More importantly, though, the Workers' Clinic puts forward an alternative model of

social solidarity that differs markedly from charitable or philanthropic organizations, given that it

creates a common space for the practice of direct democracy and horizontal prefigurative politics

among community members who have taken matters into their own hands to find solutions to

collective problems. As De Angelis (2017) tells us, the effect of the expansion and multiplication

of commons ecologies:

> in a single area is intense: it produces a new culture, norms, networks of support and
>
> mutual aid, virtuous neighborhoods and villages. For sustained social change to occur,
>
> commons ecologies need to develop and intensify their presence in social space up to a
>
> point where they present a viable alternative for most people. This point is the point of
>
> *critical mass* [emphasis in original] (pp. 288-289).

While we are still far away from being able to talk about the point of 'critical mass', the

commons ecologies being created and sustained by everyday people in Greece, as seen in the

example of the joint initiative of Vio.Me and the Social Solidarity Clinic of Thessaloniki, make visible the constituent elements of a transformative praxis and social force, which fashion new ways of being, relating, and reproducing life in common at multiple scales. For me, this is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the Vio.Me workers' project, in that it shows people there is an alternative way of living life that is sustainable and meaningful, and that is increasingly disentangled from the social alienation, domination and exploitation of capital and state social systems. The practice of commoning is empowering in the sense that it promotes agency and solidarity and cultivates a heightened political awareness and social consciousness (Theodossopoulos, 2016, p. 180) in those people that change themselves in the process of changing their circumstances through practicing solidarity (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 52).

7.5 'Revolutionary Practice': Commoning and New Worker Subjectivities
After the recuperation of the factory, the everyday experience of work and the daily practices workers engage in have drastically changed. Prior to this, most of the Vio.Me workers did not actively participate in community development initiatives and/or political activism beyond traditional forms of protest, such as general strikes, given that such activities fell outside the scope that employees of a capitalist enterprise considered to be part of work. However, the struggle to convert their bankrupted capitalist enterprise into a genuinely worker-controlled recuperated company, and the linkages forged with other grassroots political and social movements, particularly through the SI, has radically altered workers' perceptions of the traditional spatial-temporal boundaries of work. In the case of Vio.Me, as Fernandez Alvarez (2016) argues, in the similar context of worker-controlled factories in the city of Buenos Aires, "the recuperation of the factory modified the everyday life of workers, diversifying their activities and redefining the limits of the working day and the working space" (p. 261).

Similarly, for the Vio.Me workers, the boundaries that previously defined 'work' and the 'workspace' have been reconfigured through the workers' commoning activity and the 'open factory' model.

The worker takeover and self-management of the factory has had the positive effect of making the everyday working lives of the protagonists of this struggle more "rounded, integrated and whole," as Theodoros Karyotis puts it (T. Karyotis, personal communication, July 20, 2016), making community development and political activism central aspects of work in the self-managed factory. Many participants expressed having experienced significant self-change in the process of recuperation and by participating in a diverse array of new activities in the occupied factory. The self-change workers have experienced is directly a result of workers modifying the boundaries of work and *making* the occupied factory into a common space for a diverse range of activities that extend beyond "*capital*'s definition of production – one that thinks of production as the creation of specific use-values that can be a source of surplus value" [emphasis in original] (Lebowitz, 2010, p. 59). In fact, production is the totality of human activity and it is only through active participation, therefore, that individuals become agents in their own self-development. According to Lebowitz (2010), the relationship between human development and practice constitutes the 'key link' necessary for the full development of human capacities and potential to be realized, creating the rich human beings who belong in a solidarian society beyond capital (p. 15). Drawing on Marx's concept of 'revolutionary practice', that is, the "coincidence of the changing of circumstances and human activity or self-change" (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 59), Lebowitz (2010) argues that we can only change ourselves through our own self-activity and that, as human beings, we are essentially the product of the sum of all our activities (p. 59). From my perspective, the 'revolutionary practice' the Vio.Me workers are engaged in is that of

commoning, in that the workers have changed themselves by changing their circumstances through democratic, participatory and protagonistic activity in their everyday lives (Lebowitz, 2010, p. 22), in the process of identifying and addressing collective problems facing workers and the wider community by managing economic and social life in common. Capturing the change in subjectivity worker-members have experienced in the process of recuperation, Alekos Sideridis reflects that,

> We've all changed a lot, we've made a 180-degree turn, I'd say, we've changed greatly as persons … we've really changed our behavior towards other people as well; let's face it, once we didn't pay attention to the people around us, not really anyway. However, through these processes you get to meet people who maybe you didn't think about previously because you were following different paths, and all of a sudden you're called upon to change many things together. You really become much, much more creative than you had been until then … I have to say I am happy that at the age of 43 I have greatly changed as a person. That is one of the advantages of self-management. A great instrument. (A. Sideridis, personal communication, July 4, 2016)

The activity of commoning and practicing solidarity is fashioning alternative subjectivities, as the interview excerpt above demonstrates, transforming the worker-members of Vio.Me into community-minded individuals (Vieta, 2014, p. 205) set on building a more solidarian society here and now.

Chapter 8: Concluding Remarks

In closing out this thesis, I would now like to provide a brief summary of the findings presented in chapters 5 through 7 in order to adequately address the aim and objectives of this research in a very clear and concise way. As shown in chapter 5, the Vio.Me workers' struggle emerged as a defensive reaction against the closure of their workplace and the looming threat of unemployment and poverty in the context of the economic crisis. However, in the process of occupying and self-managing the occupied factory, the Vio.Me workers' resistance has transformed into an offensive class-based struggle for workers' autonomy and radical social change. In view of this, the motivations of the Vio.Me workers have expanded beyond those of an immediate survival strategy in hard times toward a struggle against all forms of power and representation in and beyond their workplace. By converting their troubled firm into a workers' cooperative, the commoning activity of the Vio.Me workers has radically transformed their lived experiences of work and changed their profit-oriented enterprise into a transformative community organization, which aims to meet social needs through 'solidarity production' and expand access, use and benefit of the common space of the recuperated factory to the wider community.

Under self-management, the Vio.Me workers have implemented direct democratic and horizontal decision-making and labour processes in the occupied factory allowing them to reclaim control over the product and process of their labour and the power to decide how to distribute and reinvest the surpluses created through their commoning activity, which constitute key characteristics of workers' control. Needless to say, democratic workers' control differs markedly from the vertical command structure of capitalist production and, as the findings discussed in chapter 6 demonstrate, the commoning activity of the workers' cooperative bestows

upon workers much greater autonomy over their working lives, which leads to a progressive de-alienation and increased pleasure and self-fulfillment from work. As outlined in chapter 7, the conversion of the occupied factory into a common space for alternative economic, political, and social practices, and through joint initiatives established with other commons, such as the Workers' Clinic, Vio.Me is directly contributing to transformative community development. Most importantly perhaps is the fact that not only is Vio.Me improving economic and social conditions in their local neighbourhood, but that the workers' cooperative is identifying and addressing community problems through direct democracy and horizontal prefigurative politics, which has cultivated a heightened sense of political awareness and new community-minded subjectivities among workers.

8.1 Looking to the Future: Issues of Sustainability and Transformation

The Vio.Me workers recently celebrated five years under workers' occupation and self-management. Despite the many challenges they have faced, the Vio.Me workers have been able to restart production under workers' control, established alternative markets for the distribution of their products, created decent work opportunities in a context of widespread unemployment, and contributed significantly to community development in the neighbourhood surrounding the occupied factory. Without a doubt the autonomous workers of Vio.Me have made great strides since taking over their bankrupted company, but how sustainable is the workers' project? In short, it is too early to tell. However, there are indications that the self-managed workers' project could continue to increase productivity and efficiency in the occupied factory; through 'research and development', improve its existing products and create new organic and environmentally-friendly cleaning agents, and even restart production of the industrial glues Vio.Me manufactured under the bosses; create new employment opportunities, both directly and

indirectly; and expand the distribution of its products through the channels of the budding

solidarity economy in Greece and abroad. Based on my interviews and observations, the Vio.Me

workers' cooperative has yet to experience degeneration, and their connections to broader social

movements and the careful selection and socialization of new worker-members from within the

solidarity movement, suggests that Vio.Me is well prepared to constructively deal with

degenerative tendencies in the near future. While its production and distribution is inevitably

affected by the capitalist market, the Vio.Me workers' cooperative is still able to maintain its

direct democratic and horizontal decision-making and labour processes, given that its

commoning activity has a different set of measures, norms, and values that run counter to the

capitalist imperatives of accumulation and profit. Also, the alternative networks of the solidarity

economy insulate the internal functioning of the workers' cooperative, to a degree, from the

external pressures of market forces. However, in order to further build up the resilience of

solidarity economy networks and the autonomy of action it gives the workers' cooperative, I

believe that the next step for Vio.Me is to attempt to replicate active networks of solidarity

distribution in the sphere of production, so as to create horizontal linkages between cooperatives

that purvey the inputs of production to one another and thus, reduce their dependence on the

capitalist market. In this way, the value produced by Vio.Me, and other solidarity economy

actors, remains within these networks instead of spilling over into the capitalist market,

supporting the development and sustainability of commons ecologies.

It is now time to return to the question posed in chapter 2, namely, what transformative

potential do workers' movements have in the context of globalized neoliberal capitalism. As the

case study has shown, the autonomous workers' struggle of Vio.Me has significant

transformative potential at different scales. At the micro-level, the Vio.Me workers have

transformed themselves, their company, social relations in and beyond their workplace, and the surrounding communities touched by the recuperation. At meso- and macro-levels, on the other hand, tangible effects are obviously more difficult to make out. However, from the perspective of the duality of structure and agency, we can see that "human action … both changes and reinforces structures" (Mukherjee Reed, 2008, p. 3) and therefore, agents are capable of transforming those same structures constituted by human action in the first place. As demonstrated in the case of Vio.Me, despite a lack of access to social and political power, the workers have taken their lives into their own hands with the intention of altering uneven social relations in the division of labour and material (re)production, decision-making processes, norms/cultures/values, and the ownership of knowledge/production (Mukherjee Reed, 2008, p. 28). By reclaiming their factory and labour activity as a commons, and intertwining their struggle with other commons to facilitate the multiplication and expansion of 'cracks' in which autopoietic commons ecologies can emerge and flourish in, Vio.Me is part of a local, national and global movement 'from below' which is constituting a social force that is capable of challenging the dominant mode of organizing economic and social life. Of course, commons cannot exist in a pure form in the current hostile environment dominated by state and capital social systems which aim to enclose or co-opt the commons (De Angelis, 2017; Kratzwald, 2016). In this context, Vio.Me must negotiate and make compromises with other social processes and institutions in a strategic effort to preserve the development and sustainability of the commons. Hence, the legalization of the Vio.Me factory by the state, or at least its tolerance toward the workers' project, is crucial to the long-term viability of Vio.Me, as is building an enabling institutional and policy environment for solidarity economy actors and networks to expand and flourish. It is important to note, however, that "These types of state actions cannot

emerge voluntarily from the state, but through the mobilization of social and political power by ordinary citizens" (Mukherjee Reed, 2008, p. 29) and similarly, it is up to the protagonists of this struggle to determine whether they create conditions for greater autonomy, and develop alternatives to state and capital social systems, or if their struggle provides capital and the state with free resources, or a 'commons fix' (De Angelis, 2013; Kratzwald, 2016).

8.2 Avenues for Future Research

Both in the global North and South, the growing precariousness of work, the rise of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, increasing bankruptcy and closure of small- and medium-sized companies, and the continued enclosure of existing commons, welcomes research from across disciplines on how everyday people respond to crises of social reproduction by managing economic and social life in common. In the course of conducting this research, I have come to recognize several avenues for further research that could possibly build on the findings of this current study or explore new areas of the topic which fall outside the scope of this thesis. I have identified areas for future research that are relevant not only for the case of Vio.Me, but also for worker occupations and takeovers within different social, political, economic, legal and cultural contexts. I will outline just a few below. First and foremost, as the case of Vio.Me shows, I think that one of the most significant areas for future research into WRCs is to look at the level of workers' organization prior to the closure of their companies and to determine whether or not there is a positive correlation between different forms of unionism and the successful occupation and takeover of workplaces, a subject which has received scant attention in the existing literature. Also, I think it is equally important for more research to be conducted on the solidarity economy networks WRCs are embedded in, so as to better understand the interplay between external economic factors and the internal organizational structure and

democratic functioning of work-controlled enterprises, and how the building of parallel economic networks can bolster their autonomy and thus, counter degeneration. Of course, it goes without saying that further research into the concept of labour as commoning and the emergence of commons ecologies is fundamental to the advancement of an emancipatory post-capitalist politics.

References

Afonso, A., Zartaloudis, S., & Papadopoulos, Y. (2015). How party linkages shape austerity politics: Clientelism and fiscal adjustment in Greece and Portugal during the eurozone crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(3), 315-334. doi:10.1080/13501763.2014.964644

Antonopoulos, R., Adam, S., Kim, K., Masterson, T., & Papadimitriou, D. B. (2014, April). *Responding to the unemployment challenge: A job guarantee proposal for Greece*. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. Retrieved from http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/rpr_apr_14.pdf

Antonopoulos, R., Adam, S., Kim, K., Masterson, T., and Papadimitriou, D. B. (2015, May). *Responding to the unemployment challenge: A job guarantee proposal for Greece – an addendum*. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. Retrieved from http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/rpr_may_15.pdf

Arampatzi, A. (2016, October 17). *Constructing solidarity as resistive and creative agency in austerity Greece*. Retrieved from White Rose Research Online website: http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/106590/

Atzeni, M. (2014). The workers' control alternative. In M. Atzeni (Ed.), *Workers and labour in a globalized capitalism: Contemporary themes and theoretical issues* (pp. 161-177). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Atzeni, M., & Ghigliani, P. (2007). Labour process and decision-making in factories under workers' self-management: Empirical evidence from Argentina. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(4), 653-671. doi:10.1177/0950017007082875

Avramidis, C., & Galanopoulo, A. (2013, May 23). Vio.Me: A workers' experiment with global appeal. *Reports from the Edge of Borderline Democracy*. Retrieved from https://borderlinereports.com/2013/05/23/viome-a-workers-experiment-with-global-appeal/

Ayoub, P. M., Wallace, S. J., & Zepeda-Millan, C. (2014). Triangulation in social movement research. In D. Della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (pp. 67-96). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Azzellini, D. (2015a). Contemporary crisis and workers' control. In D. Azzellini (Ed.), *An alternative labour history: Worker control and workplace democracy* (pp. 67-99). London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Azzellini, D. (2015b). Introduction. In D. Azzellini (Ed.), *An alternative labour history: Worker control and workplace democracy* (pp. 1-30). London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Azzellini, D. (2016, August 7). Labour as a commons: The example of worker-recuperated companies. *Critical Sociology*, 1-14. doi:10.1177/0896920516661856

Bellos, I. (2016, April 24). Business sector in Greece shrank by over 244,000 firms in just seven years. *Kathimerini*. Retrieved from http://www.ekathimerini.com/208159/ article/ekathimerini/business/business-sector-in-greece-shrank-by-over-244000-firms-in-just-seven-years

Berner, E., & Phillips, B. (2005). Left to their own devices? Community self-help between alternative development and neo-liberalism. *Community Development Journal*, 40(1), 17-29. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsi003

Bhattacharyya, J. (2004). Theorizing community development. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, 34(2), 5-34. doi:10.1080/15575330409490110

Bosco, F. J., & Herman, T. (2010). Focus groups as collaborative research performances. In D. DeLyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitken, M. Crang, & L. McDowell (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative geography* (pp. 1-17). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Boukalas, C., & Muller, J. (2015). Un-doing labour in Greece: Memoranda, workfare and eurozone 'competitiveness'. *Global Labour Journal*, 6(3), 390-405. doi:10.15173/glj.v6i3.2720

Caffentzis, G., & Federici, S. (2014). Commons against and beyond capitalism. *Community Development Journal*, 49(Supplement 1), i92-i105. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsu006

Cornforth, C. (1995). Patterns of cooperative management: Beyond the degeneration thesis. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 16, 487-523. doi:10.1177/0143831X95164002

Dacheux, E., & Goujon, D. (2011). The solidarity economy: an alternative development strategy? *International Social Science Journal*, 62(203-204), 205-215. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2451.2011.01804.x

Daskalaki, M., & Kokkinidis, G. (2017). Organizing solidarity initiatives: A socio-spatial conceptualization of resistance. *Organization Studies*, 38(9), 1303-1325. doi:10.1177/0170840617709304

De Angelis, M. (2013). Does capital need a commons fix? *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 13(3), 603-615. Retrieved from http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/contribution/13-3deangelis.pdf

De Angelis, M. (2014). Social revolution and the commons. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 113(2), 299-311. doi:10.1215/00382876-2643630

De Angelis, M. (2017). *Omnia sunt communia: On the commons and the transformation to postcapitalism*. London: Zed Books.

de Peuter, G., & Dyer-Witheford, N. (2010). Commons and cooperatives. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action*, 4(1), 30-56. Retrieved from https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/affinities/article/view/6147

Dimoulas, C. (2014). Exploring the impact of employment policy measures in the context of crisis: The case of Greece. *International Social Security Review*, 67(2), 49-65. doi:10.1111/issr.12039

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54-63. doi:10.1177/160940690900800105

Farber, S. (2014, Spring). Reflections on "prefigurative politics". *International Socialist Review*, 92. Retrieved from https://isreview.org/issue/92/reflections-prefigurative-politics

Fernandez Alvarez, M. I. (2016). Productive work as political action: Daily practices of struggle and work in a recuperated factory. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, 21(2), 254-275. doi:10.1111/jlca.12221

Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230. doi:10.1177/146879410200200205

Fournier, V. (2013). Commoning: On the social organization of the commons. *M@n@gement*, 16(4), 433-453. Retrieved from https://www.cairn.info/revue-management-2013-4-page-433.htm

Frangonikolopoulos, C. A. (2014). Politics, the media and NGOs: The Greek experience. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 14(4), 606-619. doi:10.1080/15705854.2014.952127

Gasper, P. (2014, Summer). Are workers' cooperatives the alternative to capitalism? Co-ops show that workers can run production, but they don't offer a strategy for changing society. *International Socialist Review*, 93. Retrieved from https://isreview.org/issue/93/are-workers-cooperatives-alternative-capitalism

Gialis, S. (2015). Recession and atypical employment: A focus on contemporary Greek metropolitan regions. In S. Mavroudeas (Ed.), *Greek capitalism in crisis: Marxist analysis* (pp. 212-231). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Gialis, S., & Leontidou, L. (2016). Antinomies of flexibilization and atypical employment in Mediterranean Europe: Greek, Italian and Spanish regions during the crisis. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 23(4), 716-733. doi:10.1177/0969776414538983

Gialis, S. & Tsampra, M. (2015). The diverse regional patterns of atypical employment in Greece: Production restructuring, re/deregulation and flexicurity under crisis. *Geoforum*, 62, 175-187. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.04.004

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2003). Enabling ethical economies: Cooperativism and class. *Critical Sociology*, 29(2), 123-161. doi:10.1163/156916303769155788

Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., & Healy, S. (2013). *Take back the economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., & Healy, S. (2016). Commoning as postcapitalist politics. In A. Amin & P. Howell (eds.), *Releasing the commons: Rethinking the futures of the commons* (pp. 192-212). Abington, United Kingdom: Routledge. A pre-publication version of this chapter is available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299720121_Commoning_as_a_postcapitalist_politics

Gilbert, M. R. (1994). The Politics of location: Doing feminist research at "home". *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 90-96. doi:10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00090.x

Giovanopoulos, C., & Dalakoglou, D. (2011). From ruptures to eruption: A genealogy of post-dictatorial revolts in Greece. In A. Vradis & D. Dalakoglou (Eds.), *Revolt and crisis in Greece: Between a present yet to pass and a future still to come* (pp. 91-114). Oakland, CA: AK Press and Occupied London.

Gounari, P. (2014). Neoliberalism as social necrophilia: Erich Fromm and the politics of hopelessness in Greece. In S. J. Miri, R. Lake & T. Kress (Eds.), *Reclaiming the sane society* (pp. 187-201). Rotterdam, Amsterdam: Sense Publishers.

Grollios, V. (2018). Early Frankfurt School critical theory and socialist politics: A critique of the Greek Communist Party. *Critique*, 46(1), 77-96. doi:10.1080/03017605.2017.1412626

Gunn, C. (2011). Workers' participation in management, workers' control of production: Worlds apart. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 43(3), 317-327. doi:10.1177/0486613411407714

Harvey, D. (2004). The 'new' imperialism: Accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40, 63-87. Retrieved from http://www.socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5811/2707#.WpcN5WrwbIU

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Helfrich, S., & Bollier, D. (2015). Commons. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 75-78). New York, NY: Routledge.

Holloway, J. (2002). *Change the world without taking power: The meaning of revolution today*. London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press.

Holloway, J. (2010). *Crack capitalism*. London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press.

Huliaras, A. (2015). Greek civil society: The neglected causes of weakness. In J. Clarke, A. Huliaras & D. Sotiropoulos (Eds.), *Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil Society at the European frontline* (pp. 9-27). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

International Cooperative Alliance. (n.d.). *Co-operative identity, values & principles*. Retrieved from http://old.ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles

Ioannides, A. (2014). A comparative study of aspects of employment and unemployment in Greece before and after the crisis. In S. Mavroudeas (Ed.), *Greek capitalism in crisis: Marxist analyses* (pp. 196-211). Abington, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Jones, N., Proikaki, M., & Roumeliotis S. (2015). Social capital levels in Greece in times of crisis. In J. Clarke, A. Huliaras & D. Sotiropoulos (Eds.), *Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil society at the European frontline* (pp. 29-43). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Jossa, B. (2005). Marx, Marxism and the cooperative movement. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 29(1), 3-18. doi:10.1093/cje/bei012

Kay, A. (2006). Social capital, the social economy and community development. *Community Development Journal*, 41(2), 160-173. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsi045

Kaplanis, Y. (2011). An economy that excludes the many and an "accidental" revolt. In A. Vradis & D. Dalakoglou (Eds.), *Revolt and crisis in Greece: Between a present yet to pass and a future still to come* (pp. 215-228). Oakland, CA: AK Press and Occupied London.

Karanikolos, M., & Kentikelenis, A. (2016). Health inequalities after austerity in Greece. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 15(83), 1-3. doi:10.1186/s12939-016-0374-0

Karyotis, T. (2014, May 1). Vio.Me: workers' control in the Greek crisis. *Roar Magazine*. Retrieved from https://roarmag.org/essays/viome-workers-control-greek-crisis/

Katz, C. (1994). Playing the field: Questions of fieldwork in geography. *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 67-72. doi:10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00067.x

Kesisoglou, G., Figgou, L., & Dikaiou, M. (2016). "Narratives of flight": Accounts of precarious employment relations and emigration from Greece. *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 24(2), 73-90. Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=570819518720554;res=IELBUS

Kioupkiolis, A. & Karyotis, T. (2015). Self-managing the commons in contemporary Greece. In D. Azzellini (Ed.), *An alternative labour history: Worker control and workplace democracy* (pp. 298-328). London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Kobayashi, A. (1994). Coloring the field: Gender, "race," and the politics of fieldwork. *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 73-80. doi:10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00073.x

Kobayashi, A. (2003). GPX ten years on: Is self-reflexivity enough? *Gender, Place and Culture*, 10(4), 345-349. doi:10.1080/0966369032000153313

Kokkinidis, G. (2012). In search of workplace democracy. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 32(3/4), 233-256. doi:10.1108/01443331211214785

Kokkinidis, G. (2015a). Post-capitalist imaginaries: The case of workers' collective in Greece. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 24(4), 429-432. doi:10.1177/1056492615579788

Kokkinidis, G. (2015b). Spaces of possibilities: Workers' self-management in Greece. *Organization*, 22(6), 847-871. doi:10.1177/1350508414521098

Kornelakis, A., & Voskeritsian, H. (2014). The transformation of employment regulation in Greece: Towards a dysfunctional liberal market economy? *Relations Industrielles/ Industrial Relations*, 69(2), 344-365. doi:10.7202/1025032ar

Kouvelakis, S. (2011). The Greek cauldron. *New Left Review*, 72, 17-32. Retrieved from https://newleftreview.org/II/72/stathis-kouvelakis-the-greek-cauldron

Kratzwald, B. (2016). Community development and commons: on the road to alternative economics? In R. R. Meade, M. Shaw & S. Banks (Eds.), *Politics, power and community development* (pp. 235-251). Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press.

Kretsos, L., & Vogiatzoglou, M. (2015). Lost in the ocean of deregulation? The Greek labour movement in a time of crisis. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 70(2), 218-239. doi:10.7202/1031484ar

Kritidis, G. (2014). The rise and crisis of the anarchist and libertarian movement in Greece, 1973-2012. In B. van der Steen, A. Katzeff, & L. van Hoogenhuijze (Eds.), *The city is ours: Squatting and autonomous movements in Europe from the 1970s to the present* (pp. 63-93). Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Kyriakidis, A. (2016). The Greek crisis 2009-2015: A comprehensive analysis of the EU-IMF financial assistance programs. *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 24(2), 7-34. Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=570744986835521;res=IELBUS

Laskos, C., & Tsakalotos E. (2013). *Crucible of resistance: Greece, the eurozone and the world economic crisis*. New York, NY: Pluto Press.

Laurier, E. (2003). Participant Observation. In N. J. Clifford & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key methods in geography* (pp. 116-130). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Lebowitz, M. A. (2006). *Build it now: Socialism for the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Lebowitz, M. A. (2010). *The socialist alternative: Real human development*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Leontidou, L. (2015). Urban social movements in Greece: Dominant discourses and the reproduction of 'weak' civil societies. In J. Clarke, A. Huliaras & D. Sotiropoulos (Eds.),

Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil society at the European frontline (pp. 85-106). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Levitt, P., & Schiller N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002-1039. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00227.x

Longhurst, R. (2003). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In N. J. Clifford & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key methods in geography* (pp. 117-132). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Majee, W., & Hoyt, A. (2011). Cooperatives and community development: A perspective on the use of cooperatives in development. *Journal of Community Practice*, 19(1), 48-61. doi:10.1080/10705422.2011.550260

Markantonatou, M. (2013). Fiscal discipline through internal devaluation and discourses of rent-seeking: The case of the crisis in Greece. *Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review*, 91, 59-83. doi:10.1080/19187033.2013.11674982

Marx, K. (1864). Inaugural address of the International Workers' Association: "The First International". *Marxists Internet Archive*. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org /archive/marx/works/1864/10/27.htm

Marx, K. (1976/1990). *Capital volume 1*. (B. Fowkes, Trans.) London, England: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1976)

Marx, K. (1975/1992). *Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844*. (R. Livingstone & G. Benton, Trans.). In K. Marx, *Early writings* (pp. 279-400). London, England: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1975)

Matsaganis, M. (2012). Social policy in hard times: The case of Greece. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(3), 406-421. doi:10.1177/0261018312444417

Mavrikos-Adamou, T. (2015). Informal relationship and structures in Greece and their effects on civil society formation. In J. Clarke, A. Huliaras & D. Sotiropoulos (Eds.), *Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil society at the European frontline* (pp. 45-65). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Maxey, I. (1999). Beyond boundaries? Activism, academia, reflexivity and research. *Area*, 31(3), 199-208. doi:10.2307/20003985

McDowell, L. (2010). Interviewing: Fear and liking in the field. In D. DeLyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitken, M. Crang, & L. McDowell (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative geography* (pp. 1-18). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

McLafferty, S. L. (2003). Conducting Questionnaire Surveys. In N. J. Clifford & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key methods in geography* (pp. 87-100). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Memos, C. (2009). Dignified rage, insubordination and militant optimism. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 9(3), 219-233. Retrieved from http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/9-3memos.pdf

Monteagudo, G. (2008). The clean walls of a recovered factory: New subjectivities in Argentina's recovered factories. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 37(2), 175-210. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/40553423?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Moore, C. J. (2009). *In other words: A language lover's guide to the most intriguing words around the world*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Moraitis, Y. (2014). Social transformation and dialectics in traditional Marxism: A critique of the Report of the Central Committee of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) to the 19th Congress. *Critique*, 42(1), 51-71. doi:10.1080/03017605.2014.909976

Mukherjee Reed, A. (2008). *Human development and social power: Perspectives from South Asia*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Mylonas, Y. (2014). Crisis, austerity and opposition in mainstream discourses of Greece. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 11(3), 305-321. doi:10.1080/17405904.2014.915862

Nagar, R., & Geiger, S. (2007). Reflexivity and positionality in feminist fieldwork revisited. In A. Tickell, E. Sheppard, J. Peck & T. J. Barnes (Eds.), *Politics and practice in economic geography* (pp. 267-278). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Nasioulas, I. (2011). *Greek social economy at the crossroads: Law 4019/2011 and the institutionalization challenge* (Working Paper CIRIEC N° 2011/10). Retrieved from CIRIEC International website: http://www.ciriec.ulg.ac.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/WP11-10.pdf

Nasioulas, I. (2012). Social cooperatives in Greece introducing new forms of social economy and entrepreneurship. *International Review of Social Research*, 2(2), 151-171. doi:10.1515/irsr-2012-0022

Nast, H. J. (1994). Women in the field: Critical feminist methodologies and theoretical perspectives. *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 54-66. doi:10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00054.x

Ntampoudi, I. (2014). The eurozone crisis and the politics of blaming: The cases of Germany and Greece. *Political Perspectives*, 8(2), 1-20. Retrieved from http://www.politicalperspectives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Ionna-N-The-Eurozone-crisis-and-the-politics-of-blaming.pdf

Ozarow, D, & Croucher, R. (2014). Workers' self-management, recovered companies and the sociology of work. *Sociology*, 48(5), 989-1006. doi:10.1177/0038038514539064

Panageotou, S. (2017). Disciplining Greece: Crisis management and its discontents. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 49(3), 358-374. doi:10.1177/0486613417703971

Pantazidou, M. (2013). Treading new ground: A changing moment for citizen action in Greece. *Development in Practice*, 23(5-6), 755-770. doi:10.1080/09614524.2013.801399

Papadatos, D. (2015). The Greek EU-IMF memoranda: A problematic strategy for Greek capitalism. In S. Mavroudeas (Ed.), *Greek capitalism in crisis: Marxist analysis* (pp. 67-81). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Papadopoulos, T., & Roumpakis, A. (2012). The Greek welfare state in the age of austerity: Anti-social policy and the politico-economic crisis. In M. Kilkey, G. Ramia, K. Farnsworth (eds.), *Social Policy Review 24: Analysis and debate in social policy* (pp. 205-230). Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press.

Papatheodorou, C. (2015). Economic crisis, poverty and deprivation in Greece: The impact of neoliberal remedies. In S. Mavroudeas (Ed.), *Greek capitalism in crisis: Marxist analysis* (pp. 179-195). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Pappas, T. S. (2013). Why Greece failed. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(2), 31-45. doi:10.1353/jod.2013.0035

Peck, J., & Tickell, A. (2002). Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography*, 34(3), 380-404. doi:10.1111/1467-8330.00247

Petras, J., & Veltmeyer, H. (2002, September 25). Worker self-management in historical perspective. *Rebelión*. Retrieved from https://www.rebelion.org/hemeroteca/petras/english/worker021002.htm

Petropoulou, C. (2013). "Alternative networks of collectivities" and "solidarity-cooperative economy" in Greek cities: Exploring their theoretical origins. *Journal of Regional Socio-Economic Issues*, 3(2), 61-85. Retrieved from http://www.jrsei.yolasite.com/resources/Journal__Volume--III__Issue--II__2013__Online.pdf

Pickerill, J., & Chatterton, P. (2010). Everyday activism and transitions towards post-capitalist worlds. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35(4), 475-490. doi:10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00396.x

Pillow, W. S. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196. doi:10.1080/0951839032000060635

Rakopoulos, T. (2013). Responding to the crisis: Food co-operatives and the solidarity economy in Greece. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 36(3-4), 102-107. doi:10.1080/02580144.2013.10887033

Rakopoulos, T. (2016). Solidarity: The egalitarian tensions of a bridge-concept. *Social Anthropology*, 24(2), 142-151. doi:10.1111/1469-8676.12298

Reinhart, J. (2006). *The tyranny of work: Alienation and the labour process* (5th ed.). Toronto, Canada: Nelson.

Restakis, J. (2010). *Humanizing the economy: Co-operatives in the age of capital*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Routledge, P. (1996). The third space as critical engagement. *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography*, 28(4), 399-419.doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.1996.tb00533.x

Routledge, P. (2002). Travelling east as Walter Kurtz: Identity, performance, and collaboration in Goa, India. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20(4), 477-498. doi:10.1068/d322

Routledge, P., & Derickson K. D. (2015). Situated solidarities and the practice of scholar activism. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(3), 391-407.doi:10.1177/0263775815594308

Ruggeri, A., & Vieta, M. (2014). Argentina's worker-recuperated enterprises, 2010-2013: A synthesis of recent empirical findings. *Journal of Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity*, 4(1), 75-103. doi:10.5947/jeod.2015.005

Satgar, V. (2014). The crises of global capitalism and the solidarity economy alternative. In V. Satgar (Ed.), *The solidarity economy alternative: Emerging theory and practice* (pp. 37-63). Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Sergi, V., & Vogiatzoglou, M. (2013). Think globally, act locally? Symbolic memory and global repertories in the Tunisian uprising and the Greek anti-austerity mobilizations. In C. F. Fominaya & L. Cox (Eds.), *Understanding European movements: New social movements, global justice struggles, anti-austerity protest.* Abington, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Silver, B. (2014). Theorizing the working class in twenty-first century global capitalism. In M. Atzeni (Ed.), *Workers and labour in a globalised capitalism: Contemporary themes and theoretical issues* (pp. 46-59). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simiti, M. (February, 2014). *Rage and protest: The case of the Greek indignant movement* (GreeSE Paper No. 82). London, United Kingdom: Hellenic Observatory. Retrieved from http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/CMS%20pdf/Publications/GreeSE/GreeSE-No82.pdf

Souliotis, N., & Alexandri, G. (2017). From embedded to uncompromising neoliberalism: Competiveness policies and European Union interscalar relations in the case of Greece. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 24(3), 227-240. doi:10.1177/0969776416630582

Sitrin, M. (2012). *Everyday revolutions: Horizontalism and autonomy in Argentina*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.

Sitrin, M., & Azzellini, A. (2014). *They can't represent us! Reinventing democracy from Greece to occupy.* London, United Kingdom: Verso.

Sotiropoulos, D. A. (2014, May 20). *Civil society in Greece in the wake of the economic crisis*. Retrieved from Konrad Adenauer Stiftung website: http://www.kas.de/griechenland/ en/publications/38533/

Sotiropoulos, D. A., & Bourikos, D. (2014). Economic crisis, social solidarity and the volunteer sector in Greece. *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance*, 2(2), 33-53. Retrieved from http://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Assets/Documents/Publications/Books/2014-15/ Sotiropoulos-Bourikos-Economic-Crisis-Social-Solidarity-and-the-Voluntary-Sector-in-Greece.pdf

Spear, R. (2000). The Co-operative Advantage. *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 71(4), 507-523. doi:10.1111/1467-8292.00151

Standing, G. (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stavrides, S. (2016). *Common space: The city as commons*. London: Zed Books.

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(3), 374-385. Retrieved from https://www.acme-journal.org /index.php/acme/article/view/786/645

Tagaris, K. (2017, December 6). In ruins of Greek economy, factories turn to exports to grow. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-greece-economy-manufacturing/in-ruins-of-greek-economy-factories-turn-to-exports-to-grow-idUSKBN1E01OO

Social Clinic of Solidarity Thessaloniki. (n.d.) The Social Solidarity Medical Centre of Thessaloniki [Brochure]. Thessaloniki: n.p.

The Children of the Galley. (2011). The rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time. In A. Vradis & D. Dalakoglou (Eds.), *Revolt and crisis in Greece: Between a present yet to pass and a future still to come* (pp. 115-131). Oakland, CA: AK Press and Occupied London.

Theodossopoulos, D. (2016). Philanthropy or solidarity? Ethical dilemmas about humanitarianism in crisis-afflicted Greece. *Social Anthropology*, 24(2), 167-184. doi:10.1111/1469-8676.12304

Tragaki, D. (2007). *Rebetiko worlds: Ethnomusicology and ethnography in the city*. Newcastle, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Trantidis, A. (2016). Clientelism and economic policy: Hybrid characteristics of collective action in Greece. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(10), 1460-1480. doi:10.1080/13501763.2015.1088564

Vaiou, D., & Kalandides, A. (2016). Practices of collective action and solidarity: Reconfigurations of the public space in crisis-ridden Athens, Greece. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 31(3), 457-470. doi:10.1007/s10901-015-9468-z

Varvarousis, A., & Kallis, G. (2017). Commoning against the crisis. In M. Castells, S. Banet-Weiser, S. Hlebik, G. Kallis, S. Pink, K. Seale … A. Varvarousis, *Another economy is possible* (pp. 128-159). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Vathakou, E. (2015). Citizens' solidarity initiatives in Greece during the financial crisis. In J. Clarke, A. Huliaras & D. Sotiropoulos (Eds.), *Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil society at the European frontline* (pp. 167-189). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Vieta, M. (2010). The social innovations of autogestion in Argentina's worker-recuperated enterprises: Cooperatively reorganizing productive life in hard times. *Labour Studies Journal*, 35(3), 295-321. doi:10.1177/0160449X09337903

Vieta, M. (2014). Learning in struggle: Argentina's new worker cooperatives as transformative learning organizations. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 69(1), 186-218. doi:10.7202/1024212ar

Vio.Me. (n.d). *Caravan of Solidarity and Struggle and the news from the legal front*. Retrieved from http://www.viome.org/2015/06/caravan-of-struggle-of-solidarity-and.html

Vogiatzoglou, M. (2016). Turbulent flow: Anti-austerity mobilization in Greece. In D. della Porta, M. Andretta, T. Fernandes, E. Romanos, F. O'Connor, & M. Vogiatzoglou, *Late neoliberalism and its discontents in the economic crisis: Comparing social movements in the European periphery* (pp. 99-129). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wainwright, H. (2014). Notes for a political economy of creativity and solidarity. In V. Satgar (Ed.), *The solidarity economy alternative: Emerging theory and practice* (pp. 64-100). Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Williams, M. (2014). The solidarity economy and social transformation. In V. Satgar (Ed.), *The solidarity economy alternative: Emerging theory and practice* (pp. 37-63). Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Wacquant, L. (2012). Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism. *Social Anthropology*, 20(1), 66-79. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8676.2011.00189.x

Watson, A., & Till, K. E. (2003). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In D. DeLyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitken, M. Crang, & L. McDowell (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative geography* (pp. 1-20). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Willis, J. (2007). The place of personal politics. In A. Tickell, E. Sheppard, J. Peck & T. J. Barnes (Eds.), *Politics and practice in economic geography* (pp. 131-140). London: Sage Publications.

Wood, G., Szamosi, L. T., Psychogios, A., Sarvandis, S., & Fotopoulou, D. (2015). Rethinking Greek capitalism through the lens of industrial relations reform: A view until the 2015 referendum. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 70(4), 698-717. doi:10.7202/1034900ar

Zeuli, K., & Radel, J. (2005). Cooperatives as a community development strategy: Linking theory and practice. *The Journal of Regional Analysis & Policy*, 35(1), 43-54. Retrieved from http://www.jrap-journal.org/pastvolumes/2000/v35/35-1-4.pdf

Zibechi, R. (2012). *Territories in resistance: A cartography of Latin American social movements*. (R. Ryan, Trans.) Oakland, CA: AK Press.

List of Participants by Sector –

Academics:

Milios, Yiannis – Professor of Political Economy at the National Technical University of Athens and formerly the head of the SYRIZA party's economic policy unit.

Sotiropoulos, Dimitris A. – Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Athens.

Spourdalakis, Michalis – Professor of Political Science and the Dean of the School of Economics and Politics at the University of Athens. He is a founding member of SYRIZA and a member of the board of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute.

Rakopoulos, Theodoros – Associate Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo.

Vogiatzoglou, Markos – PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute. His research focuses on labour organizing and anti-austerity mobilization. He is a Special Advisor to the Greek Government's Ministry of State.

Government Officials:

Antonopoulos, Rania – Alternate Minister of Labour, Government of Greece and the Director of the Gender Equality and the Economy program at the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

Vikas, Giannis – Development Company and Tourism Project of City of Athens (EATA). He is a trainer/mentor and member of the Epihiro Kinonika, a training program initiative for social entrepreneurship.

NGOs:

Bekridaki, Georgia – Solidarity4All

Solidarity Initiative of Vio.Me:

Harpidou, Olga – a member of the legal team of Vio.Me.

Karyotis, Theodoros – sociologist, translator and social activist.

Manoukas, Christos – member of the self-managed bookstore/publisher, Akyvernites Polities, in Thessaloniki.

Trade Unionists:

Theodorakis, Nikos – International Secretariat of PAME.

Worker-Members of Vio.Me:

Anagnostou, Makis

Andreas

Charitakis, Kostas

Koumatsioulis, Dimitrios

Matzaris, Tasos

Mucollari, Jani

Nikolaidis, Dimitrios

Sgouras, Spiros

Sideridis, Alekos

Theligiannis, Giorgos

Vangelis

Solidarity and Cooperative Economy:

Eleni, Dimitra and Neovi – members of the Lacandona workers' collective coffee shop in Athens, Greece.

Elias – member of the Syn.all.ois workers' collective fair trade shop in Athens, Greece.

Mourgi, Lina – member of the Alternative Trade Network.

Nikos – Roben of the Woods occupied timber factory in Veria, Greece.

Papadopoulos, Christina – member of the workers' collective *kafenio* (coffee shop) at Akadimia Platonos and a member of the Integral Cooperative of Athens.

Socrates – Roben of the Woods occupied timber factory in Veria, Greece.

Theodore – member of the Integral Cooperative of Athens.

Varkarolis, Orestis – member of the Pagkaki workers' collective coffee shop in Athens, Greece.