



Performing Values Practices and Grassroots Organizing: The Case of Solidarity Economy Initiatives in Greece

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Abstract

This article discusses solidarity economy initiatives as instances of grassroots organizing, and explores how ‘values practices’ are performed collectively during times of crisis. In focusing on how power, discourse and subjectivities are negotiated in the everyday practices of grassroots exchange networks (GENs) in crisis-stricken Greece, the study unveils and discusses three performances of values practices, namely mobilization of values, re-articulation of social relations, and sustainable living. Based on these findings, and informed by theoretical analyses of performativity, we propose a framework for studying the production and reproduction of values in the context of GENs, and the role of values in organizing alternatives.

Keywords

grassroots exchange network (GEN), Greece, financial crisis, values practices, performance, Judith Butler, Gibson-Graham

Introduction

Recent empirical research on the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) on grassroots organizations has unveiled the importance of studying how people collectively enact shared values (Chen, Lune, & Queen, 2013). However, there remains ‘considerable ambiguity in the role values play’ (Martin & Upham, 2016, p. 205), particularly in relation to how they affect the pursuit of alternative organizational forms (see, for example, Dinerstein, 2007; Amin, 2009; O’Reilly, Lain, Sheehan, Smale, & Stuart, 2011; De Bakker, Den Hond, King, & Weber, 2013; Cheney, Cruz, Peredo, & Nazareno, 2014). Recent research, emerging mainly from crisis-stricken Greece, acknowledges that groups persistently form initiatives to reject conventional bureaucratic practices, resist extreme neoliberal capitalist reforms and

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3 strive for social transformation (Daskalaki & Kokkinidis, 2017; Daskalaki, 2017; Arampatzi,
4 2016; Karyotis & Kioupokiolis, 2015; Chatzidakis, 2013; Petropoulou, 2013). Yet few
5 studies explore in depth how value systems and/or their re-production may drive and sustain
6 such alternatives.
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11 Inspired by an investigation of values practices in the development of an honour code in
12 a large business school (see Gehman, Treviño, & Garud, 2013), our proposed framework
13 extends work on the performance of values in alternative organizational settings. We focus
14 on how norms, discourses and principles, such as alternative currencies and barter trade
15 schemes, materialize in everyday practice in grassroots exchange networks (GENs). GENs
16 form part of what are broadly described as ‘diverse economies’, characterizing exchange
17 arrangements and forms of production that differ from the dominant capitalist economy (see
18 Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016). These aim to bring about social change (Gibson-Graham,
19 2003, 2008) through their diverse actors’ engagement in shaping and (re)producing
20 alternative economic futures (Lee, 2006, 2013). We combine economic geographers’
21 materialist notion of value (Lee, 2006; Healy, 2009) with discursive poststructuralist analyses
22 of normative values through the lens of performativity (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008, inspired
23 by Judith Butler’s work, see 1990, 1993) to theorize from our empirical data. This framework
24 allows us to consider the implications of values performance in the context of GENs, and
25 specifically to examine their effects on organizing alternatives.
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44 Our contribution to organization studies is twofold. First, we examine the concept of
45 ‘values practices’ (following Gehman et al., 2013) enacted by GENs during times of crisis. In
46 doing so, we extend the performative understanding of values as situated in networks of
47 practices by considering the intersections between material and discursive, as well as
48 affective and relational, dynamics involved in the co-production of values. As our research
49 shows, these specifically involve: (i) mobilizing values to reconfigure ideas of economic
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3 value; (ii) redefining social relations through new forms of organizing; and (iii) rethinking
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5 human values to enable sustainable living. Second, we propose that alternative exchanges are
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7 enacted through collectively-performed systems of values originating in macro-level, anti-
8
9 capitalist discourses, and that it is these collective performances of values at the micro-
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11 (individual) and/or meso- (organizational) levels that eventually become significant drivers in
12
13 the creation of alternative, post-capitalist futures.¹ We therefore consider values practices as a
14
15 political means of prefiguring different arrangements for social exchange and non-hegemonic
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17 governance structures.
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20 The remainder of this article is organized as follows: The next section discusses
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22 community organizing in relation to the emergence of diverse economic exchange schemes,
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24 viewing them as both political and collectively co-constructed entities. In doing so, we stress
25
26 the role of grassroots exchange schemes and values practices, using a performativity
27
28 framework that attends to the performance of practices through which such values are
29
30 enacted. We then present the methods and findings of our study of four GEN schemes in
31
32 which such practices occurred. Abductive logic (Wodak, 2004; Alvesson & Sköldborg, 2009)
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34 drives this analysis, centred around how values systems influence social transformations
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36 when these are jointly performed. We conclude by suggesting a need for future research on
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38 the collective performance of values and their role in the context of organizing alternatives.
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44 **Grassroots Exchange Networks and the Collective Performance of Values Practices**

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46 The 2008 GFC increased the importance and visibility of diverse modes of community
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48 organizing and solidarity economy initiatives. In response to the severe consequences of the
49
50 resulting cuts in public spending, austerity and unemployment in many Eurozone countries
51
52 and elsewhere, debates on alternative exchange schemes (Blanc, 2011; Gregory, 2009; North,
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54 2007; Sahakian, 2014) gained momentum. These initiatives refocused researchers' attention
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3 on the need for a value-driven movement that might reconfigure power relations in ways
4 conducive to the emergence of alternative organizing forms (Carroll, 2010; Jackson, 2011;
5 Hillenkamp, Lapeyre, & Lemaitre, 2013; Chen et al., 2013). While the concept of value and
6 the redefinition of values are central to the establishment of such initiatives, it is less clear
7 how these values come into being, how they are practised, and how their performance may
8 lead to different organizing forms, alternative governance systems and/or non-hegemonic
9 power structures.
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18 Extant organization studies literature stresses the importance of values to organizational
19 outcomes (Amis, Slack, & Hinnings, 2002; Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Kraatz, Ventresca, &
20 Deng, 2010), but this recognition remains largely implicit (for an exception, see Perkmann &
21 Spicer, 2014 on the role of values in the development of a grassroots media collective). To
22 address this gap, we examine how collective values and collaborative co-production
23 processes mediate the evolution of values in a rapidly-transforming socio-economic context.
24 We draw our inspiration from Gehman et al.'s (2013, p. 104) performance of values
25 practices, which 'are subject to ongoing rework over time'; values are not static properties,
26 but rather dynamic and evolving processes constituted and re-constituted through their
27 collective performance in everyday practice. While the authors stress the performative
28 aspects of values practices, they do not address the political nature of such transformations as
29 they ignore the central issue of power directing these performances. Yet power dynamics and
30 assumptions underpinning such processes are not neutral, and have distributional and
31 political consequences. For instance, practices and subjectivities emerging from the
32 performance of values through a relational nexus of exchanges (sustained by discourses and
33 affects) aim actively to construct a worldview (and a world) that inspires new political
34 imaginations and reinforces our sense of agency (Burke & Schear, 2014).
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54 To develop our theorization, we draw on empirical evidence from Greece, which
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3 experienced a rapid growth in community grassroots networks, including various social and
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5 solidarity initiatives (Daskalaki & Kokkinidis, 2017), following almost a decade of neoliberal
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7 restructuring, austerity and recession. We focus on GENS, which are intrinsically
8
9 heterogeneous spaces of ethical negotiation and decision making, comprising multiple
10
11 mechanisms of exchange, forms of labour, economic relations and ownership (Healy, 2009;
12
13 see also Cohen, 2017; Meyer & Hudon, 2017). GENS thus offer potentially revealing case
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15 studies of diverse mechanisms and transactions, while highlighting internal contradictions
16
17 embedded in emergent individual and collective power relations (Lee, Leyshon, Aldridge,
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19 Tooke, Williams, & Thrift, 2004). Specifically, we examine how GENS are instituted, and
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21 explore whether, through the collective redefinition of social values (Seyfang, 2000; North,
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23 2007), they may co-constitute spaces of personal and social transformation. We briefly
24
25 explain the notion of value, the theory of value and values (Lee, 2006), and how we connect
26
27 these with the poststructuralist idea of performativity developed by Gibson-Graham (2008),
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29 before discussing our cases.
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32 33 **Analytical Framework**

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35 Our analytical framework centres on the interplay between value and values. It emerged
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37 during analysis of the empirical work as we sought to better understand what mobilizes
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39 distinct socio-economic actors to organize and institute GENS. We realized that we needed
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41 perspectives that captured the constitution of value(s) and their transformation through
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43 practice, since issues of valuation and normative values appear to be central to GENS'
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45 establishment and evolution. For this, we turned to alternative economic geographies that
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47 draw their key inspiration from Marxism, and to the post-structuralist theorization of
48
49 performative practice inspired by Judith Butler's work.
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53 Performativity approaches point out that the 'categories of social life [...] are not self-
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55 standing, "natural" or to be taken as given, but are the result of endless performances by
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3 human [...] and by non-human entities and artifacts' (MacKenzie, 2004, p. 305; see also
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5 MacKenzie & Milo, 2003). Inspired by Butler's (1990, 1993) ideas in their studies of diverse
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7 economies, post-structuralist economic geographers (Gibson-Graham 2006, 2008, 2013,
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9 2014; Narotzky & Besnier, 2014; Roelvink, Martin, & Gibson-Graham, 2015) have turned to
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11 the power of discourse to explain that performativity is the key concept that holds together
12
13 the idea of transformation of both social structures and subjectivities. Importantly, such
14
15 notions of performativity take account of how performance of values depends and relies on
16
17 subjective appropriation of discourse, and how this performing process affects and alters
18
19 subjectivities. Such contributions therefore also elucidate how power is relational and
20
21 reproduced through everyday material practices and performances of values.
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25 Moreover, the concept of performativity (or the consequences of the performance of
26
27 norms, discourses and practices), understood as both enunciation and enactment, has been
28
29 widely employed to analyze the impact of economics on social arrangements (Callon, 1998).²
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31 Specifically, economic geographers necessarily stress the intersections between material and
32
33 social relations and practices in the formation and definition of value (Gibson-Graham, 2006,
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35 2008, 2013; Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2009; Lee, 2006, 2010), but differ in their
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37 emphases and conclusions on the role of materiality. For example, Lee (2006) argues that, in
38
39 order to facilitate social and material survival, 'circuits of value must sustain the delivery of
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41 such flows of value in appropriate quantities and distributions across space and time'. These
42
43 are not isolated events; rather, they should be capable of '*reproduction* both geographically
44
45 and historically' (Lee, 2006, p. 417, emphasis added). For Lee, the values embedded in the
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47 regulation and direction of circuits of reproduction reflect a wide range of social objectives,
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49 and influence environmental, religious and cultural notions of social justice. Values are 'the
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51 forms of life, relations, things, thoughts and practices that are held dear and are considered to
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53 be inalienable' (Lee, 2006, p. 415). Lee's analysis contributes to a better understanding of the
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3 'relationships between the materially inescapable feature of economic activity – that of the
4 consumption, production and circulation of value – and the diversity of values shaping such
5 materialities' (Lee, 2006, p. 417). In this context, we cannot disregard the material reality
6 shaped by capitalism and the state.
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11 Thus, whereas Gibson-Graham's view focuses on 'possible' rather than 'probable'
12 economic alternatives, Lee's view is that it is not enough to accept the unpredictability (or
13 openness) of the outcomes of this political project. Capitalist social relations are diverse and
14 contested; hence, 'the uneven but expansionary historical geographies of capitalism serve to
15 open up diverse localities whilst, at the same time, tending to reduce them to singular
16 measures of value' (Lee et al., 2004, p. 600). Therefore, dominant power relations and
17 discourses sustain the reproduction of current material economic conditions and social
18 relations (Lee, 2006; Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016). At the same time, prevailing social
19 relations temporarily shape economic imaginaries 'through representational discourse about
20 material success or failure' (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016, p. 922).
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33 Nevertheless, such discourses and representations are inherently unstable, and are
34 therefore infinitely iterable and open to interventions. These frames operate in everyday life,
35 from the micro level of social relations to the macro level of global political relations, all
36 aiding the presentation of partial accounts of social phenomena (Butler, 2009) and allowing
37 us to intervene performatively in the social processes, while also reflecting power relations
38 that constrain the possibilities of alternative imagination (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016).
39 Adding to this, Lee (2006, p. 420) notes: 'once particular social relations of value have begun
40 to take place, those engaged in and benefiting from them have an interest in ensuring that
41 they may be extended and sustained'. Change then becomes possible only through crises in
42 prevailing social relations that disrupt circuits of value (Lee, 2013; see also Gritzas &
43 Kavoulakos, 2016).
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3 Acknowledging the complementary aspects of the aforementioned approaches allows
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5 us to appreciate, first, that even the dominant imaginaries are dynamic, as they are constantly
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7 being constructed through diverse and multiple day-to-day practices; and second, that the
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9 possibilities of alternatives – the imperatives of material success and power relations – affect
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11 both the scalability of alternatives and their transformative potential. We thus argue for a
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13 performative ontological project that stresses the discursive, social and material as well as
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15 affective and relational constitution of values. This is based on a recognition of value as
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17 constructed through the formative intersection of the practice of values in the context of
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19 social relations, and the reflexive, performative and regulatory practice of theories of value.
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21 We propose that values practices (both social and economic) remain in a state of becoming,
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23 but changes in the social capacity of groups to perform different values may foster new ways
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25 of relating, in both the economic and social spheres.
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29 This approach, which centres on the values work of groups and collectivities, allows
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31 us to explore how grassroots mobilization may create such possibilities by encouraging,
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33 strengthening and proliferating diverse economy initiatives. Such framing brings us closer to
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35 understanding not only how values are performed, but also how they are contested and re-
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37 constituted collectively through a variety of relational exchanges involving discourses and
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39 affects. Studying these initiatives is, in this sense, also performative, in that it fosters and
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41 shapes our understanding of their potentialities within and beyond the current economic
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43 system.
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48 **Methodology and Methods**

49 **Research context**

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52 Following the GFC, the Greek economy experienced deeper and longer-lasting contraction
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54 than in the USA's Great Depression of the 1930s. For instance, by 2016, economic output
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3 had shrunk by 30 per cent. Over the last eight years, the country has consistently had the
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5 highest rates of youth unemployment in Europe (Trading Economics, 2017).³ Austerity and
6
7 harsh neoliberal policies have deeply fractured the country's social fabric, but have also
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9 provided fertile ground for the strengthening and development of new grassroots community
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11 initiatives as alternatives to capitalist models of growth-based development. This study
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13 examines some such initiatives, focusing on parallel-currency and non-monetary exchange
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15 schemes (referred to here as GENS) established during this period. There are currently 97
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17 such schemes in Greece, including 48 time banks and various parallel-currency schemes in
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19 which prices are freely set by scheme members (see also Garefi & Kalemaki, 2013).⁴
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21 However, several are still in a (re-)organization phase, and many time banks have been set up
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23 or promoted by local authorities, and hence cannot be considered to be grassroots
24
25 community-driven schemes.
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29 We report on four relatively well-established GENS that form part of a wider landscape
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31 of grassroots economic activities and spaces of solidarity currently unfolding in Greece: (1) a
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33 parallel-currency scheme in a big island community; (2) a countrywide, online goods
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35 exchange network; (3) an art currency scheme; and (4) an exchange network operating, like
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37 the online scheme, with no currency, with goods and services exchanged for free. We applied
38
39 two selection criteria that reflected the project's scope. First, we excluded transactions
40
41 involving Euros or any other official currency. This was because we wanted to focus solely
42
43 on schemes and community actors that 'monetized' the value of their own production, based
44
45 on their own values and valuation processes. Second, we excluded transactions based on
46
47 friendship or family relations, as the focus was on modes of economic exchange that were not
48
49 based on kinship, friendship or intimate affinity. Of course, in many cases, relatives and
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51 friends participated in the same scheme, and many friendships emerged within the schemes.
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53 These cases are representative of the solidarity schemes included in a larger ongoing research
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4 5 **Empirical setting**

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7 The first case, Ex-Net, was a parallel currency scheme established in 2011 in a large city on a
8 Greek island. Transactions were performed through a virtual accounting unit, ‘U’, with
9 members setting the prices of goods and services. The network had passed through various
10 stages of growth and recent decline. The scheme was organized through an open general
11 assembly and several open management-coordination groups. The second case, G-T network,
12 covered the entire country through an online platform on which members offered goods and
13 services for exchange. The network had several coordinators, and reached 2,500 registered
14 users in 2013. The third case, A-Bank, was a self-organized art collective based in Athens
15 aiming to explore the possibility of using art for economic exchanges. The participants
16 designed and constructed currencies, which were unique, numbered and registered copies of
17 artwork with various denominations of value. Forty registered artists and several other
18 individuals participated in this online artistic community, exchanging goods and services in
19 ‘Art cash’ currency. The fourth scheme, R-Exchange, was similar to G-T in operating with no
20 currency (goods and services were exchanged for free), but was local (based on one Greek
21 island), and in 2012 had around 100 registered members. Table 1 presents a summary of the
22 characteristics of the four selected study sites.
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41 [Insert Table 1 about here]

42 43 **Research design**

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45 The study was based on an open-ended and inductive research design. Adopting a
46 performative practice lens allowed us to consider how establishing intersubjective meaning in
47 terms of values creation and reproduction is a continuous process rather than a one-off event.
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49 Ethnographic methodologies, requiring deep engagement with fieldwork over an extended
50 period of time, are able to provide such insights. These allowed us to attend to the multiple
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3 subjectivities of actors, and to consider the fragmented field within which the schemes were
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5 operating, while remaining mindful of the risk of over-essentializing the alternatives,
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7 including social movements and NGOs (Fischer, 1997). The sample to which we had access
8
9 was necessarily small owing to the nature of our chosen research approach (see below). Thus,
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11 while this study provides considerable depth of analysis regarding the potential impact of
12
13 non-monetary exchange schemes, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to
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15 all grassroots solidarity formations emerging in the context of the crisis in Greece or
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17 elsewhere.

20 **Data collection**

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22 Our data collection methods comprised extended ethnography, including interviews with and
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24 observations of participants in the schemes, and documentary analysis of minutes of
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26 assembly meetings and online network materials. The ethnographic fieldwork permitted
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28 experientially-rooted insights into the nature of solidarity economy networks and emergent
29
30 forms of organizing. Author 3 conducted the participant observations and was also a member
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32 of two of the four schemes (Ex-Net and G-T). She participated in bazaars and assembly
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34 meetings, interviewed the participants and kept an ethnographic field diary. Around 2,000
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36 hours of participant observations were conducted over 30 months. This created a context of
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38 direct involvement in the activities studied, and also provided a longitudinal perspective on
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40 the evolution of processes and relationships within these schemes, and multiple opportunities
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42 to keep abreast of activities as they evolved. In addition to recording detailed observations in
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44 a field diary, Author 3 also wrote analytical notes reflecting on her experience.

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48 Unstructured interviews lasting between 25 minutes and two hours were carried out with
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50 13 individuals (10 women and three men) aged between 26 and 45. Most respondents held an
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52 undergraduate or postgraduate degree, and about a third had no personal income in the
53
54 official currency.⁵ The interviewees included two founding members and two other members

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3 of Ex-Net and of G-T, and three founding members and one other member of A-Bank. We
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5 also conducted one interview with the founding member of R-Exchange. One-to-one
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7 interviews were conducted in Ex-Net and R-Exchange, and both individual and group
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9 interviews in the other schemes. The respondents offered their views on solidarity exchanges,
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11 and explained their reasons for joining, and their visions and future plans for the schemes.
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13 The founding member interviewees provided a global view of the schemes' activities and
14
15 history, while other interviewees helped us to unearth any issues unmentioned by the
16
17 founding members (e.g internal politics, power play and contradictions).
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20 Finally, identity statements, online forum discussions and posters were collected as
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22 primary data to complement and triangulate the participative aspects of the research project.
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24 These were used to structure, clarify and expand our understanding and interpretations of the
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26 findings. For confidentiality reasons, and in consultation with members of the schemes, all
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28 quotations are completely disassociated from the informant to enhance anonymity.⁶
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31 **Data analysis**

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33 During our analysis, we focused on both diary notes (ethnographic fieldnotes) and
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35 unstructured interviews with the schemes' participants to unveil the underlying values,
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37 principles and norms guiding their interactions and mediating community relationships and
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39 actions. The research process evolved iteratively, moving between analyzing the empirical
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41 materials and developing a conceptual framework. The themes were developed inductively
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43 from the entire dataset, using iterative thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to identify
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45 key issues arising from the exploration of different notions of values emerging in everyday
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47 practices across the four sites. Three interwoven dimensions derived from Gehman et al.'s
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49 (2013) work guided our analysis of the empirical material: how discourses on values were re-
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51 produced and circulated across the schemes; the role of values in collective action; and the
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3 performance of values practices. This led to the identification of new themes as we moved
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5 back and forth between data and theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).
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7 In the first stage of analysis, we organized the transcribed interviews and diary notes to
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9 allow patterns and common themes to emerge. We focused on how our research participants
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11 talked about their motivations for joining the GENs, and how they indicated and identified
12
13 different values influencing their choices and elaborated on the negotiation of values
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15 practices within their networks. We then recorded the discourses emerging from the
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17 participants' narratives at the four study sites. Specifically, we identified discursive patterns
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19 (word choices, expressions) that enabled our research participants to articulate who they
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21 were, what they were doing and why (Butler, 1990, 1993), with reference to their activities,
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23 social identities and organizational practices, as well as revealing how values practices were
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25 being collectively performed in the schemes ('the structure has been instinctive', 'the
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27 experimental nature of economic activity', 'giving things for free', 'the transaction is the
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29 feast'). Drawing on these discursive patterns and our ethnographic observations, the focus
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31 was on how values were being performed in GENs' everyday practices (Gibson-Graham,
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33 2003, 2006). Accordingly, we identified three performances of values practices: mobilization
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35 of values, re-articulation of social relations, and sustainable living. We argue that these foster
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37 the emergence and evolution of grassroots initiatives with the potential to institute values-
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39 driven, post-capitalist organizational forms (see Figure 1).
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43 [Insert Figure 1 about here]
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48 **Findings: Toward a Value-Based Framework for Organizing Alternatives**

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50 Our analysis revealed commonalities across the four cases, forming the key themes presented
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52 below; however, there were also substantive differences in the material dimensions of the
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54 alternative value systems deployed, which were prominent in the case of A-Bank. A-cash, its
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3 ‘alternative currency’, was accompanied by a notice of guarantee because A-cash, as an
4 artistic artefact, had material-artistic value as well as exchange value. This contrasted with G-
5 T and R-Exchange, whose activities were based on barter rather than parallel currencies, and
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7 with Ex-Net, whose parallel currency had no material value.
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11 G-T had 918 registered online users in 2010, and its membership fluctuated significantly
12 over time. The active members of the network were located largely in the two main Greek
13 cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, where social events such as craft workshops and creators’
14 bazaars were also organized. Despite high levels of online membership, reaching 2,500 users
15 in 2013, levels of activity in G-T confirm other studies’ findings of variations in levels of
16 participation among registered members (e.g. Schneider, 1996). Research shows that,
17 similarly to the offline world, democratic participation in online communities is constrained
18 and enabling (Albrecht, 2006).⁷
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29 In the following analysis, we focus on commonalities across the four schemes,
30 particularly in relation to the mobilization of values, the re-articulation of social relations, and
31 sustainable living (or what participants described as ‘restoring humane values’). We show
32 how these three collective performances were both constituted through and constitutive of
33 alternative organizing. While we use these findings to theorize the performance of values in
34 GENS, these are not distinct and separate, but interrelated values practices that affect both the
35 emergence of GENS and their potential to produce alternative modes of organizing.
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46 ***Mobilization of values: The value of value(s) and the value of ‘the priceless’***

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48 Setting new rules for transactions and deciding the value of things were new experiences for
49 the scheme members. This was reflected in the evolution of decisions and rules, as well as
50 individuals’ desire to avoid relying solely on monetary exchange systems:
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3 I need to offer, to create and to feel useful... Through my participation, I improve
4 myself by observing how the team operates and by learning new things about value
5 [...]. I try to become independent from money as much as possible (Ex-Net).
6

7 Before joining the schemes, most participants were unfamiliar with setting and
8
9 evaluating value; that is, how 'value is put upon things, processes, and even human beings,
10
11 under the social conditions prevailing within a dominantly capitalist mode of production'
12
13 (Harvey, 1982, p. 38). According to Lee (2006), value is valued through social practice, and
14
15 is geographically and historically variable. In the schemes we studied, people came together
16
17 under conditions of acute crisis, where dominant economic models of exchange had reached
18
19 their limits and the values underpinning them were failing. Participants instituted various
20
21 mechanisms to regulate and evaluate value (for example, exchange without rates, free
22
23 exchange, and exchange without time limits for reciprocation, as in free bazaars) as
24
25 alternatives to those predicated on conventional monetary systems. For example, valuation
26
27 mechanisms included a multiplicity of transaction practices for a single item (such as
28
29 exchanges of traditional seeds) and setting alternative measures of value/equivalence (for
30
31 instance in the case of A-Bank). Symbolic and non-monetary values were also instituted in
32
33 various forms of co-production, using knowledge bases, expertise or time as currencies (see
34
35 Glynos & Speed, 2013; Bovaird, 2007). In the following vignette from our field diary, we
36
37 reflect on how the networks practised regulation and evaluation of value:
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41 In some cases, people seemed unsure about the price of their products during these
42 transactions. It was also obvious that they were experimenting with prices,
43 particularly during the first months. The issue of quantity and measures was
44 particularly relevant when it came to food, for example: when it was their own
45 produce, quantities were calculated by approximation, with most transactions being of
46 generous measure. Second-hand goods and services were also exchanged, and these
47 were more consistently available to customers than non-industrial goods produced by
48 network members, such as agricultural products (Ethnographic vignette, Author 3).
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51 Collective performances of value seemed to permit scheme participants to prioritize their
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53 own 'valuables', allowing them to decide for which transactions and under which rules
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55 members could join the scheme. One member of A-Bank explained:
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3 We aim to reveal the illusion of the value of money, to question the established value
4 of money in social life and practise an alternative route, showing that our own
5 currencies, which are art works of independent creators, can institute a new value
6 system ... this can be achieved to the extent that art, the creator and her/his labour
7 have an important place in the social and economic life of people (A-Bank).
8

9 Revealing 'the illusion of money' not only involved setting new rules for transactions, such
10 as non-monetary transactions and new currencies, but also mobilizing values that members
11 perceived as having been lost under the current monetary system:
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15 Great values are being lost because of the current economic system; what we have
16 achieved is that knowledge of other valuation systems can now be maintained and
17 shared widely. For example, the idea of renewable is an ancient value [...]. Similarly,
18 in the schemes nowadays, we talk about 'Banks of Services Exchange' or 'Volunteer
19 Exchange' in an attempt to re-establish lost social webs (Ex-Net).
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21

22 'Free bazaars' were also examples of schemes' attempts to restore what their members
23 perceived as lost values. For example, participants recognized that 'there are items that are
24 outside transaction zones', and commented frequently on 'the value of the priceless'; that is,
25 'the value of things that members give away for free' (Ex-Net). Free bazaars were organized
26 regularly by participants, allowing them to exchange ideas, discursively re-construct prior
27 values and collectively perform new modes of socio-economic activity. Author 3 participated
28 in 22 bazaars organized by Ex-Net, all of which were well-attended. Also, as membership of
29 the schemes grew significantly, more members began to participate in activities, shaping their
30 roles and practices. In doing so, the participants disrupted established notions of value and
31 collectively developed valuation practices that prioritized non-capitalist values, such as
32 sharing, solidarity and caring for less privileged others. The following fieldnote explains how
33 these non-capitalist values (in this case, the 'value of the priceless' – giving things for free)
34 were performed when new members brought new demands, particularly in relation to the
35 supply of free goods and services in the G-T network:
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52 The G-T network, similarly to others, organizes free workshops and free-exchange
53 bazaars, where people can exhibit and give for free items that they have created with
54 materials they have acquired from other network members. Other GENs, for example
55 the Athens Time Bank, organize free workshops where members (and non-members)
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3 can learn new skills. These free bazaars respond to changes in demand, particularly
4 for free goods and services, triggered by the acute financial crisis. Schemes had to
5 adapt to this climate by modifying their practices to include more free items or
6 extending their activities to cover the needs of those who could not donate anything or
7 otherwise participate in the exchange (Ethnographic vignette, Author 3).
8

9 Thus, mobilization of these 'lost values', including solidarity with those who could not make
10 ends meet, triggered a change in members' personal values. More importantly, we found that
11 collective performances of these values posed challenges not only to the very foundation of
12 their espoused values, but also to how members related to each other when trying to institute
13 alternatives in practice. This 'sociality of economic activity and the socially reproductive
14 imperative of value creation' (Lee, 2006, p. 416) was apparent when participants engaged in
15 problem resolution:
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24 The greatest difficulty is always social relationships, but exactly when there is
25 friction, the angles are rubbed... it is through problem solving that we create common
26 perceptions and common values, overcoming differences and diverging viewpoints
27 (Ex-Net).
28

29 While GENs' value practices remained contested, the participants' social capacity to perform
30 different values fostered new ways of relating, both economically and socially, thus
31 demonstrating the intertwining of the symbolic and material in the constitution of new forms
32 of organizing exchange. Echoing Lee's (2006) perspective, which bridges material features of
33 economic activity and the diversity of values shaping such materialities, we observed that
34 there was 'nothing predetermined about the emergence of particular forms of social relations
35 of value that developed' (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016). Instead, schemes' social relations of
36 value remained diverse and dynamic (for example, more 'free-for-all' bazaars were organized
37 as more people needed free products or services), and their form depended partially on the
38 imperatives of what Lee (2006) calls 'life-sustaining' value, i.e., the means for societal
39 reproduction that contribute to the sustenance of economic activity.
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53 Nevertheless, values practices were contested and negotiated as members attempted to
54 decide how to establish exchanges that departed from capitalist modes of transaction, and to
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3 mobilize their collective values. One participant explained: ‘Embedding these values was
4
5 tricky, and sometimes the practice of these values, unfortunately, remained unchallenged by
6
7 group members’ (R-Exchange). Learning the ‘value of values’ required members to engage
8
9 in constant negotiation and dialogue with others in attempting to construct community
10
11 responses to economic crisis. Crucially, as the following vignette from our field diary
12
13 illustrates, these emerging and evolving values seemed to highlight a personal transformation
14
15 for members who were trying to devise new practices of collective action:
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17

18 The recently-established schemes often refer to the economic dimension of their
19 activity, like how the economic system works, how the material economy is affected
20 by its financialization; and they use the term ‘crisis’ not as an explanation for the
21 existence and development of their schemes, but as a backdrop to discussing the
22 motives and values of the schemes and their members. Thereby, the ‘crisis’ becomes
23 just an event, not ‘the’ argument, nor the main reason for the activity. The ‘crisis’ is
24 sufficient to explain the change in people’s views about the economy and their own
25 economic activity, but it seems also to affect members’ willingness to start a
26 discussion, search for and disperse new ideas, experiment with the economy, and
27 undertake collective action to find or try possible solutions (Ethnographic vignette,
28 Author 3).
29
30

31 A founding member of R-Exchange also discussed members’ willingness to engage with
32
33 new ideas and experiment with alternative economic arrangements when referring to how
34
35 participants started to ‘nurture the possibilities of diverse economies’ (Ethnographic
36
37 fieldnotes) and organize around shared values. Another participant commented on how these
38
39 shared values were mobilized and gradually became integrated into the networks’ practices:
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42 We continuously adapt and the scheme’s values constantly evolve... in a group of
43 people where everyone has freedom of speech and freedom of opinion, there is space
44 for reflection ... yet, people need time to get to know each other and create trusting
45 relationships ... they need to integrate, become part of an economy without money.
46 This requires a change of mentality, requires the cultivation of different values such
47 as fairness (Ex-Net).
48

49 Thus, it is important to study the symbolic discursive underpinnings and ‘the relationships
50
51 between the materially inescapable feature of economic activity – that of the consumption,
52
53 production and circulation of value – and the diversity of values shaping such materialities’
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55 (Lee, 2006, p. 417), to better understand how they both shape and are shaped by
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3 performances and shifts in values. In other words, the redefined system of values produced
4 different material realities which were changing in practice as they were performed.
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6 Moreover, we realized that it was equally important to consider the affective relational ties
7 that enabled such performances of values, including trust building (author/s), reflexivity, and
8 reconsiderations of the relationship between self and community. As discussed in more detail
9 below, GENS' organizational practices, such as general assemblies, invited members to
10 participate in collective valuation processes, to decide what was 'of value' and reflect on the
11 values mobilized in the process. Yet mobilizing values and integrating them into the
12 networks' practices often involved dealing with social structures (such as patriarchy) that
13 counteracted the schemes' commitment to horizontalism, equality and democratic
14 participation, and instead maintained capitalist structures and values. To this issue we now
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16 turn.
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31 ***Organizing GENS: Re-articulation of social relations***

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33 All schemes' identity statements stressed the values of egalitarianism and democratic
34 participation, supported through the institution of horizontal, non-hierarchical structures. As
35 one member stated, 'structure has been instinctive' (Ex-Net). Aiming to avoid traditional
36 organizational arrangements with autocratic leaders (Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974), 'any
37 decisions made, are made as a group' (A-Bank). Open general assemblies, a practice in line
38 with non-hierarchical organizing, nurtured deliberation under conditions of collective action
39 (see Mouffe, 2000), enabled autonomous organizing structures and perpetuated the groups'
40 commitment to alternative valuation systems:
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50 The decisions were made in an open General Assembly, horizontally. There was also
51 an administrative committee (that would rotate every three to four months), which
52 was responsible for implementing the decisions of the General Assembly; some
53 decision making was taking place there, nevertheless, for simple, practical things (R-
54 Exchange).
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3 A few incidents required extensive interactions among members, and in most cases, the
4 schemes' members reached agreement through consensual decision-making processes (see
5 Della Porta, 2009): 'Any disagreements would be raised and openly discussed in the general
6 assembly along with other agenda items' (Ethnographic fieldnotes). The networks' small
7 scale and non-hierarchical, horizontal organization permitted transparency in negotiating
8 differences and making decisions. However, it sometimes took weeks or months for members
9 to reach agreement or turn decisions into actions. As noted in our fieldnotes, 'when the
10 initiatives explored issues of valuation and pricing, we noted that any disagreements or
11 disparities quickly became apparent and would rarely be left unnoticed or not dealt with'. The
12 following reflective statement by a member reveals the daily negotiation of power and the
13 contested social relations that might develop when trying to collectively decide 'whose
14 alternative values are being mobilized' (see also Seyfang & Smith, 2007, p. 599):

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29 The disagreements usually had to do with decisions that had a political and/or
30 politico-ethical dimension: for example, with what other schemes shall we try to build
31 alliances; should we accept sponsors for our events and cooperate with the
32 municipality; what is our approach (theory and practice) towards solidarity and
33 altruism; do we take a (political) stand towards a political incident? ... What caused
34 most conflicts was the enactment of decisions in terms of how passive or active
35 people were in the group (R-Exchange).
36

37 Supporting earlier studies of diverse economies (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016), we noted
38 that power relations between core group members and newcomers or other network members
39 could lead to contentious relationships and, at times, a gradual loss of community feeling.
40 Relationships required time and constant renegotiation of values, but this posed a challenge,
41 as time spent on performing various tasks became a proxy for currency denoting value in
42 alternative exchange schemes because the core group members usually devoted significant
43 amounts of voluntary time, and might therefore be unwilling to compromise (Gritzas &
44 Kavoulakos, 2016). One member described how some members of the group were
45 consistently more active, both in sustaining group activities and in implementing the general
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3 assembly's decisions:
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5 There was no particular process established in the schemes to resolve disagreements...
6 What happened frequently was that the majority of the people would either not take
7 the initiative to do the tasks [decided by the general assembly], or took the initiative
8 but eventually wouldn't do the tasks. So what was happening, although rotation had
9 been decided, most of the time it was the same people (the great majority women)
10 who were involved in the implementation phase (R-Exchange).
11

12 Hence, debates during meetings were always emotionally charged, unveiling potential
13 power imbalances constantly negotiated as part of the organizing process. Nevertheless, pre-
14 existing power relations in society (relating to gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) were often
15 reproduced (see also author/s), despite most, if not all, members' self-proclaimed
16 commitment to egalitarian and non-hierarchical values. More particularly, we sometimes
17 witnessed the reproduction of gendered social expectations in relation to role and task
18 responsibilities. Social hierarchies, particularly those defined by gender, were very difficult
19 to address, especially since some scheme participants had very limited experience of being
20 members of diverse and heterogeneous initiatives. Feminist analysis has drawn attention to:
21

22 ...the tacit assumptions that the default activist was male (and indeed white, able-
23 bodied and heterosexual); the tendency to consider gender as at best an add-on
24 variable rather than a constitutive feature of social movements; a disregard for the role
25 of embodiment, affect and emotion in the study of social movements and political
26 mobilization (Dean & Aune, 2015, p. 376).
27

28 A founding member of R-Exchange explained:
29

30 Men were more outspoken in the assemblies, and in some cases this was perceived as
31 an aggressive behaviour, because it made it difficult for women or more quiet
32 personalities to claim time and space in the assembly. Nevertheless, this attitude was
33 challenged by women, and some men, and in most cases this challenge was very
34 effective (R-Exchange).
35

36 Depending on both the structure of the scheme and members' collective decisions on whether
37 or not to address an existing imbalance of power, conflicts were exacerbated or resolved
38 through less formal decision-making processes and through emerging social relationships.
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40 Also, quoting from our ethnographic notes:
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3 We gladly noted a strong presence of women across all schemes, and active
4 participation in both general assembly meetings and social events. To this contributed
5 the fact that most schemes organized educational activities for children and ensured
6 that specialist teachers and/or carers were available when members needed to
7 participate in schemes' activities, such as assemblies, co-ordination meetings or
8 solidarity events.
9

10 Nevertheless, when it came to decision-making processes, we noted that women less
11 frequently found or were given sufficient space to develop their arguments, and sometimes
12 resorted to discussions outside formal settings. Reflecting on this, women explained how they
13 found ways to create solidarity relations with other members of the community (outside the
14 schemes) and occasionally managed to influence the process through which decisions were
15 implemented. One way was to re-contextualize individual differences and to reframe and
16 transform collective practices by forming relational ties or 'affective exchanges' (Biggart &
17 Delbridge, 2004) with other scheme members:
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27 Various conflicts were bridged through forming relational ties with other (scheme)
28 members. However, this was done informally [...]. Of course, the more we knew each
29 other, the easier the relationships and the communication. Personally, I would
30 struggle on whether I should give priority to outputs (getting things done) or
31 relationships, and how to balance the two (R-Exchange).
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34 Thus, conflicts, and the processes through which the schemes' participants tried to
35 resolve them, sometimes assisted efforts to avoid centralization and top-down control of the
36 exchange process, but might also create factions that threatened scheme cohesion:
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40 Having sub-groups of 2-3 people talking to each other informally (outside formal
41 democratic structures) creates many problems and difficult dynamics. People choose
42 sides and then things slowly fall apart. Yet, in cases when bridging the gap between
43 the individual and the collective was possible, then real change in attitudes and
44 behaviours occurred (R-Exchange).
45
46

47 Although horizontal decision-making processes were practised and encouraged across some
48 networks, participants had to mediate and negotiate conflicts emanating from diverse
49 performances of values. For this 'bridging' (of the individual and the collective) to occur,
50 established spaces outside the general assembly were identified by members as essential:
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3 In my opinion, we need a different kind of assembly to discuss disagreements. You
4 cannot discuss and resolve all practical issues and also deal with the emotional
5 aspects, the relational, both in the same space (R-Exchange).
6

7 Also, confirming earlier findings, our study suggests that for some grassroots members,
8 formal structures (such as the general assembly) were 'clearly not integrated into the group
9 and remain inaccessible' to some members (Beeman, Guberman, Lamoureux, Fournier, &
10 Gervais, 2009, p. 880). This was partly because voluntary participation meant that relatively
11 few members took part in the general assembly's decision-making process. To foster other
12 spaces where affective bonds could be built, events such as open meetings, fairs, bazaars,
13 seminars and workshops were frequently organized. As one founding member of Ex-Net
14 described:
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24 We saw that friendships were cultivated, for example, in spaces where we could
25 release our creativity; fairs, workshops where people started working together,
26 making things out of nothing (Ex-Net).
27

28 Participation in these events enabled members and non-members to exchange ideas,
29 discursively re-construct prior values and collectively re-articulate social and economic
30 relations, which often involved affective exchanges as participants expressed their attachment
31 to the schemes' values. Thus, members did not focus solely on monetary or non-monetary
32 value and how this was co-produced, but also highlighted that the schemes' shared values
33 instigated new forms of social interaction and possibilities for personal and social
34 transformation. An Ex-Net participant explained why he enjoyed being part of the scheme: 'I
35 enjoy the collegiality and solidarity we have at the group, because I believe that we all
36 together can do things that one person alone cannot do.' A member of A-Bank also
37 commented on the social aspects of the schemes and the possibilities enacted:
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50 I want to think about the scheme as a social space. I think that there are multiple
51 dimensions in what we are doing here that we do not even imagine ... we have
52 managed to establish a shared vision here and this can be the start of an alternative
53 way of thinking about our community and about society as a whole (A-Bank).
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55 Thus, conceptualizing the networks as social spaces enabled members to re-constitute
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3 them as fields in which they could explore solutions and forge solidarity relationships with
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5 other networks and grassroots initiatives.
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10 ***Sustainable living: Restoring 'humane values'***

11 Participating in alternative social formations, such as these community-driven schemes,
12
13 became a transformative psychological and sociological experience:
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16 There is faith that there are other moral values apart from money... we believe that the
17 relations of people should be facilitated in the logic of transactions, not only by means
18 of money, the known money ... it is related to an ethical way of life [...] in the sense
19 that you go for a different logic that emphasizes humane values (G-T).
20

21 A member explained how inspiring it was to externalize these 'humane values' that everyone
22
23 felt were part of their struggle for an alternative future:
24

25
26 I volunteered to take on the task to write up our identity statement [...]. When I read
27 that statement back, we all went into a state of awe and silence (I didn't expect that
28 the particular reading would have that effect). We had a shared moment of 'wow, this
29 is who we are (want to be) and what we (want to) represent really?! Amazing!'. It was
30 a very inspiring moment that it was apparent made us feel very united, that very
31 moment (R-Exchange).
32

33 Restoring and practising 'humane values' also included respect for nature and the
34 environment. Participants stated that, through their participation in GENS, they had learned to
35 put values such as sustainability, ethics and the environment above profit. This indicates a
36 movement away from a linear and sequential approach to value creation, toward more
37 complex and dynamic exchange systems of actors (i.e. service ecosystems including nurture,
38 regeneration and sustenance of all life), centred around value creation practices guided by
39 norms, meanings and new organizing properties. For scheme members, sustainable living
40 was clearly different from the conventional sustainability discourse that struggles to reconcile
41 the goal of economic growth with social equity and environmental limits (Sahakian, 2014):
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52 We devoted quite some time and effort to put together collectively our identity
53 statement (vision and aims) that talked about the principle of sustainability in the
54 sense of environmental sustainability (degrowth and social ecology principles). Our
55 views around sustainability, environment and ethics were communicated and
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3 represented in our external actions and relationships. For example, when we would
4 talk with potential or existing members of the exchange network (that were not
5 participating in the group's internal processes), or when we would run events, talks
6 etc., we would also refer to our identity statement (R-Exchange).
7

8 Furthermore, participants emphasized that the quest for a fulfilling life should focus on
9 the need to change how humans relate to each other. As one participant stated, G-T tried to
10 embed the practice of 'a good and ethical life for all'. At Ex-Net, participants also stressed
11 the importance of 'mutual respect' and 'equality':
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17 If we recognize human rights, the equality of humans, that each one can offer and
18 enjoy the best possible on this earth within a perception of equality, if we do not have
19 this, even these spaces of alternative exchange can become spaces of exploitation... if
20 the agenda of human rights is not integrated [into the network], which is for tall
21 people, for short people, for green, red, yellow people, a component of mutual
22 respect, that I offer my services not only, for example, to tall people, nor ask services
23 from tall people only, for me it is not worth being in this space (Ex-Net).
24

25 This is in line with a poststructuralist performative interpretation that sees values as being
26 produced in the space where one relates to others (author/s). Sustainable living therefore
27 requires happiness to be attained by living ethically, according to overarching moral
28 principles on how we ought to treat others. For many participants, this implied a shift toward
29 the economy of care and personal responsibility (see Williams, 2011). Another member of G-
30 T shared the following experience:
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38 We live in times of economic crisis and we don't have the luxury of consumption that
39 we had before. With consumption, we were getting some false joy; we went out, we
40 did our shopping, etc. Personally, as a teacher, I have been preoccupied with
41 environmental education for 25 years now; I am very interested in environmental
42 sustainability and what people call recycling or reuse. This scheme is helping people
43 to think in different ways, to say 'better to give it there, where people will give it a
44 second chance, they will make something out of it, they will not throw it away'. This
45 network questions this ingrained need for consumption and tries to make people think
46 more about sustainable forms of living (G-T).
47
48

49 Overall, the relationships fostered by the schemes can be conceptualized as a form of
50 social capital, resonating with discourses of responsibility and active citizenship (Westheimer
51 & Kahne, 2004). Such discourses 'include imaginaries – representations of how things might
52 or could or should be' (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002, p. 195) that are enacted as actual
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3 practices: imagined activities, subjectivities or social relations become real through
4 materializations of alternative discourses and practices. The GENS appeared to be striving to
5 introduce fundamental changes to how community life was performed. As our analysis
6 reveals, these performances included: first, mobilizing values and appreciating the value of
7 values; second, espousing organizing principles that fostered the re-articulation of social
8 relations; and finally, restoring humane values and establishing sustainable living.
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18 **Discussion**

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20 The GFC provided a context in which to explore the organizing potential of diverse economy
21 initiatives in non-institutionalized, discontinuous, ambiguous and novel fields. To address
22 this, we focused on the very moments in which discourses, texts and events were produced
23 and came to shape GENS' values practices. The central role of values in underpinning
24 organizational performance (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004), culture (Cameron & Quinn,
25 2011) and alternative organizing (Diani, 2013) has previously been acknowledged but
26 remains poorly conceptualized. However, one recent study confirms our findings that GENS
27 respond to and mobilize the values of the citizens involved, that specific values are held by
28 people participating in societal experiments, and that values are mobilized and performed
29 within such schemes on a collective scale (see Martin & Upham, 2016). Members' desire to
30 improve the living conditions of those with 'limited economic means' causes them to
31 coalesce and intertwine in networked ways to promote alternative values production schemes.
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46 Following this, we argue that value runs on a continuum between belief and action/non-
47 action ('belief' about a thing being the most valuable, and 'action' to protect what is
48 considered to be most valuable) that is formed and continuously renegotiated by communities
49 themselves (Graeber, 2006). In contrast to previous suggestions that participants often see
50 'values practices as ends in themselves and thus, analytically distinct from organizational
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3 practices' (Gehman et al., 2013, p. 84), based on evidence across the four cases, we suggest
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5 that joint performances of value are what drive communities to self-organize and constitute
6
7 new social and economic relations. The poststructuralist performative approach informing
8
9 our analysis suggests that such transformative potential may emerge from the collective
10
11 performance of values practices. That is, the new social, ecological, cultural and financial
12
13 landscapes that GENs assemble entail collectivist, participatory struggles that potentially
14
15 bring about new social, cultural, and economic realities (see also Daskalaki, Hjorth, & Mair,
16
17 2015). Such initiatives therefore become prefigurative, in the sense that they attempt 'to bring
18
19 new forms of social relationships into being' (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014, p.
20
21 628; see also Boggs, 1977; Graeber, 2002).

22
23
24 We identify three distinct values practices that materialize out of situated and emergent
25
26 performances, namely mobilization of values, re-articulation of social relations, and
27
28 sustainable living. Supporting the work of other critical scholars who stress the need to
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30 understand and debate the values that 'tie together' alternative organizational forms (Parker
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32 et al., 2014, p. 625), we propose that these forms represent a diverse set of socio-material
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34 practices that reflect relationally-constructed understandings, constantly negotiated through
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36 direct democratic processes and horizontal, non-hierarchical organizational arrangements.
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38 Such post-capitalist arrangements appear to characterize GENs' efforts to escape the logic of
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40 relentless growth (Fournier, 2008), take back the economy (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, &
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42 Healy, 2013) and 'operate as immanent critiques of existing forms of work organization'
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44 (Shukaitis, 2010, p. 63).

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47 Accordingly, we argue that GENs seek to transform socio-economic exchanges by
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49 collectively mobilizing and restoring values and organizing principles that challenge
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51 dominant relations of production and consumption. Thus, GENs offer alternatives, or the
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53 potential to organize alternatives, to the static element of bounded institutionalized practices
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3 that 'represent constraints on the options that individuals and collectives are likely to
4 exercise' (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 94). If not in strictly technocratic terms, grassroots
5 initiatives comprise the actual spaces in which challenges to the mainstream model of
6 monetary exchange are practised, or at least explored. For instance, collective performances
7 of values allow participants to prioritize values differently, and to decide when, whether and
8 under what rules transactions will take place. In cooperating in these initiatives, communities
9 regain some control over the organizational process, despite the problems of knowledge
10 transfer and sharing, and direct access and participation. They learn to interpret the world in a
11 manner that fundamentally re-configures how power operates (Graeber, 2001; Maeckelbergh,
12 2011). For instance, many participants explained how non-consumerist and collectivist
13 values, along with a desire to improve their living conditions and create a better world, served
14 as an impetus for action. Hence, the schemes' collective purpose and orientation are clearly
15 about the prefigurative politics involved in re-establishing values and community practices
16 with a view to transforming social and economic relations.
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33 This article contributes to several debates. First, it contributes to analysis of alternative
34 economic practices (Gibson-Graham, 2003, 2008; Jonas, 2013; Lee, 2006, 2013) by
35 connecting macro-political with meso-organizational and micro-individual relational levels.
36 The connecting link is the notion of performativity, which explains how prefiguration of
37 different values enables these alternatives to materialize, which are then reconfigured and
38 reproduced through practices. While a multitude of practices and diverse forms of mixed
39 community economies (Gibson-Graham, 2003, 2008; Healy, 2009; Jonas, 2013) have always
40 existed in the hidden 'neverland' of alternative spaces (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016), their
41 proliferation during the crisis poses important questions about their sustainability and
42 potential to create alternative forms of organizing. Accordingly, central to our analysis is the
43 performance of values practices pertaining to economic practices and arrangements that
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3 might offer ways to escape neoliberal capitalist determinism. This contribution also allows us
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5 to explore the potential for new forms of organizing centred on inclusive and non-hierarchical
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7 democratic governance that emerge from performing solidarity exchanges, and whether they
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9 apply market means for social ends (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). According to Gehman
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11 et al. (2013), such new forms comprise loosely scripted but concerted collaborative problem-
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13 solving efforts and enable the re-definition of values practices through collective
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15 performances. Nevertheless, we demonstrate that values are reconfigured, redefined and
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17 reaffirmed through a process of relational performances of exchanges occurring at multiple
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19 levels, involving material artefacts, discourses and affects. In other words, while mobilization
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21 of values (in this case concerned with post-capitalist futures) is a necessary spark for action
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23 and the establishment of such initiatives, the re-production and sustenance of the value of the
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25 priceless, and non-hierarchical forms of sociality and humane living must be continuously
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27 performed and reiterated through practice. This also means that pre-existing power
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29 relationships (for instance, dominant gender structures) must be openly acknowledged and
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31 actively addressed. Hence, grassroots initiatives and schemes may become spaces where
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33 ‘ethical choices for a post-capitalist future could be made, insofar as the existence of power
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35 relations and sustainability issues is acknowledged’ (Gritzas & Kavoulakos, 2016, p. 11).
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40 Second, our study contributes to organizational scholarship on alternative forms of
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42 organizing as forces emerging outside and against institutions, directly contesting existing
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44 institutional arrangements for change or new path creation (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008).
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46 This responds to Den Hond, Bakker, and Smith’s (2015) call to investigate the implications
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48 of social mobilization for the ‘organization’, and social movements’ struggle to balance
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50 decided and emergent orders. We offer important insights into the role of new ideas and
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52 practices in this process. According to Parker et al. (2014), autonomy, solidarity and
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54 responsibility constitute general principles or values that link alternative organizational
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3 forms. Following this, we suggest that GENS are political, cultural and social phenomena that
4 link to (potential) alternative organizational activities and represent a (potential) practised
5 alternative to the financial instrumentalism characterizing capitalist modes of production. We
6 argue that such bottom-up initiatives, emerging through community mobilization, are
7 inherently political, subversive practices of resisting established patterns of organizing. We
8 also demonstrate that people's values are central to this work of reconfiguring new ways of
9 organizing, adding new evidence to organization studies in the context of GENS. Overall, we
10 suggest that a grassroots context may become a fertile space for social change to occur, by
11 identifying and mobilizing values collectively, and testing and practising new social relations
12 and sustainable living. The importance and strength of such initiatives lies in their ability to
13 prefigure things that do not yet exist, and hence to reimagine possible alternative futures (see
14 Komporozos-Athanasiou & Fotaki, 2015).
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31 **Concluding remarks**

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33 The GENS studied in this article appear to have been striving to introduce fundamental
34 changes to how community life is performed, and to implement changes driven by values
35 other than monetary concerns. We acknowledge that the potential for GENS to tackle social
36 inequality has been challenged (Bowring, 1998; see also Sahakian, 2014); yet the search for
37 alternative futures is not only constrained but also, as Böhm, Dinerstein, and Spicer (2010)
38 point out, enabled by economic, political, social and cultural settings and situations. Our own
39 position has been to investigate this potential without beautifying the struggles and antitheses
40 that emerge in every social space, especially under harsh political and economic conditions.
41 This has allowed us to argue that community mobilization is defined by an endeavour to
42 promote values practices that prioritize ethical living during times of crisis. However, we are
43 mindful that studies of solidarity economies have a tendency to romanticize achievements
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3 and simplify the limitations and contradictions. Hence, we should also stress the importance
4 of exploring how communities constantly evolve and challenge capitalist relations through
5 acting, experimenting and redefining their understanding of co-operation in contexts of
6 ambiguity and flux, and how they re-organize their activities to overcome difficulties and
7 transform dominant structures of social engagement and economic exchange.
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14 Grassroots initiatives are continuously evolving and changing, owing not only to internal
15 processes, but also to the broader landscape of potential alternatives currently unfolding in
16 Greece and elsewhere. Consequently, we do not suggest that the values practices presented
17 here can be generalized to other community initiatives, or even that those we describe are
18 actually stable. We can only claim to have interpreted the initiatives' practices as these were
19 performed at a given point in time when the research project was conducted. Future
20 longitudinal work might address the sustainability of these initiatives, focusing specifically
21 on the challenges they face when interacting with established, institutionalized exchanges and
22 market-driven norms and values. More focused research is also needed to explore virtual
23 spaces of collaboration and processes that support or endanger the transformative capacity of
24 grassroots communities engaged in the co-production of different forms of exchange. Finally,
25 the groups' small scale and horizontal management structure might create the much-needed
26 transparency lacking in the mainstream economy. As their size increases, it remains to be
27 seen how these mechanisms will develop, and how others will be instituted in attempts to
28 protect and secure both transparency and potential for socially transformative engagement.
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15 Notes

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17 1 In the context of our work, ‘alternatives’ also encompass environmentally- and socially-aware
18 arrangements that defy capitalist and patriarchal/racist exploitation.
19 2 For Callon, the discipline of economics is performative rather than descriptive since its
20 pronouncements and statements may create and enact the world that they are meant to analyze.
21 3 This was caused largely by the exceptional disciplinary austerity policies enforced on consecutive
22 Greek governments by a troika of lenders (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and
23 the International Monetary Fund), resulting in loss of productive capacity, disinvestment,
24 unprecedented unemployment, corrosion of employment conditions, rising inequalities and poverty.
25 4 http://www.enallaktikos.gr/kg15el_topika-enallaktika-nomismata_t40.html.
26 5 The gender, income and education profiles of participants correspond with those of earlier studies of
27 GENs in Greece (see, for example, Author/s, 2011).
28 6 To avoid identification of study participants, we do not use (pseudo-)names for any of the
29 quotations shared in the results. Owing to the small scale of some of the initiatives and the tight ties
30 within the solidarity economy, ascribing statements to specific individuals would compromise
31 informants’ anonymity.
32 7 Previous studies of e-democracy and governance suggest that online civic commons constitute a
33 trusted public space in which the dispersed energies, self-articulations and aspirations of citizens can
34 be rehearsed in public (see, for example, Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Markus, 2007). Although, these
35 debates are not discussed here, we consider it important for future studies to focus on how direct
36 democratic processes are ensured in online communities of practice and affect the mobilization and
37 collective performance of values practices in grassroots organizing contexts.
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Table 1. The Case Studies

Schemes	Location	Exchanges	Activities	Organization	Members
Ex-Net	Greek Island	'U' (Alternative currency) Barter	Goods Services	Assembly and open management-coordination groups Open markets' organization Online platform & transaction system Social benefit actions	850
G-T	Country-wide	Free Barter	Second-hand products Home-made organic food Raw materials for crafting Original handicraft and artwork	Several coordinators Open discussion forums Online transaction system Online bazaars	2500 (registered users*)
R-Exchange	Greek island	Free Barter	Second-hand products Home-made organic food Raw materials for crafting Original handicraft and artwork	Several coordinators Open discussion forums Online transaction system Online bazaars	100
A-Bank	Athens, Greece	Art Cash (Alternative Currency) Artistic Artefacts	Registered Art Work Artistic Artefacts Goods & Services	Several coordinators Open discussion forums Online transaction system	40 (Registered artists**)

* The number of registered users who regularly participate in online exchanges and actively join the schemes bazaars and fairs is not available.

** This number indicates the number of artists who have joined the scheme. The number of A-Bank participants who perform economic exchanges with A-cash is not available.

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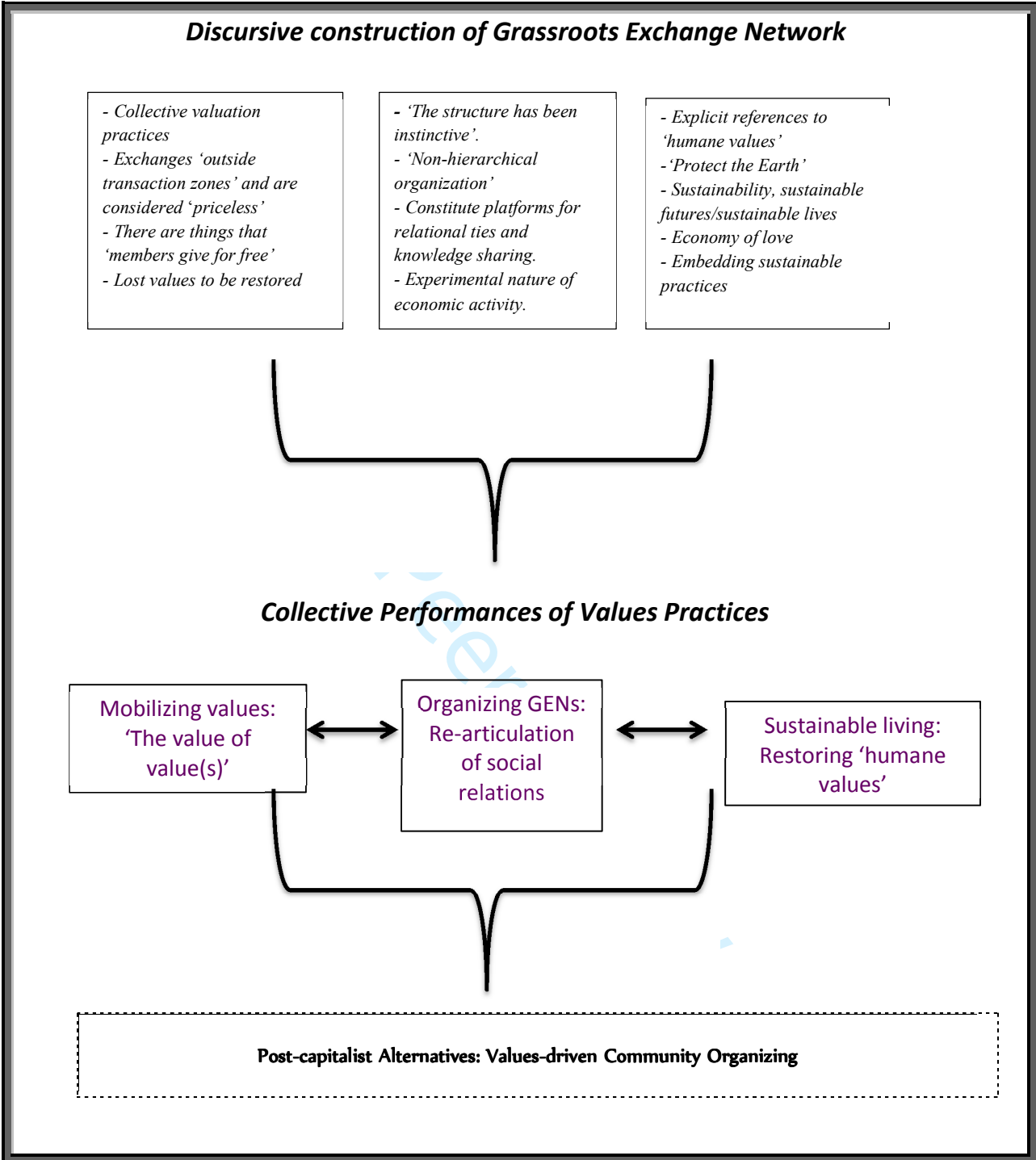


Figure 1. Emergent Themes: Performances of Values Practices