Cultivating Social Capital in Thessaloniki: Contesting neoliberal governance on Urban Agricultural Gardens

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Abstract: The economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent implementation of austerity policies in Greece has had profound negative socio-economic impacts on Greek citizens. One way people seek to improve their socio-economic conditions is through participation in community organisations that have been studied for their ability to provide access to resources and representation. Through the application of a conceptual framework that connects the concepts of Social Capital and empowerment, this thesis investigates in what ways participation in Urban Agricultural Gardens (UAGs) in Thessaloniki benefits citizens. Specifically, the research aims to identify in what ways the formation of social relationships on these organisations produces and distributes Social Capital and whether this has empowering effects on individuals. The research positions itself within an ongoing discussion in what is referred to as a ‘neoliberal transition’, where in the last two decades social movements have increasingly contested forms of neoliberal governance and sought alternative forms of social organisation. Using empirical data from two Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki, this thesis further investigates in what ways citizen empowerment may lead to contestations of neoliberal governance. While Social Capital was found to be generated at both organisations, there were differences in the ways it was produced and distributed. Stronger social ties were formed at PERKA due to an organisational structure that was conducive to social interaction. Similarly, narratives of contestation were found to be intensified by the physical and ideational practices at the organisation.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Urban Agricultural Gardens, Social Capital, Empowerment, Neoliberal Governance, Contestation.

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Summary: The economic crisis of 2008 in Greece led to a series of policies, known as austerity, which aimed to control Greece’s national debt. The reforms reduced public spending and increased privatisation, limiting the provision and access to resource that consequently made poorer people more vulnerable. This thesis studies the rise of organisations that are based around community participation and how they help these vulnerable people by increasing their access to resources and their representation in society. Urban Agricultural Gardens (UAGs) are an example of these community initiatives and facilitate social interaction around the cultivation of crops in the city. This study looks at two particular Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki to identify how participation improves the ability of individuals to access and benefit from different resources and whether this allows citizens to improve their socio-economic conditions and reduce their vulnerability. The research contributes to an ongoing discussion on the future of neoliberalism in urban areas by looking at the way that people oppose and dispute practices, logics and ideas surrounding neoliberalism. In this way, the research contributes to visions of alternative ways to organise society. The research found that social networks were formed through participation on both organisations and provided people with access to resources. There were differences in the way benefits of these social networks were distributed on the two organisations caused by the stronger ties between individuals at PERKA. Ideas and practices that differed to neoliberal ideas and practices were found to be more prevalent and intensified on PERKA, highlighting different levels of empowerment at the two organisations.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Urban Agricultural Gardens, Social Capital, Empowerment, Neoliberal Governance, Contestation.

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<td>Urban Agricultural Garden</td>
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<td>UCG</td>
<td>Urban Community Garden</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Community Supported Agriculture</td>
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<td>UA</td>
<td>Urban Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>ECB</td>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>SNA</td>
<td>Social Network Analysis</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Stakeholder Analysis</td>
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<td>AFN</td>
<td>Alternative Food Network</td>
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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the Greek financial crisis in 2008, many scholars have studied the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Greece (Peck 2012; Matsaganis and Leventi 2013). Although the effects of the economic crisis and subsequent recession are particularly striking, the resultant policies of austerity aimed at curtailing government spending and reducing public debt have been found to contribute to the worsening socio-economic conditions of Greek citizens (Arampatzi 2017a, 2017b; Rakopoulos 2014a, 2014b). Neoliberal policies centred on the promotion of the free market coupled with state retrenchments have created structural inequalities that are most pronounced in urban areas. These inequalities are only reconstituted through the organisation of society around the logics and values of neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck et al. 2013).

This thesis situates itself within the growing research around post-neoliberalism, where in the years post-crisis there has been a rise in the number of social movements that aim to counteract processes of neoliberalisation and reclaim ‘the right’ to the city (Lefebvre 1996). By engaging in activities that exist alongside or in opposition to the neoliberal economy social movements contest neoliberal governance. They aim to transform social relations by handing back freedom of choice to marginalised citizens, giving them agency outside of the neoliberal market to shape their own lives (Thornton 2017, p.970). In what this paper terms the ‘neoliberal transition’, it explores how Urban Agricultural Gardens form part of these wider social initiatives like the solidarity economy that aim to transform the exploitative nature of the neoliberal system through social processes (Rakopoulos 2014a, 2014b). Significantly, the importance of this research is to understand in what ways the organisation of people and economic practices around not-for-profit, democratic and cooperative social activities through solidarity economy initiatives may empower marginalised citizens by giving them agency and the ability to influence their socio-economic conditions (Tornaghi 2017; Strzelecka and Wicks 2015).

Focussing on Urban Agricultural Gardens (UAGs) in Thessaloniki, this thesis firstly explores the ways in which social capital is produced and distributed at two different organisations, Kipos' and PERKA. Social capital is the sum of both material and non-material resources that are accrued through the construction in of social networks and relationships (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and is an indicator of the strength of communities. Much like the literature surrounding Urban Community Gardens (UCGs), this research emphasises the importance of these urban spaces not because of their food-producing capabilities but because of the social processes taking place within them. However, social capital is not just readily available and its production and distribution is affected by the structure of the organisation that shapes social relations (Firth et al. 2011). The thesis operationalises social capital by combining it with elements of stakeholder analysis that take the strength of ties between individuals as contributing factors to the formation of social capital, thus making central the impact of organisational structure.

Through an analysis of the production and distribution of social capital, the research aims to investigate in what ways the benefits accrued from social relationships contribute to citizen empowerment. This paper then identifies ways in which empowerment leads to contestation of hegemonic neoliberal narratives of social organisation. It is argued that the organisation of social relations and resources within these gardens challenges the dominance of neoliberal governance through the socialisation of values and norms based on mutuality and cooperation (Eizenberg 2012). This research compares two different Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki, looking at reasons why people participate, the resources gained, and the different relationships that exist between members and the organisational structure. In doing so, this thesis goes beyond a simple analysis of social capital by connecting the experiences of socio-economic marginalisation with the social production of empowerment on UAGs. Similarly, UAGs have not been widely studied as part of the solidarity economy in Greece and therefore by identifying how neoliberal governance is contested at these organisations contributes to the academic field.

1.1. Problem Statement and Aim

This thesis looks at the way development of Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki have emerged as a part of a solidarity economy that contests the dominant narratives of neoliberal governance; and in what ways UAGs empower citizens by giving direct access to both material and non-material goods through the formation of social networks. Social capital is used as a means to
measure benefits accrued through social relationships, however, a number of variables can influence the way social capital is produced and distributed among social groups, which may influence its effects on different people. In order to assess the production and distribution of social capital on Urban Agricultural Gardens, this thesis will answer three research questions:

1. Why do people use Urban Agricultural Gardens?
2. What kinds of resources do people get from Urban Agricultural Gardens?
3. How are Urban Agricultural Gardens organised in Thessaloniki?

Exploration of the first question seeks to identify reasons why people participate in UAGs, particularly aiming to discern whether socio-economic factors are a significant motivational force. In doing this, it is possible to draw links between the negative externalities of neoliberal governance that necessitate the pursuit of social forms of capital. The second question will illustrate the types of benefits social capital produce and how these benefit members of each organisation. Finally, the third research question will specifically look at the effects of organisational structure on the way social capital is distributed among members, specifically using the strength of social ties as a way to understand relationships between individuals.

The results of the data is discussed around these three research questions allowing the analysis to focus on the extent to which the production and distribution of social capital contributes to citizen empowerment. Crucially, the research aims to establish in what ways empowerment through social organisations leads to contestations of dominant neoliberal governance structures. The discussion will discuss both physical practices of contestation as well as contestation through the socialisation of ideas and values that challenge the norms and logics of systemic neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002). The overarching research questions of the paper are thus:

- To what extent do Urban Agricultural Gardens contribute to citizen empowerment?
- Does citizen empowerment lead to contestations of neoliberal governance?
2. Literature Review

Through a literature review of relevant academic studies, this section will navigate some conceptual difficulties in order to define what an Urban Agricultural Garden is and evaluate how they have been studied thus far in the academic field. Then, focusing on relevant research centred on social aspects of urban gardening, this section will position how this research fits into the wider debate on urban agriculture, emphasising contributions to existing studies.

2.1. Defining Urban Agricultural Gardens (UAG) – Conceptual difficulties

The study of community gardens is experiencing an upsurge in social science literature that exemplifies the reconnection of cities with nature, food and community. Moreover, the emergence of community gardens have been widely studied as mechanisms to counter the intrusion of the market in public spaces, adhering to Lefebvre’s (1996) idea of the ‘right to the city’. Here, a variety of research exists about how community gardens contribute to the re-ruralisation, re-localisation and reclamation of food sovereignty, which has myriad effects on capacity building in communities and citizen empowerment (Athanassiou 2017; Firth et al. 2011; Glover 2004; Tornaghi 2017). However, the term Urban Community Garden (UCG) is widely used within the literature, yet relates to a diversity of different garden typologies from parks, allotments, municipality green spaces to organisation initiatives that vastly differ in their scope and operations (Pudup 2008).

The vagueness in definition poses conceptual and methodological issues for the study of UCGs, as the functioning of individual gardens may differ completely, and thus so too do their socio-economic effects. Specifically, the concept of ‘community’ is problematized within the literature for its oversimplification and vagueness that poses real challenges for the definition of Urban Community Gardens. For example, Ghose and Pettygrove (2014a) take a vague conceptual definition of community gardens in Milwaukee, using recreational parks as a tool for exploring practices of citizenship and democracy. In contrast, Partalidou and Anthopoulou (2017) approach the concept of community-building and participation through the lens of agricultural production in urban gardens. McGlone et al. (1999) even suggests that not all studies of community gardens involve communities and therefore have little value academically or practically. This is because the conceptual generalisation of community trivialises the importance of social relations “on the basis that it is not always clear whether community gardens are run for the community, by the community, or that they just happen to be located in certain communities” (Firth et al. 2011, p.557).

It is no less of an issue for this study that focuses more specifically on Urban Agriculture (UA), which is why I use the term Urban Agricultural Garden (UAG). The core characteristics of UAGs organise around the cultivation of crops within urban and peri-urban areas. Here, the characterisation of Urban Agricultural Gardens follows elements of the definition set out by DeLind (2002, p.194) in her work on ‘Community Supported Agriculture’. She argues that “In CSA, small, diversified farmers are central, visible, and accountable. They raise food, not commodities. They feed people-people they know-not distant markets”. The primary objective of UAGs may not be to produce food solely for the subsistence of urban communities but is rather about collective efforts that re-establish livelihoods and community ties absent from market-based commodity production (DeLind 2002; McFadden 1999). Furthermore, utilising Lefebvre’s (1991) idea of material space, UAGs refers to actual fixed space encompassing human and non-human elements (plants, nature and people). Unlike Community Supported Agriculture there is no divide between grower and buyer in UAGs, as these organisations are not based on marketization of produce.

Urban Agriculture (UA) is not a new phenomenon and its modern history can be traced back for centuries. The emergence of agricultural production in cities can be linked with incidences of crisis, and thus the nature of the crisis defines the organisational structure and discursive goals of urban agricultural gardens to some extent (Pudup 2008). In 19th century England, as industrialisation took over cities, privately-owned allotment plots allowed the urban poor to produce their own food as they became marginalised from the industrial economy (Irvine et al. 1999, p.36). Then, during the Second World War and its aftermath, through city authorities the state utilised allotments as a way to facilitate the subsistence of
urban communities because of the disruption and destruction of food supply networks. The resurgence of communal gardens during repeated economic and financial crisis in the twenty first century has predominantly been down to the use of urban agriculture as a livelihood strategy for the unemployed and economically marginalised (ibid). Hence, depending on the nature of crisis, the purpose and character of food production in Urban Agricultural Gardens may change, emphasising how they are spatially and temporally dynamic.

Similarly, the changing landscape of urban areas has significantly impacted the nature of Urban Agricultural Gardens, which is reflected in much of the academic literature. Rapid urbanisation in the last fifty years has markedly reduced the amount of available cultivatable land in and around cities (Barthel et al. 2013). Irvine et al. (1999, p.6) link the process of economic development in cities with the increasing marginalisation of green space, as well as the environmental and social degradation of existing spaces. The privatisation of publically owned land has contributed to the disappearance of nature from cities and has made it ever more difficult for community-based initiatives to acquire land for the purposes of agriculture (Eizenberg 2012). Likewise, after the financial crisis of 2008, the formation of UAGs comes less from state-driven endeavours because of low public spending, towards an amalgamation of private-public initiatives. Grassroots movements have become a prominent advocate and user of UA as a means to challenge the privatisation of public space and reclaim citizen’s rights to the city (Lefebvre 1996).

Consequently, much of the recent literature studies Urban Agricultural Gardens as bottom-up initiatives, looking at the myriad ways in which they help marginalised urban dwellers (Pudup 2008; Kingsley and Townsend 2006; Chitov 2006).

Since the definition of Urban Agricultural Gardens is spatially and temporally constituted, the categorisation of Urban Agricultural Gardens in the academic field becomes partly differentiated based on their social outcomes. In turn these are guided by the governance structures of different organisations. In their study of community gardens with an agricultural focus in the UK, Firth et al. (2011) separate community gardens into ‘place-based’ organisations and ‘interest-based’ organisations. Place-based community gardens are territorially constructed places where people have a connection to physical spaces, whereas interest-based gardens are formed by people with a common connection, meaning that there is no requirement for physical proximity (Firth et al. 2011, p.557). Although noting the differences in the physical expressions of space within these two entities, the distinction most notably lies in their organisational structure, which leads to variations in the way social benefits are distributed among community members. Thornton (2017) found that city-community partnerships for urban gardens in Canberra and Sydney amalgamated the characteristics of interest-based and place-based organisations. It was evidenced that the involvement of city authorities significantly shifted the balance of power within the organisations that led to them becoming dominated by market-based narratives (ibid). Thus, the interests of citizens (such as in local food production and connections with alternative food networks) are often subverted, which severely changes the purpose and characteristics of UAGs.

2.2. Urban Agricultural Gardens and the Social Turn

As has been illustrated by defining UAGs, it becomes evident that the character of these organisations is determined by the participants themselves and the social practices that take place within these spaces. Urban Agricultural Gardens are physical entities yet they are socially constructed through place-based social interaction among a wide variety of stakeholders, making their definition contextually dependent. Recent literature concerning urban agriculture has therefore taken a ‘social turn’ becoming avowedly human centred, notably focussing on diffuse elements of community (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014a; 2014b; Pudup 2008). A reason for this turn in the literature is due to the increasing evidence that the neoliberal governance of space within urban areas has negative socio-economic effects on citizens (Eizenberg 2011; Pudup 2008).

One strand of research within this context concerns the Lefebvrian (1996) production of space that facilitates social integration and cohesion. Following Lefebvre’s (1996) work on the ‘right to the city’, numerous studies have evaluated how urban gardens establish values based on cooperation and community that empower citizens who are socially marginalised, thus giving them agency within the city through the common ownership of land (Eizenberg 2012; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014b). It follows research that points to the way meaningful participation in communities may be empowering due to ways
in which it increases people’s abilities to shape their immediate socio-economic conditions, as social networks are argued to give individuals agency through access to material resources (Tornaghi 2017; Strzelecka and Wicks 2015). Eizenberg (2012) posits that UAGs counteract the erosive forces of the market that dispossess residents of common resources to claim private property rights. Common ownership between citizens allows complex forms of social relationships and interactions to develop where people collectively manage and sustain such commons (ibid). These relationships are said to equitably empower citizens in contrast to state and private ownership of land where interests and resources are unequally distributed between the elite and capital wealthy (Pudup 2008; Quastel 2009).

Here, space goes beyond the material dimension and becomes intertwined with the social production and distribution of resources (Eizenberg 2012).

Boyes-Watson (2005) goes further to suggest that social networks have gained such credence as to replace the state and private enterprise in an array of services, for example child care. She argues that poorer families are more vulnerable in times of economic crisis because they rely upon services to survive. Thus if the state does not provide these services for free, these very families become even poorer financially. Similarly, carrying out all family responsibilities produces a deficit in time, which further reduces the possibility to engage in other livelihood strategies (ibid). Although these studies theoretically go further than this research, literature surrounding the importance of social networks to livelihood strategies in times of crises is of relevance. Calvet et al. (2015) emphasise that the formation of community bonds through participation in Urban Agricultural Gardens may therefore help in coping with uncertainty.

The social production of space and the realisation of social ills are argued to lead to the contestation of socially unjust urban development (Glover 2003; Pudup 2008). Therefore the relationship between the formation of social networks and incidence of crisis is of use to the context of this study that aims to look at contestations of neoliberal governance in Greece. Through what Lefebvre (1991) terms representations of space, the sharing of individual experiences of urban life lead to the formation of collective experiences, allowing a critical examination of urban life through interaction with other community members. Consequently, “the space of the commons allows for an alternative experience of the everyday life which clashes with the dominant experience” (Eizenberg 2012, p.775). As knowledge is pooled and communicated, it is translated into power and therefore becomes a usable, non-material resource for communities (ibid). The literature discusses how power translates into political power, which is seen through the merging of Urban Agricultural Gardens with social movements (Partalidou and Anthopoulou 2017; Calvet et al. 2015). Chitov (2006) discusses the emergence of grassroots movements in New York that use urban agriculture as a mechanism for environmental action and social justice. He emphasises that communities gain social control through collective efforts present in community activities. The accumulation of social capital through access to knowledge, information and resources contributes to the transformation of once crime-ridden communities into functioning and vibrant communities (Chitov 2006, p. 442). The take-over of urban land by community organisations thus represents contestations and resistance to both institutional and economic policies; motivating social cooperation that helps people in times of need (Calvet et al. 2015). UAGs therefore act as spaces of autonomy, in the sense that they are self-organised; and contribute to contesting prevailing social organisation by dominant systems of governance in cities (Calvet et al. 2015).
3. Neoliberal Governance and its Discontents: Towards post-neoliberal thought

Neoliberal governance has played a crucial role in the emergence and study of Urban Agricultural Gardens; it is therefore necessary to understand how it is manifested in cities and the social effects of these manifestations. The concept of governance refers to the organisation of social, economic and political systems by policies guided by certain norms and power relationships (Peck et al. 2010) (see Table 1). Thus neoliberal governance is a form of organisation around principles and logics of neoliberalism (Hilgers 2011) (see Table 1). This section looks at the ways in which neoliberal governance has structured society and the resultant effects of this on citizen engagement and empowerment, detailing a process of change in urban development through the lens of neoliberal governance. It starts by problematizing the concept of ‘neoliberalism as system’, which refers to neoliberalism as a structure of relationships between different agents within social space (Hilgers 2011). Then through the exploration of the negative social externalities of these relationships, this section then traces the emergence of alternative narratives of urban governance, with specific focus on the ‘solidarity economy’ in Greece. In what is termed a ‘neoliberal transition’, the paper will explore the shift towards citizen-led governance that can be understood as a response to the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in Greece and the marginalising effect of neoliberal governance. In particular it will look at how the emergence of alternative forms of social organisation includes a wider conceptualisation of human needs and values that contributes to citizen empowerment.

3.1. Neoliberalism in the urban context: Between practice and theory

Neoliberalism is a theory of political economy that promotes the economic and social restructuring of society through a process of privatisation and deregulation (Morales et al. 2014, p.425). It is often characterised by the promotion of free markets that are unhindered by state regulation (Jessop 2000). However, neoliberalism is a broad concept with a wide range of political, economic and social dimensions. There are subsequently many different definitions and subcategories of neoliberalism as an ideology, theoretical approach and as a form of governance. The overlapping definitional elements result in the obscurity between neoliberalism as theory and neoliberalism in its practical application (Hilgers 2011, p.352). The latter is more nuanced because it is embedded within the discourses and practices of social agents (ibid) and study of neoliberalism in this way refers to the “expanding development of certain logics, practices and techniques” of governance (Morales et al. 2014, p.424), which is highly relevant to this paper. Neoliberalism in its practical application is thus often culturally and geographically defined, as well as perceived and implemented, which means that any approach to understanding its societal impacts must also be defined in this way (Jessop 2000). Hilgers (2011) emphasises that structural relationships and networks within the social space of cities constitutes this practical application of neoliberalism, which is termed ‘neoliberalism as system’. The unique relationships between different agents in specific contexts results in the formation of certain rules and practices that determine pathways for urban development.

Taking this definition of neoliberalism into account, urban development can be understood as the product of interaction between different social agents and institutions that negotiate their different practical application of neoliberal thought (Peck et al. 2010). These thought processes lead to the formation of values and beliefs about how cities should function with and between citizens. The cultural and historically defined relationships within the social space of the city therefore have similarly defined organisational structures that articulate development pathways. It is therefore necessary to analyse the relationship between the two concepts of ‘neoliberalism’ and ‘urban development’ in order to understand system continuity and change.

Practice and theory are inherently connected and inform each other (Marcuse 2009). Despite focussing on the operationalisation of neoliberalism as practice, it does not mean that it is theoretically absent. Rather, ideology and theory are masked behind the normativity of certain logics and values of everyday life within the context of urban areas. The interaction of multi-scalar and multi-dimensional “power relations and regulatory ideologies, practices and institutions condition the evolution of urban regions” (Peck et al. 2010
p.1096). Resultantly, neoliberalism in the urban context (or any context for that matter) is not static, neither temporally or spatially. Hence, any overarching theoretical perspective can never grasp the complexity and dynamics of such systems. Especially in the context of economic and post-economic crises neoliberal policies are used as a response to deteriorating socio-economic conditions through the interaction of macro and local policy-making. Even neoliberal contestation operates within the confines of wider systemic spaces of neoliberal thought; therefore it is essential that critical urban research map the construction and reconstruction of neoliberalisation in order to understand processes of change (Harvey 2005, p.88).

3.2. Characteristics of neoliberalism as system
The hegemony of neoliberalism is debated within the literature (Hall 2011; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck et al. 2010) due to afore mentioned dynamics and contextualisation of neoliberalism in practice. However, generally speaking there are guiding principles of neoliberal thought, whether preconceived or not. Peck et al. (2010) emphasise that systemic neoliberalism is continually constituted, especially in cities, due to the interaction of macro-economic and political forces. Such forces prioritise the freedom of the market in order to create economic growth, which is significantly emphasised within cities, as they are considered the engines of economic growth in the modern state (Jessop 2000). In what Morales et al. (2014) deem ‘first wave’ neoliberalism, are policies that roll-back the state to make way for profit-seeking strategies, which are considered more efficient and innovative. These processes result in the selling-off of public and social services to private business. Simply put, the creation of private enterprise in cities gives life to the market and thus stimulates sought after economic growth. At the same time, the state can balance its budgets through the income received from public service sales (ibid).

Despite neoliberal governance prioritising the free market, a number of authors argue that the quest for the free-market state has actually led to increased regulation and the conscious development of the state through intervention (Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). Part of this paradoxical shift towards interventionism is due to the unintended consequences of the neoliberal project, where the original aims for economic expansion and subsequent poverty reduction through “trickle down” seemed to dissipate from reality and was replaced by the entrenchment of a class system ruled by an increasingly powerful elite (Morales et al. 2014). However, by attracting business and selling off state services to the private sector, opportunity for change is minimised as these social actors come to exercise a considerable influence over the structure and organisation of urban development (Peck and Tickell 2002, p.395).

Building on the idea that neoliberalism is the systematisation of certain logics and practices, Morales et al. (2014) go even further to suggest that a “third wave” of neoliberalism can occur whereby public servants take on the mind sets and practices of business entrepreneurs. Social practices and values based on individualism lead to the embodiment of an entrepreneurial ethos that naturalises processes of neoliberalisation (Morales et al. 2014, p.424). Unlike Foucault (2004) who considers neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, systemic neoliberalism considers the way in which neoliberal values affect the individual and thus “Neoliberalism is apparently not only ‘out there,’ but practically everywhere, seeping into every pore of urban political life” (Theodore and Peck 2012, p.20). Consequently, processes of neoliberalism become naturalised to the extent that systemic neoliberalism becomes the status quo or equilibrium state. The normalisation of these values make neoliberalism remarkably resilient, whereby under crisis further neoliberal reforms are justified as a means to solve the crisis, leading to the continual reproduction of the neoliberal system (Giannakis and Bruggeman 2015; Peck 2012; Morales et al. 2014). For example, Doran and Fingleton (2014) found that recessionary shocks in Europe have had lasting socio-economic effects and that economies did not strive to return to pre-recessionary levels but rather adjusted to new recessionary levels. Crisis (financial or otherwise) has therefore become legitimised as a norm of the self-correcting neoliberal system, meaning that societies simply adjust and accept new socio-economic realities, which makes alternative systems increasingly hard to envision (Tierney 2015; Reid 2013).

One such form of neoliberal governance that naturalises harsh socio-economic measures as a response to crises is austerity. Austerity can be seen as a plethora of policy measures aimed at correcting the economic crisis of 2008 in much of Southern Europe, but especially in Greece. Austerity represents a more stringent form of neoliberalism that is centred on further fiscal retrenchment of the state and minimalism in terms of
government spending (Peck 2012). Rather than questioning the prevailing systemic structure, the crisis was framed as a misdirection of policy and state intervention (Morales et al. 2014). Hence, austerity is justified as a response to market conditions and so systemic neoliberalism continues. Cities have little freedom to set their own policies and austerity has largely been implemented as a top-down process through the ‘troika’, the ECB (European Central Bank), EC (European Commission) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to reduce Greece’s rampant public debt (Peck and Tickell 2002). Stiglitz (2008, pp.1-2) said that “Neoliberalism market fundamentalism was always a political doctrine serving certain interests”. Austerity, then, can be seen as a political doctrine intensifying systemic neoliberalism through intensive structural adjustment. As a political manifestation, the politicisation of austerity as a form of social rule is bound to mobilise social discontent because of its negative socio-economic effects (Peck et al. 2009). These, in turn, contribute to contestations of neoliberal governance.

3.3. The ‘neoliberal transition’

The neoliberal project is experiencing a protracted crisis, which some have argued reflects its inevitable downfall in its current form (Peck et al. 2010). However, neoliberalism is a continuous process, with no definitive end state, which is multifaceted and multi-scalar across contextually specific spaces.

“Consequently, “the project” of neoliberalization can only be understood as a politically (re)constructed, nonlinear, and indeed mongrel phenomenon. There is no crisp and clean divide between its “inside” and its “outside”; there is no iron curtain between neoliberalism and its others” (Peck et al. 2010, p.105).

The concept of ‘Post-neoliberalism’ suggests that there exists a defined alternative form of governance and social order that is able to be readily supplanted politically and socially. It further emphasises that alternatives may be dynamic and differentiated within and between geographies and cultures both spatially and temporally. Neoliberalism is not just destined to disappear because elements of neoliberal governance continue to exist on a macro scale in economic ministries and international financial institutions (Peck et al. 2010, p.112). Alternative narratives may even utilise neoliberal principles because recurring features and characteristics will reveal themselves due to the structural embeddedness of existing neoliberal narratives (Peck et al. 2010). Since some citizens accept the dominance of neoliberalism, interaction with neoliberal values and characteristics is still necessitated on a day-to-day basis. Any alternatives present are therefore inherently ‘Greek’, ‘Thessalonikan’, and even more precisely refined, and multiple alternatives will inevitably exist in parallel. Although alternative economic and governance narratives may strive for separation from systemic neoliberalism, they always emerge from neoliberal time and space, which is why the term ‘neoliberal transition’ is used.

3.3.1. Marginalisation, social discontent and the rise of the ‘Solidarity Economy’

Neoliberalism in its extreme manifestation of austerity has had dire socio-economic consequences for the people of Greece (Rakopoulos 2014b). Since 2010, Greece’s GDP has shrunk by 25% and wages have decreased whilst the prices of goods and services have remained the same (Rakopoulos 2014b, p.192). Consequently, Greek household expenditure has reduced by an average of 32% and consumption poverty has risen to 2008 levels of 45% (Kaplanoglou and Rapanos 2018, pp.105-106). The rampant increase in poverty demonstratesthat current economic and social structures do not meet the needs of the Greek population. Ferreira (2008) suggests that persistent poverty in Greece is a direct result of changes to government expenditure on social welfare, which disproportionately affect the working and middle classes, as well as putting families and children more at risk.

Instances of resource poverty combined with unemployment mean that people lack the capacity to influence both short-term and long-term decision-making because of poor access to resources, leading to the marginalisation of the urban poor (ibid). Marginalisation is the inability of individuals to access and utilise resources. Consequently, socio-economically disadvantaged people lack power and agency that enables them to fully participate in the socio-economic and socio-political system (Narayan 2005). The retreat of the state through welfare cuts only compounds the inability of citizens to meet their basic needs as the market remains the only available source of goods and services. Marginalised people have little access to capital and therefore an inability to utilise market goods and services; and thus the resource and
representative deprivation has necessitated people look for alternative means to survive, which circumnavigate existing neoliberal structures of economic organisation in urban areas (Giannakis and Bruggeman 2015).

The rise of a ‘solidarity economy’ as an alternative form of social organisation aims to tackle marginalisation and exclusion by contesting the prevailing structure of neoliberal governance and its negative externalities (Rakopoulos 2014a; 2014b; Arampatzi 2017a; Papataxiarchis 2016). What is being witnessed is change emanating bottom-up through grassroots movements that encourages different social and economic behaviour. In this sense, solidarity initiatives can be understood as a reaction to hardship, as resource marginalisation is alleviated through their provision of cheap goods that are produced and distributed externally to the prevailing market system. Alexandrakis (2013, pp.80-81) emphasises that the sudden increased cost of social services has meant that people must “seek new economic activities and to stabilise their social networks” (Alexandrakis 2013, pp.80-81) that allow them to find and finance alternative livelihood strategies. Initiatives such as time banks, soup kitchens and voluntary organisations have gained prominence as alternative social welfare providers. They prioritise social needs over profit-making, focussing on the distribution of resources rather than the production of commodities (Rakopoulos 2014a, Arampatzi 2017a). The direct production and distribution of goods and services is part of an anti-middleman movement that seeks to cut out the profit-making enterprises that take money from the pocket of the consumer (Rakopoulos 2014a). The solidarity economy is, however, different to the informal economy because it exists outside of the prevailing economic and social order, not as an appendage in the form of an illegal black market or sub-market.

Much like the anti-middleman movement, solidarity initiatives like Urban Community Gardens challenge the structural relationships between private economic actors and urban areas by physically preventing the acquisition of land by investors (Eizenberg 2012). Eizenberg (2012, p.764) emphasises that the neoliberalisation of space through property ownership dispossesses citizens of common resources and dissolves the social and cultural identities of neighbourhoods that may form part of people’s livelihood strategies. Instead of land being sold to the capital-rich, the ownership of land by citizens through “the commons” restructures urban development around social practices of sharing, which gives agency back to citizens on equal terms (ibid: Pudup 2008).

The solidarity economy is engendered by principles of self-organisation that enables equal access to goods and services, in direct opposition to market economies where profit-seeking strategies make access capital-dependent. Direct engagement in the production and distribution of goods and services allows people to regain control over their short-term situation, and through membership of community organisations gives citizens a voice in urban development. Likewise cooperation with like-minded individuals fosters ties of kindship and friendship, where values centred on cooperation come to replace those of individualism and competition; and the formation of trusted community networks may even act as substitutes for services such as childcare (Boyes-Watson 2005). Connotations can be drawn with social capital, where benefits of participation in social organisations are not limited to the provision of physical resources but are also embodied in social relationships. The reconstitution of material and social relations through mutuality therefore promotes an alternative ‘human economy’ that diverges from the neoliberal system in organisational structure and the values it governs by (Graeber 2012).

Alexandrakis (2013) argues that this response to the privatisation and commodification under neoliberalism is largely unplanned and un governable, meaning that an alternative economic network exists in parallel to the hegemonic system, whereby the state loses control over social organisation. In Athens alone, 300 solidarity economy groups have been established, demonstrating the extent to which the solidarity economy is contesting the social order of neoliberal governance (Arampatzi 2017a). Solidarity initiatives therefore take on an inherently political dimension and specifically in times of crisis, solidarity economies arise as an opposing force to hegemonic governing forces (Rakopoulos 2014b). The mobilisation of people through shared values and shared hardship fosters a political consciousness both directly and indirectly (Rakopoulos 2014a). Even if people aren’t politically motivated, a form of political education through social interaction allows for people to learn of new social ideals and strive towards them through every day practice and participation in organisations (ibid). The act of participation legitimises alternative forms of governance that contest the prevailing political-economic order, whilst some organisations actively politicise their actions against the backdrop of austerity. If austerity is
understood like Krugman (2012), who argues that it has never been about economic recovery but about using the crisis to further dismantle social programmes, it is inevitable that within the exploitative nature of the neoliberal system, social protest will take on an anti-systemic narrative. This is evidenced by the fact that where the impacts of austerity have hit hardest, social movements have been most prevalent (Porta 2016).

Urban Agricultural Gardens have not been studied as part of the solidarity economy because they do not contribute to alternative economic activity through the exchange of goods and services. Similarly, their membership is contingent on crop cultivation, which may be exclusionary to those who do not know how to cultivate. However, this thesis argues that UAGs are a solidarity initiative and therefore do contribute to a neoliberal transition and contestation. Firstly, UAGs segregate themselves from the market through the cultivation of produce that is anti-middleman by nature. The direct interaction of citizens with their produce means that people do not have to look to the market for certain food items. Secondly, the non-hierarchical and cooperative nature of UAGs has been widely studied for their positive social effects (Calvet et al. 2015; Chitov 2006; Kingsley and Townsend 2006). The creation of social capital and focus on social relationships contributes to the formation of a collective identity and consciousness, whether political or not. Therefore, this paper seeks to understand how and why people use UAGs and whether participation in these organisations generates social capital that is empowering to citizens. In this vein, the level of citizen empowerment can be used to understand the level of contestation with dominant social and economic narratives.

Table 1: Definitions of concepts used in chapter 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>The organisation of social, economic and political systems by policies guided by certain norms and power relationships (Peck et al. 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoliberal Governance</td>
<td>A form of social, economic and political organisation around principles and logics of neoliberalism (Hilgers 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalisation</td>
<td>A lack of capacity to influence both short-term and long-term decision-making. Refers to the absence of agency as a result of poor access to resources, meaning that individuals are unable to participate fully in the socio-economic and socio-political system (Narayan 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity Economy</td>
<td>A socio-economic system that is based on the organisation of society around cooperation and sharing. It refers to a social economy that reshapes the production and consumption of goods and services by cutting out the middle-man and the market (Rakopoulos 2014a, 2014b).</td>
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4. Conceptual Framework

4.1. Empowerment

Empowerment is a broad concept that connects individual well-being with wider socio-economic conditions and political processes (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995). It relates to capacity building that increases the agency of individuals within society vis-à-vis other actors, allowing participation within communities (ibid). Empowerment is influenced by contextual factors that determine the capacities needed for meaningful participation and engagement in decision-making processes. With specific reference to Urban Agricultural Gardens, the provision of material resources through the cultivation of crops may be enough to increase the capacity of individuals who are poorer, allowing them to divert financial resources away from food to other livelihood necessities. Skills and knowledge gained through social learning may further improve the ability of individuals to participate in communities (Tornaghi 2017). Tornaghi (2017, p.794) underlines the importance of knowledge that is central to the capacity of communities to critically analyse structural injustices of political and socio-economic conditions, as well as a self-reflexivity that motivates change. Access to resources and the expansion of abilities hands agency to individuals, giving them freedom of choice and control over decision-making within specific contexts (Narayan 2005).

Empowerment thus emerges through an individual’s interaction with their environment that enables them to influence conditions that matter to them (Strzelecka and Wicks 2015). Individual empowerment occurs between individuals and communities and Strzelecka and Wicks (2015) argue that the empowerment of whole communities can come to challenge and influence the entire socio-political context. Community empowerment is the interaction of individuals within a social group with decided outcomes (Bowen 2005). Through interaction people come to realise their common interests and develop necessary social relations to achieve these. Collective identity thus establishes a form of representation within the wider social and political system that provides communities with power to shape conditions and advance their visions of social organisation (Narayan 2005). Social capital as discussed in the next section distinguishes ways in which social relationships facilitate capacity building that allows individuals and communities to acquire agency to influence socio-economic conditions.

4.2. Social Capital

The concept of Social Capital has wide-scale application within the field of social sciences, yet its core idea remains fairly stable across different studies; that individual participation within social groups has positive effects on both the individual and the community as a whole (Portes 1998). The concept used in this thesis builds upon the work of Robert Putnam (1995; 2000), which emphasises how non-material resources contribute to strengthening community through the establishment of social networks. Trust formation is a key feature in building strong communities and social cohesion, where reciprocity between individuals results in the exchange of material and social benefits contributing to specific forms of social and economic organisation (Kinglsey and Townsend 2006). It is particularly relevant to this study that looks at how participation in Urban Agricultural Gardens contributes to citizen empowerment through the provision of different resources.

The theoretical underpinnings of Social Capital in its current application originate from the work of Coleman (1990) and Bourdieu (1986). Although they have some diverging ideas, the central conceptualisation is fairly concrete:

“Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 p.119)

Social capital is therefore intangible, engendered in social relationships, as opposed to the somewhat concrete nature of economic capital in the form of money, or human capital in the form of knowledge (Portes 1998, p.7). As Braudel (1985, p.227) puts it, “it is too easy to call one form of exchange economic and another social. In real life, all types are both economic and social”. It therefore poses methodological issues for measuring social capital and operationalising it as a form of analysis. The embeddedness of a number of factors such as social ties, cultural practices and political contexts within economic and social
Refers to participants within the garden organisation. Furthermore, the resources involved are multiple and more democratic and non-managed by a range of stakeholders, however, as a collective community end (Prell et al. 2009, p.502). Urban Agricultural Gardens can be considered a natural resource that are collectively under study and the stakeholders relevant to the issue, which often focusses on more powerful actors and the mobilisation of people behind certain ideas and goals (even if people do not have a close relationship) (Kingsley and Townsend 2006), which is particularly relevant for this study that looks at contestations of existing governance narratives. Only through mobilisation can alternative narratives be operationalised against existing governance structures.

The extent to which these forms of social capital are prevalent within communities correlates to the quality of life of citizens and the community as a whole. It hypothesises that strong community networks have high levels of all forms of social capital that results in benefits for community members (Putnam 2000). In contrast, low levels of social capital results in impoverished communities. These assumptions demonstrate that there exists a plurality of sources of social capital and therefore in the same vein, the consequences of social capital are also highly plural (Portes 1998, pp.9-21).

Social capital as described here cannot be used as sole conceptual model because it reduces complex societal inter-relationships to simple cause and effect connections (Portes 1998). Durlauf (1999) has further problematized social capital as a theory due to the confuse understanding of the direction of cause and effect. For example, does trust create cohesive communities or vice versa? The presence of social relationships does not automatically indicate that social capital is produced and this assumption significantly overstates their importance when studied without reference to context or a societal issue. Therefore, social capital does not manifest itself independently and exogenously but rather other preconditions and factors contribute to its rise, such as organisational structure (Chitov 2006, p.446). These limitations necessitate that the conceptual underpinnings of social capital be merged with a framework that operationalises and contextualises social relationships in relation to empowerment. Specifically, to be able to test the hypothesis that Urban Agricultural Gardens foster alternative governance narratives, it is imperative to understand how social capital is mobilised within these organisations through stakeholder interaction.

4.2.1. Connecting Social Capital and Empowerment through Social Network Analysis (SNA)

Bridging and bonding social capital have been linked with their ability to foster empowerment (Narayan 2005; Pudup 2008) and this will be studied in relation to two UAGs in Thessaloniki. Moreover, since social capital is not manifested exogenously, the concepts are placed in a framework that is structured around Social Network Analysis (SNA), looking at the significance of relationships between social agents to understand how they affect the production and distribution of social capital.

Social Network Analysis follows from the model of Stakeholder Analysis (SA) and is widely used to look at the characteristics of social networks and relationships to successfully manage natural resources (Schneider et al. 2003). Stakeholder Analysis (SA) is criticised for its hierarchical approach to the evaluation of social groups (Prell et al. 2009). When approaching SA, one must first identify the issue under study and the stakeholders relevant to the issue, which often focusses on more powerful actors through a top-down approach “that reflect their [the research team’s] interests and biases” (Prell et al. 2009, p.502). Urban Agricultural Gardens can be considered a natural resource that are collectively managed by a range of stakeholders, however, as a collective community endeavour are governed in a more democratic and non-hierarchical manner. The concept of a stakeholder in the context of UAG thus refers to participants within the garden organisation. Furthermore the resources involved are multiple and
complex, and may hold different values to different participants. Therefore, the rigidity of Stakeholder Analysis does not capture the complexity and plurality of social relationships within these social groups. SNA complements the concept of social capital in a multitude of ways, most notably by looking at the ways in which the strength of ties between individuals affects the functioning of the group and how resources are shared among participants (Coleman 1990; Cross and Parker 2004). This conceptual addition allows the thesis to address its three research questions:

- Why do people use Urban Agricultural Gardens?
- What kinds of resources do people get from Urban Agricultural Gardens?
- How are Urban Agricultural Gardens organised in Thessaloniki?

Social capital is a concept, which poses difficulties in operationalising it as a form of analysis. However, by combining social capital with the concept of empowerment this research has identified three variables that affect the presence, production and distribution of social capital within social networks on UAGs. These will be used to guide the interpretation and analysis of the empirical data:

1) **Reasons for participation**
Identifying the reasons for participation of different individuals contextualises the need for social capital and empowerment. This variable will establish levels of marginalisation of individuals at the two different organisations, assessing dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions. People from poorer socio-economic backgrounds may be significantly more marginalised and therefore may use social networks in different ways in order to acquire access to, and the abilities necessary to utilise, resources as a means of increasing their capacity. Additionally, they may put more effort into forming social ties that makes the production of social capital more prevalent and community bonds stronger (Bowles and Gintis 2002).

2) **Resources**
This variable identifies the resources people feel they receive from participation in the UAG, which can refer to both material and non-material resources. It builds on the idea of the fungibility of resources that emphasises how social capital may be substituted or exchanged for forms of economic capital either directly or indirectly (Bourdieu 1986; Portes 1998, p.4). For example, using access to social networks to find a job or to find cheaper sources of food and services constitute this form of exchange. In contrast, access to social movements may indirectly provide resources that increase a person’s capacities by advocating for more favourable terms to access such capital through state or institutionally-led macro policy changes. Resources as described here demonstrate how social capital may empower citizens by providing them with material and non-material goods that increase their ability to influence their socio-economic conditions. It subsequently gives citizens agency vis-à-vis other actors, which is considered a form of empowerment (Narayan 2005).

3) **Organisational structure**
The variable of organisational structure discerns the way benefits are accrued and distributed between participants of UAGs and how this affects empowerment. The application of SNA rests on identifying and evaluating the strength of ties between individuals in social groups. Prell et al. (2009, p.503) emphasise that strong ties have evident benefits for natural resource management, allowing people to:

- Have significant influence over each other
- Share similar views
- Support each other in times of crisis
- Successfully communicate complex information
- Trust one and other

Likewise the inclusion of weak ties in social groups can compensate for the limitations of having only strong ties, such as the incorporation of new information (ibid). It is argued that the inclusion of strong and weak ties contributes to the success of community organisations and Chitov (2006) views the diversity of these relationships in community gardens as essential to the longevity of the organisations. This is because norm reciprocation and collective equity (communal work) are
established through social relationships that maintain the necessary activities and management of the gardens (Chitov 2006, pp.451-454). Kingsley and Townsend (2006) argue that a tension exists in the application of social capital to urban communities because of the difficulties around measuring forms of bridging and bonding capital. Hence, using SNA’s focus on the strength of ties between social agents within an organisational structure enables the identification and distribution of bonding and bridging capital that Putnam (2000) establishes.

Using the conceptual framework as detailed here, it addresses the criticism that social capital neglects the influence of the socio-economic position of actors and the effects of societal structure on social relationships (such as income distribution). For example, it is claimed that people with more financial resources have greater capacity to access and utilise social capital (Chitov 2006, p.452). However, ‘ties’ between individuals result in certain knowledge and values being shared among stakeholders, which leads to the formation of ‘rules’ that act as a form of social control (Coleman 1993). Social rules enable and restrict certain behaviours, nullifying the critique that structural differences are the most important influencing variables. Rules demonstrate that effects of social relationships can be positive in the sense that they enable social organisation and stable social groups, yet also restrict individual freedoms that may be damaging through the expectation of certain behaviours (Bowles and Gintis 2002). In other words, the creation of rules leads to the formation of governance structures that determine how social capital is created and distributed within the community. Therefore, by integrating Social Network Analysis, it is possible to map the operationalisation of social capital through organisational structure in order to assess the collective effects on members of the social group.

The above framework is useful in the study of communities, which as discussed in the literature review are highly diverse and differentiated. Bowles and Gintis (2002, p.240) definition of community as “a group of people who interact directly, frequently and in multi-faceted way” is markedly similar to that of a social organisation like Urban Agricultural Gardens. They perfectly summarise that:

“The term community makes it clear that understanding trust, co-operation, generosity and other behaviours emphasised in the social capital literature requires the study of the structure of social interactions, and underlines the fact that the same individuals will exhibit different levels and types of social capital depending on the social interactions in which they are engaged” (Bowles and Gintis 2002, pp.420-421).

Problem solving only becomes a social endeavour if a certain level of intimacy is achieved and therefore the strength of communities (as evidenced through the amount of social capital) is a particularly important analytical factor in looking at the way social groups respond to crises. This study is situated in the context of austerity in Thessaloniki and will analyse how Urban Agricultural Gardens contest neoliberal governance. The way individuals interact and co-create social capital may significantly contribute to citizen empowerment; hence social capital may act as a support mechanism in the sense that it provides both material and non-material goods and services that the state or market fails to provide during times of need (Boyes-Watson 2005). Bridging and bonding social capital is present in the everyday lives of citizens but occurs more significantly in times of threat, especially if the threat is collectively felt across entire social groups (Anderson 1991). The mobilisation of social groups around rules and norms that contest neoliberal governance can therefore only take place through strong communities.
5. Methodology

5.1. Choice of study area and respondents

As previously discussed, Greece and in particular Thessaloniki was significantly exposed to the 2008 economic crisis. In response, governing institutions have adopted neoliberal policies like privatisation and market-oriented development, leading to the marginalisation of many urban citizens. Today 1 in 3 Greeks “live in a situation at risk of poverty” (European Parliament 2016), which makes Thessaloniki a particularly interesting and relevant study area, as the socio-economic effects of this crisis are ongoing as further austerity measures are implemented. There is relatively little empirical research in this geographical area within the academic field of Urban Agriculture and social capital, meaning that this research will contribute something new.

Unlike many other areas of the world where allotment gardening has been present since the Second World War, urban agriculture is a newly-emerging phenomenon in Greece (Partalidou and Anthopoulou 2017). Late-blooming urbanisation in Thessaloniki has meant that rural food-production has remained connected to cities until fairly recently (ibid). Along with many social movements against the various policies and effects of neoliberal expansion, Alternative Food Networks (AFN) and Urban Agricultural Gardens have taken-off only recently. The recent emergence of these organisations means that there is little knowledge and research on their operations or socio-economic effects making this study both necessary and interesting.

There exist very few Urban Agricultural Gardens (or green spaces in general) in Thessaloniki with the city containing less than 3m² of green space per resident (Gavrilidou et al. 2015). Since this research is specifically concerned with Urban Agricultural Gardens, the choice of organisations was therefore fairly limited. Two organisations, Kipos3 and PERKA, from a total of four were chosen as case studies because of their focus on food production by and for citizens. The other two organisations, the university allotments and community vineyard, are both exclusive in their aims and practices, meaning that they are not accessible to all citizens and the vineyard in particular does not allow for agricultural production other than grapes. Consequently, these would not provide an accurate representation of community social relations and the production of social capital between citizens.

Participants of the interviews were members of both Kipos3 and PERKA and were sourced directly through the organisations. A total of 7 respondents were interviewed at Kipos3 and 10 at PERKA, all of which were cultivators who used one of the two UAGs. Respondents were sourced by talking with the leaders of the organisation and organising a site-visit. There was no direct contact with individual members of the organisations prior to the group interviews and I therefore had no control over who was invited or who would turn up on the days of the site-visits. The leaders of each organisation assured me that an invitation was send to all members of the groups through online communication (either Facebook or Whatsapp).

5.1.1. Description of selected organisations

5.1.1.1. Kipos3

The English translation of this Greek name is ‘Garden’; the ‘cubed’ symbol denotes the relationship between the physicality and social dimensions of the space. The project occupying a 500m² area within the city centre was initially established by two architecture students funded by the Clinton Global Initiative that supports start-ups with environmental and social dimensions. It gained the support of the municipality of Thessaloniki becoming a public-private partnership. The objectives of the garden are multi-dimensional, aiming to reinvigorate the urban landscape with greenspace and contribute to social cohesion through the cultivation of food (Gavrilidou et al. 2015). The space therefore acts as a social area, as well as a productive plot of land, run for and by the community. The garden has 30 residents who are all from the surrounding neighbourhood, each tending to their own plot of 1.5m².
The English translation of this Greek acronym is ‘Peri-Urban Agriculture’, which also denotes to some extent its purpose and geographical location. The organisation was established in 2011 through the occupation of a former military camp situated on 68.9ha of land on the north-eastern outskirts of Thessaloniki. The core goal of the organisation is the “communal and in season cultivation of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs in a field or an appropriate space near the city of Thessaloniki” (PERKA 2017). Food cultivation is a primary objective of the organisation and people each tend to their own plot of 35m². The organisation is made up of 7 sub-gardens, which are connected through a monthly general assembly. Through the communal production of food it aims to establish a sense of community and reconnect citizens with nature. The gardens are self-organised but the principles and rules that govern the organisation are collectively decided through the general assembly.
5.2. Choice of methods
The study uses a combination of three data collection methods comprising of a qualitative survey, semi-structured group interviews, and observations. The qualitative survey was carried out before the interviews and observations, whereas the observations were done in tandem with the group interviews.

5.2.1. Qualitative survey
The study of social capital is avowedly human centred, based on the interpretation of social interaction and social relationships (Putnam 2000), which is why the empirical foundation of this research is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews. However, the extent to which individuals engage with, utilise and distribute social capital is also largely influenced by organisational structure within community-based organisations (Firth et al. 2011). In order to understand the basic characteristics of the two selected organisations, variables such as demographics, income and other individual information needs to be assessed. These can then be cross-examined with the empirical material collected from further semi-structured interviews and observations to understand what social capital is created and whom it benefits.

It was essential that the qualitative survey was done prior to the semi-structured interviews so that the interviewees would remain anonymous and the interviewees would not be influenced by the additional information given from my visit. In addition to basic demographic questions, the survey would also ask more qualitative, opinion-based questions about reasons for participation in the garden and questions relating to the wider context of Thessaloniki. Again, this is to get a broader picture of what life is like in Thessaloniki by relating to wider socio-economic and socio-political issues. The qualitative answers could then be compared with the semi-structured interviews to ensure coherency in empirical material and any point-out any discrepancies.

The benefit of a pre-interview survey is that additional qualitative data is readily available in case anything issues arise when collecting field studies or if any important information is lost through face-to-
face encounters. This was important since many of the respondents spoke in their non-native language (English). The surveys were translated to Greek meaning that respondents could answer in their mother tongue, ensuring that respondents could answer in full capacity.

5.2.2. Semi-structured group interviews

One week was spent at Kipos and PERKA, where group interviews and observations were carried out simultaneously. Two group interviews were carried out with each organisation on separate days and most of the same cultivators showed up at both interviews. The group interview dates were chosen to coincide with the PERKA general assembly, where further observations were carried out. The site-visit and interviews lasted around three hours each and were all recorded and supplemented with hand-written notes. The length of time allowed for an in-depth discussion and observation of their organisational meeting. The interview questions were designed to be broad enough to allow for general discussions and follow-up questions about specific information.

Some background questions about the interviewees were covered first in order to open the conversation and create a comfortable atmosphere. The process of the group interviews followed four general themes:

1) Perceptions of Thessaloniki and living conditions
2) Reason for participating in the Urban Agricultural Garden
3) Resources given and received from the garden
4) Relationship with organisational structure

The first theme intended to reveal how people related to the situation post-economic crisis and what kind of feelings people held towards the state. It intended to investigate whether people were under significant economic pressure and what kinds of strategies people were employing to deal with these issues. The second theme follows from this line of thought, asking respondents the reason they chose to participate in the organisation. This aimed to reveal whether participation in the organisation correlated with their livelihood strategies in the context of austerity in Thessaloniki.

The third theme looked at the kinds of resources that were involved, whether these be physical or intangible and how they were created. This relates to the social production of goods through participation in social networks. Lastly, looking at the way resources are distributed among different stakeholders helps discern in what ways organisational structure supports the production and distribution of social capital and if this is something that empowers citizens equally. Successful organisational structures that empower citizens may contribute to contestation of hegemonic discourses if people are successfully mobilised (Rakopoulos 2014a). Rather than taking social capital as being constructed solely through identity and values, this study posits that social capital is an actual form of capital (even if it is intangible) that exists even if it is not recognised by relevant actors. Despite this condition, it is still has unique value to each individual, yet is relational in given social contexts.

Since the study is limited to the members of the two selected Urban Agricultural Gardens, the number of interview participants is limited. Therefore the data set is not large enough to carry out a more detailed quantitative analysis. Furthermore, since social interactions are place-based and context specific, quantitative data analysis would not capture the complexity of the local setting (DeLeyser et al. 2014). Large data sets are prone to error and tend to generalise their findings, which simplifies the diversity of views and opinions in social groups (Ibid). Through face-to-face interviews it is possible to establish a rapport with the respondents through sharing small talk or some other social activity that creates a relationship of trust (Raymond et al 2010). Likewise, through a semi-structured interview there is enough time to engage in a meaningful conversation, where visual and verbal cues contribute to mutual understanding and clarification (Irvine et al. 2012, p.90). The interviewer and interviewee may create personal chemistry that keeps the conversation flowing and the respondent engaged and interested in the study (Ibid). Since the study was conducted in a different country, it would have been very difficult to carry-out telephone interviews due to the time difference and poor connection. Telephone interviews are inherently difficult to yield high-quality data because it is difficult to engage in meaningful and sustained conversation (Gillham 2005, p.105).

5.2.3. Observations
Social capital is produced through social relations and thus can be embodied and communicated in non-verbal forms of interaction (Putnam 2000). Hence, a form of data collection that is not verbally communicated is necessary, looking at how people ‘do’ activities. Observations further corroborate findings of the semi-structured interviews by identifying if what people say matches the way they interact on the gardens and with other gardeners. I spent a week between the two sites where I observed behaviour and practices from a distance, taking notes and photographs to document the findings. I looked specifically at the way individuals used the garden and the level of interaction between individuals. I further noted the behaviour of interviewees around different individuals and within the group setting in order to identify the closeness of relationships between different individuals. In addition, I was able to participate in the garden myself, which enabled me to see the garden from the perspective of the participants. Observations can be done individually as well as being combined with semi-structured interviews making them a flexible and dynamic tool for place-based studies.

5.3. An inductive-deductive approach
In empirical studies the choice of theoretical perspective will inevitably affect how empirical material is interpreted, which specifies the way social phenomena are understood. In the field of social science, researchers therefore enter the research arena with pre-articulated hypotheses or preconceptions about these social phenomena. For example, it is taken for granted that there is a relationship between language and knowledge that is context dependent, which is a preconception of social scientists (Gergen 1986). Consequently, the way the researcher makes links between language and knowledge is both a re-articulation of a pre-existing constructivist paradigm as well as a contribution to the construction of these realities (ibid).

A deductive approach uses the principles of theory to interpret empirical material and make predictions, whereas inductive research starts from the interpretation of empirical data in order to construct arguments and assumptions (Maass et al. 2001, p.391). This research process has largely employed a deductive method because it takes for granted that social capital is an actual phenomenon and is ‘out there’ ready to be identified.

This research process started by reviewing literature on the formation of social capital and social relationships in Urban Agricultural Gardens and whether this provides benefits for citizens in times of crisis. The literature provided an array of explanations on the formation of social bonds and strong community networks that contribute to survival strategies for people in times of need. Other research has therefore influenced the direction and theoretical underpinnings of this study, in addition to the development of the problem formulation. Likewise, the interview process was based on pre-formulated questions, which in turn was guided by the literature review and choice of theoretical constructs. The choice of questions can be argued to influence the answers, placing the empirical data interpretation between induction and deduction.

However, the dynamics of semi-structured interviews mean that new information may be presented that cannot be explained by the chosen theoretical assumptions. Therefore, the “logic of discovery” (Hanson 1958) necessitates that necessitates an abductive approach as an “inference to the best explanation” (Harman 1965, pp.88-89). Abduction only reveals general rules, meaning that does not assume that every phenomenon can be explained by the chosen theory. Abduction is an approach well-suited to social science because it is creative, pragmatic and understands the complexity of social relations that permit the formation of explanatory hypotheses (Walton 2014, pp.8-9). This study takes for granted certain preconceptions about what social capital is but does not infer how this created or distributed, or what social capital means to each individual. Certain forms of capital may be valued based on an array of variables unique to the individual, depending on the how people perceive the world but also on short-term decision-making factors. The challenge of abduction is to be able to apply new theoretical assumptions based on evidence and accepting that theory may only provide a partial answer.

5.4. Philosophical points of departure
5.4.1. Epistemological questions and validity
In qualitative data the interpretation of opinions and perceptions always raise questions of validity, which concerns how reliable the results are and whether they can be replicated in other research Irvine et al. 2012). Opinions are neither homogenous nor stable across individuals or time, as the way an individual views the world and constructs knowledge may differ. The epistemological foundations when relating to a
diversity of people may not be the same, in other words the notion of citizen empowerment is unique to each individual within UAGs under a specific context. The validity of the findings can therefore be questioned.

Restricting the study within two organisations in the city of Thessaloniki helps alleviate some epistemological vagaries by prevent wide-scale generalisations in knowledge. Social groups are not unitary actors, each individual all hold their own set of values and beliefs that form specific social and cultural identities (Raymond et al. 2010). Nonetheless, social groups share certain forms of knowledge and create social norms that are stable across members of the group (ibid). The findings of this study can therefore be situated within the norms of these social groups, allowing for valid and epistemologically rooted forms of comparison. It is not possible to upscale this study and make generalisations about Greek society as a whole.

The qualitative nature of the study acts as both a strength and a weakness. The use of semi-structured interviews to collect empirical data strengthens validity as it allows respondents to express their true opinions (Irvine et al. 2012). As discussed, individual personality is a variable that has a considerable effect on the formation of perceptions and opinions, however, these assumptions are counted for within the interpretation. The study is therefore valid precisely because it cannot be replicated by others.

5.4.2. The links between language and social phenomena

Qualitative data analysis stems from phenomenological research, which seeks to understand how the relationship between the material world and social phenomena are experienced from the perspective of specific subjects (Vandermause and Fleming 2011). Individual perspectives and attitudes are unique to the individual and can therefore only ever be interpreted through the use of intermediary communication tools such as language (Taylor et al. 2015, p.14).

Language is the verbal or written construction of meaning, and is unique to the individual based on how they discursively structure discourses (Korobov 2017). The way language is constructed is important but more significantly it is what actors do with these constructions that create meaning (ibid). Language is therefore a way of approaching the empirical world, using it to identify relationships between knowledge and lived experience (Taylor et al. 2015). When spoken, language becomes an immediate form of communication, which has no opportunity to be revisited and amended. Gibbins and Reimer (1998, p.302) emphasise that this makes language present-centred as it has no defined future narrative. Consequently language itself and the relationship between language and social phenomena is always context dependent (Gergen 1986).

5.4.3. The researcher – Hermeneutics and interpreting interviews

Researchers do not remain objective but rather come to the interview with pre-existing knowledge and views about the world. The research is therefore not value-neutral, problematizing the way the empirical data may be interpreted. The time and place of the interview plays an important role in the interaction between the urban gardener and the interviewer, which is problematic because what people say and how it is interpreted may be completely different. Similarly, what people say may differ on separate occasions, and how it is interpreted may also differ. Hermeneutic analysis is therefore context-dependent and socially constructed; it is co-created through interaction between the researcher and respondent and the knowledge that is created is specific to this relationship and its context (Vandermause 2008). Knowledge about these relationships does not exist independently but is brought into being through interpretation by the researcher and hermeneutics is this process of interpretation (Vandermause and Fleming 2011). It is therefore essential that the interviewer remain as neutral as possible in order not to lead the discussion or influence the opinions of the person being interviewed (Wood 2014).

5.5. Limitations

The limitations of this study stem from the lack of time and resources to carry out further interviews, which would have culminated in a more comprehensive study of Urban Agricultural Gardens in Greece. The study was limited to two UAG organisations in Thessaloniki, where interviews were conducted over a one week period in March 2018. As discussed previously, semi-structured interviews are context and time-specific, meaning that the results cannot be applied to other regions in Greece or elsewhere. The
The role of the city authority in relation to UAGs in Thessaloniki has not been fully researched or included in this paper. Similarly a contextual analysis of the role of institutions in Urban Agricultural Gardens has not been discussed. The paper is placed within the wider context of neoliberalism yet does not seek to explain neoliberalism in all its complexity as a macro-political and economic phenomenon. As discussed in much of the literature, the role of institutions in the establishment and running of Urban Agricultural Gardens has been significant in recent times (Irvine et al. 1999). Even if the state does not take an active role in the organisations, UAGs still operate under the authority of the state and must abide by laws and regulations. Crucially, since this study situates the role of UAGs and social capital in the context of neoliberal governance, gauging the perspective of state actors like the municipality and their relationship with the governance of UAGs would have added further analytical clout. The study therefore takes a participant-level (citizen) perspective approach rather than incorporating all actors present in the urban setting.

5.6. Ethical considerations
All participants in this study verbally consented to take part in this research, satisfying the fundamental right of people to know they are being studied (Ryen 2013). Members of both Urban Agricultural Organisations were informed of the topic of the research and the purpose of the interviews, however, to avoid biased results many of the details of the study were not revealed. There needs to be a balance between revealing too much and too little information and thus the boundary between informed and uninformed becomes somewhat blurred (Thorne 1998). The gardeners were told that the study aimed to investigate how and why people used UAGs in Thessaloniki.

Confidentiality is an important tenet of the ethics of research and therefore before conducting the interviews, the respondents were notified that they would be recorded for note-taking (Ryen 2013). They were further made aware, for the sake of transparency, that the recordings themselves would not be published. The research was conducted in the confines of the city of Thessaloniki, within two relatively small organisations. Some of the information was critical of the role of authorities and their organisations, and even about other members of the organisation, therefore it was imperative that the names and contact information of the respondents remain anonymous both within data collection and when transcribing the interviews to prevent any negative repercussions.

A range of other studies have looked at the relationship between social capital and citizen empowerment. However, only a handful of studies have looked at Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki with little reference to social capital. It is nonetheless important to highlight that the data and transcripts are unique to this specific study and have been gathered first hand by the researcher. Although the findings may corroborate similar findings in other academic studies, none of the empirical material has come from a third source.
6. Empirical Findings
The complexity of social relationships means it is difficult to definitively categorise data into bridging or bonding social capital, as networks may contain a hybridity of different connections (Putnam 2000, p.23). Nonetheless, the interviews and observations from both organisations were coded into themes based on the three sub-research questions:

- Why do people use Urban Agricultural Gardens?
- What kinds of resources do people get from Urban Agricultural Gardens?
- How are Urban Agricultural Gardens organised in Thessaloniki?

The data coded around these themes was used to evidence the production and distribution of social capital. The section looking at the organisational structure of the organisations employs Social Network Analysis to code the data, looking at the relationships between individuals and how the strength of social ties affects the prevalence of social capital. The results are contextually specific, both spatially and temporally, due to the unique relationship between the interviewer, the locations and the interviewees.

Table 2: Summary of organisation characteristics of Kipos3 and PERKA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kipos³</th>
<th>PERKA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Type</td>
<td>Place-based</td>
<td>Interest-based and place-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of members</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land per member</td>
<td>1.5m²</td>
<td>35m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Socialisation and green space for neighbourhood</td>
<td>Cultivation of produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership system</td>
<td>Fixed but no annual payment with closed membership</td>
<td>Formal – annual payment of €10 with open membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of organisation</td>
<td>Unelected head, no election</td>
<td>Rule by democracy through General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average income of members</td>
<td>€16-€30,000 per year</td>
<td>€0-€15,000 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1. Reasons for participation
The reasons for participation in the two organisations help to understand people’s relationship with the wider economic crisis and give a picture of the current socio-economic conditions in Thessaloniki. It may also indicate forms of social capital that arise from the activities people intended to do at the organisations. The data has been coded into themes based on the reasons that were referred to the most throughout the interviews on both gardens. It must be noted that there existed a plurality of reasons for why people participated in the gardens and members cannot be definitively categorised under one theme. This form of coding simplifies complex decision-making, but since decision-making is not the focus of the research, this way of looking at the data is very useful.

6.1.1. Hobby/to relax
One of the principle questions put forward to all members during the interviews was why they chose to participate in the organisation and how they came about doing so. A primary reason that was prevalent in the empirical data collected at Kipos³ was that people wanted to participate in the garden as a way to relax or as a hobby outside of their daily routines. One man says directly:

"My job is working with technology all day, every day. The point of coming here is to relax and get away from the stress of work."

Here, it highlights that the garden is used externally to the day-to-day lives of members and that they participate in order to feel happy and for the intrinsic purpose of being in the garden. Another man explained that he enjoyed being in the garden when the weather is nice because it is very tranquil in
comparison to the city. He went on to emphasise that being around nature was calming and allowed him to relax. Other members emphasised that they only use the garden as a leisure activity and do not use the space for the purpose of food production. One respondent goes on to say that:

“I am a gardener to relax not to solve my financial problems so I don’t care if I have 1 kilo or 3 kilos of produce or whether it is good quality”.

Although mentioning wider financial problems, which may be a guarded reference to the current financial climate in Thessaloniki, the empirical data shows that gardeners at Kipos do not participate in the garden as a direct result of the economic crisis or as a way to improve their socio-economic conditions. The empirical material from the survey indicates that most participants are white-collar office workers, who earn above the minimum salary threshold of €0-€15,000 per year, indicating that they do not need to rely on cultivating produce as a livelihood strategy, reinforcing the notion that participation is simply a leisure activity.

Comparatively, members of PERKA related less to using the garden as a hobby. When asked why she used the garden, one woman said it is “a way to get away from the city and relax”. Another woman said “it is a good way to spend my free time”, showing that part of member’s rationale for joining PERKA is to find recreational and leisure activities. Although members emphasised that they enjoyed being around the green space and working on their gardens, most members said that the reason they participate in the organisation is to produce food to eat.

6.1.2. Socialising/involvement in the neighbourhood

Another reason for participation at Kipos that was emphasised in the empirical data was to use the garden as a means to get to know their neighbourhood and make new friends in the area. One woman said that “I was interested in the initiative from the start and the opportunity to get involved with the neighbourhood”. Here, rationale can be further linked to using the garden for enjoyment but participation is also used to expand people’s access to the neighbourhood and make connections to other people. At Kipos most participants lived within the surrounding neighbourhood or within a few kilometres, which suggests that participation is localised. It explains why interest in the neighbourhood formed a larger part of rationale for joining the garden in comparison to PERKA, where members are not from the immediate area.

Many people referred to the project as “exciting”, “different” or “pioneering” because nothing like this has been established in Thessaloniki before. Part of people’s justification for joining centred on getting involved within this new project in the neighbourhood because of its appeal as something different. An element of curiosity is present in the rationale of interviewees, which suggests that gaining knowledge both about their neighbours and about urban agriculture was an important part of their reasoning for getting involved with the project.

6.1.3. Access to resources

The reasons for participation at PERKA differ considerably from Kipos in the sense that participation at PERKA was linked to a greater extent with gaining access to resources. When asked why they use the garden, one man said that “some people here rely on the food they produce. They can also earn some money when they grow their own things, which is very helpful in the current situation”. Another person said that “I wanted to grow my own food with none of these chemicals that are used in the food you get at the supermarket”. Here, it is evident that reasons for joining the organisation centre on gaining access to land and the means to produce their own food, suggesting it forms part of their livelihood strategy. Specific reference to the economic crisis demonstrates that the socio-economic conditions are a motivating factor for participation at PERKA. The empirical data collected from the survey shows that on average most members are within the lowest salary bracket, emphasising that they are more financially vulnerable and in need of resources. Similarly, respondents on average said that they visited the garden either more than once per week or at least once per week, and do not live in the immediate neighbourhood. The conscious effort put into participation highlights that access to resources at the garden forms part of their livelihood routine. The fact that people have access to 35m² of land means that in general people are able to grow a considerable amount of produce, which may explain why access to resources is referred to more frequently.
One member of Kipos³ said that she participated because she was interested in starting her own allotment but lacked the financial resources and access to land to do so. The UAG therefore gave her access to land for a low cost. Similarly, other members indicated that participating in the garden was something interesting to do outside of work that did not require a huge investment. Although respondents at Kipos³ mentioned access to resources, it was not mentioned directly but in connection to pursuing urban agriculture as a hobby or leisure activity.

### 6.1.4. Political motivations

There were clear political and ideological reasons for participation in PERKA that contrasted immensely to Kipos³. One man who took part in the process to establish the organisation recollects how he became involved:

“There were a few of us who were close to the green party...we are not members of the greens but they were the core of the group. They used to distribute food at the beginning. The used to collect food from the suburbs and you would go to a certain place and buy it, things like that. But then they said why don’t we make our own gardens?”

Participation emerged from other politically-oriented organisations showing how members may share similar views about the current socio-economic situation. Again, participation and establishment of the organisation was directly related to the socio-economic conditions in Thessaloniki, the same man continuing “all of these projects started during the crisis, it is not a simple coincidence, it is a need”. Furthermore, the organisation is inherently political since it is an illegal occupation of a former military base and members participating in the organisation are aware of this and therefore possess a political motivation to join.

Comparatively, when asked about their reasons for participation in reference to the economic crisis, members of Kipos³ were clear to point out that they were not taking part as a reaction to the economic crisis. Interestingly, some respondents stated that “we joined the garden not to get out of our problems but to forget the crisis” and that “the garden is just a normal way of living, crisis or not”. Here it is demonstrated that there is a clear recognition of the economic crisis, however, it is not used in a way that justifies their participation in the organisation. It may be the case that respondents were too proud to admit any financial difficulties, which may affect the validity of the empirical material. However, what can be taken from this is that participation at Kipos³ is not politicised in the same way as it is at PERKA.

### 6.2. Resources

The resources gained through participation exemplify the positive effects of participation in social networks. The amounts and types of resource indicate in what ways participation contributes to empowerment by increasing the capacity of members through access to and ability to use resources (Tornaghi 2017).

#### 6.2.1. Material resources

When asked about what the benefits of participating at PERKA a lot of emphasis was placed on the material resources people received from production. One man said “I produce enough food to live off in the spring and summer time in terms of vegetables and herbs. I grow my own salad and tomatoes, potatoes and stuff like this”. Here, there is a clear link between the material resources gained through participation in the form of crop cultivation.

In terms of material resources another member made reference to the seeds they received from a local seed bank through the organisation. There was considerable emphasis placed on the fact that the seeds were “traditional Greek” varieties of plants. They said that the seeds and crops were grown at PERKA, which they argued improved the quality of material resources. For example, when talking about the seeds, the man continued:

“The seeds have to be traditional and grown in an ecological way. It is in our principles. There are no hybrids or chemicals used here, it is all organic”.

The fact that the plants were grown in an environmentally friendly way gave the resources more value to
members of the organisation, which distinguished this form of production and consumption from shop-bought produce.

Contrastingly, at Kipos\(^3\) it was evident that material resources were not a priority for members of the organisation. When asked whether the food they grow on their plot was an important resource for them, one man was emphatic that:

“\textit{The point here is not production, there is a very small amount of production from a garden like this...4, 5, 7, 10 kilos maybe! It depends. This is not the point! We can go and buy what we need. With 10 euros we can go and buy 10 kilos of tomatoes or whatever}”.

Physical resources from the cultivating of produce were referred to as an additional perk of membership. It may be the case that respondents did not focus attention on their produce as the crops weren’t fully grown because of the time of year. However, other members further distanced themselves from participating solely for the purpose of material resources, demonstrated by the way some gardeners reacted to some American researchers that were promoting a wireless technology to measure production:

“\textit{I use the hose pipe to water my plants and that is the only technology I need. I find watering my plants very therapeutic...I don’t want to come here and sit on my phone assessing the PH of my soil or whatever. I come to enjoy the nature and just enjoy the experience of being here. It is very relaxing}”.

Here, there is a clear distinction that the most important resources received from participation in Kipos\(^3\) are not material in the sense of food but are intangible based on the intrinsic value of the garden.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure3.jpg}
\caption{A member of Kipos\(^3\) watering his own plot and enjoying being surrounded by nature.}
\end{figure}

\textbf{6.2.2. Networks and social connections}

The empirical data illustrates that most of the resources received from participation at Kipos\(^3\) are inherently social, based on the formation of networks and social connections. Many people noted that they appreciated the way the garden helped them make friends and get to know people in the neighbourhood. One man directly relates participation in the garden with the expansion of his personal social network, emphasising that the garden has facilitated the formation of strong bonding ties like friendship/kinship...
through socialisation in the common space:

“The point is that we socialise with our neighbours and get to know our neighbourhood and this is very important. Before, I did not know anyone apart from Nikos, because he is a friend from before. But now I know most of my neighbours and it is very nice!”

Participants said it was funny that they had never known their neighbours until they met them in the garden, even if they lived in the same street. Similarly, one woman mentioned that it was nice to have connections in the community and that the garden has created a communal space where she would rather come than sit alone at home.

Similarly, people noted that PERKA brought like-minded people together from across the city and created a network for communication. Again, it was linked to wider political movements, this member saying that “we were all part of movements in Thessaloniki. I am part of other movements and some of us were buying things from this system”. Hence, the resource mentioned here refers to social connections that facilitate access to other resources. Explicit reference is made to one member finding out about a soup kitchen, which he argues helps poorer people live a better life in times of austerity, i.e. through the provision of cheap goods and services. In general, there were fewer references to making friends. Nonetheless, from the observations, the way that people greeted each other and talked personally with each other demonstrated that the garden provided a space that fostered friendship and kinship. It is possible that the conversation became more politically focussed if the organiser thought the research could give a forum for their views.

6.2.3. Neighbourhood quality
Many of the benefits received from the garden related to the improvement of the neighbourhood. People made reference to how nice it was to have a green space in the area, which is uncommon in Thessaloniki. They referenced that it improved the aesthetics of the neighbourhood. Similarly, people emphasised that it allowed them to “be close to nature” without having to travel out of the city. One man linked the creation of the garden with the safety of the community, saying that

“if it was not for the garden this place would be somewhere where drug dealers hang out or something. It would be run down and probably no green space”.

The resources gained from the garden are therefore shared among the community and again relate to intangible goods, such as safety, aesthetic qualities and being close to nature.

The resources received from PERKA were similar to that of Kipos³, in the sense that reference was made to the gardens improving the physical appearance of the neighbourhood and creating a place that was close to nature within the city. However, there were wider connotations to this statement and the resources gained through improving the neighbourhood were linked with protecting the land from developers. The communal resource of green spaces was highly politicised, one member emphasising:

“We are not just stupid, happy tomato cultivators, we have principles, we are here to protect the green, to protect from incoming investors who would build buildings. By us being here, an investor will think first before he takes the green space. This city has only 2.3m² of green space per person, which is unacceptable! The European threshold is 10! And this is the only green space in the Western suburbs of Thessaloniki”.

Therefore the resource of neighbourhood quality and green space were protected through the act of forming social networks where people worked together for the greater good of the community and the city of Thessaloniki.

6.2.4. Knowledge
The results of the interviews demonstrated that through the formation of social connections, people gained knowledge resources from the gardens. At Kipos³ knowledge in terms of knowing neighbours and the community were frequently referred to as a positive resource gained through socialisation on the garden. These social relationships had further knowledge resource-generating effects, one man saying:
“A friend of mine told me that it’s good to grow the tomatoes next to the basil because it gives the tomatoes a better flavour”.

His friend then added:

“We put corn with beans and pumpkin together because they complement each other from a biological point of view so we’ve read”.

Here, it is illustrated that participation in the garden through social contact with other people contributes knowledge resources that in turn help members to improve the way they grow their plants.

At PERKA, a number of members said that they gained knowledge about how to grow their plants and crops from other members of PERKA who were good cultivators. Here, knowledge is also a resource gained through the formation of social relationships, which have positive effects on individuals. In addition to receiving knowledge for themselves, one member emphasised that PERKA also contributed to spreading knowledge throughout Thessaloniki through educational visits at schools and hosting visitors at the garden. The formation of communication networks was considered an important resource to PERKA in order to spread common values of cooperation, as well as information about the importance of green space and the environment. When asked how the public viewed what PERKA do, one man replied:

“They view it in a very positively! I mean if you see that within seven years 30 families here have become 130. It shows something. We are in the years of organic food and no pesticides and ecological approaches, which is something that PERKA does, it is in our principles! People see and hear about this and want to be a part of it”.

What is clear from this statement is that knowledge is a resource gained through participation at PERKA and helps spread ecological principles that benefits individuals, the community and the city.

6.3. Organisational structure

This section uses Social Network Analysis to look at the organisational structure of each organisation, identifying the connections between members and characterising the way members interact with each other. By understanding the strength of different relationships at the organisations it is possible to identify the production and distribution of social capital. The types of social capital evidenced in this section are bonding and bridging capital. Bonding capital refers to strong ties between people from a similar social group, which can be characterised by high levels of trust and reciprocity (Putnam 2000). Bridging capital denotes weak ties between individuals and other people in their community. This form of capital is argued to bring people from diverse social backgrounds together and foster the incorporation of new information to social groups (ibid).

6.3.1. Bonding capital

When PERKA members were asked about their relationship with other members of the organisation, one man said:

“We all know each other here. I know people in my own PERKA very well (reference to one of the 7 sub-gardens that make up the organisation). We eat here and there is a place to bake bread and sit and have coffee”.

Here, it is demonstrated that there are connections between most members of the garden that can be described as close relationships, where individuals are friends with each other. Observations at the garden further corroborated that there existed strong ties between individuals, evidenced by the way they interacted with each other, such as sharing jokes, asking about each other’s families and knowing each other personally. Trust and reciprocity seemed to be present in the social relationships, one man saying that his friend who has the chicken coop shares out his eggs when the chickens produce a lot. Similarly, members made reference to helping each other out, for example by watering each other’s plots or giving their friends a ride to the garden in their car. This is further evidence of strong social ties that are reciprocated between individuals.

The structure of the organisation that revolved around a general assembly was conducive to the formation
of strong relationships and hence bonding capital. When talking about the formation of the organisation, one man described:

“We set aside time for discussions, a couple of months, to decide or common principles and then we started. From the very beginning we made a lottery and everyone got the same amount of space, which is 35 square meters, and from there on everyone got the same”.

The fact that everybody is treated equally and fairly contributes to the inclusiveness and cohesiveness of the social group. Each member has the same opportunity to take part in the activities of the organisation, and likewise, each person entered the garden on equal terms, which may have helped foster feelings of mutuality. From the observations of the general assembly, it was clear that all members were comfortable with each other, evidenced by the way they shared snacks and joked with one and other. Additionally, all members were comfortable expressing their views at the meeting and nobody shied away from partaking. There were even instances of heated debate, which demonstrates the level of intimacy between members.

Figure 4: Social Network Analysis illustrating the connections between different social agents at PERKA.

Figure 4 illustrates the myriad connections between different social agents at PERKA, whereby the general assembly facilitates connections to everyone within the entire organisation. It emphasises that the distribution of resources is fair and equal; and additionally the distribution of social capital is equal because individuals have the same opportunity to form social relationships and participate within existing social networks.

Kipos also demonstrated the presence of bonding capital. As a smaller organisation of around 30 people, it had a sense of community about it where people seemed to know each other personally. For example a family who have a plot at the garden came to sit with their dog and have a picnic, talking and laughing together with some of the other members. Similarly, a retired couple sat and talked to the project organiser about each other’s families, indicating strong ties within the community where people know each other personally. Bonding capital seemed to be prevalent between some of the members of the group as they exchanged produce from their garden, one woman placing a bag of fresh mint on the table for people to take. Another man brought some of his own seeds to share with other people at the garden, showing the
communal atmosphere and the direct transfer of goods within the social network that is symbolic of trust and reciprocity.

However, bonding capital was not as prevalent at Kipos\textsuperscript{3} as at PERKA and the distribution of social capital did not appear to be equal. One woman came to tend to her garden and did not say hello to anyone or participate in the group discussion, demonstrating that not everyone in the garden may know each other and the formation of social relationships are limited. As highlighted in Figure 5, the connections between only certain individuals limit the formation of other social relationships and the distribution of social capital and resources to all members.

Despite this, there was a communal atmosphere witnessed through observations, when asked about their relationships with other members, participants made direct reference to “helping each other out” as a condition of being part of the garden. Each member contributes their own work to the garden, which functions as a wider project, one woman saying:

“Everyone has their own garden but of course we help each other out because the garden only works as a whole. If nobody did any work it would be overgrown and nobody would want to come here”

There is a sense of reciprocity and trust between the members, one participant saying that “we help each other and when some people are out of the city or busy at work we will water their plants for example”. This is evidence that social relationships are strong and are a resource for participants that contribute to the overall well-being of the community garden and its members. The close and personal relationships between the members create respect for each other, cementing strong community ties. This was demonstrated when one member said:

“I don’t have a good place in the garden because it is exposed to the wind and the rain but I don’t mind because I just like to come here to relax and socialise. I would not do anything to disrupt other people’s gardens and I don’t spray chemicals everywhere because this isn’t good for the plants or people”.

People made a direct comparison between Kipos\textsuperscript{3} and the public vineyard that is located next door. They emphasised that the vineyard the project was run in a very “top-down” and “exclusive” manner in contrast to Kipos\textsuperscript{3}, noting that it was not open for citizens to use. Members emphasised that they felt part of a democratic community where they had a say in how the organisation was run. However, as depicted in Figure 5, the project was established externally to the members and the neighbourhood had no say in its establishment. The establishment of the project was therefore top-down, however, a more hands-off approach to its day-to-day running suggests that the group members had some control over decision-making. Similarly, there were communal meetings every two months, however, these are not decision-making forums like at PERKA.
6.3.2. Bridging capital

Building upon the SNA of Kipos³, it was demonstrated that there lacked bridging capital at the organisation. The availability of only 30 agricultural plots of 1.5m² emphasises the exclusivity of the project that is limited to the surrounding neighbourhood. When participants were asked about what neighbours thought of the project, one man noted “best not to ask because it would give people the idea to complain”. This suggests that not all neighbours want to participate or were invited to participate; suggesting that there exist no connections with the wider community and therefore social capital is only present on the garden between its members.

As depicted in Figure 4, the communal nature of PERKA around the general assembly facilitates a range of social connections. Since the organisation comprises of 130 individuals, it is unlikely that each relationship is characterised by strong ties. However, the presence of a formal organisational structure ensures that connections are easily made and that weak links between people from different socio-economic backgrounds are possible to form. Furthermore, the interest-based nature of the organisation meant that people from different socio-economic backgrounds come together from across Thessaloniki with the aim of working together behind common principles surrounding food cultivation. One member emphasises that it doesn’t matter whether you are good friends or not because “we have a communal system and help each other out because here is place of social coherence…it’s a place of solidarity”. Here, it is emphasised that the community stands for principles of community and collectivism and that help is offered to everyone, whether they have a close relationship or not.
However, at the general assembly the discussions became fairly heated because some new members (who were not present) had rejected the guiding principles of PERKA. Nonetheless, they were still given the opportunity to come and discuss their position at the next meeting, showing that the garden is a welcoming community even to those people who are only connected via weak social ties. Weak ties exist between members who do not obey the guiding principles of the organisation and can even result in the loss of social capital. People were unhappy about a man cutting down a tree and a man putting in concrete walls without consultation with the rest of the group. They were subsequently asked to leave the garden, which demonstrates that weak ties can have negative repercussions where social capital can be taken away and social ties severed.

Bridging capital was evident on both an individual and group level as a result of the activities of PERKA. Since it is an interest-based organisation, members are also part of political and social organisations outside of PERKA. One member admitted:

“I am a part of other solidarity initiatives in Thessaloniki, I am a member of an organisation that takes food that is not wanted in the suburbs and distribute it to people who need it. We have done similar things here when the organisation first started. We brought food here to give to refugees coming from Syria.”

It is shown here that individual connections to outside organisations forms weak ties between PERKA and other solidarity initiatives, as well as weak ties between PERKA and other socially and economically marginalised individuals. With reference to an earlier quote that emphasised that the public viewed PERKA in a positive way, the formation of ties with the wider community has increased membership in the organisation. Likewise, at an organisational level, bridging capital is further facilitated through connections with the seed bank, schools, the municipality and the fact it is open for people to come and visit. This bridging capital gives the organisation access to resources such as seeds but also a wider network across Thessaloniki that helps share their ideas, new information and best practice.
Figure 7: A gardener’s concrete walls around his plot, which was not taken kindly to by other members of PERKA.
7. Discussion/Analysis
The overarching research questions that this section aims to answer are:

- To what extent do Urban Agricultural Gardens contribute to citizen empowerment?
- Does citizen empowerment lead to contestations of neoliberal governance?

In order to assess these questions, this section analyses the connection between the concepts of social capital and empowerment as defined in the conceptual framework, in conjunction with the three sub-research questions for this study. The sub-research questions have thus far guided the interpretation of the empirical data and will further be used in this section to demonstrate the conditions necessary for the generation of social capital. It will further highlight the ways in which social capital is produced and distributed, identifying the consequential effects on citizen empowerment. The sub-questions are as follows:

1. Why do people use Urban Agricultural Gardens?
2. What kinds of resources do people get from Urban Agricultural Gardens?
3. How are Urban Agricultural Gardens organised in Thessaloniki?

The analysis and discussions is based on interpretation of the empirical material using literature from the academic field to reinforce argumentation. The conceptual framework is only able to show general connections between the production of social capital and empowerment and does not provide a comprehensive analysis of specific cases of empowerment, as these are influenced by a much wider set of socio-economic variables (Narayan 2005). Similarly, contestation of neoliberal governance is interpreted from the ideas and values present that differ from neoliberal governance as established in the Chapter 3. Contestation refers to the ways in which people dispute and oppose certain ideas, practices and logics of governance. The final section discusses in what ways opposing ideas and values may contribute to alternative forms of governance, however, does not provide a model or blueprint for these alternatives.

7.1. Understanding the links between social capital and empowerment at the two organisations
In order to establish how social capital increases the opportunities for empowerment on the two UAGs, it must first be determined to what extent people are presently marginalised, as only then is it possible to identify any change. Narayan (2005) emphasises that lack of empowerment is engendered by an individual’s lack of capacity to influence both short-term and long-term decision-making. Taking this into consideration, the results highlight that members of the two organisations have different reasons for joining the two UAGs in Thessaloniki, which may significantly explain their respective levels of empowerment, affecting the way social capital is produced. Gardeners at Kipos suggested that their participation was more of a hobby and was closely linked to the location of the garden within their neighbourhood. Members generally experienced better socio-economic conditions than gardeners at PERKA, suggesting that Kipos members are less excluded from current socio-economic systems and therefore lack the needs that may be satisfied through the provision of social capital. Comparatively, PERKA members explained that their membership was used as a livelihood strategy, as a way to gain access to resources such as the means to produce food. These findings emphasise that members of PERKA are more socio-economically marginalised than members of Kipos and therefore may place more effort into the formation of social networks to support their livelihoods.

Despite the relative differences in socio-economic marginalisation of individuals, both organisations provided a medium for social capital to be produced through the common activity of cultivation (Putnam 2000). The results highlight that all members benefitted from the benefits accrued through cooperation on the gardens, as resources such as neighbourhood aesthetic quality, neighbourhood safety, friendship, and access to nature were all mentioned to be positive outcomes of participation at both Kipos and PERKA.

The act of participation in both organisations led to varied levels of bridging and bonding capital but in all cases led to the formation of social networks. It is argued that the formation of social networks lead to collective behaviour that intensifies the group’s influence on social environment, giving people
greater control and agency within the social system (Strzelecka and Wicks 2015). An example of this at PERKA was the collective behaviour of participating in the general assembly that allowed everyone to share their views and have an equal say in how the organisation is run. Similarly, participation at community level further links social capital and empowerment by creating self-efficacy and confidence (Strzelecka and Wicks 2015, p.384). Again, the democratic nature of the general assembly was seen to positively influence people’s behaviour as it encouraged everyone to participate giving them confidence to involve themselves in social endeavours.

However, participation is argued to be a subjective term and may not translate into meaningful interaction, which is essential for empowerment to occur (Brennan et al. 2008). The organisational structure with more social connections led to the formation of stronger social ties at PERKA, evidenced by the closer relationships of the members. It can be argued that the close relationships demonstrate the presence of bonding capital, which is engendered by higher levels of trust and reciprocity (Putnam 2000). The establishment of trusting relationships improves people’s security and reduces the possibility that individuals will be unfairly treated or excluded from social relations due to the formation of social rules (Gintis and Bowles 2002). At PERKA interaction among members led to the formation of social rules that determined acceptable behaviour, demonstrated by the dismissal of the man who cut down a tree without consultation. Meaningful participation, where people exercise power is essential for empowerment (Keiffer 2008). The presence of strong ties created an atmosphere whereby this could be achieved by improving the ability of members to influence, communicate, share views and support each other in decision-making (Prell et al. 2009, p.503). Close friendships and family ties also contributed to the presence of bonding capital in Kipos3, yet did not influence the way resources were distributed, evidenced by the fact that one family owned three agricultural plots. It suggests that the production of social capital cannot be directly linked to the activities taking place on the garden at Kipos3 and therefore the social networks may not lead to empowerment. The power of individuals to influence decision-making at Kipos3 is limited because the organisation is owned by one individual, even though people control their own plots. Again, the socio-economic situation of individuals on Kipos3 may suggest that people do not need additional resources and therefore put less effort into the formation of stronger social ties.

The distribution of material resources at Kipos3 does not, however, disqualify the importance of the benefits accrued from existing social interaction. The findings show that people used the gardens as means to escape their everyday life, as way to relax, and as a way to be close to nature. Although it does not directly contribute to their immediate material livelihood strategy, the intangible benefits accrued through the intrinsic values of the garden may have important ramifications on individual’s social welfare. This is emphasised as people referenced they used the gardens as a way to forget the economic crisis. Empowerment may therefore emanate from the provision of intangible resources that help people cope in times of difficulty (Calvet et al. 2015).

There existed markedly increased amounts of bridging capital at PERKA, illustrated by the organisation’s connections with other social movements and organisations across Thessaloniki. PERKA’s connections with other community initiatives such as the soup kitchen and the seed bank directly empowers marginalised individuals by giving them the opportunity to access a range of different services and resources that improve their socio-economic conditions (Narayan 2005, p.4). Furthermore, a form of collective representation achieved through the formation of social connections between like-minded individuals gives the organisation greater power to influence and engage with other organisations (Glover 2004). The formation of common ideas and goals facilitated by interaction means that the organisation becomes a platform of representation for the interests of participants (Firth et al. 2011; Kingsley and Townsend 2006). Thus, individuals are given greater agency within the wider community enabling them to affect change through the collective voice and influence of PERKA. In contrast, there was no such evidence of bridging capital at Kipos3, which may be because of the small size and recreational use of the organisation, meaning it is not necessary to form such relationships. Consequently, social capital remains within the organisation between members who participate in social networks. These findings emphasise the centrality of organisational structure to the production and distribution of social capital. They reinforce the findings of Firth et al. (2011) that emphasise that interest-based communities export the benefits of social capital to the wider community, which incentivises positive socio-economic change. Similarly, bridging and bonding capital is argued to occur more frequently in times of threat, especially if the threat is felt collectively across the entire social group (Chitov 2006, p.446). This may explain why there are
stronger social ties at PERKA where participation is a direct result of the socio-economic effects of austerity.

7.2. Contestations of neoliberal governance

This section will trace how processes of empowerment through social practice support the emergence of contestations of neoliberal governance (both physically and ideationally). The concept of empowerment is operationalised using the context of neoliberal governance, emphasising how agency and ability allow citizens to take back control of their livelihoods from dominant narratives of social organisation. Importantly, this section does not argue that these two UAGs are involved in a conscious systematic dismantlement of the current system. Instead it is suggested that through the socialisation of ideas, values and practices that counteract processes associated with systemic neoliberalism, multiple processes of change and contestation may occur.

7.2.1. Physical practices

The findings illustrate that PERKA members felt more affected by the socio-economic effects of austerity than Kipos members. The level of dissatisfaction with the current socio-economic conditions in Thessaloniki is therefore higher and may contribute more to the contestation of the dominant neoliberal system.

The results indicate that both organisations see their physical presence on the gardens as necessary for the preservation of green space within Thessaloniki. Kipos and PERKA therefore reiterate findings in the literature that UAGs are a physical means of opposing the neoliberalisation of space by preventing the acquisition of land by private investors (Eizenberg 2012). Through systemic neoliberalism private business come to influence the structure and organisation of urban development through the acquisition of land and property (Peck and Tickell 2002, p.395). Thus the practice of self-organisation on public land through “the commons” gives agency and control back to citizens, directly challenging the authority and exclusionary practices of private enterprise within urban areas. The collective management of space is recognised to empower citizens by allowing them to produce their own visions of space and collectively claim its ownership (Pudup 2008).

The findings demonstrate that the formation of bridging social capital at PERKA enabled social networks to be formed within and beyond the organisation itself that contribute to the way people source material resources. Through practices of subsistence production and the sharing of goods, citizens actively reconstitute processes of production and consumption (Tornaghi 2017), aligning with notions of the solidarity economy that increasingly marginalises the middle-man and profit-seeking activities in favour of the citizen (Rakopoulos 2014a; 2014b). Ultimately, control of food production and self-organisation frees people from the dependence on the market food system, allowing them to claim food sovereignty (Tornaghi 2018, p.793). In contrast, there was less evidence of contestation at Kipos because members were limited by their physical resources that did not afford the same levels of subsistence as PERKA. Similarly, the absence of bringing capital prevented the connection to other solidarity initiatives meaning that members are still largely reliant on the market.

The reconstitution of material and social practices around cooperation and solidarity promotes an alternative ‘human economy’ that diverges in its structure and values from neoliberal principles (Graeber 2012). In other words, PERKA contests dominant neoliberal narratives that separate labour and capital by integrating these processes within spaces of the commons; and supplementing other economic activity through connections with the wider solidarity economy. These processes of social organisation around the needs and priorities of citizens has transformative implications for wider socio-economic practices, as the solidarity economy operates outside of the purview and control of the state through self-organisation (Arampatzi 2017a). Through the procurement of the means of production, knowledge and systems of social support in PERKA, socio-economically marginalised people increased their individual power vis-à-vis the market by accessing cheaper goods and services through networks external to the state and the market. Community based organisations establish social networks that may even come to physically substitute traditional state and market services (Boyes-Watson 2005).

7.2.2. Ideas and values

Although physical practices pose a direct contestation of dominant governance narratives, the process of
participation and engagement with practices of solidarity may further generate shifts in ideas and values that come to supplant the normativity of certain logics and values of everyday life under systemic neoliberalism (Morales et al. 2014, p.424). The results demonstrate that cooperation and “helping each other” are integral values at both Kipos³ and PERKA. Specifically at PERKA, the collective agreement about the guiding principles of the organisation endorses “the commons” as a form of social organisation based on values of civility and cooperation that contribute to the formation of community (Glover 2004). The social practices and values based on individualism and competition that reinforce processes of neoliberalisation (Morales et al. 2014) come to be replaced by sharing and cooperation through the formation of strong social bonds.

Papataxiarchis (2011) argues that solidarity is a practice that is a response to socio-economic conditions associated with austerity, which is clearly evidenced at PERKA. However, this is not to say that contestation is absent in the social relations at Kipos³. Members give multiple meanings to the garden, such as being important for socialising and generating a sense of belonging. The fact that the members of Kipos³ need this space to form these relationships is testament to fact that neoliberal spaces do not cater for the needs and priorities of citizens. Even though the garden is not used as a livelihood tool, it is still used as a way to escape the everyday worries of urban Thessaloniki. It does therefore contest the dominant narratives within the city by expressing dissatisfaction or “stress” with everyday life. Despite not being a direct affront on the practices of neoliberal governance, the sharing and socialisation of everyday concerns facilitated by social networks allow visions and imaginations of the future to take hold (Rakopolous 2014b). In this way, “‘solidarity’ works as a ‘conceptual bridge’ between sociality and understandings of the self in crisis” (Papataxiarchis 2011, p.205). Even if not drastically divergent from everyday life, participation in the gardens creates alternative experiences of everyday life that is different to the hegemonic norm (Eizenberg 2012) and the act of participation itself legitimises these alternative ideas and values.

The results from the interviews demonstrate that there was a greater political consciousness at PERKA and awareness of the political consequences of the organisation. The wider production of bonding and bridging capital may spread this political consciousness through processes of socialisation such as the general assembly, where people gain knowledge and information regarding political activities. This enables meaningful participation in urban life because people are provided with knowledge that informs decision-making (Brennan et al. 2008). The presence of a political consciousness means that crises are no longer legitimised as a norm of the neoliberal system because people are aware of the negative socio-economic consequences (Tierney 2015; Reid 2013). Ultimately, the sharing of knowledge means that “solidarity” as an alternative system is inherently “a political project aimed to empower…on ‘horizontal, anti-hierarchical’ terms” in direct contrast to current systems of neoliberal governance that is ruled top-down by a wealthy elite (Papataxiarchis 2011, p.207).
8. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to understand the ways in which social capital is produced and distributed on two different Urban Agricultural Gardens in Thessaloniki and how this contributes to citizen empowerment. Based on these findings, the study further looked at ways in which the production of social capital lead to contestations of neoliberal governance. The research situates itself at the juncture of a ‘neoliberal transition’, where the rise of social movements that express dissatisfaction with the marginalising socio-economic effects of the current system of austerity are forming alternative systems of governance external to the market and the state. Through the identification of reasons for participation in UAGs, resources gained from participation, and the relationships between members and the organisational structure of these UAGs, this thesis places itself within the ongoing discussion that sees empowerment being socially constructed through social relationships.

The results of the interviews and observations are mixed but nonetheless give insight into the way people use Urban Agricultural Gardens for the provision of both material and non-material resources, and ways in which this contributes to coping strategies through the improvement of individual agency and abilities.

The empirical material has demonstrated that there was a marked difference in the reasons for participation between the members of the two organisations. Members of PERKA were found to use the garden out of necessity and as a means to pursue their livelihood, whereas members of Kipos\(^3\) mainly used the garden for recreational purposes. This can largely be attributed to the difference in the socio-economic status of individuals, as members of PERKA were found to be more affected by the economic crisis and subsequent policies of austerity than members of Kipos\(^3\). The resources gained through participation were found to be similar across both organisations, with knowledge, social networks, neighbourhood aesthetics and friendship being the most referenced non-material resources on both gardens. Despite this, PERKA members gained considerably more material resources because of the larger plots of land that allowed the cultivation of more crops. Furthermore, non-material resources were also produced to a greater extent at PERKA, which can be seen to be a result of the organisational structure that allowed strong social ties to form between individuals. Subsequently, this meant that more bonding and bridging capital opened up greater opportunities through the extension of social networks. PERKA had a formal and democratic governance structure that allowed members to collectively make decisions and influence conditions on the garden, whereas Kipos\(^3\) operated on a more informal basis with no defined organisational structure. Consequently, the strength of ties between individuals was weaker due to more infrequent and less intense forms of interaction between members.

Through the application of a theoretical framework that operationalised the concept of social capital and Social Network Analysis, it was possible to interpret the empirical material and identify the extent to which the production and distribution of social capital empowered members. It was interpreted that the prevalence of greater levels of bridging and bonding capital at PERKA significantly improved the abilities of members to have influence over their socio-economic conditions. This is because through stronger social connections, access to resources was improved. Additionally, through the collective representation of the organisation people are given greater agency to represent their needs and assert influence over governance processes. In contrast, empowerment at Kipos\(^3\) was less pronounced because of the loose ties between individuals and the organisation. However, it is noted that participation in Kipos\(^3\) did have positive effects on individuals through formation of friendships and the existence of a place to relax, which may have empowering effects (although not in sense of being able to influence socio-economic conditions).

The research found that contestations of current neoliberal governance structures were more pronounced at PERKA and links were drawn between increased sense of empowerment and incidences of contestation. It was found that through social practices contestations were both physically and ideationally constituted. By physically conducting economic activities through alternative social channels at PERKA actively promoted the solidarity economy through abstention from the market economy. This took the form of removing the middle man from transactions through the direct growing and sourcing of food and other goods. Kipos\(^3\) participated in fewer physical practices of contestation because their food-producing capabilities were so small. Ideationally both organisations can be understood to contribute to contestations of neoliberal governance, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It was found that through meaningful participation in the social practices of UAGs, logics and values of competition and individualism
associated with neoliberal forms of social organisation are increasingly challenged through the emergence of values of cooperation and sharing. Ultimately the emergence of ideational contestation may prevent the reproduction and reconstitution of neoliberal systems.

The findings relating to the production and distribution of social capital is limited because it is a form of interpretation that is contextually dependent both temporally and spatially, and is further specific to the epistemological and ontological positions of both the interviewer and the interviewees. Furthermore, practices outside of the activities of the Urban Agricultural Gardens were not assessed, which limits the analytical significance of the findings. It cannot be determined whether the social practices on UAGs form a significant part of the livelihoods of members without an analysis of variables affecting empowerment outside of these organisations.

Taking the above into consideration, this study provides a small look into the social production of empowerment of Urban Agricultural Gardens through the production and distribution of social capital. Despite its limited scope, this research nonetheless provides the groundwork for a more comprehensive study into the significance of social relationships for the livelihoods of Greek citizens, especially in relation to the marginalising effects of austerity after the economic crisis; and is a solid contribution to wider studies of behavioural economics in times of crisis. The thesis gives a glimpse of the feelings of Greek citizens towards policies of austerity and governance structures centred on neoliberalism. In addition, this research contributes to understanding the different socio-economic needs of citizens, emphasising that needs go beyond the simple economic conceptualisation envisaged under neoliberal governance.
9. References


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