

Sustainable Community Movement Organizations

This volume shines a light on Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs), an emergent wave of non-hierarchical, community-based socio-economic movements, with alternative forms of consumption and production very much at their core.

Extending beyond traditional ideas of cooperatives and mutualities, the essays in this collection explore new geographies of solidarity practices ranging from forms of horizontal democracy to interurban and transnational networks. The authors uniquely frame these movements within the Deleuzian concept of the 'rhizome', as a meshwork of alternative spaces, paths and trajectories. This connectivity is illustrated in case studies from around the world, ranging from protest movements in response to austerity measures in Southern Europe, to the Buen Vivir movement in the Andes, and Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) in the Caribbean and Canada. Positioning these cases in relation to current theoretical debates on Social Solidarity Economy, the authors specifically address the question of the persistence and the durability of the organizing practices in community economies.

This book will be a valuable tool for academics and students of sustainable consumption, environmental policy, social policy, environmental economics, environmental management and sustainability studies more broadly.

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Sustainable Community Movement Organizations

Solidarity Economies and Rhizomatic Practices

Edited by Francesca Forno and Richard R. Weiner

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Solidarity Economies
and Rhizomatic Practices

**Edited by
Francesca Forno and
Richard R. Weiner**

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Chapter 6 is a slightly adapted version of an article published in 2015 in the *Journal of Co-Operative Studies*, 48 (8): 7–18.

Glossary

AENs Alternative Exchange Networks (AENs) are solidarity-based exchanges and cooperative structures founded on principles of social and ecological values, participation and cooperation. Some examples are community currencies; barter clubs; citizens' self-help groups; farmers' markets; decentralized networks of workers' cooperatives; time banks; community supported agriculture; and various local community initiatives around food, housing and healthcare.

Assemblage Assemblage involves a putting together – as in a re-assembling – of previously disconnected practices, establishing relations between them. It is associated with *agencement*, the activity as well as the arrangement of an intensive ensemble or network, one constituted by emergent effects of self-ordering forces of heterogeneous material that come to mesh together. It prefigures and configures dynamics of becomingness amidst the *rappports* of intersubjectivity within an ensemble, and not within fixed structural relations. This involves a breaking up and then a recombinative participating in further connectingness. Alongside this, there is a capacity to interweave and enmesh horizontal/heterarchical connectingness.

Buen vivir Buen vivir (living well) is the Spanish term for the Indigenous worldview of *sumac kawsay*, i.e., ecologically balanced community life. It refers to a culturally sensitive and community-centric way of doing things: about not the individual *per se* but the individual in both a social solidarity context and a respective unique environmental situation. It is based on the belief that true well-being (“the good life”) is only possible as part of a community. As a worldview, Buen vivir is a sensibility opposed to a development-centred approach. Furthermore, in its holistic view of life, humans are understood not as owners, but as reciprocating stewards of the Earth and its resources. Nature is therefore considered not as “natural capital” but as a being without which life does not exist.

Commoning Commoning defines a specific way of use and production, distribution and circulation of resources through democratic and horizontal forms of governance which give rise to and sustain social systems (the “commons”) in which resources are shared by a community of users/producers (the “commoners”). As a verb, it describes the social practices used by commoners over the course of managing shared resources. Commoning means to participate in unfolding projects for social change, which aim to have implications for politics, economics and the planet.

Deleuzian thinking An *assemblage*-based ontology, Deleuzian thinking taps into the findings of theorizing on complexity and emergence. Such theorizing shows that critical thresholds in some physical and biological systems can be said to “sense” differences in their environment that trigger self-organizing practices. Gilles Deleuze and his frequent co-author Felix Guattari studied emergence in terms of potentiality rather than actuality, specifically the potential to differ. This potential is understood as one that is actualized in lines of creation and connectingness as well as in relations among geometries and geographies of power. Deleuzian thinking is more interested in a continuously recombinant becomingness and continued connectingness than in some underlying beingness. This becomingness is understood in planes of immanence. Immanence is here understood as lines of creativity/novelty, as fugitive moments that traverse a framed field, stir it up, deconstruct it, possibly leading to a coalescing around some new arrangement, that is, some new *assemblage*.

Geographies of co-responsibility Such geographies denote a wider sense of social-economic relationality where we encounter the complexity of engaging others in pluralized ever-changing struggles. Derived from the theorizing of Doreen Massey, the concept addresses multiplicities of spatial relations amidst both geometries of power and efforts at embodied co-responsibility. The co-responsibility looked to is grounded in spatio-temporal relations of connectingness, rather than in economic definitions of maximization and optimization. Such a sense of geographies of responsibility involves fiduciary obligation as stakeholders within a trust network. This is a geographically imagined *assemblage* interweaving horizontal/heterarchical co-responsibility as a meshwork of value chains. Involved here is a pooling out of common goods, which were once called private goods.

Micropolitical cartography A sense of cartography that maps social movement of novelty. It is a *rhizomatic practices analysis* that we

turn to in order to trace and portray alternative spaces, pathways, connections, conjunctions and trajectories “in between” assemblages and meshworks. As such, it taps into the capacity/capability involved in the mutual ordering of heterogeneous rhizomatic practices of connectingness. A rhizomatic practices analysis shifts focus from integrative functional differentiation in some organismic or systemic whole to performative connectingness in the emergent horizontality of innovative practice.

Pooling resources Pooling resources means inventing new forms of commoning based on the embodied inter-connectedness of reciprocal solidarity. This pooling is founded on social learning *vis à vis* local norms, values and interests at multiple scales. Through commoning/commons projects, bridges are built between and beyond social roles: for example, bridges between consumers and producers, employees and employers, and clients and service providers. Pooling resources of various types is fundamental to building new social systems in which reproduction stems from the direct participation of a community of users/producers who are able to reclaim and share. They are motivated by a set of values fundamentally opposed to those embedded in the capital circuits. These are values of solidarity, mutual aid, cooperation, respect for human beings and the environment, horizontalism and direct democracy.

Rhizome In Deleuzian thinking, rhizome is not an aborescent (tree-like) representation but a stringy/clewy-like substance. It is more of an immanent process of becomingness, connoting decentred multiplicity or network. Deleuzian thinking helps us grasp the unceasingly restless hyper-connectivity of cross-cutting, zigzagging and boundary spanning of performative offshoots. Rhizomes spin off their seeds like crabgrass: i.e., ceaselessly establishing connections, junctions, interconnections. These offshoots easily become woven, undone and re-woven. Rhizomatic reference denotes the subterranean character of the biological rhizome, evoking a network quality of interlinked forces beneath the surface that have adapted to resist striating forces from the surface and the air. As such, it is the opposite of Aristotelian concepts of rootedness/aborescence. Rhizomatic refers to the practice of rhizomes, not as foundational elements, but as ontological openness to continued connectingness, i.e., performative offshoots of cascading emergent connections and reconnections burrowing ever forward, capable of new elective affinities and upsurging.

Rondas The term relates to the phenomena in Peru of *Rondas campesinas*. These are community organizations of peasants in the

foothills of the Andes. They are involved in alternative policing, monitoring and adjudicating of alternatives to practices associated with capitalist justice. The term *Rondas* comes from the Spanish for the practice of rounds of patrolling to keep watch against intrusions on communal territory, including its cattle and mineral resources. Completely horizontalist/mutualist in method, these practices became officially recognized and institutionalized in the Peruvian Constitution.

ROSCAs Rotating Credit and Savings Associations (ROSCAs) are informal financial institutions made up of a group of people which agree to put their money into a common fund, generally structured around monthly contributions. A ROSCA emerges within a community-organized series of contributions and withdrawals. ROSCAs are most (although not solely) common in areas where access to formal financial institutions is limited and among individuals who might not have access to such institutions.

SCMOs Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs) are constituted by social movement actors who work towards building dynamics of innovation and reciprocity within communities. Within the SCMO, environmental protection and social justice issues are inextricably intertwined. Different than traditional social movement organizations, SCMOs have the peculiarity of mobilizing citizens primarily through their purchasing power. However, within these initiatives, the act of buying is promoted not simply individually but within a socialized sensibility among a group of people. This active and participatory collective practice qualitatively distinguishes its unique political action from individualized forms of political consumerism; SCMOs, in fact, utilize political consumerism not just to build awareness to step up pressure on producers and corporations but, even more significantly, to facilitate the construction of new alliances between different actors, starting from the local level.

SEDs Social Economy Districts (SEDs) are economic systems of material flows based on mutual engagement and joint activities among different actors that help each other to meet their needs of purchase, sale, exchange goods, services and information, according to principles inspired by a commitment to building an economy that is local, fair, supportive and sustainable.

SSE Social Solidarity Economy is an ethical and values-based approach to economic development. It is an approach that prioritizes the welfare of people and the planet, rather than profits and economic growth (as measured by gross domestic product [GDP]).

The core ideas of SSE are cooperation rather than competition and meaningfulness for people instead of profit. In such an approach, people play an active role in shaping all of the aspects of human life: economic, social, cultural, political and environmental. SSE as an approach can encompass all sectors of the economy – production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance.

1 Introduction

Sustainable solidarity economies: rhizomatic practices for another world

Richard R. Weiner and Francesca Forno

Introduction

Throughout the last decades, and particularly since the end of the Cold War and the spread of neoliberal capitalism, the global political space has profoundly changed. Shared disillusionment with traditional institutional politics has implied a retreat from its codified spaces; struggles for emancipation take place mostly through the informal constitution of groups that challenge traditional categories of political participation (e.g., left and right, class identities). Moreover, and not surprisingly, giving the market's increasing importance in shaping the (everyday) worlds of people across the globe, these movements move “from the streets to the market” – more and more often enacting politics through consumption (e.g., boycott, buycott platforms and apps, alternative/sustainable lifestyles). Furthermore, against a patterning of action that tended to verticalization and centralization in bureaucratic institutions, emphasis is given on decentralization, self-organization in non-hierarchical groupings and the creation of horizontal alliances of potentially global reach among local groups who further similar interests: they have a “glocal” dimension.

This anthology weaves together a coherent series of contributions and case studies on emergent social-economic forms of alternative organizing. These forms try to constitute autonomous normative ordering based on mutual regulating social-economic networks whose constitutive provenance lies in heterarchical multi-stakeholder social pact-ing. As such, they are both embedded social insertion and embodied responsibility of pooling common resources. These forms by following along the theoretical lines detailed by Elinor Ostrom (1990), may also be interpreted as inter-connectedness of reciprocal solidarity and endogenous trust for common resource stewardship.

Often also referred to as “common-based peer production” (or CBPP), such a form of collective action is emergent in different parts of Europe as well as in North and South America. By focussing not only on production but also in consumption, procurement, micro-financing renewable energy, organic food schemes, and anti-extractivism, they aim at evolving toward sustainable alternatives to commodified patterns of consumerism. In doing so they manifest intent on meeting the need of the present without compromising the capability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Within recent debate on collective action and various forms of activism, the concept of *Sustainable Community Movement Organizations* (hereafter SCMOs) has been proposed to indicate grassroots efforts to build alternative, productive, and sustainable networks of production and exchange by mobilizing citizens primarily (though not solely) via their purchasing power (Forno and Graziano, 2014). By acting primarily on the market, such grassroots initiatives attempt to create new economic and cultural spaces for civic learning as well as consumerism and producerism actions (Andretta and Guidi, 2017) that aim to construct and sustain alternative markets based on knowledge exchange, loyalty, and trust. In other words, the networks they form facilitate both the circulation of resources (information, tasks, money, and goods) and the construction of common interpretations of reality, thus simultaneously providing a framework for collective action and enabling the actual deployment of alternative lifestyles (Forno *et al.*, 2015).

SCMOs often include experiences of mutualism, such as in projects of welfare from below, consumer-producer networks and cooperatives, Alternative Food Networks, urban agriculture/urban gardening, barter groups, time banks, recovered factories, local savings groups/alternative currencies, fair trade, ecovillages, and social and solidarity economy networks. These initiatives address at once *ecology* (climate change, resource depletion, reduced biodiversity, diminishing land fertility, diminishing wildlife, etc.); *economy* (reduced family’s income and purchase power, unemployment, increasing difficulties for small enterprises to keep afloat in the face of increasingly powerful and oligopolistic multinationals); *society-culture* (insecurity and unsafety, polarization of life opportunities, diminishing happiness and well-being, spreading of so-called psychological discomfort) in their being interconnected and co-emerging aspects of the same system.

Instead of appealing to formal (local, national, international) institutions by lobbying and/or putting pressure so as to make them change their political decisions, SCMOs act locally by ongoingly building

concrete alternatives to the system they are contesting. Instead of asking for change they produce the change itself in the form of alternative ways of socio-ecological and economic organization, establishing novel material and cultural-symbolic patterns.

The cases discussed in this anthology demonstrate how SCMOs are alternative organizations which, while contesting around capitalism and markets, experiment with alternative ways of organizing. Then is done in the attempt to revamp moral principles (such as equality, democracy, and sustainability) within society and to contrast growing extremism and populism sentiments. By foreshadowing a confederal frame of thinking, imaginatively projecting and anticipating a more flexible and polycentric institutional architecture, such efforts involve a re-territorialization and re-municipalization of material flow in interlocal/interurban networks which more and more often converge in transnational advocacy networks of cities pursuing a geopolitics of communing and code connectivity.

SCMOs are the bedrock within the so-called *Social Solidarity Economy* (SSE), which is a term increasingly being used to refer to a broad range of organizations that are distinguished from conventional for-profit enterprise, entrepreneurship, and informal economy as they have explicit economic, social, and environmental objectives (Utting, 2014). All those myriad of experiences include cooperatives, mutual associations, NGOs engaged in income generating activities, women's self-help groups, community forestry and other organizations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprise, and fair trade organizations and networks. Such movement organizations are understood as the basis of:

- a *sustainable governance*, and
- generative social entrepreneurship of stakeholders co-creating value by a confederated communing connected to networks.

As Forno and Graziano note in the second chapter of this anthology, SCMO self-reinforcing value chain networks inclusively interlace and encourage direct relationship between consumer and producers. For example, there are innovative micro-credit/micro-financing alternatives; local and social currency alternatives; and investments through purchase of shares/or deposits with ethical financed institutions linked to another new practice, "ethical banking." SCMO institutionalized governance is organized, not by private capital, but by mutualizing and networking cooperatives aligned SSE commitments and practices based on Alternative Exchange Networks (AENs) and/or Solidarity

Economy Districts (SEDs). In such governance, *reciproqueteurs* associate themselves on the basis of skill and through effective communicative interaction on a multiscalearity of platform levels.

SCMOs are motivated by commitment to the creation of shareable resources along with the democratic governance of such resources to sustain people and the planet. They use markets and their privileged limits – rather than the streets – as the battlefields. But beyond the governmentality of neoclassical and neoliberal market-mindedness, SCMOs move to the creation of what Ostrom refers to as *non-rivalrous common pool resources*, both alongside and outside the market. These constitute eco-systems evolving toward sustainable development and alternative forms of consumption in different parts of the world.

Concretely, the SCMO involves a new mode of resilient social pacting that is grounded in *decentred mutual stakeholder social pacts* (MSSPs). The intention of such new multi-stakeholder social pacts is to rebuild new social relationships around some radical revision of the market and practices of an excessively commodified environment (Bäckstrand, 2006). SCMOs are institutionalized by MSSPs locally, and beyond in levels of multi-scalearity.

The SCMOs' purpose is the creation of *value chains* of shareable resources embedded within the system of capitalism, such as knowledge, services, goods, labour, and solidarity purchasing power. Within this value chain network are co-stakeholders, co-producers, co-owners, co-users, and co-responsible *reciproqueteurs*. They seek to improve market access and market opportunities, therefore addressing grand challenges such as tackling climate change, fostering gender equality and attempt to reduce poverty, providing good food for all and more affordable healthcare.

In other words, the SCMOs can be understood as a *community of practices* underpinning new forms of consumption and production: an enduring constellation of arranged interconnected performances, with an arc of subject positioning (Torfing, 1999), a trajectory of how such practices shape, spawn, and develop each other. The SCMOs are *assemblages* of interwoven practices of mutually interactive performances for the sake of commitments, expressing mutual accountability (see here Rouse, 2006: 333; Schatzki 2008: 33). In this sense, they are “prefigurative”: they try to embody an alternative world that might become concrete for people outside of their “niche.” Privileging direct interaction and rejecting higher-level organization, in fact, does not imply that they cannot scale up through replication, the creation of networks, and alliances.

Stunning us out of habituated narrative, these (pre)fugitive instances capture moments of rupture and a collective imaginary, which

overflow the framed field and mobilize demands that cannot be sufficiently satisfied in a habituated present (Touraine, 1977: 362). There is an institutionalizing at work – as an imaginative projecting of new values (Joas, 1993, 2000a, 2000b). This projecting opens up a constellation – an arc, so to speak – of intersubjectively new horizontal social positioning. And with it, a future of difference and heterarchy, rather than of homogenizing hierarchical ordering (Torfing, 1999). New spacings and new timings are opening in our midst in geographically dispersed meshworks (Delanda, 1996, 1998, 2016) across conventional territorial and organizational boundaries.

SCMOs as rhizomatic becoming

SCMOs emerge and evolve as the result of long-term social practices by creating new “spaces” or “fields.” In doing so resound of echoes with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s (1987) ontology of creativity and becomingness. This is the swerve of novelty, prescient fugitive flashes of fugitive moments sublimating into institutionalizing form (Wolin, 1994) which – the subtitle of the anthology refers to. In order to map the complexity of immanent relations that are not reified and fixed into something neatly defined, Deleuze and Guattari introduced the concept of *rhizome*. As a concept, rhizome helps to grasp the unceasingly restless hyper-connectivity. This is the cross-cutting, zig-zagging boundary-spanning of performative offshoots. This is the incessant connecting, which includes all concerned actors involved in the on-going process of making participation and negotiation¹ (see Deleuze, 1986).

As opposed to Aristotelian concepts of rootedness and aborescence, Deleuze and Guattari approach sensitizes us to comprehend the cross-cutting, zigzagging, entangling undergrowth burrowing ever forward. What is described is path-creative action of emergent connecting-ness and weaving/enmeshing. Deleuzian thinking is more interested in their becoming open to continued connecting-ness than in their being (van Wezemaal, 2008: 170–171).

Root gives way to rhizome

What endures, noted Carl Jung (1965), “endures beneath the eternal flux. The plant living in its rhizome. Life hidden in *the rhizome*.” Within the available spaces in fissures, rhizomes spin off their seeds like crabgrass, ceaselessly establishing connexions, junctions, interconnexions – woven, undone, rewoven. Rhizomes wander imaginatively, mangling and entangling. And we can detect map-like folding

and refolding – open, reversible, detachable, reworkable in constant iteration and alteration.

The perspective from rhizome therefore enables to appreciate the complex dynamic of SCMOs emergence, as well as the multiple nodes of unceasing creation and cross-connexion they establish while building new heterarchical multi-stakeholder social pact-ing. The rhizome is a practice/ a flow, not a structure. It calls forth an entangled web of movement as displacement and transition. Specifically, not understanding society as a structure, but as a clustering of self-spreading flows, capable of new elective affinities. *The rhizomatic* connotes upsurging, wandering, and dispersal – emergent properties of connecting-ness, rather than fixed ones. Rhizomatic interlinkages can be disruptive fostering of novelty or a recursive fostering of stabilization.

Rhizomatic emergence relates to a clustering and interweaving, a capacity to assemble and enmesh heterarchical entangling rather than hierarchical embedding. This is understood as horizontally oriented co-articulation, co-responsibility. What Deleuzian thinking has come to refer to as *assemblage*. De Landa (2016: 1) defines this term as a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them. In so doing, actors and actants make emergent sense of each other, and not simply by the summation of the properties of their components.² An assemblage of practices and discourse configure and prefigure a becomingness within dynamics amidst *the rapports* of the ensemble, not within fixed structured relations (again, see Touraine, 1977). There is a re-assembling of previously disconnected practices.

Assemblage involves breaking up and then recombinatory participation in further connecting-ness and a capacity to enmesh that connectingness. As social insertion, there is an opening up of closed circuits of supposedly stable regulation before supposed structures unravel and dikes collapse. Rhizomatic assemblage amounts to an enmeshing composite of elective affinities, articulated as a rather stable operationally autonomous ensemble of interdependent and mutually reinforcing practices, whose participants interact through negotiations. In Deleuzian writing, assemblage is associated with *agencement*, the activity as well as the arrangement of the ensemble itself (Phillips, 2006).

Such an ensemble is referred to as a *meshwork* of connecting-ness that recursively interweaves and coordinates heterogeneous actants in a self-sustaining connecting-ness. Such meshwork has a fibrous, clewy, stringy-like character. These are force-fields within the nodes that materialize with as many dimensions as they have connexions (Latour, 2007). The force-fields exhibit an enmeshed pattern of

negotiations while at the same time manifesting intensive processes of discontinuous knowing, stirring, and emergence. Thus enmeshed, assemblages manifest emergent effects. Rapports amount to felt immersion in connecting-ness, an active sense of living by intersubjectively acknowledging one another as co-authors of idea, projects, and institutionalizing practices. This is an intersubjectivity of our creative interactions as a mutually lived experience – as a shared decoupling, recoupling, and co-emergence. Rhizomatically, rapports are scrambled, no longer conforming to the subject position spacings of the past or the present. This is a *rhizomatic emergence* facilitating norms of connecting-ness, a regulative normative framework that is to a certain extent self-regulatory.

In other worlds, there is in Deleuzian thinking a sense of continuously recombinant twists and turns, a sense of experimenting with practices, and creating new values. This is a sense of “lived planes of immanence” within practices, but it is not an ontology of internal relations with either teleology or transcendence. These are planes of becoming-ness, planes of actualization. Agency is immanent within a forming assemblage rather than in some subsuming totality, no longer understood as some universalizing grand narrative (Phillips, 2006). Deleuzian thought engages us to consider becomingness without falling into a linear realization of the possible. What is described is cascading path-creative action of emergent connecting-ness and re-connecting-ness, rather than seeming determined, sequenced synchronic path-dependency.

As “vital forces” which are virtual and actual at the same time, SCMOs can be comprehended rhizomatically, as an assemblage of constituting practice and discourse. Processes of “becoming” that can be studied as intertwined movements generative of a new way of being, ones that prefigure and configure a new sense of bindingness. Accordingly, sociological discovery needs to concentrate on understanding to what extent does such an enmeshed ensemble operate with some consistency and coherence, trying to map how such rapports scrambled in a zigzag endless movement and how then, such movement involve decoupling, recoupling, and track-switching.

Stringy/clewy rhizomatic interconnexions of solidarity practices comprise innovative valuation, innovative value chains as well as supply chains in solidarity economies. The interconnections are immanent substance of material practices resisting and disembedding conditions of commodification. All patterns that are understandable as the imaginative and institutionalizing projection of new values reveal a predicate logic of intersubjective practical reasoning. Further, as Brandom (1979, 1983, 1995)

describes, what they reveal are the normative pragmatics involved. And they are understood as chains of unfolding signifiers, unfolding categorically within a context of situated agency.

As the case studies discussed in this volume demonstrate, SCMOs can be understood as rhizomatic emergence, as well as a trajectory of a multiplicity of connexions without fixed subject positioning, and with interwoven heterogeneous paths of substantive norm-setting. Their creative becoming-ness can be comprehended as immanence toward sustainable development, a new sense of bindingness – a sense of reciprocal solidarity regarding sustainable development marked by immanent claims, what Robert Brandom (1979, 1995) refers to as *assertional warrants* with normative commitments, bringing something new into the web of entangled values and norms as moral practice. From this point of view, organizations – as socially constructed entities – form or modify through an on-going process of making participation and negotiation, which happens within the social context in which they are embedded in and through a complex relation of knowledge and power.

Analysing SCMOs with a rhizomatic lens

From the enigmatic philosophical insight of Deleuze and Guattari it is possible to glean an analysis of such performative social practices that we refer here as Rhizomatic Practices Analysis (RPA). RPA indicate the need to shift our focus from integrative functional differentiation in some organic whole – to the performative *connectingness* in some emergent horizontality of innovative practices. Rhizomes are not arborescent/tree-like rooted foundational elements, but performative offshoots. Following Deleuze and Guattari in fact, society is not to be understood as sustained by constructed pillars of corporatism, but as shifting assemblages without a real centre (see Deleuze and Parnet, 1987). As rhizomatic systems evolve through process of problematization, becomingness needs to be approached as a process-mapping without falling into a process-tracing of linear realization of the possible. Less in terms of network innovation, and more along the lines of Bourdieu's study of a field (Bourdieu, 2000). Such a field is not just one of disruptions, transgressions, and collisions but also, at the same time, one of patterned flows of traceable unfolding institutionalizing practices themselves.³

RPA therefore aims at mapping ontological emergence in assemblage/meshwork, and clustering relays of assemblages horizontally connecting multiple points amidst paranodality. As understood by Guattari and Deleuze, the rhizome itself is a map of lines of disruption transforming

into lines of flight and re-connecting-ness; its maps exhibit a process of relational and transversal meshworking. RPA mapping suggests, therefore, that we focus on the constantly contesting character of our social existence – contested structuring processes, rather than on structures themselves. This is more than process-tracing of multiple data points in political science input-output analysis. The very idea of representation is de-stabilized.

Sociological investigation into SCMOs should consequently move beyond bounded rationality to understand restless hyper-connectivity, how our innovation processes will always outrun our social representations. As a sort of micropolitical cartography of alternative spaces. RPA suggests that we follow the paths and trajectories “in between” assemblages and networks. Thus, RPA aims to tap into the capability revealed in mutual constitutive ordering. Specifically here, the capability revealed in heterogeneous rhizomatic practices of connectingness.

RPA journeys into the interior of bearing signification, into our constituting values, norms, and commitments. Practices are predicated on a culture of deliberative horizontality, exhibiting a social bondingness and commoning practices.⁴ Rhizomatic emergence should in fact not just be understood as disruptive and transgressive, but also as creative and constructive: opening patterns of self-differentiation and self-ordering beyond a micropolitics of affinity. Stabilization should therefore be described as unhinged, fractured, de-coupled and re-coupled within lines of immanence, within trajectories of new valuation.

Comprehensible as argumentative exchanges with warrants that swell and overflow frames of reference as path-disrupting and path-creating collective action, RPA sensitizes us to ontological emergence – to comprehending the perturbations, eruptions, collisions, contestation, committedness, and surges. RPA therefore helps to gauge the learning process involved in how these surges *in formation* generate new “forms of life” – opening up new circuits of re-regulation, new patterns of self-ordering as reflexive governance (Voss *et al.*, 2006).

More deeply, Rhizomatic Practices Analysis – like ethnomethodology and phenomenological sociology (e.g., Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz, 1972) – should aim to produce thick description of practices with normative commitment. This is a thick description of their participating in promising practices with associated accounting practices and interpretive procedures. However, while the RPA proposed here shares intertwining affinities with the constructivist indexical expression analysis of ethnomethodology and phenomenological sociology, it nevertheless avoids their common perspective

of “bracketing,” which Alfred Schutz endows to them – the bracketing of issues of power generating the “constantly contesting” lifeworld. Knowledge should in fact to be understood and traced as continually *in-the-making*, that is, in a continual negotiation, renegotiation and reconstruction of shared conceptualizations (e.g., Moscovici, 2001).

RPA should therefore be recognized as a mode of investigation that is rooted in time and place. A way to conduct research that needs a multiplicity of methods, using analysis of historical records and documents as well as formal and informal conversations. As focussed on becomingness within the unfolding of innovation as on the inter-connectingness of paranodality, RPA implies the need to divert from usual analyses based on linear or binary associations to concentrate on “lines of flight,” which, in Deleuze’s words, traverse a framed field, stir it up, deconstruct it, and prevent its closure (1986).

RPA aims to grasp how rhizomatic patterns evolve within an autonomous social-economic form that amounts to a meshwork of mutual responsibility and social insertion. Its ultimate concern should therefore be to discern: (1) how mutually interactive performances are accountable to each other; (2) how connecting rhizomatic practices are brought together. Put differently, RPA should tap into the capability of mutually constituting orders of heterogeneous forces to mesh together. RPA needs to understand how disparate rhizomatic sub-meshworks are brought together with some recurring coherent coordination as an enduring pattern of participatory governance. What is asked: How are they brought together in a manner enabling them to mutually self-order and self-differentiate themselves as reflexivity, and then to spread interwoven meshworks of horizontal reciprocal solidarity? Novel valuation is understandable as meaning construction in terms of connectivity norms, coherency norms, capability norms.

Specifically, taking a RPA perspective means to:

- grasp moments of rupture;
- apprehend the transgressing of inherited normative forms;
- denote transversal movements of overlapping and cross-cutting nodes, junctures and inter-connexion, as well as their capability/capacity to assemble, interweave, and enmesh connexions “in between”;
- capture movement as a flow swelling beyond, overflowing and displacing the frames which movement transgress and disrupt;
- discern how practices and discourses merge and interweave with each other to form a discursive web and make plausible and meaningful sense;

- eschew any drawing upon either reductionist sort of fixed constellation of unities, or snapshots of periodized moments of time;
- take hold of the unfolding of both the flow and the predicate logic of movement becoming institutionalizing practice;
- to map and trace “lines of flight”/“planes of immanence” opening up “planes of possibility” as fugitive frames of intersubjectively imagined new social positioning;
- interpret how these fugitive frames work at prefiguring institutionalizing practice and co-producing a form of participatory governance;
- discern how alternative valuation emerges and is offered up as an act of creative capability to participate in a movement of becoming.

Outline of this collection

The series of works presented in this anthology will show how in a social-economic sense, SCMOs take us beyond 19th century and early 20th century forms of syndicalism, municipalism, and cooperatives. By addressing grand challenges for our societies as they are building alternative, productive, and sustainable networks of production and exchange, *SCMOs* urge us to develop novel avenues of critical thinking to comprehend how rapports among and between such forms of organizing are comprised.

Overall, the different cases presented here discuss:

- i the emergence of new geographies of solidarity practices from municipal horizontal democracy to interurban and transnational networks, as well as how they are interlinked in different ways;
- ii investigate how and in what ways SCMOs communicate and set up relations within AENs;
- iii how such culture of horizontal networks and connectedness are gauged;
- iv how both ideas and practices of co-responsibility and reciprocal solidarity embody and sustain emergent SCMOs;
- iv test metaphors of SCMOs, AENs, and SEDs as distinguishable “islands of alternatives in a capitalist sea” specifically the extent to which they resist conditions of commodification and disembedded atomism;
- v raise questions regarding the durability and resilience of these organizations’ dedication to commoning and pooling resources as they move into power at the municipal level;

- vi query to what extent rhizomatic assemblages of cross-cutting connectedness emerge when people resist processes of privatization and deregulation, claiming the factor as a commonality through affective politics of precarity, despair, and co-responsibility;
- vii query to what extent SCMOs are focussed continuations of both the Global Justice Movement and the Degrowth Movement related especially to food, finance, extractivism, and climate change;
- ix query to what extent do sustainable solidarity economies' practices take us beyond Elinor Ostrom's focus on the rules and institutions governing the commons;
- x query to what extent can we create more linkages and networks between The North and The South when the multinational corporations of The North and China are such a part of the pattern in The South, feeding the cycles of "unsustainable consumption" in The North.

In the first case-based study, starting with our second chapter, Francesca Forno and Paolo Graziano draw on their foundational article on SCMOs published in 2014. They underline how, in the current time characterized by a "multiple crisis," social movements are simultaneously facing two types of challenges. First, they are confronting institutions which are less able (or willing) to mediate new demands for social justice and equity emerging from various sectors of society. Second, given the highly individualized structure of contemporary society, they are also having trouble in building bonds of solidarity and cooperation among people, bonds which are a fundamental resource for collective action. SCMOs are practice-based movement actors whose main aim is to bring different collectives together to help them developing a post-capitalistic socio-economic system in which the overriding object of profit maximization is substituted by cooperation, solidarity, and mutualism. While sharing several common traits with social movement organizations of the past, such actors tend to bypass the traditional state – addressing repertoires of action, and to focus on changing society as part of everyday politics, where the public and private spheres are increasingly blurred. Although with some differences due to their specific geographical origin, as highlighted in this chapter, SCMOs share several common traits regarding their motivations, their repertoire of action, and their organizational structures.

In the third chapter, Richard R. Weiner and Iván López take the discussion on SCMOs further developing an operationalization of such new social-economic concept of embodied economic co-responsibility, resource pooling, and stakeholder stewardship. As formulated, SCMOs

illuminate a new form of social insertion: the creating from the bottom-up of sustainable value networks by co-producing stakeholders. What is projected and constituted discursively and economically is trust networking with which to frame and reconfigure institutional practices. SCMOs co-construct a sensibility of a need for a river going back to its normal flow after a disastrous flood, as in unbridled growth and capital accumulation. Such trust networking involves paradoxicality, the involvement of more than one single dominating code. The chapter utilizes a case-study focus on the lessons learned from the 15M movement in post-Franco Spain, when new initiatives emerged as new spaces for social action. The abbreviated name “15M” refers to the date of May 15, 2011, when thousands of people – mostly from the 50% plus unemployed young people – occupied public spaces in major Spanish cities, especially in the well-known Puerta del Sol in Madrid. Having lost trust in the two-party system, this movement targets embedded regime corruption and demands more citizen participation. Further, it has developed autonomous SCMOs for solidarity-based exchange on an urban and inter-urban basis.

In the fourth chapter, Angelos Varvarousis, Viviana Asara, and Bengi Akbulet explain how the “movement of the squares” has produced a vast literature, where most of the attention has focussed on the encampments period. The case-based study examines the movement’s unfolding following the end of the more visible cycles of mobilization and its decentralization. It is argued that a crucial aspect of this evolution lies in the creation of a social infrastructure of alternative (re)productive projects. They call this type of outcomes “social” in order to distinguish them from the cultural, political, and biographical outcomes underlined in typologies on the consequences of social movements. Through a comparative analysis of the movements in Athens and Barcelona, they show how the commoning practices of the square encampments gave rise to more enduring commons disseminated across cities’ social fabrics. Their analysis identifies both direct and indirect mechanisms of movements’ transmutation into commons. Further, the authors distinguish the former into transplantation, ideation, and breeding processes. The article also scrutinizes the political dimension of these commons in relation to what has been framed as the “post-political condition.” Ultimately, it is maintained that the post-square commons constitute political and politicizing actions for activists, as well as for users of the effects of commoning on everyday life. The authors discern the capacity of such commoning in linking their practices with broader, structural dynamics of injustice, inequality, and exclusion; as well as with their selective engagement

with counter-austerity politics. This paper constitutes one of the scant empirically grounded attempts to bring together social movement studies with the literature on commons, and to build a conceptual framework of their relationship within a rhizomatic lens.

In the fifth chapter, Alice Dal Gobbo and Francesca Forno examine how overconsumption, with associated processes of consumerism and commodification, has gained centrality and it is today at the heart of several contemporary social movement organizations which stress the contradiction between capitalist growth versus living conditions in the community. Drawing on the case study of GAS (Solidarity Purchase Groups) in Italy, this chapter looks at how people self-organize to achieve socially and environmentally sustainable transitions. Key issues addressed in this chapter are how political consumerism and collective practices of sustainable procuring and provisioning can challenge commodification. Further, these SCMO practices constitute the bases for original “assemblages” that not only give concrete alternatives to the current unsustainable system, but indeed embody a novel style of doing politics.

In the sixth chapter, Caroline Shenaz Hossein details how millions of Black people in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Haiti, and Toronto use informal cooperative banking systems in low-income communities known as ROSCAs. These are money pools embedded, organized, and managed by women known as banker ladies on the basis of peer to peer (P2) lending alongside conventional commercialized banking systems. This is not done only to meet livelihood needs, but also to build reciprocity by helping their family, friends, and community. This chapter utilizes interviews and focus groups held in the aforementioned Caribbean and Canadian sites with 322 people between 2007 and 2015. Money pools function as sustainable solidarity economies evolving from ancient African traditions. They ripen under conditions of slavery and colonization. This case study research argues that throughout the Caribbean, and in the diaspora to Toronto, Indigenous ROSCA banking systems – with localized names such as *susu*, *partner*, *meeting-turn*, *box-hand*, and *sol* – are enduring rhizomatic practices that historically and currently are taking a bold stand against exclusionary financial systems.

In the sixth chapter, Raquel Neyra starts with how driven by economic growth policies, material and energy extractivism in the Global South offers cheap uprooting of natural resources and labour prices. Then Neyra goes on to detail how in the Andes, capital accumulation meets with local resistance of peasants and Indigenous peoples. Neoliberal policies of Peru since the 1990s emphasize

extractivism as the foundation of all the future governments. In Peru, we have resistance of “Rondas Campesinas” and the Defence Fronts. When peasants and Indigenous peoples defend their habitat and way of life, they participate in the preservation of the “buen vivir” (“living well”). The defence of the environment gives them a new sense to their lives, a sense that they draw on a recovered culturally sensitive worldview and material practice known as “buen vivir.”

The solidarity economy practices of SCMOs rhizomatically constitute not only geographies of co-responsibility, but constitute as well ecosystems evolving toward sustainable albeit alternative modes of consumption and production in different parts of the world. These practices move from urban to interurban meshworks, and then cross national borders through transnational advocacy networks (TANs). These case studies are rich and at times both unheralded and unexpected as they catalogue and delineate a new sense of bindingness and autonomy in these SCMOs’ innovative connected collective actions. There is an underlying connectingness here, one that reveals how these SCMOs project new values and new practices – to open up closed circuits, overflow them, and lead us beyond the grip of persisting neoliberal governmentality.

Notes

- 1 In *Cinema 1* (1986), Deleuze introduces the concept of “planes of immanence” as the medium through which we creatively evolve. These planes of immanence denote fugitive moments – “lines of flight” – that traverse a framed field, stir it up, deconstruct it, and prevent its closure. Each line of flight is a path taken to flee a given arrangement of some bundle of practices, possibly leading to that bundle’s disillusion, possibly coalescing around some new arrangement. The “lived planes of immanence” within practices are not just lines of flight, but planes of becoming-ness.
- 2 DeLanda (2006) describes Deleuzian thinking as assemblage-based ontology, in terms of Leibnizian compossibility. That is ontology that is open to continued connecting-ness, so long as the context of innovation and novelty are sustained in a non-essentialist manner, and continuously remade. Latour (2007), in *Reassembling the Social*, speaks of a clustering of self-spreading assemblages, self-spreading flows capable of new elective affinities.
- 3 Alexandra Steinberg discusses “rhizomic network analysis” more in terms of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT) where networks as actants interact with one another than the more Bourdieusian RPA approach discussed here. Steinberg, “Rhizomic Network Analysis: Toward a Better Understanding of Knowledge Dynamics of Innovation in Business Networks,” in Fang Zhao, ed, *Handbook of Research in Information, Entrepreneurship and Innovation* (Melbourne: Idea Group, Inc., 2007).

- 4 This is suggested by Elinor Ostrom’s ideal typical reciproqueters pooling resources. For Ostrom, commoning involves founding and enforcing institutions for governing knowledge and resources. Ostrom discussed institution-building to govern the commons as “polyvalent” and multi-scalar – similar to assemblage/meshwork theorizing. However, her analysis was functionalist in character as it focusses on the roles and institutions “governing the commons” – not on the process of commoning itself, not on the process of commoning in terms of social solidarity. As such, it is closer to a rational institutionalist account than the RPA approach we are developing here.
- 1 Author’s reworked translation (*italics added*) of Karl Marx (1850), “Unser System, Oder die Weltweisheit und Weltbewegung Unserer Zeit”/Marx-Engels-Gesamtesgabe / Marx-Engels Completed Works, (MEGA-1), Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1958, p. 599.
- 2 Gar Alperovitz and Ronald Hanna, “Mondragón and the System Problem,” Truthout, editorial, November, 2013. Alperovitz and Hannah discuss the bankruptcy of Fagor Electrodómesticos, part of the large Basque cooperative Mondragón. The bankruptcy is understood as a result of competing in the global market with Chinese companies. They stress “moving to scale”: what we discuss as gauging what level in multi-scalarity of markets and political arenas a cooperative should play.
- 1 For a more comprehensive literature review of the usage of social movements in the commons literature see Varvarousis (forthcoming).
- 1 This is reconducible to the feminist critique of the “male” character of Modern politics, so much so that we might argue that the “individual” we are talking about is the white-male-European-heterosexual-rational individual that has imposed himself on the rest of the world as neutral model of human being since the 17th century. In this respect, it is interesting to notice that people taking part to GAS are overwhelmingly women.
- 1 This chapter is a slightly adapted version from the originally published paper in 2015 titled “Black women as cooperators: Rotating savings and credit associations (Informal cooperative banks) in the Caribbean and Canada” in the *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 48(3): 7–18 and the author was granted permission by the journal editor Jan Myers on 27 March 2019.
- 2 The Kudumbashree movement has impacted more than five million people. See more at: www.thebetterindia.com/119677/kudumbashree-poverty-gender-5-million-kerala/
- 3 I use the term informal cooperative banks but also use the terms, financial collectives, ROSCAs and self-managed banks to refer to the same phenomenon.
- 4 On 12 January 2010, Haiti experienced a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that left 300,000 persons dead and 1.5 million people displaced and living in tent cities.
- 5 The Canada and Trinidad cases are part of 2013 to 2017 fieldwork for a number of various conferences and papers.
- 6 Buckland (2012) makes a distinction between unbanked and underbanked.
- 1 I am a member of Frente de Defensa Ambiental de Cajamarca.
- 2 Cattle thieves.
- 3 MRTA: Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement.
- 4 Municipal Ordinance no390 CMPC, Municipality of Cajamarca, June 27, 2012.

- 5 See EJAtlas.org.
- 6 See different initiatives on Tajimat Pujut (good living), on YouTube or in writing.
- 7 According to Global Witness, in 2014 Peru was the fourth country with the most deaths of environmental defenders, only in 2015 were 12 people killed and in 2016 two people. But the figure may be higher because not all cases are known.

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