

En-gendering Macroeconomics & International Economics
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Women in solidarity economy in Greece:
Liberation practices
or one more task undertaken?

Irene Sotiropoulou
irene.sotiropoulou@gmail.com

The schemes & initiatives

- Grassroots, rare support by local authorities (or rare attacks)
- Solidarity principle explicitly used to distinguish them from charity & from competitive utility/profit-maximising economy
- Parallel currencies, exchange networks, free bazaars & networks, kitchen collectives, social kitchens, social medical centres, social education centres, collective land cultivations, etc.
- Vast participation of women

Work needed

- Establishment & organisation of a scheme or collective
- Collective decision-making as hard work
- Individual & collective learning
- Tackling everyday little issues so that they do not become large & permanent
- Secretarial services, PR, accounting & stock management, cooking, cleaning, etc
- Keeping an eye on principles & their implementation
- Other personal, social & political work?

General trends in the economy

- High unemployment, precarious job market rising
- Vast reductions in incomes, benefits, etc
- Deterioration (through personnel reductions & sharp cuts on material expenditures) or mere elimination of public services
- Reduced incomes of people make the support (in money or work or materials) of grassroots initiatives more & more difficult
- Sectors which were already privatised (like tutoring, artistic or language education) are not anymore accessible by the majority
- Sectors which were public get privatised through closing down hospitals/clinics, technical schools, technical universities & academic departments

Theoretical frameworks to understand the situation?

- Initiatives as spaces defying private-public divide
- Patriarchal-capitalist-colonial perceptions about the economy, economics and the ability of women to participate in both
- Women's agency on individual & collective grounds
- Distress volunteering & pressure coming from needs (or perceptions about who is obliged to satisfy them)
- Women's experiences, discourse & action as grassroots theory and/or as a pillar of post-colonial understanding of anticapitalist resistance

Methods & ethics of research

- Participatory observation, free discussions with scheme members or in assembly, interviews, reflection & reflexivity
- Does the agency of the participants prevent me from pointing out practices which I think are detrimental to individuals or to collectives?
- Does the agency of the participants and their collectives waive my responsibility/freedom) to consider
 - a) problems that some members point out one or another way
 - b) problems that members do not point out, but arise again and again in the collective discussions, not pictured though as solidarity problems
 - c) problems that members or collectives do not point out, or do not consider yet as important

A. One more task undertaken?

- Overworked people, not shared tasks
- Pressure from social needs on the service provider
- Solidarity work is highly relational on multiple levels
- Is setting personal limits enough? Are limits an individual responsibility only?
- Solidarity work is voluntary & attempts to go beyond wage labour. However, all work is labour in terms of quality expected, liabilities, and worker's reproduction
- How solidary is a structure if they forget to leave space, time and materials for reproducing the social beings which engages in solidarity economy? Is it solidary to let all responsibility for this reproduction to the people or to the collective who perform this work, at the benefit of the society?

B. Liberation process?

- Women gain experience through trial & error, access political spaces of negotiation & debate not accessible to them even some years ago
- The political economic value of "low politics", or why cooking, cleaning, keeping records & translating is still low politics?
- Solidarity vs resistance. Why food security is less resistance than demonstrating in a street?
- Work done within non-hierarchical framework gets disdained because it is done with hands & body to cover mostly bodily needs
- Resistance & theory through covering human basic needs, with solidarity work done with the body

C. Final questions

- If we are not solidary to the people who work for solidarity, is this really the societal form of non-capitalist future we want to construct?
- If we are solidary with the working class, then why aren't we solidary with the solidarity worker?
- How can a researcher become solidary with women & men tackling with such solidarity issues without overpassing their freedom, creative powers & political agenda?

More at

- http://www.scribd.com/Irene_Sotiropoulou
- <http://independent.academia.edu/IreneSotiropoulou>
- http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Irene_Sotiropoulou/

At FB in Greek (usually!)

Ανταλλαγές Παράλληλα Νομίσματα