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Alternative Forms of Resilience in Hard Economic Times: Theoretical, Methodological and Southern European Dimensions

Maria Kousis (University of Crete) and Maria Paschou (University of Crete)

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Send all correspondence to Maria Kousis (Ph.D.), Department of Sociology, University of Crete. E-mail: Kousis.m@uoc.gr, address: University of Crete, Gallos Campus, GR-74100, Rethymno, Crete.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to offer a literature review and a typology of approaches on novel, collective and solidarity oriented critical resilience initiatives and organizations before and after the 2008 economic crisis, including those in Southern European regions. Eight major approaches are identified on alternative solidarity practices. More recent, but fewer works focus on exchange and cooperation practices of a solidarity-based economy in European regions. Limited however, are systematic empirical studies on novel, alternative, survival oriented and defensive structures in times of crisis which arise to meet urgent basic needs such as food, shelter, health and education at the community level, especially on Southern Europe. The undertaken typology unravels an importance recent shift by South European studies towards political issues, especially in relation to social movements. This finding is useful for future research in the area which needs to systematically the political character of alternative action organizations, either at the professional or community action level.

Keywords: economic crisis, alternative forms of resilience, Southern Europe, resilience

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Introduction

Public responses to economic and political threats (Almeida 2007, Kousis and Tilly 2005), as seen in the recent crisis, vary. In this paper we concentrate on those public responses manifested in alternative (to mainstream) forms of economic and noneconomic activities by collective initiatives and community based groups confronting hard economic times and falling rights, especially since the global financial crisis of 2008.

This crisis has impacted heavily on millions of EU and US citizens due to increases in unemployment, decrease in credit access, cuts in social provisions, changes in consuming practices and gloomy prospects for the future of their children. These austerity impacts have led to transformations in citizens practices (from adapted to alternative), which allow their future survival (Conill, Castells, Cardenas and Servon 2012: 210, 222-229). Expanding world-wide, citizens have responded to economic threats posed by the economic crisis of 2008 by collectively engaging in alternative economic and noneconomic activities meeting basic and increasing needs linked to food, housing, health, clothes, childcare, education and other needs, which have either not been, or are no longer covered by the respective social policies. These alternative public actions and initiatives of resilience include: solidarity-based exchanges and networks, cooperative structures, barter clubs and networks, credit unions, ethical banks, time banks, alternative social currency, citizens' self-help groups, prosumption practices, social enterprises, and others.

Related studies remain limited on alternative structures which arise to meet urgent basic needs such as food (e.g. Lambie-Mumford 2012, Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen 2012, Phillips 2012), shelter (e.g. Kaika 2012), health (e.g. Stuckler and McKee 2011, Phua 2011) and education for citizens (Conill et al 2012), but especially for vulnerable groups such as children, immigrants, the elderly who need support to face the crisis. Furthermore, as seen in the solidarity-based works,

studies on more vulnerable groups and gender are fewer and based on the experiences from developing countries (e.g. Pearson and Sweetman 2011).

Such studies tend to center on national or regional spaces. They focus on novel, alternative practices (e.g. clubes de trueque) which sprang during economic crises in Argentina and other regions of the global south, but also of the global north before and after the crisis of 2008, such as the SOL social currency project in France; regional currencies support by NGOs in Germany aiming to support local economies; the alternative cashless production and exchange systems Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) in the UK; and, ethical banks promoting ethical commitment, ideology and principles.

They reflect a form of resilience which moves beyond its more frequent conceptualization. In general, resilience has been a concept stimulating a wide variety of interpretations, and theoretical perspectives, from pro-government to critical ones. Adapted as well by policy agencies, including EU and UN bodies, it comprises a major concept enlightening policy frameworks addressing problems in different policy fields (Chandler 2013). Moving beyond this perspective, critical resilience is reflected in community and collective citizen practices (Juntunen and Hyvonen 2014) that lead to empowerment and common goals (Murray and Zautra 2012, Berkes and Ross 2013), in developed regions facing hard economic times, following the 2008 global crisis. More rare are critical resilience studies addressing solidarity groups (Heltberg, Hossain, Reva and Turk, 2012) and social movement participation (D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano 2015, Papadaki and Kalogeraki in this volume), based on the experience of Southern European regions following the 2008 global financial crisis.

Alternative forms of critical resilience (AFR) by community and collective citizen practices illustrate the changing interactions between citizen groups and policies especially since the global financial crisis of 2008. The subsequent Eurozone crisis whose impacts have been severe for Southern European citizens created conditions leading to the flourishing of local currencies and

barter networks in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. In these crisis-hit regions, critical resilience is reflected in the strengthening of social networks and community practices to foster solidarity in the face of crises, change of lifestyles towards more sustainable forms of consumption and production, developing new artistic expressions, moving abroad for short or long durations (or on the contrary reducing mobility).

At the same time AFR carve a new type of politics through the creation of bottom-up participatory initiatives promoting a ‘solidarity economy’, as seen in countries confronting crises in the past. They are new expressions of engagement, in a wide repertoire of non-capitalist practices by citizens, which facilitate their survival through reciprocity and networking with other communities facing similar problems. More importantly however, these alternative forms of critical resilience simultaneously foster and facilitate a new form of political engagement/participation aimed to strengthen open, democratic forms of governance. They may stem from social movements, labour unions, or other associative structures.

The paper offers a review of the related literature focused on the conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches, starting with a historical-political view of AFR. Emphasis is placed on a comparative dimension between south and north EU, especially as reflected in the more recent works since the 2008 crisis. Its ultimate aim is to identify major politically oriented features and aspects within a political process and a policy perspective that could guide future research.

Alternative Forms of Critical Resilience in a Solidarity Economy: a historical-political perspective

A rich literature¹, in French, Spanish and English, has been developing on the ‘social economy’, ‘human economy’, ‘third sector’ and ‘solidarity economy’ in the past few decades- herein called

¹ See journals such as *Revue internationale de l'économie sociale (RECMA)* founded in 1921 - <http://www.recma.org/>

solidarity economy² given its pluriactive character in the current crisis³. All terms refer to the wide repertoire of non-capitalist/non-mainstream and alternative economic practices which are usually initiated worldwide and throughout history by citizens groups and networks in their attempt to confront and survive hard economic times. Mostly focused on social and economic justice issues (e.g. Salamon and Ahheier 1995, Laville 2010, Allard and Matthaei 2008) this literature paid limited attention to political ones (e.g. North 2007, Ould Ahmed 2014).

In a brief, but lucid and articulate, historical presentation, two years before the onset of the current economic crisis, Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) trace these alternative practices as far back as their ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman roots (citing Defourny and Develtere 1997; Demoustier 2001). The authors elected nevertheless to concentrate in the period since the medieval times given the rich associative life in Europe, but also in Byzantium, the Muslim countries, India, Africa and America (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005:2038). They propose that, “each epoch has its own socioeconomic conditions bringing subsequent opportunities and challenges to the *lien solidaire* (solidarity bond) which it produced. . . . when the economic growth engine starts to stutter, formal distribution mechanisms begin to fail and new social forces develop and give rise to alternative institutions and mechanisms of solidarity and redistribution as a means of addressing the failures of the institutions of the socioeconomic movements to guarantee solidarity among economic agents.” (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005:2038).

Thus, reflecting a concern comparable to that of political opportunities and threats by political process scholars studying social movements, Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) offer a promising historically-based perspective to the study of solidarity economy pointing to the importance of structural economic threats. They argue that waves of ‘*économie sociale*’ and solidarity practices have emerged and re-emerged, especially since the industrial revolution/19th century, in reaction to

² Term used by one of the oldest such movements in Latin America, coined by Chilean professor of philosophy Luis Razeto (Ould Ahmed, 2014)

³ As was the case after the Latin American economic crisis in the late nineties.

economic threats, exploitative relations and poverty faced by considerable segments of populations. The associations, co-operatives and other alternative/social economy structures that arose across Europe and were subsequently institutionalized at the closing of the 19th/start of 20th century were simultaneously influenced by 18th and 19th century utopian socialism, Christian socialism, and the liberal movement – reflecting also the importance of cultural factors (Defourny and Develtere 1997).

Three generations of social economy structures have been linked to the three large pre-WWII crises (Bouchard et al 2000 in Moulaert and Ailenei 2005). The first generation refers to “those of the 1840s-1850s transition from the old regulation (via craftsmen corporations) to competitive regulation, leading to mutual support organisations (mutuelles) as a form of resistance of craftsmen workers”. The second generation is comprised “of the agricultural co-operatives and the saving cooperatives that rose in reaction to the crisis (1873–95) of the extensive regime of accumulation with heavy investments in agriculture and natural resources”. The third generation sprang “from the economic collapse of 1929–32 and was mostly a product of the crisis in competitive regulation. The consumption cooperatives for food and housing supported workers and unemployed people, allowing them to secure goods and services at prices they could afford” (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005:2041).

The postwar period witnessed new reactions, this time to the crisis of the mass-production system, by the 1970s alternative movement incorporating the rise of co-operative and ecological actions, the ‘small is beautiful’ local development schemes, offering alternatives to state services encouraging social bond strengthening within communities. In the 1980s and 1990s high unemployment, public finance crisis and decreasing welfare state provisions facilitated the creation of alternative structures such as *entreprises d’insertion* and worker-owned cooperatives and reactions against neo-liberal and individualistic ideology (Lipietz 2003, Bouchard et al 2000 in Moulaert and Ailenei 2005:2041).

The social and solidary economy movements of the postwar period which first flourished especially in France and Latin America, spread to the UK, the US, Africa and Asia, while developing strong links and networks between them - e.g. with the British human economy movement- but not yet with the US ones (Ould Ahmed 2014). Scientific networks on AFR have been established especially in francophone, south American and African regions⁴ and international conferences and forums have been organized worldwide⁵.

Although works on Southern European social and solidary economy initiatives have been more limited, yet have recently received the attention of scholars, as will be seen in the next two sections. One recent work also raises the issue of resilience. Following Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013), D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano (2015:334, 338) view “social resilience” as a specific approach studying the “dynamic process which describes the ability of embedded social actors to foster collective transformation through a process of social learning and participative decision-making”. They point to studies highlighting the capacity to build “socially resilient systems” to confront the threats of neo-liberal policies at the grassroots level, in Southern European regions.

Methodological and Empirical Approaches to the study of AFR

Empirical studies on alternative forms of resilience to economic hardship focus on a great variety of forms of action, locus and geographical coverage. Despite methodological variation, most studies adopt an exploratory approach in order to describe, understand or generalize trends on collective action, community solidarity, reciprocity, citizenship and agency issues, or their intersections.

⁴ Such as: EMES Emergence des Entreprises Sociales en Europe, RILESS (Red de Investigadores Latinoamericanos de Economia Social y Solidaria), CRISES (Centre de Recherche sur les Innovations Sociales in Quebec), PSES3 (Pôle de Socio-économie Solidaire) and REMESS (Réseau Marocain d'Economie Sociale et Solidaire), (Ould Ahmed 2014:2-3).

⁵ Including: Globalisation of Solidarity (Lima, 1997 and Québec, 2001); which became the RIPESS (Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire) (Dakar, 2005, Luxembourg 2009); the World Social Forum, Brazil 2001–2003, India 2004, Kenya 2007, and other cities; and FBES (Forum Brésilien de l'Economie Solidaire), active in most Brazilian cities (Laville et. al., 2005 in Ould Ahmed, 2014:2-3).

There is a plethora of actions which have attracted scholars' interest: solidarity bartering (Fernández, 2009), Local Exchange Trading Schemes – LETS- (Granger et al, 2010), local currencies (North, 2013; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Schroeder, 2013); Sahakian, 2014) ethical banks (Cowton, 2006; San-Jose et al, 2011; Tischer, 2013; Cornee and Szafarz, 2013), local market cooperatives (Phillips, 2012), cooperatives for the supply of social services, e.g. in health and education (Costa et al, 2012), alternative forms of production (Corrado, 2010), critical consumption (Fonte, 2013), spontaneous actions of resistance and reclaim (Dalakoglou, 2012) and the reproduction of cultural knowledge via oral and artistic expression (Barkin, 2012; Lamont et al. 2013).

Interestingly, while some studies concentrate on one specified form of action or sector type, others do not. Representing examples of the first case, Corrado (2010) examines peasant seed networks of alternative agro-food systems, while Fonte (2013) studies consumer networks which support buying products directly from producers on ethical and solidarity grounds. As regards the second case, Barkin (2012) studies local community cooperative structures across various sectors, from food production and energy to ecotourism and handicrafts, Sotiropoulou (2012) examines alternative currencies together with exchange networks, free bazaars and several sui generis schemes of solidarity action, and Papadaki (2015) reviews all different forms of social support and solidarity under the economic crisis in a single locality – Chania, Crete, Greece (see also Papadaki and Kalogeraki, this issue).

In addition, there seems to be a connection between the type of action and the environments where they are taking place. Actions which are developed in rural environments address issues of resource management and agricultural production (Barkin, 2012; Corrado, 2010). Actions undertaken in urban environments are bound to the socio-spatial dynamics of the city, thus involving actions of reclaim (Dalakoglou, 2012) or consumption behaviours (Fonte, 2013). Current systematic research in nine EU countries distinguishes seven main fields of solidarity activities:

urgent needs, economy, energy and environment, alternative consumption/lifestyles/food sovereignty, civic media & communications, self organized spaces and culture (Livewhat WP6.1 Codebook, 2015). One can observe a wide spectrum of methodological approaches which are used in the study of alternative forms of collective action. Barkin (2012) adopts an ethnographic approach on traditional and preservation techniques while interviewing techniques among the participants of solidarity networks and alternative collectivities are more popular among scholars (Fonte, 2013, Lamont 2013, North, 2013).

Case studies based on descriptive or historiographic methodologies are also found, such as Corrado's research on Réseau Semences Paysannes agro-food association (2010) in France, Phillips' study of the food cooperative in the City Market in Burlington (2012), Granger et al. (2010) study on the Totnes LETS scheme (the 'Acorn') in a small market town in Devon, UK and Sahakian's (2014) case studies on complementary currencies in Argentina, Japan and Switzerland. Last but not least, Primavera's (2010) review of social currencies and barter networks with a global perspective.

Among the quantitative approaches, media analysis –i.e. action focused content analysis of the press- has been used in a recent study in Greece (Papadaki, 2015), while of particular interest are studies with a comparative perspective, such as Costa et al (2012) evaluation of the efficiency and profitability of social cooperatives among Italian regions by adopting principal component analysis to economic and financial indexes, or North's (2013) comparison of different contexts of alternative currency adoption at the supranational level – i.e. in Germany, UK and the USA.

On the other side, a multi-method approach seems to be appropriate for cases in which the forms of action under study vary in a degree that necessitates a combination of fieldwork research and secondary data analysis. Examples here are Sotiropoulou's (2012) economy-focused study which combines qualitative and quantitative techniques (interviews, survey, participant observation, text analysis) in order to classify small scale alternative production and consumption patterns,

Petropoulou's (2013) study, which combines interviews with blog and website analysis to identify networks and collectivities which contribute in materializing a solidarity-cooperative economy and a community-currencies, global-level study by Seyfang and Longhurst (2013), which draws on secondary data, an email survey and key informant interviews among academics and practitioners in their international scoping study of community currencies.

A broad geographical coverage characterizes the academic interest on alternative forms of resilience. Especially in communities exposed to intense economic hardship. The South American economic crisis of 2002/late nineties triggered interest towards studying Argentina (Fernández, 2009; Primavera 2010) and Brazil. Nevertheless, alternative forms of collective action and solidarity networks are not always directly related to the impacts of economic crises but also to the pursuit for cultural alternatives and empowering lifestyles. There are a number of studies which focus on social strategies of building community bonds, local knowledge systems and new networks of social interaction. Barkin's (2012) studies collective capacities illustrating how inherited cultural knowledge promotes community well being and the protection of ecosystems, thus delineating an alternative path of sustainable local development. Corrado (2010) focuses on the emergence of new relationships among producers, consumers, and organizations with the aim of re-qualifying food as a common good instead of a commodity.

South European empirical studies

The impacts of the recent global economic crisis on communities and citizens have led to an increasing number of empirically oriented solidarity studies on the Southern European experience (e.g. D'Alisa et al 2015). Thus, during the last five years there has been a rise such as empirical works on Italy (Costa et al, 2012, Fonte, 2013, Forno and Graziano 2014, Bosi and Zamboni 2015, Andretta and Giudi 2015), Spain (Conill et al, 2012, Calvo and Morales, 2014, de Armino 2014, de Andres et al 2015, Nez, this issue, Blanco and Cruz, this issue), Portugal (Parente et al 2012,

Baumgarten, this issue) and Greece (Dalakoglou, 2012; Sotiropoulou, 2012; Pautz and Kominou, 2013; Petropoulou, 2013; Papadaki 2015, Papadaki and Kalogeraki, this issue). Using case studies, secondary data, as well as online sources through quantitative and qualitative methods, these cover either specific issues or geographically limited areas, while studies on, or including the Southern European experience, link alternative forms of resilience to hard economic times and the recent Eurozone crisis, thus a considerable number focuses on the enhancement of local economy, or social enterprises (Nassioulas 2012). For example, Costa et al (2012) study on regional social cooperatives focuses on their role in terms of economic and financial performance. San-Jose et al (2009, 2011) focus on the differentiation between ethical banks and the rest of credit institutions by developing a four-concept index, which they call the Radical Affinity Index. Based on an anti-neoliberal perspective, Conill et al (2012) study major dissatisfaction with capitalism and its obstacles and trace a wide repertoire of non-capitalist economic practices based on altruism, non-monetary exchange and cooperation.

Other studies since the 2008 crisis, connect alternative forms of resilience with the politics of the crisis, i.e. with issues of public resistance to austerity and collective tactics of recovery, offering however limited systematic empirical data. Some highlight the relationship to social movements, such as the movement of the squares (e.g. Nez, this issue). Others record the influx of human resources into projects of alternative actions of public reclaim at the grassroots level such guerrilla gardening initiatives (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011) or more confrontational forms of actions such as collective supermarkets expropriation as a symbolic means of wealth re-distribution (Pautz and Kominou, 2013). Current systematic research across nine EU countries, including Greece, Italy and Spain, applies a mixed methods approach on Alternative Action Organizations using content analysis on online media sources, and online survey of their representatives and well as in depth interviews with organization representatives as well as with beneficiaries.

Conceptual and Theoretical approaches to the study of Alternative Forms of Resilience

Alternative forms of resilience are nonmainstream/capitalist economic and noneconomic practices through which citizens build community resilience when confronted with hard economic times through austerity policies, decreasing social welfare policies and threatened economic and social rights. More specifically, the paradigm of comprehensive alternative economy or free, constructed (not inherited), democratic (not philanthropic/charity) solidarity (Laville 2006: 609-610 in Ould Ahmed), is based on six main criteria:

1. non-economic concerns of economic practices (related to the environment, health, and other social justice and welfare issues)
2. rejection of competitive individualism of capitalist societies
3. promotion of self-management of production
4. economic empowerment of the excluded/disadvantaged groups
5. political and economic equality
6. freedom of choice in solidarity action participation

(Ould Ahmed 2014:5)

Resilience is a contested concept which a wide variety of groups use with different interpretations. More generally, it has been defined “as the capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. It is an active process of endurance, self-righting, and growth in response to crisis and challenge...resilience is forged through openness to experiences and interdependence with others.” (Walsh, 2006:4-5)⁶. Critical works on the concept of resilience and its use in policy and academic fields note however that it shifts responsibility away from the public

⁶ Most studies on resilience focus on children, youth and families (Ungar, 2012), and the effects of crisis on children (Walsh, 2006). “ ‘Family resilience’ refers to coping and adaptational processes in the family as a functional unit.” (Walsh, 2006:15).

sphere, while highlighting people's ability to 'bounce back' and downplaying the related costs (e.g. Harrison, 2012).

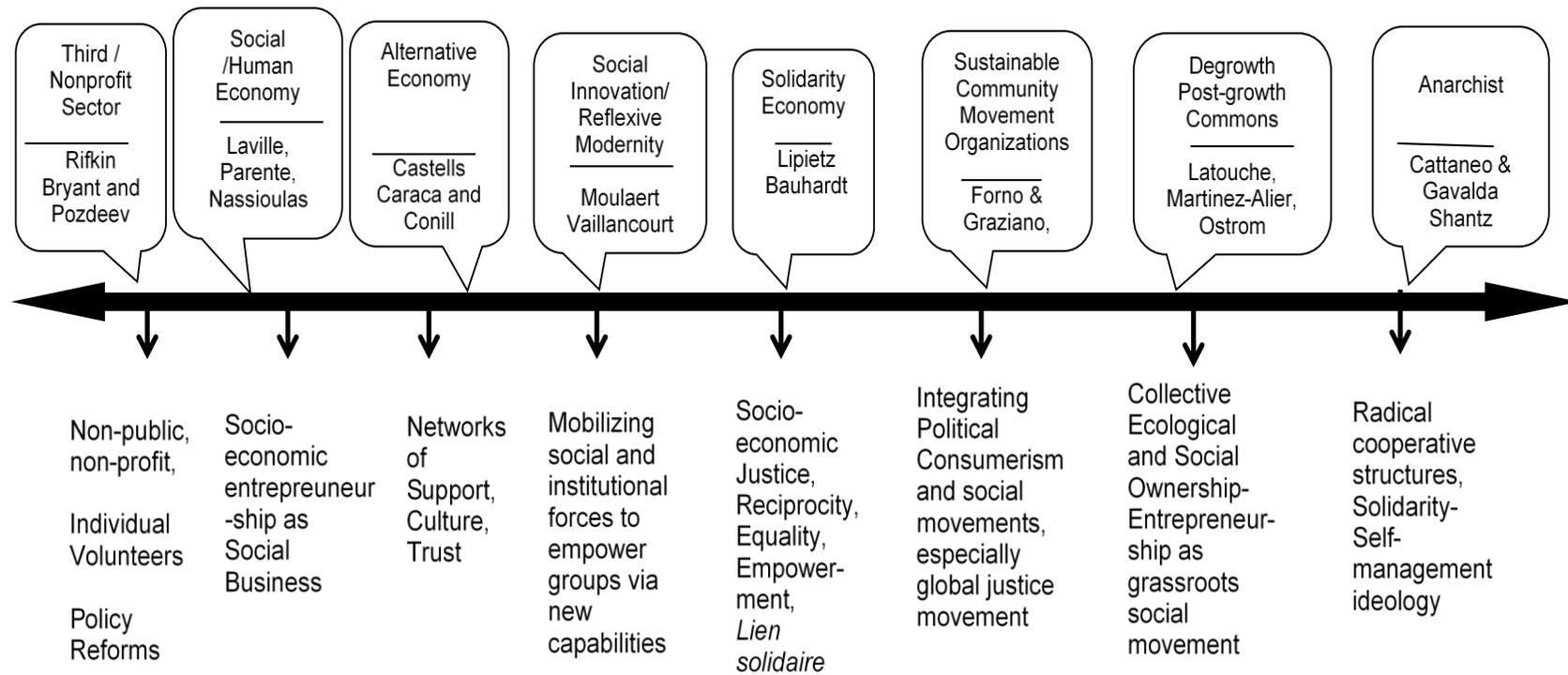
Following the 2008 crisis, resilience studies have moved beyond the level of the individual and the family, to that of collective resilience aimed to confront the failing social policies and social rights, to foster participatory democracy and collaboration, and to develop empowerment, common purpose and collective wisdom (Murray and Zautra 2012: 340). Thus recent studies on crisis and resilience focuses on groups and communities, as well as regions or countries, pointing out: ways in which collaborative processes can lead to resilience through building trust and interdependence (Goldstein 2012); the critical role of relatives, friends and mutual solidarity groups in 17 developing nations (Heltberg, Hossain, Reva and Turk, 2012); the importance of manufacturing employment in shaping regional resilience (Davies 2011); and, the resilience of engagement and participation in poor disadvantaged communities (Hancock, Mooney and Neal, 2012).

Works have also shifted their focus from developing regions to developed ones, including those in Southern Europe. Many refer to community based, grassroots initiatives of critical resilience which foster social movement participation and promote solidarity activities (D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano 2015, Papadaki and Kalogeraki in this volume). Figure 1 below is influenced by Moulaert and Ailenei's (2005) basic typology, which distinguishes Social Economy, from Third Sector and Solidarity Economy. Nevertheless, reflecting concerns related to the crisis and 21st century empowerment and environmental issues (e.g. D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano 2015) Figure 1 offers a wider typology scheme that includes more recent types of AFR which have appeared in the past decade, especially through South European studies and perspectives.

The proposed typology scheme distinguishes between eight key theoretical approaches, ranging from more reformist to radical ones, that have been engaged in understanding and interpreting old as well as new waves of alternative economic and noneconomic action organizations and groups, before and during the crisis. Although overlaps between them exist, given

the hybrid and similar nature of many alternative initiatives, each of these approaches tends to focus or emphasize specific types of alternative organizations and actions, which are close to the initiatives they study and their theoretical frameworks.

Figure 1. Theoretical approaches/Perspectives to the study /typologies of AFR: from reformist to radical



The term ‘**Third Sector**’ was especially promoted by Rifkin in the mid-nineties, referring to all non-public and non-profit oriented activities (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005), while following the recent crisis, it has been supported by Stiglitz (2009). It constitutes an Anglo-American conception, which places emphasis on the voluntary and non-statutory sector and the role of individual volunteers (Bryant and Pozdeev 2014), thereby diverging from continental European and Latin American perspective which also include co-operative and mutual support organizations (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005: 2043; Ould Ahmed 2014:3). Recent works focus on the changing “austere relations” between the market, the state and the third sector, as the latter is called to fill in the gaps in welfare provision to cover citizen needs (Bennett et al 2015:100, Macmillan 2015). Supporters such as Giddens (2008) emphasize the important role of NGOs under neoliberalism, with more recent scholars point also to the impacts of austerity on the third sector (Milbourne 2013, Bennett et al 2015:100, Macmillan 2015, Clarke et al 2015).

According to Moulaert and Ailenei (2005: 2044-2046) **Social Economy** is a hybrid concept, yet, it could be defined as “the more restricted economy of co-operatives and *mutuelles*” illustrated by “firms with social objectives or socially inspired work organizations” where members are shareholders to whom profits are distributed. Scholars addressing these have also paid more attention to their relationship with national and EU agencies and policies aiming to assist these socio-economic entrepreneurs or Social Businesses, especially during hard economic times (Nassioulas 2012, Parente et al 2012, Chavez et al 2012, Sabatini et al 2014, Borzaga et al 2014, Poledrini 2015).

Culture shapes the economy argue Castells, Caraca and Cardoso (2012:11-12) and thus trust - build in networks by social support and personal contact - is vital for engaging in **alternative economy** practices (Conill, Castells, Cardenas and Servon 2012: 210, 222-229). Following the US and EU

crisis, these alternative economic cultures are born in social movements rising in hard economic times across the globe. They are based on different values concerning the meaning of everyday life and they are one of four different layers of the economy in the 21st century. According to Castells (2013) alternative economic activities in the recent hard economic times, as seen for example in Southern Europe, "...are economic practices but without the for-profit motive - such as barter networks; social currencies; co-operatives; self-management; agricultural networks; helping each other simply in terms of wanting to be together; networks of providing services for free to others in the expectation that someone will also provide to you. All this exists and it's expanding throughout the world."

During the past decade a **Social Innovation** approach developed, making a notable contribution to the literature on alternative economy studies, especially by Moulaert (e.g. Moulaert et al 2007, Moulaert et al 2010, Blanco, Cruz-Gallach, this issue). In a series of publications, they promote social innovation as the outcome of social and institutional mobilization covering social needs and empower social groups towards open governance systems (Moulaert et al 2013). "Social innovation occurs when the mobilisation of social and institutional forces succeeds in bringing about the satisfaction of previously alienated human needs, the relative empowerment of previously silent or excluded social groups through the creation of new 'capabilities' and ultimately, changes in the existing social –and power–relations towards a more inclusive and democratic governance system" (González et al, 2010: 54).

Vaillancourt (2009) adopts a similar approach, but more attentive to reflexive modernity issues and to the ways in which social economy can contribute to the democratization of the state and public policy through the processes of co-production and co-construction. Favouring a 'solidarity-based' model in the context of an open-governance state, he finds that in the case of housing policy in Canada

and Quebec, social economy initiatives produced social innovations that improved the related public policy.

Solidarity economy approaches highlight the plethora of bottom-up alternative initiatives and practices based on cooperation and reciprocity and stressing of *lien social* (Moulaert and Allenei 2005), not involving profits. For example, the importance of solidarity and people-centered cooperatives beyond the current structural dominance of capital is highlighted by Satgar (2007). The term *economie solidaire* is used by continental Europeans and Latin Americans to refer to a new generation of more recent, social economy practices. Yet, European and South American approaches are both distinct and complementary to each other (Ould Ahmed 2014:3-4). Those actions and initiatives which follow solidarity economy principles, are mainly devoted to covering urgent needs, as well as fostering self-determination and cooperation (Bauhardt 2014).

A most recent approach surfaced to cover an important but neglected dimension of alternative initiatives, i.e. the relationship of AFR to social movements. Forno and Graziano (2014) make a vital contribution towards this direction, starting with their work, that integrates political consumerism and social movement theory, to highlight the importance of **Sustainable Community Movement Organizations** (SCMOs). These involve collective initiatives which empower consumer and producer networks, on a smaller scale, to confront hard economic times. Related studies pay close attention to critical consumer practices and the links of SCMOs with the Global Justice movement (e.g. D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano 2015, Giudi and Andretta 2015, Bosi and Zamponi 2015, Andretta and Giudi, this issue, Papadaki and Kalogeraki, this issue).

Departing from the above approaches, “**Degrowth**/decroissance” has been mainly a 21st century initiative towards a more radical alternative economy pursued on a voluntarily basis, which confronts dominant economic paradigms with grassroots strategies centring on building autonomous collective

alternatives outside of mainstream economic institutions, especially at the level (Martinez Alier 2012, Demaria et al 2013). One such example is Italy's Reti de Economic Solidale (Solidarity Economy Networks) of more than twenty Solidarity Economy districts with hundreds of small enterprises focused on socio-ecological objectives (Demaria et al 2013). The Degrowth approach is also similar to the '**Post-growth**' prioritizing people and the planet over capitalism (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2014) advocated by Joan Martinez-Alier, Serge Latouche, the New Economic Forum and others. The focus here is on emerging forms of collective ownership by ecological and social entrepreneurs in Western Europe, (Kunze & Becker 2014). One such example is that of the cooperative Som Energia established recently by Girona University of Catalonia staff and students (Kunze & Becker 2014). This strand of approaches also includes the **Commons** approach, influenced by Ostrom (1990) and the global justice movement. According to De Angelis (2014, 2003:1), "Commons suggest alternative, noncommodified means to fulfill social needs... Commons are necessarily created and sustained by communities, i.e. by social networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human exchange that are not reduced to the market form." The approach is adopted in recent work on Southern Europe (D'Alisa et al 2015).

Finally, the most radical approach in the continuum, **Anarchism**, offers works in the past decade which offer an alternative participatory economy perspective, linking values of solidarity, diversity, equity, with self-management anarchist ideology (e.g. Albert, 2013). Alternative agro-food networks, are also inspired by critical, anarchist, and ecological thinking Corrado (2010). Anarchists are involved in popular social movements, neighborhood committees, or rank-and-file union organizing (Shantz, 2013). Green anarchists have largely supported the British LETS system for adopting an alternative economy lifestyle (North, 2007:92). Anarchist thought has also influenced the squatting phenomenon as a practice of alternative economic and socio-spatial relations (Cattaneo and Gavalda, 2010: 582). Finally, the tactic of collective expropriation as an action of resistance towards crisis' policies is an

anarchist expression with connotations of redistribution and state power derogation (Pautz and Kominou, 2013).

Conclusion: Towards a Political Approach to the study of AFR

This literature review aimed at drawing out the basic theoretical approaches on alternative forms of critical resilience in the public sphere by organized or community based groups as well as at pointing to the main issues they address in European/Northern regions. All of the approaches to the study of AFR face the challenge of a multi faceted and complex social phenomenon with cultural, economic, and political dimensions, which needs to be addressed more systematically, through a multi-methods approach as well as the examination of political features, especially its policy and social movement dimensions.

Following the foci of the first typology by Moulaert and Ailenei (2005), many of the works, remain focused on economic and social issues. During the past decade however an increasing number of studies is carried out in Southern Europe. In view of rising, unmet socio-economic needs, based on a turbulent period for many Southern Eurozone regions since the 2008 financial crisis, these studies offer new evidence and perspectives. Four of the eight proposed approaches are predominantly presented by South European scholars, i.e. Alternative Economy, Sustainable Community Movement Organizations, Degrowth/postgrowth/Commons and Anarchist, (e.g. Castells et al 2012, Forno and Graziano 2014, D'Alisa et al 2015, Martinez Alier 2012, De Angelis 2014, Pautz and Kominou, 2013).

Strengthening the Social Movement link: A South European contribution

During the past decade the literature on AFR has witnessed a shift towards political issues, brought into the field by the Social Innovation approach (Moulaert et al 2013, Blanco and Cruz, this issue) as well

as Alternative Economy, Sustainable Community Movement Organizations, Degrowth/postgrowth/Commons and Anarchist approaches (e.g. Castels et al 2012, Forno and Graziano 2014, D'Alisa et al 2015, D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2014, De Angelis 2014, Cattaneo and Gavalda, 2010, Andretta and Giudi this issue). While the former highlights issues of empowerment and governance, the later are especially attentive to the links with social movements and action strategies. Although these studies are limited, the political and economic context within which they rise and the issues they point to contribute to a new research agenda for students of the area. The contribution of the four recent Southern European approaches is especially important since very limited knowledge exists on the relationship between alternative socio-economic practices and social movement organizations, including their profile, frames and aims of the participants, their collaborations and links to informal networks, formal institutions and associations. The lack of such studies is especially prominent on AFR during the current crisis. Research in progress is aimed to offer systematic evidence across nine EU countries, including Greece, Italy and Spain, on solidarity oriented, both formal and informal organizations and groups covering the 2007-2015 period (LIVEWHAT, Work Package 6, 2015, Introduction this issue).

Researching systematically the social movements' dimension of AFR would allow bringing together different strands of literature as well as understanding the opportunities and threats related to the survival of formal organizations (e.g. cooperatives) as well as community-based groups. This can be done using social movement oriented theories and methods, such as political process theory and Alternative Action Organization analysis (LIVEWHAT Codebook 2015, see introduction in this issue). Political process theory (PPT), the dominant social movement paradigm, centers mostly on political opportunities (openness/closure of institutionalized political arena, elite alignment stability, elite allies, state's repression capacity), but also on mobilizing structures, framing processes (diagnostic, prognostic frames), protest cycles (of increasing contention), and contentious repertoires (Caren 2012).

PPT facilitates the study of how movements rise and fall, and the systematic features of mobilizing structures and frames.

Although economic factors had been a sustained issue for scholars of collective reactions by citizens in Latin America and India (Uba 2005, Almeida 2007, 2010), these factors had been neglected in the collective action literature of the North during the past two decades, and only recently returned in social movement discussions (Kousis and Tilly 2005, Goodwin and Hetland 2009, Kousis 2014, Kriesi 2014). Economic change and variation affect collective action. Including AFR in one or two ways, either by shaping responses to political threats and opportunities or by constituting themselves significant threats and opportunities (Kousis and Tilly 2005: 7).

Investigating the Policy dimension

AFR's relationship to state policies has been two-fold. On one hand, and more importantly, state policies have been a major determining factor influencing the creation of AFR, as major economic threats to populations (Almeida 2007). This is manifested either through the imposition of harsh austerity policies, or through the dismantling/withdrawal –gradual or sudden - of social policies supporting economic and social rights. AFR arise as citizen created initiatives to the mainstream capitalist economy, or during hard economic times marked by austerity policies, the weakening of social policies as well as the depletion of labor and social welfare rights.

On the other hand, and to a more limited extent, upon inception, or once they are established, AFR seek to, or have exerted an influence on state/supra-state policies. Such public policy objectives of alternative practices are becoming more visible. In Brazil, a National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy was established under the Ministry of Labor and Employment, inspired by the thousands of

“barter clubs” (clubes de trueque) that were created in Argentina as a strategy to cope with the crisis (Primavera 2010).

Recent calls by solidarity activists (Hart et al 2010:11) point to the need to strengthen alliances of grassroots groups, to harness not only voluntary reciprocity but public policy, while *Alliance 21* takes a more developmental path, stressing the need for measuring and assessing SSE activities, being politically recognized, establish an international lobby at UNDP, and pressuring national and international authorities such as UNO, WTO, towards policies of intervention that incorporate SSE as integral part of sustainable development (Fraisie et al in Ould Ahmed 2014:8). The relationship of SSE and EU policies has been of particular concern by a group of solidarity and social economy works (e.g. Defourny and Nyssens 2010, Alix 1993, Alix 2012, European Parliament 2011) given the 1990s’ EC acknowledgement of social economy as a sector and a specific form of governance based on cooperation as defined by a network of people (Alix 2013). Such initiatives have trickled down to the country level, as seen in the 2011 Spanish Law on Social Economy and EU’s Small Business Act (Julia and Chaves 2012) and the recent social economy initiatives in Greece (Nassioulas 2012). However, despite recent calls for the importance of SSE and a plural economic system since the 2008 economic crisis (Stiglitz 2009), it is argued that EU law approaches SSE and the third sector as market failures. There appear to be no specific EU legal frameworks for multi-stakeholder initiatives, for public or collective management and proprietorship, or for the hybridization of resources within the same organization (Alix 2012: 3). Scientific activists therefore propose a renewal of the solidarity and social economy perspective through a ‘Commons approach’ following Ostrom (2010) (Alix 2012). Based on the undertaken review, very limited knowledge exists from secondary and theoretical works on the political character of alternative socio-economic practices, including the profile, frames and aims of the participants and alternative organizational structures, the collaborations and links to informal networks, formal institutions and associations as well as to social movement organizations.

The lack of systematic cross-national research is especially visible when it comes to the study of the political dimensions of AFR, in terms of policies affecting them or policies which are influenced by them.

The above literature review nevertheless shows only a limited number of studies, at the local or national level, on the processes through which citizens have responded to counter the debilitating impacts of recent economic crisis with socio-economic justice oriented practices. Based on the path of South European studies on AFR as well as a partial convergence between alternative citizens reactions and citizens' collective resistance, the paper proposes the adoption of elements from social movement related theoretical and methodological approaches to study AFR, especially through the political process approach. This would enable future research to offer a systematic and comprehensive examination of the economic and political opportunities and threats, as well as frames, resources and organizational structures of AFR across different national settings. Under this perspective, the impacts of austerity policies on AFR, but also the ways in which AFR may influence policies will be studied systematically.

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