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Heterotopian Markets for Degrowth: An Ethnographic Inquiry

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Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support for an application for another degree or qualification of this university or another educational institution.

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Abstract

The present work engages with the task of reinventing markets for degrowth by extending the work on heterotopia to the study of market practices. The literature review reveals that, as social and ecological constraints to economic growth have become increasingly apparent, emergent views on sustainability are calling for a transition towards degrowth rather than green growth. It is acknowledged that, whilst a transition to degrowth does not necessarily have to involve an abandonment of markets, the architecture of existing marketing systems has been shaped by two centuries of unprecedented economic growth. Therefore, if markets are to operate beyond the growth paradigm, it is argued that notions of the market will have to be radically reinvented. In this regard, scholars have argued alternative currencies as market devices that can be deployed with the aim of achieving a range of degrowth objectives, principally the creation of social capital, localization of economies, valuing non-productive labour, and enabling collaborative consumption to reduce environmental impacts of current life-styles. Given these arguments, alternative currency schemes have emerged as a suitable area of inquiry to explore the practices through which degrowth communities build sustainable systems of provisioning that retain a market form.

An alternative currency scheme known as Puma, which is implemented in an area of Seville known as El Pumarejo, has been identified as a suitable empirical case to investigate these processes. The Puma is a type of alternative currency scheme known as Local Exchange Trading System (popularly known as LETS), which is implemented by a degrowth community of more than seven hundred members. Given that the emphasis was on markets as performances, which are enacted in webs of sociomaterial practices, this research was undertaken through an ethnographic strategy. Fieldwork was undertaken over a period of six weeks, which was followed by four revisits of approximately one-week

duration each. Data was collected through a range of ethnographic techniques; including participant observation, ethnographic interviews, focus groups, research dairies and field notes, as well as organisational documents and archives. Research findings are presented in an ethnographic narrative, which has been articulated around a thematic analysis produced through a process of hermeneutic interpretation.

Research findings highlight that the Puma currency scheme is embedded in concrete place dynamics, community ties and practical concerns, which are specific to the context of El Pumarejo. Moreover, this work identifies market practices and material devices through which a heterotopian market is enacted. For example, a detailed discussion is provided regarding exchange and bartering practices through which exchanges are accomplished between members. Furthermore, this research discusses various material devices employed in such practices, such as the Puma passbook or the CES software, which highlights the centrality of non-human elements in the enactment of heterotopian markets. Nevertheless, opening up the heterotopian market blackbox required an examination of infrastructural work through which members sustain the alternative currency scheme. In this regard, this work identifies a number of market-making practices beyond those of market exchange, namely epistemic practices, communication practices, community care practices, and enrolment practices, as well as other practices involved in the organisation of events such as Mercapuma and the Central de Abastecimiento. Ultimately, the symbolic dimension of the Puma currency scheme was examined. In this regard, members appear to be actively involved in the coproduction of meanings and identities which subvert prevalent notions of private and public property, gender, citizenship and consumerism, wealth and debt. Conclusions and implications of these findings for degrowth and marketing are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The ambivalent role of marketing in contemporary sustainability debates

From a historical perspective, it can be argued that the relationship between marketing and environmentalism has been of an ambivalent nature. Marketing's ambivalent role in contemporary sustainability debates is apparent in the different interpretations that oscillate between excessive hope and dismal pessimism. On the one hand, marketing has been demonised as a source of all environmental ills by many. In this respect, marketing's capacity to fuel the expansion of materialism and hedonist consumption (Assadourian, 2010), its strong commitment to managerial interests (Hackley, 2009) and maximisation of shareholder value (Kilbourne, 1998), or its reproduction of neoliberal forms of governance by turning citizens into consumers (Isenhour, 2010), have made of marketing a classic environmental villain (Peattie, 2007). However, the ecological charges against marketing have not been confined to the traditional criticism cast by members of green pressure groups. Rather, it appears that highly negative attitudes towards marketing's environmental responsibilities are increasingly being shared by lay citizens and customers (Pereira-Heath and Chatzidakis, 2012; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Crane, 2000). Other critics such as Smith (1998) go further than this, suggesting that even the greenest expressions of marketing operate as a perverse mechanism, which serves to alleviate the pressure for radical institutional changes by enabling consumers and businesses to feel that they are "doing their bit" – despite large scale environmental destruction and increasing social inequalities.

On the other hand, the historical success of marketing in transforming consumer culture continues to fascinate others. In this respect, many

advocates of environmental reform acknowledge that marketing technologies have a great potential to promote the adoption of greener lifestyles in the conditions of late capitalism (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2010). From this perspective, it has been suggested that marketing can become a driving force in greening the private sector, either by channelling demand towards greener products and services or by enabling businesses to gain competitive advantage through the adoption of more environmentally responsible practices. Others highlight that an underexploited potential for sustainability policies is to be found in the area of social marketing (Peattie and Peattie, 2009). It is suggested that, provided that marketing's commercial objectives are replaced by environmental ones, the use of marketing technologies can help governments and green activists to improve the effectiveness of their campaigns on issues such as recycling, energy conservation or even de-marketing.

To be certain, moral efforts to discern whether marketing is a sustainability friend or foe tend to lead to conceptual and ideological stalemates. Therefore, a more productive strategy to make sense of marketing's ambivalence to sustainability would acknowledge that the discipline is entangled in a web of unresolved tensions and paradoxes that render marketing a usual suspect. The challenge of untangling these webs will require scholars to question some of the main assumptions that have dominated the relationship between marketing and the natural environment since the 1970s.

1.2 Between hope and delusion: an inquiry into the conditions of possibility for sustainable marketing

In his seminal work "Marketing and the Ecological Crisis", Fisk (1974) anticipated that pressing ecological challenges will urge marketing scholars to confront questions regarding the architecture, functioning,

scale, and value of existing systems of provision head-on. The early work of Fisk (1974), as well as other scholars such as Shapiro (1978), emerged as a critical response to the apparent awaken of marketing to social and environmental concerns during the 1970s (Arnold and Fisher, 1996). At the time, terms such as social marketing (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971), ecological marketing (Kassarjian, 1971; Henion and Kinnear, 1976), or societal marketing (Kotler, 1972), were being coined to highlight that marketing management theories, tools and practices, could be successfully applied to analyse and solve social and ecological problems (Crane and Desmond, 2002). Whilst Fisk (1974) was not particularly radical in terms of the specific macromarketing reforms that he envisaged, this author was wary that ecological and social micromarketing developments would not achieve much unless they were supported by a holistic transformation of marketing systems.

Forty years later, a thriving community of scholars and practitioners appears to be united around a significant corpus of theoretical and methodological developments that seek to extend the principles of marketing management to social and environmental causes (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011; Chamorro *et al.,* 2006; Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998). Indeed, there has been a boom in the amount of publications, conferences, and courses dedicated to marketing and the environment has boomed since the 1970s and it is apparent that social and environmental concerns constitute a legitimate domain of marketing management (see figure 1.0).

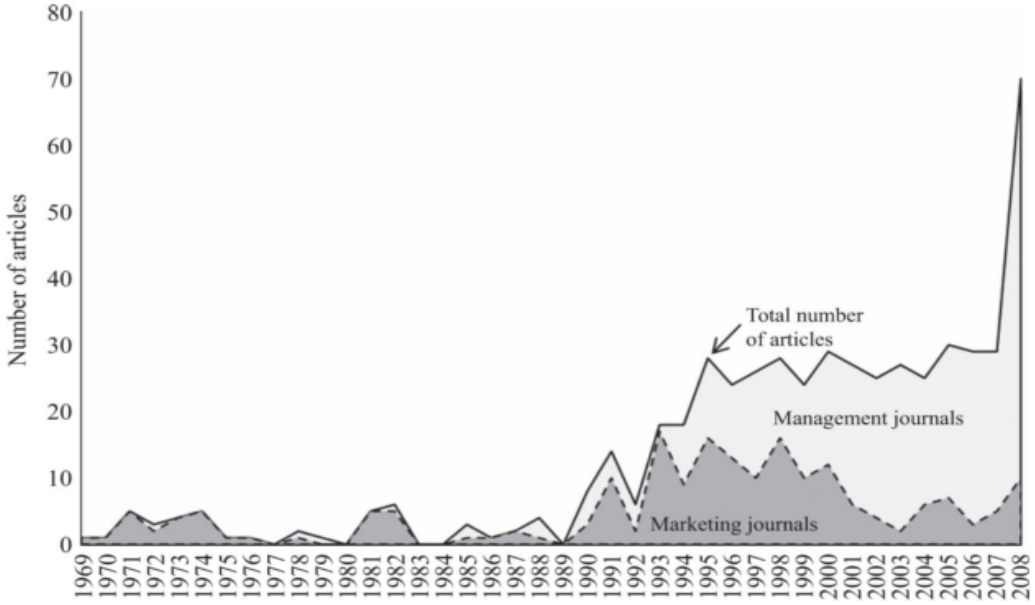


Figure 1.0 Number of research articles dedicated to environmental issues published on marketing and management journals from 1971 to 2008 (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011: p. 75).

These developments have to be assessed with caution. From a critical perspective, Hackley (2009) has discussed the subordination of marketing academia to narrowly defined managerial agendas since the 1960s. According to Hackley (2009), this managerialist ideology hampers the development of marketing as a relevant as a social science by placing significant methodological and ideological constraints on marketing scholarly work. These critical arguments resonate within the area the area of sustainability and marketing, in which the expansion of specialised marketing knowledge on social and ecological issues has been achieved at the cost of limiting, not to say impoverishing, marketing contributions to sustainability debates. Indeed, the adoption of increasingly sophisticated quantitative methods and experimental research designs cannot obscure the fact that research efforts have been devoted, fundamentally, to the task of identifying and targeting green consumers (Kilbourne, 1998; Peattie, 2001). This managerialist trend is confirmed by recent bibliographic analyses of the literature, which highlight the continuation of sustainability priorities in marketing being focused on the task of

developing portable tools and frameworks to be applied in micromarketing contexts (Chamorro *et al.*, 2006; Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011). Meanwhile, at the dawn the 21st century, when sustainability has emerged as a global and intergenerational concern, the discipline of marketing has proved unable, both conceptually and ideologically, to even begin to grasp some of the most relevant questions of the time.

Drawing upon Tadajewski (2010), it is argued that the limits of marketing knowledge are largely determined by the institutional context in which such knowledge is produced, and such institutional context is pervaded by managerialist interests and epistemologies. Such arguments pose an invitation to think carefully about the limitations established by 'the disciplinary space of marketing management', and the need to incorporate a critical perspective to the present inquiry as a means to overcome those (Hackley, 2009). In this regard, whilst the specific meaning of the label "critical" has been contested, Tadajewski and Brownlie contend that:

> '(...) critical perspectives on marketing involve a continual effort to question the self-evidences that are concretised as the boundaries of marketing or as 'appropriate' contributions to marketing thought' (Tadajewski and Brownlie; 2008: p. 18).

Notwithstanding the trends identified above appearing to confine green marketing into a rather technical and self-serving disciplinary space, a number of prominent scholars are starting to highlight the need to revisit green marketing's conceptual and ideological dimensions (i.e. Kilbourne 1998; Peattie, 2007; Polonsky, 2011). For example, Kilbourne (1998), along the lines of Fisk (1974), suggests that green marketing must incorporate a macromarketing perspective if it is to offer an adequate vantage point to analyse the current ecological crisis. Similarly, Polonsky (2011) argues that green marketing management, as it currently stands, offers little transformational value in the face of the complex challenges

posed by sustainability, and Peattie (2007) contends that existing "green" marketing frameworks have to be re-thought, re-tooled and re-mixed. The present PhD thesis holds the basic premise that micromarketing efforts for re-thinking, re-tooling, and re-mixing marketing may be futile unless a radical transformation of the "conditions of possibility" of sustainable marketing is undertaken. To avoid delusion, such endeavour must be informed by critical perspectives that enable the production of marketing knowledge at the fringes of "green marketing's disciplinary space", to use Hackley's (2009) terms. Somewhat paradoxically, as marketing abandons its self-referential approach to sustainability, and begins to engage with ecological and social issues without the conditioning effect of managerial constraints and urgencies, indirect managerial benefits may be accrued as a result of enhanced relevance, credibility, and resistance to criticism and scepticism.

1.3 Pushing the boundaries of sustainability beyond green marketing's disciplinary space: degrowth, heterotopia and alternative currencies

Although Tadajewski and Brownlie (2008: p. 18-19) prefer not to be prescriptive about what it is to be "critical" in marketing, these authors acknowledge that 'a critique of the relationship between marketing and society needs to reconfigure this [critique] beyond the boundaries of the existing social paradigm – not within it'. In the context of sustainability, following Fisk's (1974) early foresight, the challenge of discerning the conditions of possibility of sustainable marketing must necessarily involve a critical interrogation of the systems of provision in which marketing theory and practice are embedded. The present PhD thesis seeks to make a contribution in this direction by incorporating a number of sustainability developments that have received little or no attention by marketing scholars. More concretely, the present work draws upon two conceptual developments that lie at the fringes of the "disciplinary space of green

marketing", namely degrowth (Varey, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013) and heterotopian space (Chatzidakis *et al.,* 2012). Such conceptual developments are particularly useful to question existing marketing systems because each of them poses a challenge to pillars upon which such systems of provisions have been erected.

1.3.1 From sustainable green growth to sustainable degrowth

According to Varey (2010), economic growth has turned into a prevalent criterion to gauge the comparative performance of marketing systems to deliver quality of life. Different systems of provision, including marketing systems, are compared against one another in terms of their capacity to stimulate the highest rates of economic growth. Traditionally, the discipline of marketing has been 'hand in glove' with macroeconomic aspirations to pursuit economic growth (Shankar *et al.,* 2006: p. 488). Indeed, whilst marketing cannot create disposable income, Shankar *et al.* (2006: p. 490) remind us that 'in the end people, acting as consumers and participating in market-based exchange relationships, lubricate the economy and keep it ticking over'. In this regard, Firat and Dholakia (1998) chronicle the instrumental role of marketing, particularly from the post-World War II period to the present, as a technology to create demand for the outcomes of increasingly productive economies.

As noted by Peattie (2001a), the notion of sustainable development, coined in 1987 by the United Nations, has contributed to highlight that marketing must embrace a model of management that acknowledges the potential conflicts between the needs of present generations and the needs of future generations. However, as a macromarketing vision, sustainable development has not altered in any significant manner the instrumental position of marketing in the growth economy. With existing systems of provision building their productive capabilities for the so-called green economy, particularly in sectors such as green energy,

transportation, housing or food, marketing continues to be central for ensuring that an increasing amount of green commodities are absorbed by demand (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Therefore, the pursuit of economic growth, albeit green economic growth, is expected to continue by shaping consumer choices through green marketing practices and technologies (Moisander *et al.,* 2010)

With remarkable exceptions (Varey, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013), marketing scholars have seen these developments as a positive step in the transition to sustainability; thus, they have applauded the transformation of existing systems of provision along the lines of green growth (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2010). However, critics are beginning to ask questions regarding the purported sustainability of the green growth model. For example, what if the pursuit of green growth is socially unfair and likely to widen the gap between rich and poor (i.e. Victor and Jackson, 2012)? What if the timing required by the transition to a low carbon global economy is entirely inadequate to remain within the safe thresholds for climate change (i.e. Victor, 2012)? What if green growth is no longer an option and the actual choice we are facing is between degrowth or collapse (i.e. Martínez-Alier *et al.,* 2010)? Indeed, degrowth critics are envisaging a global sustainability horizon that is no longer concerned with economic growth, not even in its green variety, but with scenarios in which economic contraction and convergence can occur without undermining people's quality of life (Martínez-Alier *et al.,* 2010). In this regard, sustainable degrowth is often depicted as planning for a "soft landing" in a post-growth world. The present PhD thesis will draw upon notions of sustainable degrowth to undertake a radical critique of growth-driven systems of provision, including green growth, in which marketing theory and practices are embedded.

1.3.2 Reclaiming markets for degrowth and heterotopias of resistance

As critique shifts the emphasis from green growth to degrowth, sustainable marketing will have to answer questions regarding the new systems of provisions that will fill the gap left by their growth driven counterparts. In this regard, the present work suggests that the transition towards a degrowth society is not necessarily anti-markets *per se*. Indeed, if we are to avoid the shortcomings of large-scale bartering or command-and-control in degrowth societies, we will surely need new market varieties to enable the production and allocation of resources. And yet, the task of envisaging markets compatible with degrowth appears a daunting one, particularly in sight of a global economic landscape, whose markets have been shaped by two centuries of unprecedented economic growth; but if not here and now, where and when can we find examples, ideas, intuitions, or inspirations to envisage and engage with the construction of systems of provision for degrowth?

Within this thesis, the strategy to approach this question has been to draw upon the notion of heterotopias of resistance, as applied by Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012: p. 494) in their study of an Athenian neighbourhood called Exarcheia. The notion of heterotopia combines the Greek prefix *heteros* – another, different - and the suffix *topos* – place. Therefore, in a literal sense, heterotopias are “different places”. Heterotopias, as formulated by Foucault, are spaces of otherness that involve a rupture with what is experienced as “normal” or “ordinary” life in a given society. Therefore, in this Foucauldian sense, notions of heterotopia have been applied to study spaces of difference, exclusion or deviance, such as asylums, brothels, or prisons. Nevertheless, Marxists geographers, such as Harvey (2012), were dissatisfied with the reduction of heterotopias’ emancipatory potential to a hesitant “politics of the self” in the work of Foucault. In this regard, for Harvey (2012), heterotopia is not only a space in which life can be

experienced differently, but also an emplacement in which societal alternatives to the dominant capitalist order are under construction.

Drawing upon the latter interpretation of heterotopia, Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012) employed the concept to study the Athenian neighbourhood of Exarcheia as a site of resistance and construction of a more radical praxis regarding green consumption. Following the steps of Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012), the study of heterotopias emerges as an opportunity to engage with radical reconstructions of green market realities at the fringes of growth-driven capitalism. Whilst it is clear that markets in a degrowth economy will have to differ substantially from those systems of provision that we identify as markets today, the quest for new market concepts remains uncertain and ongoing. Meanwhile, marketing has not only omitted degrowth as a foreseeable sustainability horizon but also, as argued by Venkatesh *et al.* (2006), the discipline appears to have surprisingly little to say about markets. The present work seeks to address these limitations by examining the construction of market realities in heterotopia from the perspective of sustainable degrowth.

1.3.3 Heterotopian markets and alternative currencies

According to Shaw (1995), markets and money are inseparable concepts, particularly as it is only through the adoption of money that bartering can be replaced by the kind of multilateral exchanges that characterise markets. In this regard, Marx coined the term “cash nexus” to describe how money enshrined capitalist market relationships, based on the alienation of commodities and people for exchange, in the fabric of society (Ingham, 2004). Despite the centrality of money in the emergence of markets, the relationship between monetary innovations and market

transformation remains largely unaddressed by marketing scholars - for a remarkable exception see Dholakia's (2011) work on Finanzkapital[1].

Critical scholars have questioned the Marxist view of money as an inherently alienating technology (North, 1999). Likewise, they have contested the prevalent economic narrative according to which money is a neutral, rather unremarkable tool that simply enables, but does not affect in any significant manner, the course of economic exchange (Ingham, 2004). Instead, drawing upon Seyfang and Longhurst (2013: p. 65), it is argued that 'money is a socially-constructed institution, so alternative systems of exchange, or financial services provision, can build-in more sustainable incentives and structures than conventional money'. Broadly defined, the notion of alternative currencies is used here as an umbrella term to define monetary innovations created by communities outside – although not necessarily against - the circuits of national currencies (Blanc, 2011). Whilst alternative currencies have been implemented to pursue a broad diversity of goals, they tend to deployed with the purpose of subverting existing credit relationships that are regarded as oppressive (North, 1999). Within the context of environmental sustainability, alternative currencies are implemented with the aim of achieving a range of degrowth objectives, principally the creation of social capital, localization of economies, valuing non-productive labour, and enabling collaborative consumption to reduce environmental impacts of current life-styles (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Given these arguments, alternative currencies emerge as a suitable area of inquiry to explore the enactment of heterotopian markets within this PhD thesis. A discussion of these critical issues will be provided by drawing upon empirical insights from a study undertaken within an alternative currency scheme in the city of Seville (Spain). More specifically, this research involved an ethnographic

[1] Dholakia's work is discussed on page 71.

study of a mutual credit system, popularly known as LETs, implemented by a group of degrowth activists in an area of Seville known as El Pumarejo.

1.4 Summary of forthcoming chapters

Chapter Two situates these arguments in the literature on marketing and the natural environment and states the research aim of the present work. Chapter Three discusses the methodological approach followed by this inquiry. Following these, the research findings are discussed in Chapter Four and their main implications are highlighted in Chapter Five. In chapter Six, the author provides recommendations and advances potential avenues for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 The centrality of markets in contemporary sustainability debates

A large scale transition towards the so-called green economy, within which economic growth, business profits and consumer expending, would be rapidly decoupled from environmental damage, is being called for as a solution to the world's main economic and ecological problems (Bina and La Camera, 2011). According to this view of sustainability, the transformation of brown capitalism into green capitalism is to be undertaken by harnessing market forces rather than opposing them (UNEP, 2011; OECD, 2011). Therefore, the complexities inherent in the challenge of making the transition towards a sustainable global economy are to be addressed by:

> Working with the grains of the markets and free-choice, not against it. It means embracing capitalism as the only overarching system capable of achieving any kind of reconciliation between ecological sustainability, one the one hand, and the pursuit of prosperity and personal well-being on the other (Porritt, 2005: p. 31)

Within this context, notions of the market have become central for integrating sustainability concerns into the complex socio-economic landscape of globalised capitalism (Weale, 1992; Hajer, 1995). The present discussion focuses on the historical emergence and consolidation of market-driven environmentalism in contemporary sustainability discourses. Concisely, the notion of market-driven environmentalism encompasses a diversity of approaches, ranging from policies to business and consumer practices, which recognise the seriousness of environmental problems such as climate change, deforestation, or

biodiversity loss, and attempts to develop market-based solutions to these problems. Therefore, the central proposition of market-driven environmentalism is that most of the constitutive elements of capitalist markets such as property-rights, competition, entrepreneurship, information flows, dynamic pricing, or consumer choice, can be harnessed for greening the economy (Hajer, 1995; Weale, 1992). Against the traditional view of markets as flawed institutions that are incapable of operating sustainably, it is argued that 'markets have a capacity *to react spontaneously* to the gradual build-up of economic and environmental tensions that reduce resource productivity, such as resource scarcity and pollutants' (OECD, 2011: p. 28 my emphasis).

Nevertheless, when considering the historical developments of environmentalism, it becomes evident that this positive view of markets as enablers rather than barriers for sustainability would have been regarded as highly controversial before the 1980s (Hajer, 1995). Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, environmentalism emerged as a radical critique of industrial capitalism which highlighted, among other things, the flawed nature of markets to operate within the environmental limits of our finite world (Meadows *et al.*, 1972). By disembedding the economy from both traditional social bonds and the natural environment, market relationships put economic activities at the sole service of profit-maximisation (Polanyi, 1957). Therefore, with the consolidation of the Industrial Revolution, particularly in the Western World, pressures to expand the size of the global economy legitimised the rise of capitalist markets as the most central economic institution to organise economic life across the globe (Polanyi, 1957). Environmentalists acknowledged that the rise of markets and the globalisation of trade made a general rise of material standards of living possible, one without parallel in human history. Simultaneously, environmentalists' critique of capitalism highlighted that the same advantages that turned capitalist markets into an iconic institution of prosperity rendered them entirely dysfunctional to accommodate economic

activities within physical limits of growth (Meadows *et al.*, 1972; Schumacher, 1973). From this perspective, economic growth was argued as a questionable indicator of human progress (Schumacher, 1973) whose inbuilt logic of endless expansion collided with the finite nature of the planet (Meadows *et al.*, 1972). Therefore, early environmentalists saw the relentless expansion of market relationships as paving the way for environmentally and socially rapacious corporations to continue a limitless race to profit maximization at the expense of people and the natural environment (Arnold and Fisher, 1996).

Hence, during the 1960s and 1970s, antagonistic views about market activities and environmental concern became the focus of frequent confrontations between the world of management and environmental activism (Arnold and Fisher, 1996). Whilst the latter maintained a rather hostile attitude to the world of businesses, the prevalent attitude of management was either denial or active resistance to environmental pressures (Peattie, 2001a; Menon and Menon, 1997). For environmental activists and specialised government agencies, litigation was the most commonly employed approach to establish the ecological responsibilities of businesses and enforce penalties for environmental damage related to their industrial and commercial practices (Rome, 2003). Governments, in response to legal and public pressures, enacted a number of environmental regulations on business activities. However, the general case was that environmental offenders, particularly large corporations in industries such as oil, food, petrochemical, the military, construction or automotive, continued their business as usual without any significant restrictions (Menon and Menon, 1997). Indeed, the sense of impunity with which large corporations and industrial conglomerates operated acquired a particularly flagrant tone when environmental and social damage occurred beyond the borders of the affluent world.

The purported contradictions between the functioning of markets and the existence of environmental limits, which characterised environmental discourse during the 1970s, began to be questioned during the 1980s (Hajer, 1995). Economists observed that rising prices of natural resources, due to temporary shortages, appeared to bring a whole new range of undiscovered reserves into existence by incentivising exploration or development of alternatives. In this regard, Peattie (2007: p. 199) argued that 'seeing a supposedly finite resource being almost magically expended by the simple mechanism of rising prices produced a comforting illusion that the power of markets could overcome the physical constraints of the planet´. Moreover, the argument that economic growth and environmental protection were mutually supporting objectives gained institutional presence during the 1980s (Weale, 1992). In this regard, it was suggested that affluent countries were able to adopt costly environmental technologies that the majority of their less prosperous counterparts could not afford. Moreover, it was observed that, as national levels of income per capita increased, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) tended to be less dependent on environmentally intense industries and be more reliant on services, whose ecological footprint is significant lower than the former.

Hajer (1995) highlights the instrumental role played by the OECD, through its environmental committee, as the architect of the view of a positive relationship between economic growth and environmental protection. Drawing upon Hajer (1995), the OECD environmental committee released a series of influential reports which highlighted the potential synergies between economic growth, innovation, competition, efficiency and environmental quality. By arguing that market forces could become effective drivers of environmental reform, this view emerged as an institutional challenge to the popular anti-markets ethos that characterised environmental activism during the 1970s. These OECD reports initiated a series of policy response in various industrialised nations, including Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, to incentivise the development of

environmental innovations by the private sector (Hajer, 1995; Weale, 1992). Within this context, governments in most industrialised nations began to incentivise businesses and consumers to engage with environmental issues by appealing to their self-interest, innovation and entrepreneurial capacities. Moreover, the notion of sustainable development (SD) was of central importance in the consolidation of market-based environmentalism during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1987, the so-called Brundtland report introduced the notion of sustainable development under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). In brief, the notion of sustainable development (SD) highlighted that in order to be sustainable, economic development had to satisfy the needs of present generations in a way that would not jeopardise the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs (Peattie, 2001a). Therefore, the pursuit of economic growth was acknowledged to be both legitimate and necessary, but only as long as it incorporated criteria of equity and environmental protection (Dresner, 2008). Following the Rio summit and the publication of Agenda 21 in 1992, SD policies began to place a strong emphasis on the centrality of 'the market, trade and businesses' in the process of achieving a responsible integration of environmental, economic and social goals within an increasingly globalised capitalist economy (Dresner, 2008: p. 44).In other words, it was highlighted that no transition towards a more sustainable society could take place if the private sector was not on board (Porritt, 2005; Redclift, 2005; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2000). The creation of the Business Council for Sustainable Development in 1992 illustrates this double process by which businesses began to be acknowledged as necessary drivers of sustainable development and, simultaneously, sustainable development began to be perceived by businesses not only as an important responsibility, but also as an emergent area of market opportunity (Dresner, 2008; Redclift, 2005; see also Hajer, 1995).

The adoption of market-driven environmental policies by most OECD countries was accelerated by the significant restructuring of the global political landscape during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this respect, the impulse given to *laissez faire* capitalism under the neoliberal policies of the 1980s, particularly by the conservative governments of the US and the UK, resulted in the systematic privatisation of public companies and the subsequent retreat of the state from the economy. Furthermore, the dismantlement of socialism in Eastern Europe turned capitalism into the globally hegemonic economic system. Consequently, the new ideological landscape that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s was one in which the traditionally left-wing elements of environmentalism had to be accommodated to the rampant expansion of the capitalist economic systems (Porritt, 2005; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). As Porritt put it, 'like it or not', environmentalists had to acknowledge that capitalism became 'the only game in town' (Porritt, 2005: p. XIV).

Hence, by the 1990s, social, political and economic developments had already consolidated the role of markets as a legitimate institution to address sustainability concerns (van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996). Given the strong opposition to markets and economic growth that characterised environmentalism during the 1970s, this transformation opened up new spaces for managerial efforts to redefine the meaning of environmentalism and environmental action as an area of business opportunities and a potential source of competitive advantage (Porter and van der Linde, 1995; Menon and Menon, 1997). In this respect, the widely cited paper of Porter and Van der Linde (1995), *Green and Competitive: Ending the Stalemate,* captures the win-win logic behind the emergence of market-based environmentalism. The central argument put forward by these authors was that the new competitive pressures faced by businesses had brought to an end the traditional stalemate between environmental and economic performance. The implementation of what Porter and Van der Linde (1995: 129) called 'good regulation', namely those environmental

policy tools which incorporate a market rationale, was argued to be not only good for the environment, but also a source of competitive advantage for businesses – as it promoted efficiency, triggered innovation and enhanced the quality of goods and services.

A new set of market-friendly policy instruments such as, for example, eco-taxes and green subsidies, pollution trade-permits, voluntary agreements, environmental audits or eco-labelling schemes, began to replace the use of environmental regulations during the 1990s. Moreover, a number of market signals highlighted the potential of market-driven approaches for preventing, or even reversing, serious environmental problems through the actions of environmentally conscious businesses and consumers (Peattie, 2001a; Peattie and Crane, 2005). For example, during this period, survey evidence from reputable market research bodies such as the Roper Organisation, Mintel or MORI, reported a growing consumer interest in green products and identified a willingness to pay premium prices for greener products and services (Peattie and Crane, 2005). Moreover, businesses across various sectors, particularly large corporations, gave signals of an unprecendented willingness to respond to the so-called "green tide" of consumers during the 1990s (Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990). In a widely cited study, it was found that over 90 per cent of European multinationals claimed to have changed their products in response to green concerns, and 85 per cent claimed to have made substantial changes in their industrial operations to reduce their environmental impacts (Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990). Furthermore, the number of both green product launches and advertising claims containing green messages continued to grow at rates without precedent during the early 1990s (Ottman, 1993).

In the 2000s, it became evident that notions of the market continued to consolidate their position as a foundational concept in sustainability debates (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2010). In this regard,

Arsel and Bürscher (2012: p. 53-54) conclude that 'market forces have been finding their way into environmental policy and conservation to a degree that seemed unimaginable only two decades ago'. It is argued that most conservation and environmental policies have incorporated market principles in one way or another (Arsel and Bürscher, 2012). Moreover, the so-called commodity discourse has become the dominant cultural code across the globe and therefore, it is argued that any attempt at environmental reform that fails to consider the parameters of consumer choice is likely to encounter strong resistance among consumers (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Notwithstanding the relentless growth in the number of environmentally concerned consumers having been questioned (Wong *et al.*, 1996, Peattie and crane, 2005), the greening of certain markets in the twenty-first century appears to be creating favourable conditions for consumers interested in embracing environmentally enlightened lifestyles (Prothero *et al.*, 2010). With a so-called green commodity discourse emerging in the affluent world (Prothero *et al.*, 2010), ecologically oriented consumers 'are taken to function as a powerful market force that compels firms and politicians to adopt green values and standards, thus pushing society towards a better and ecologically more sustainable future' (Moisander *et al.,* 2010: p.1470). Indeed, such emphasis on consumers and consumer choice as a driver of sustainability is consistent with the embracing of markets as central mechanisms in contemporary environmental policy (Prothero *et al.,* 2011).

Gradually, the big sustainability questions of the time appear to be no longer concerned with how to overturn industrial capitalism but rather with how to make capitalism greener through the emergence of a so-called 'green commodity discourse' (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000, Prothero *et al.*, 2010). Governments are expected to meet an increasing number of national and international sustainability commitments by deploying market-friendly policy tools such as green taxes and subsidies, carbon allowances and pollution trade permits, or payments for ecosystem-services, which

seek to turn environmental protection into a tradable commodity (Arsel and Büscher, 2012). Once ecological concerns have been commoditised, the green entrepreneur emerges as a crucial actor, whose task was to channel environmental concerns through the market by being more innovative, more customer oriented, more strategic, more transparent; in other words: more competitive than their non-green counterparts (Ottman, 1993; Menon and Menon, 1997). Likewise, the green consumer emerges as the necessary counterpart of the green entrepreneur in the creation of win-win green marketing strategies (Elkington and Hailes, 1988) and consumer choice is expected to become a fundamental driver for the emergence of green markets (Moisander *et al.,* 2010). In this regard, the success of market-driven environmentalism is largely dependent on the existence of environmentally responsible consumers whose actions, in terms of buycotting - buying from environmentally responsible businesses - and boycotting - avoiding purchases from environmentally irresponsible businesses, rewarded green business practices with significant market advantages (Gabriel and Lang, 1995).

These arguments suggests that the previously political boundaries of environmentalism have been redefined as to confine them into the realm of business and consumer actions (Isenhour, 2010), with governments and political institutions playing the role of enablers rather than regulators (Prothero *et al.,* 2011). Within this context, ´the sanctity of the market' and the belief on the purported superiority of market-based solutions to sustainability have been embraced as a 'key article of faith' (Peattie, 2007: p. 199), whereas 'distrust of markets is often dismissed as simply the expression of outdated of outdated left-wing, centralist tendencies' (Peattie, 2007: p. 200).

2.2 The market paradox in marketing studies: sources of criticism

As discussed above, the normative discourse that urgent sustainability changes will have to be undertaken within the all-encompassing landscape constituted by capitalist markets, at least in the short term, has become commonplace in contemporary sustainability debates (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2010). On the one hand, markets are expected to play a pivotal role in the transition towards a more sustainable economy and research on marketing may assist in terms of providing normative frameworks detailing how such reform is to be carried out (Prothero *et al.,* 2011). However, on the other hand, scholars have expressed their concerns that notions of the market have received a surprising lack of attention in the literature of economics (North, 1977; Callon 1998; Rosenbaum, 2000), marketing (Araujo, 2007; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006) and consumer research (Geiger et *al.*, 2012). Within the specific domain of marketing, the argument that markets are 'everywhere and nowhere' has been forcefully articulated by Venkatesh *et al.* (2006, p. 253) who conclude that 'in one of the stranger omissions of the discipline, the term market has not been employed with much seriousness or rigor'. Whilst the present work is not directly concerned with normative marketing issues, this acknowledgement raises critical questions about the notion of the market with ramifications on the specific area of sustainability. Hence, this section will provide a concise discussion of the main sources that highlight this so-called market paradox within marketing and consumer research, namely Service-Dominant logic (S-D logic), market-practices approaches and cultural approaches to markets as sign systems.

2.2.1 The Service-Dominant logic:

Following initial discussions on the need for a shift from the Goods-Dominant (G-D) logic to a S-D logic in marketing, redefining notions of the

market became a conceptual battlefield for advocates of the latter (Vargo and Lush, 2004; 2008). From a S-D perspective, moving marketing thought beyond the G-D logic required a reconceptualization of markets as 'spaces where actors in the market (later called market actors) integrate resources to co-create value – instead of being places where demand and supply meet and reach equilibrium as neo-classical economics suggests' (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011: p. 58). Indeed, Vargo (2011) suggests that one of the first things that became apparent in early discussions about the S-D logic was not only a need to redefine the notion of markets. More fundamentally and surprisingly, Vargo (2011) argues, the emergence of the S-D logic brought to the fore the discomforting fact that 'there had actually been very little study of the market at all in academic marketing' (Vargo, 2011: p. 125).

Contemporary marketing has largely taken for granted the notion of markets in its focus on market management. In this regard, Vargo (2007) contends that 'marketing scholars have likely missed this seemingly obvious need for a theory of the market because, incorrectly I argue, they have been assuming that a science of the exchange and the market is what economics had provided´ (Vargo, 2007: p. 57). According to Vargo (2007), the positive[2] study of markets has traditionally been regarded as the province of economics whereas marketing scholarship, with exceptions, has limited itself to the study of market management. Nevertheless, to date, the discipline of economics has been unable to provide a positive foundation for marketing as its principles remain deeply embedded in Adam Smith's moral philosophy (Vargo, 2007).

[2] Concisely the distinction between positive and normative knowledge suggest that the former is concern with what should be done to accomplish a certain goal whilst the latter is mainly concerned with developing an understanding of phenomena regardless of normative agendas (Hunt, 2002).

Adam Smith's (1776) ideas about the economy, which established the foundations of the discipline of economics, were normative because they were fundamentally concerned with questions about what should be done for increasing the wealth of nations rather than how markets actually functioned. During the eighteen century, manufacturing and export of tangible goods surpluses was becoming the main source of national wealth. Therefore, perhaps appropriately at the time, markets were conceptualised in terms of outputs, fundamentally manufactured products, and inputs, or factors of production, which were exchanged for money (Vargo, 2011). Such view of the market excluded all other activities which were designated ''unproductive'', not because they were useless, or even unessential, to human well-being, but simply because they did not contribute to national wealth as it was then understood (Vargo, 2011). Current understanding of the market, despite acquiring an increasing level of mathematical sophistication, continues to reproduce a highly normative view of economic exchange rather than a positive one (Vargo and Lush, 2008).

Importantly for the purposes of the present review, Vargo (2007: p. 57) argues that 'it has become increasingly apparent that economic science does not provide an adequate theory of economic exchange, let alone of the market´ (Vargo, 2007: p. 57). Markets are central to transform marketing into a *positively normative* theory of marketing, namely a normative theory of marketing based on a positive theory of the market, rather than a *normatively positive* one (Vargo, 2007). Therefore, a critique of marketing's G-D logic urges the discipline to develop 'a positive model of the market' not only 'for the generation of a more meaningful and relevant normative theory of marketing', but also as a foundation for a 'general theory of the firm and society' (Vargo, 2007: p. 58). Once the market has been acknowledged as a 'resource integrator', in which value is co-created through the exchange of services, it is argued that the S-D logic offers 'a generalizable mindset from which a general theory of the

market can be developed' (Vargo and Lush, 2008: p. 3). Concisely, the principles suggested by the S-D logic to elaborate such a foundational theory of the market involve the following (Vargo, 2007):

1- Understanding that value creation, rather than products, is the appropriate focus for analysis.

2- Understanding that value is phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary rather than something created by a provider.

3- Elimination of the producer- consumer distinction.

4- Move to a network, rather than a dyadic, perspective of exchange and value creation.

5- Consider that exchange occurs in integrative contexts at both a macro and a micro level which include not just private resources but also public resources

2.2.2 Markets as culture: the market as a sign system

Geiger *et al.* (2012) also highlight the lack of attention paid to the notion of market in the marketing literature by adopting a cultural perspective. Developing a more nuanced understanding of markets from a cultural viewpoint is an overdue task for the discipline of marketing, particularly as the rise of the sign-economy appears to be redefining the practice and theory of marketing (Venkatesh *et al.,* 2006). Within a sign-economy, commodities have become hardly distinguishable from one another in terms of their functionality, that is their use value, and thus consumers differentiate them based on their symbolic attributes or sign-value. Whilst the observation that consumers and producers not only exchange objects for money, but also the meanings and symbols entangled in such objects,

is a historical feature of capitalism (Schaefer and Crane, 2005), the rise of the sign-economy have dramatically accelerated the process of market aestheticization (Szmigin, 2006; Cova and Dalli, 2009). In this regard, Slater (2011: p. 32) argues that 'it now requires cool hunters, ethnographers and experts in memes and viral flows to bring about the response that rationalist markets and commercial technologies cannot accomplish'. Therefore, as value creation in the global economy is increasingly dependent on the production of images rather than goods, it is argued that the competitive position of capitalist firms rests upon their capacity to intervene and modify cultural knowledge for their own benefit (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006).

This call for reconceptualising markets as signs-systems and the plea to study markets as resource integrators advanced by the S-D logic, dovetail in their rejection of simplistic conceptualisations of the notion of markets that prevail in the literature (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). However, whilst both highlight that scholarly work on markets is a central research priority for marketing, culturally-oriented scholars have expressed their concern that the market concept advanced by the S-D logic fails to fully capture the symbolic dimension of economic exchange (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006). In this regard, it is argued that 'what is more important than skill and knowledge, or products and services, are the values underlying these two sets, or levels, of market symbols, which together constitute the micro elements of the life world' (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006: p. 258). Consequently, Slater (2011: p. 32) suggests that 'value arises now from signs, cultural assets and network positions'. Therefore, rather than exclusively seeing markets as resource integrators, in which use value is created and exchanged, cultural perspectives on markets study them as sign-systems that enable the circulation of meanings for commercial purposes (Venkatesh *et al.,* 2006; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006).

Along these lines, Peñaloza and Venkatesh (2006) suggest a number of steps to bring a cultural conceptualisation of markets to the centre of marketing. For example, it is crucial to revise how value is created in markets by including a critical account of meanings in exchange and use. Markets comprise exchange value and use value, as well as sign-value, which are co-produced between marketers and consumers (Cova and Dalli, 2009). However, as research focuses on the circulation of symbolic value, it becomes clear that consumers' role as co-producers does not necessarily make market relationships more beneficial to them. Indeed, the reverse may occur when considering the additional benefits marketers accrue from the appropriation of consumers' labour in producing meanings (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). This opens up the possibility to study markets as spaces for consumer-exploitation rather than neutral cooperation with marketers (Cova and Dalli, 2009).

Moreover, it is necessary to incorporate, more conscientiously, a more comprehensive view of subjectivity in the context of market relationships. As Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) demonstrates that consumers are proactive meaning-makers rather than passive receptors of meanings (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), marketing has engaged with issues of consumer subjectivity and agency in markets. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, and much work is yet to be undertaken, Peñaloza and Venkatesh (2006) argue that these issues remain largely unexplored as far as the subjectivity and agency of marketing practitioners is concerned. This argument highlights the importance of reflexivity to examine the involvement of marketing scholars and practitioners in the discursive processes through which market realities are constructed. Simultaneously, the study of markets must involve a reconceptualization of the nature of relationships between consumers and marketers, from individuals to social beings inhabiting communities (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). The purpose is to reunite marketers and consumers within a socio-cultural unit of analysis of the market. By examining the interplay between markets and

culture, it is acknowledged that market boundaries are not only blurry but also inseparable from the broader cultural context in which market exchanges occur (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Given these arguments, it is suggested that the social construction of markets within the context of the sign economy occurs in relation to the production, circulation and acquisition of meanings through economic exchanges (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006). Hence, by acknowledging this 'dynamic relationship between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings' (Arnould and Thompson, 2005: p. 868), cultural approaches urge marketers to study markets as systems in which both use value and exchange value 'are embedded in sign value' (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006: p. 255). In other words, these authors acknowledge the relevance of reconnecting markets to culture.

2.2.3 Market practices: reconnecting marketing to markets

Drawing upon the emergent perspective on market practices (e.g. Araujo *et al.* 2008), it has been suggested that 'despite omnipresence of markets in marketing discourse, the academic discipline of marketing has barely been concerned with understanding markets' (Araujo et al. 2010: p. 234). Yet, 'marketing produces markets – not only, nor on its own, but still' (Araujo *et al.* 2010: p. 1). Given these arguments, the market paradox takes an additional turn through the work of these scholars, namely that whilst market-*ing* practices play an increasingly important role in shaping real life markets (Cochoy, 1998), the ability of scholars to link marketing to markets continues to be hampered by a largely underdeveloped conceptualisation of the latter (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). From this perspective, marketing's lack of attention to markets has its origins in the debates about broadening the marketing concept during the 1960s and 1970s (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009). Following the disciplinary expansion of marketing to non-commercial contexts as a result of these

debates (Kotler and Levy, 1969), marketing was turned into a set of portable managerial technologies anchored in a generic notion of exchange (Araujo *et al.,* 2010). The embracement of a broadened marketing concept among marketing academics triggered a shift from the traditional concern with marketing institutions, functions and systems, to the construction of marketing as the science of exchange, broadly defined (Shaw, 2005). This has led the discipline to a problematic disconnection between marketing, as a practice, and markets, to the extent that the later are assumed to pre-exist the former. For these scholars, the challenge of reconnecting marketing to markets requires four approaches (Araujo *et al.,* 2010: p. 5):

- First, to reconceptualise markets as practical outcomes and not the spontaneous, self-organising arrays of dyadic exchanges depicted in marketing textbooks. In contemporary market economies, marketing practices and professionals have become crucial for organising markets.

- Secondly, to acknowledge that marketing knowledge is not merely descriptive or representative, but fundamentally performative. In other words, marketing theories contribute to create the realities that they claim to describe.

- Thirdly, it is important to move beyond generic notions of exchange to understand that market exchanges require framing. This may help to avoid confusion between market exchanges, the event, and markets, the organising frames in which such exchanges are possible.

- Fourthly, to take materiality serious by acknowledging that market actors are not disembodied agents, but hybrid collectives

constituted as assemblages of humans and non-humans – e.g. technologies, infrastructures, places.

2.3 Exploring the market paradox in the literature of marketing and the natural environment

According to Venkatesh *et al.* (2006), the market is a recurrent concept in marketing discourse despite markets, as a research subject, having not received adequate attention by marketing scholars. Recently, the lack of rigour with which the notions of the market are employed in the literature have been acknowledged as a burden to the development of three key areas within the discipline, namely the S-D logic (Vargo, 2008), markets as culture (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006), and market practices (Araujo *et al.,* 2010). Venkatesh *et al.* (2006) have referred to this gap as the market paradox of marketing.

In contrast with the dismissive view of green markets as an oxymoron by early environmentalism, the capitalist market has become an overarching normative framework to address sustainability concerns in the turn of the Twenty-First Century (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Indeed, within contemporary sustainability debates, it has become commonplace, not to say customary, to invoke 'green markets' as living examples of a 'sustainable capitalist system' which harmonises the pursuit of profits and environmental concern (UNEP, 2011; OECD, 2011). As marketing scholars embrace markets as a non-negotiable element of sustainable development (Hunt, 2011), one would expect such strong normative claims to be preceded by a careful consideration of the market concept. In this regard, Rosenbaum (2000) remind us that it is reasonable that those who endorse markets as a superior mechanism for resource allocation should be able to specify where and when a market does in fact exist and where and when it is absent. However, to date, the implications of the

market paradox identified by Venkatesh *et al.* (2006) remain unexamined within the specific domain of marketing and the natural environment.

This section will discuss the implications of the market paradox for the literature of marketing and the natural environment. Such task is timely, not to say overdue, given the rise of the market as a rather ubiquitous concept in contemporary sustainability debate. Drawing upon Kilbourne and Beckman (1998), the present review of the literature focuses on two distinct research traditions in the area of marketing and the natural environment, namely marketing management and macromarketing. Moreover, following Peattie (2001a), it is acknowledged that contemporary work on sustainability and marketing has to be read as a temporal trajectory. Consequently, rather than exclusively focusing on current literature, the history of different assumptions about markets has been traced to the 1970s. To conclude, the author agrees with Tadajewski about the centrality of examining the political and economic context in which marketing knowledge is produced and disseminated. Therefore, the present work situates marketing research on the environment within the political economy of economic growth (Varey, 2010; 2011) and what appears as an emergent shift towards green economic growth (Bina and La Camera, 2011).

2.3.1 Marketing management and the natural environment:

Crucially, early studies on marketing and the natural environment emerged in the early 1970s (e.g. Kassarjian, 1971). This was a period in which the so-called managerialist turn of marketing was fully consolidated (Shaw and Jones, 2005; Wilkie and Moore, 2003). Contextualizing the emergence of ecological marketing within the managerialist tradition, and acknowledging a conceptual proximity between them, is central to understand the manner in which markets have been conceptualized within the literature on marketing and the natural environment.

It is not until the early 1970s that scholarly work specifically concerned with ecological issues began to be published in specialised marketing journals, particularly in the *Journal of Marketing* and the *Journal of Marketing Research* (e.g. Kassarjian, 1971; Anderson and Cunningham*, 1972*; Henion, 1972; Webster, 1975). Nevertheless, the field of ecological marketing remained without any specialised knowledge infrastructure until the American Marketing Association (AMA) organised the first workshop on the subject in 1975 (Henion and Kinnear, 1976). This was a landmark event in the consolidation of ecological marketing as a formal marketing subarea for various reasons:

1- It signalled a growing interest in environmental concerns within the AMA.
2- It was the first time in which the term ecological marketing was officially coined. This served to define ecological marketing as a specialised domain.
3- It served as an initial platform in which academics and marketing professionals shared their views on the subject and negotiated the boundaries of what ecological marketing should be.
4- It was a referential event in establishing the research agenda for the forthcoming decades.
5- The proceedings of this workshop were published one year later into a book, namely Ecological Marketing (Henion and Kinnear, 1976), which is regarded as a key text within the field.

Given the success of the first workshop, the AMA organised a conference on ecological marketing in 1979 under the title of "Energy Usage and the Conserver Society" (Henion, 1979). By constituting ecological marketing as a formal subarea of marketing through these events, the AMA was expressing a concern with 'the advancement of the societal causes of improved environmental quality and resource conservation *by more enterprise in the private sector and less regulation in the public sector*'

(Henion and Kinnear, 1981: p. 340 my emphasis). The explicit rejection of regulation in favour of business-driven solutions was established upon the assumption that environmental concerns represented a source of commercial opportunities. As the research focus was placed on businesses, the majority of scholarly contributions to the nascent field of ecological marketing were fundamentally extensions of commercial rather than social marketing frameworks to the environment (Peattie and Peattie, 2009). For example, a close examination of the content of the first AMA workshop on ecological marketing reveals that the large majority of speakers were senior business executives, many of them working in companies with a heavy ecological footprint, such as *American Can Company, International Paper Company, Johnson Wax, Texaco Inc*., or *Copaken, White and Blitt* (see Henion and Kinnear, 1976). Numerous case studies were presented to highlight how greening industrial operations and product-lines could help businesses to become more competitive by saving energy and reducing waste, lowering the risk of industrial accidents, improving relationship with customers or preventing environmental regulations (Henion and Kinnear, 1976). Indeed, the natural environment appeared as a secondary concern for the founders of ecological marketing, since they generally assumed the amelioration of environmental problems as a logical by-product of businesses seizing new market opportunities in the green sector (Peattie, 2001a). Precisely because of this emphasis on commercial opportunities, non-commercial applications of marketing to advance environmentally responsible behaviours were hardly discussed as central to the emergent field of ecological marketing (Peattie and Peattie, 2009).

In addition to this commercial emphasis, early research on ecological marketing exhibited a strong normative orientation. Hence, rather than encouraging critical analyses of the relationship between marketing and the natural environment, scholars were exhorted to pursue a rather narrow green agenda (Fisk, 1974). Indeed, the review of the literature reveals that

the majority of scholarly work within the field was committed to the normative task of developing and testing marketing frameworks to aid managers' decision-making (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011; Peattie, 2007; Peattie, 2001a). Fundamentally, the latter involved the extension of conventional marketing models to niches of environmentally concerned consumers (Peattie, 2007). Webster's early reminder captures nicely the normative essence of ecological marketing during the 1970s, which have prevailed until the present days:

> At the minimum, academic authors demanding that businesses become more socially responsible in the products they offer to the market place have a responsibility to help businesses determine whether the market for such products is large enough and to make some suggestions about how it might be approached (Webster, 1976: p.129).

Besides a strong managerialist focus, and a normative orientation, a third defining feature of research on ecological marketing during the 1970s involved the adoption of a micromarketing perspective to the environment (Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Kilbourne, 1998). A review of the literature reveals that most research on the subject carried out during the 1970s fell within the category of green consumer behaviour, as applied to the process of market segmentation (e.g. Kassarjian, 1971; Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Henion, 1972; 1979; Webster, 1975; Henion and Kinnear; 1976). These studies were fundamentally committed with the tasks of articulating a valid and reliable measure of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour and establishing correlations with different segmentation variables, mainly demographics and psychographics, and to lesser extent lifestyle variables.

To be certain, the terminology has changed since the 1970s, and different labels have been given to ecological marketing, including green marketing

(Peattie, 1992), sustainable marketing (Peattie, 2001a), environmental marketing (1995) or enviropreneural marketing (Menon and Menon, 1997). However, it is apparent that, to date, research on the subject has largely adhered to the same principles identified above, namely a normative orientation, a micromarketing perspective and a managerial focus (Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Chamorro *et al.*, 2009; Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011). For example, although an inconsistency between environmental concerns and purchase behaviour has been repeatedly identified in the literature since the mid 1990s (Peattie, 2001b; Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Wong *et al.*, 1996), marketing has continued to assume that businesses' financial and environmental objectives could be reconciled if organizations oriented themselves to green markets (Prothero, 1990; Ottman, 1993; Peattie, 1992; Kotler, 2011). Indeed, the existence of such green markets, in the form of consumer demand for greener products and services, was quickly assumed to be the expectable behavioural outcome of consumers becoming increasingly concerned about ecological problems. Therefore, as surveys and opinion polls indicated that environmental concerns were becoming 'a universal phenomenon' (Roberts, 1996: p. 217), green consumerism was announced as an emergent force which, inexorably and relentlessly, was condensing the diversity ecological concerns into green market segments, waiting 'out there' for businesses to market to them. In retrospect, these arguments were excessively optimistic, when not opportunistic (Peattie and Crane, 2005). However, to a large extent, the prevalence of these assumptions in academic texts explains why the notion of green markets have been tacitly conceptualized as passive realities (McDonald *et al.*, 2012), whose latent preexistence would automatically surface and translate into purchases as a consequence of businesses making the right adjustments in their marketing mix (Peattie and Crane, 2005; Peattie, 2001a; 2001b).

Moreover, along the same normative principles identified in the 1970s, green marketing scholars have been encouraged to identify the specific characteristics of environmentally concerned individuals[3] in order to devise ways to target them more efficiently than competitors (Peattie, 2001b; 2007). Therefore, this stream of research has placed a strong emphasis on the task of developing accurate profiles of the green consumer by employing a wide range of variables, including demographics (Diamantopoulos *et al.,* 2003), psychographics (Straughan and Roberts, 1996), and more recently behavioural/lifestyle variables (McDonald *et al.,* 2012). However, substantial challenges have been encountered when trying to identify, characterize and quantify the size of green market segments (Roberts, 1996; Straughan and Roberts, 1996; Peattie; 2001b; Diamantopoulos *et al.,* 2003). In particular, the operational value of demographic data to characterize segments of environmentally conscious consumers began to be questioned in the 1990s due to the widespread diffusion of environmental concern throughout the entire social stratum (Roberts, 1996; Straughan and Roberts, 1999; Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the failure of conventional demographics such as age, social class, gender, number of children, or level of education, among many others, to profile the green consumer served to reactivate researchers' interest in the psychological profile of the green consumer (Roberts, 1996; Schlegelmilch *et al*., 1996; Straughan and Roberts, 1999; Leonidou *et al.*, 2010; Krystallis *et al.*, 2012).

[3] Whilst, to date, green market segmentation has been the most widely researched subject within the literature (Chamorro *et al.*, 2009), green marketing's normative orientation has triggered other lines of research. For example, scholars have focused on developing frameworks regarding green marketing strategy (Fraj *et al.,* 2011), stakeholder management (Rivera-Camino, 2007), the establishment of green alliances between businesses and pressure groups, and green product development (Pujari *et al.* 2003; 2004).

According to Schaeffer and Crane (2005), the employment of psychographic variables, which tend to be numerically integrated into linear models of consumer behaviour drawn from cognitive psychology, has become a fundamental feature of green marketing research. Such approaches can be situated along the lines of methodological individualism, or atomism, according to which the whole is constituted as aggregates of independent social units (Schaeffer and Crane, 2005). Following Granovetter (1985), methodological individualism presupposes the existence of an "undersocialised" market actor, whose behaviour can be explained on the basis of internal processes which are relatively stable and operate with independence of the social and cultural context in which such actor is actually embedded (Granovetter, 1985). Indeed, although consumer decision making models have become increasingly sophisticated by taking social and emotional variables into account, such as research inspired by socio-cognitive models as Ajzen´s theory of planned behaviour (Thøgersen and Zhou, 2009; Moons and Pelsmaker, 2012; Jansson *et al.*, 2010), these studies continue to assume the existence of atomized individuals who are disembedded from their social and cultural contexts (Hargreaves, 2011; Schaeffer and Crane, 2005). Therefore, the literature of green marketing has been heavily influenced by individualistic representations of the green consumer as a disembodied site of abstract preferences, desires, cognitions, or attitudes, inside which the causes of green consumer behaviour were to be found (Schaeffer and Crane, 2005; Hargreaves, 2011). Gradually, the notion of green markets has been devoid of any social, historical or even physical context, to become a numerical abstraction within statistically sophisticated models of green consumer behaviour (McDonald *et al.*, 2012; Chatzidakis *et al.*, 2012; Reijonen, 2011; Schaffer and Crane, 2005). At this point, it should be acknowledged that recent studies on the subject are providing a richer and more dynamic picture, one which is beginning to replace the static and atomized view of green markets discussed above. In particular, the examination of contextual (Chatzidakis *et al.,* 2012; Reijonen, 2011;

Peattie, 20001b; McDonald and Oates, 2006) and behavioural/lifestyle variables (McDonald *et al.,* 2012; Rettie *et al.,* 2012) emerge as encouraging steps in this direction.

As far as the material dimension of markets is concerned, most research on green marketing management has traditionally regarded the emergence of markets as the dyadic exchange of goods and services, whose nature is considered to be inherently immaterial (Fuentes, 2014; Reijonen, 2011; Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997). Above, it has been discussed that the notion of market has been built on the assumption of disembodied and culturally disembedded decision-makers inherited from cognitive psychology (Schaeffer and Crane, 2005; Reijonen, 2011). Likewise, it is argued that the prevailing understanding of products within green marketing management has been devoid of any trace of materiality (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997). In this regard, research has fundamentally focused on the intangible properties of green products such as their exchange and symbolic values. For example, concerning exchange value, research has focused on whether greener products can be successfully positioned as premium products in relation to conventional alternatives (Laroche *et al.,* 2001). Moreover, scholars have identified green products as containers of positive symbolic values which tend to be related to self-expressive psychological benefits and positive attributes such as softness, authenticity, purity, quality, etc. (Hartman and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2006; 2011). Given these symbolic qualities, research efforts have been focused on how such positive meanings can be effectively mobilized within the context of green marketing communications to enhance different aspects of brand equity (Chen, 2009). However, while green marketing scholars have extensively discussed the relevance of intangible properties of green products, concerns with the materiality of commodities and their embeddedness in dense webs of material relationships with other products, infrastructures, and artefacts, have been systematically neglected by scholar work within the area (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997).

Most importantly, the material dimension of markets remains largely unexplored in relation to the role of the devices and infrastructures that make green markets possible in the first place (Fuentes, 2014; Reijonen, 2011; Cochoy, 2008).

2.3.2 Macromarketing and the natural environment

Contrary to the surprising lack of attention received by the notion of markets within the micromarketing literature (Venkatesh *et al.* 2006), Mittelstaedt *et al.* (2006: p. 132) highlight that 'the unit of analysis in macromarketing is the market and/or the marketing system'. According to Dixon (2002), marketing systems are provisioning systems embedded in - and thus dependent of - institutional settings (Dixon, 2002). Likewise, Kilbourne (2008: p. 189) suggests that 'although markets are themselves institutions', they are not autonomous but dependent on 'antecedent institutions' which encompass various 'economic, political, technological institutions'. Therefore, the study of markets, as provisioning systems, which function as institutional arrangements embedded in broader institutional settings (Kilbourne, 2008), has traditionally been central to the literature on macromarketing (Mittelstaedt *et al.,* 2006).

Early calls for adopting a macromarketing perspective to the natural environment can be traced to scholarly work of Fisk (1973; 1974) and Shapiro (1978). These authors were dissatisfied with the body of literature on ecological marketing that was flourishing during the 1970s, which they perceived as involving an excessive micromarketing focus and managerial orientation. It was argued that, if the discipline of marketing was to make a relevant contribution to address ecological problems, it was central to transcend the perspective of the firm and incorporate an institutional analysis of marketing systems (Fisk, 1974). In his seminal work, *Marketing and the Ecological Crisis*, Fisk argues:

> By broadening the concept of marketing to embrace its long-neglected institutional aspects, the supply function of providing the material requirements of everyday life can be isolated for detailed ecological analysis (Fisk, 1974: p. 58).

Therefore, unlike the literature on ecological marketing that approached environmental concern as a management issue, macromarketing scholars put forward the notion that addressing the ecological impacts of marketing systems required a holistic understanding of markets and the contexts in which they are embedded (Fisk, 1973; 1974; Shapiro, 1978). At the most fundamental level, seeing marketing systems as institutions implies a rejection of atomistic views of exchange between sellers and buyers. In a widely cited definition, North defines institutions as:

> *(...) humanly devised constraints* that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both *informal constraints* (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and modes of conduct) and *formal rules* (constitutions, laws, property rights). Throughout history, institutions have been devised by human beings to create order and reduce uncertainty in exchange (North, 1991: p. 97 emphasis added).

It is implied in North's definition that institutions do not exist in the state of nature as they have to be *devised by humans*. By extension, it follows that the emergence of market exchanges cannot be taken for granted as spontaneous outcomes of rational individuals pursuing their self-interest. Rather, it is argued that markets are institutional settings that have to be shaped and organised in order to exist and function in ways that can be identified as 'economically rational' (Polanyi, 1957; North, 1977; Hodgson, 2001). Moreover, as institutions *structure interactions*, market behaviour can no longer be attributed to the psychological characteristics of utility-maximising individuals. Instead, it is suggested that market behaviour can

be explained on the basis of social processes such as, for example, the building of trust and certainty, the flow of information and knowledge, the existence of norms, rules and regulations, the conformation of habits and loyalty, the expression and inhibition of desire, or the protection of property rights (North, 1991). Therefore, by adopting an institutional perspective, macromarketing approaches shift their research focus to the social and collective mechanisms that shape and orchestrate micromarketing interactions (Mittelstaedt *et al.*, 2006).

In the specific context of sustainability, it is argued ecological impacts related to the behaviour of actors within marketing systems are to be explained in relation to the institutional dimension of the latter rather than individual characteristics of the former. These arguments suggests that, instead of trying to solve ecological problems from the perspective of marketing management, macromarketing seeks to address the formal and informal institutions[4] which shape the ecologically unsustainable functioning of existing marketing systems. As far as the study of formal institutions is concerned, research has examined the role of property rights and ownership regimes, regulatory frameworks and taxation, or accounting standards, in relation to environmentally destructive market behaviour (Fisk, 1973; 1974; Shapiro, 1978; Seth and Parvatiyar, 1995; van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996). For example, it has been argued that adequate price-signals can effectively discourage environmentally destructive practices by shifting demand, and by extension investment, towards environmentally benign activities (Fisk, 1973; 1974). However,

[4] North's (1991) distinction between formal and informal institutions is helpful to distinguish between the different contributions made by macromarketing-oriented scholars to understand the impact of marketing systems on the environment. Whilst the study of formal institutions is attentive to the regulatory frameworks and systems of economic incentives that influence the behaviour of market actors, a focus on informal institutions stresses the role of tacit phenomena such as culture, norms, or discourses in shaping markets.

according to Fisk (1973; 1974), marketing systems lack of an adequate institutional framework for internalising the costs of environmental externalities. In order to make price signals work for the environment, Fisk (1974) suggest cost-benefits analyses in order to calculate the costs of ecological damage. Once such information is known by governments and market actors, economic tools, such as for example green taxes, can be deployed to make polluters bear the costs of their externalities (Fisk, 1973; 1974). Other macromarketing scholars are sceptical about the effectiveness of price mechanisms to address market externalities in the context of environmental sustainability (van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996). For example, according to van Dam and Apeldoorn (1996), human rationality is not particularly well equipped to understand changes in non-linear systems such as natural environment.

Moreover, a high degree of uncertainty is unavoidable when trying to anticipate the implications of ecological damage, particularly due to the complex interdependencies between elements within biophysical systems. As these limitations eliminate certainty from cost-benefit analyses, these authors suggest that the implementation of market regulation is necessary to avoid environmental risks and their potentially devastating impacts on the well-being of future generations (van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996). Given these arguments, it is apparent that the study of formal institutions has generated debates about the most effective manner to reform marketing systems. Despite authors placing greater emphasis on either environmental regulations or green taxes, it is widely agreed in the literature that governments have an important role to play in establishing an adequate combination of regulatory frameworks and economic incentives to prevent environmental market failure (Fisk, 1973; 1974; 1998; Seth and Parvatiyar, 1995; van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996).

Nevertheless, if a reform of marketing systems is to take place without betraying the logic of democratic societies, it is reasonable to expect that

the deployment of policy tools such as eco-taxes or environmental regulations should be resting upon reasonable levels of consent and cooperation among citizens (Prothero *et al.,* 2011). Consequently, the task of making marketing systems compatible with environmental sustainability, without having to resort to authoritarian or coercive measures, is more profound than that of acting upon formal intuition as it involves addressing informal institutions shaping market behaviour. According to Varman and Costa (2008), cultural values and social relationships, as well as their specific manifestations as beliefs, morality, social norms or trust, configure an invisible background of informal institutions that shape markets. Existing market arrangements are mediated by culture and characterized by a fluid interplay between consumer identities and commodities' sign value (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Schaeffer and Crane, 2005; Prothero *et al.,* 2010). If for example, as argued by Dolan (2002), even our most fundamental perception about what are basic human needs is relative to specific cultural values, beliefs and norms, the implementation of environmental policies aimed at reducing material consumption is likely to be strongly contested within societies dominated by materialistic values (Kilbourne *et al.,* 2009).

Therefore, the transition towards a sustainable economy requires not only the successful marketing of greener products, as argued by ecological marketing, or the implementation of specific environmental policies, as macromarketing work on formal institutions suggest. Most fundamentally, the transformation of marketing systems rests upon our capacity to intervene on the informal institutions that underlie the behaviour of economic actors (Kilbourne, 1998). For example, whilst policy-makers continue to approach the reform of marketing systems through the lens of consumer choice (Moisander *et al.,* 2010), it has been argued that the pressure exerted by informal institutions is particularly strong on the demand side (Dolan, 2002). The existence of informal barriers are felt particularly strongly by those individuals committed to undertake radical

changes in their lifestyles, who are confronted with significant difficulties, personal dilemmas or even social stigma as they attempt to cut their personal consumption (Cherrier *et al.,* 2012). Indeed, within the affluent world, market efforts to promote and embrace sustainable lifestyles occur in a cultural background that normalises and celebrates consumerist lifestyles (Assadourian, 2010).

Macromarketing scholars acknowledge these limitations and highlight that any serious attempt at environmental market reform is likely to become an intractable challenge as long as marketing systems continue to be embedded in the so-called Dominant Social Paradigm (Kilbourne *et al.,* 2009; Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Kilbourne, 1998; Kilbourne *et al.*, 1997). In this regard, the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) refers to an overarching belief-system shared by the majority of members in society. In the words of Kilbourne et al.:

> A society's DSP represents its worldview, or overarching system of beliefs, for achieving progress. Specifically, the authors hypothesize that the DSP of a Western industrialized society may be understood by examining the belief systems relating to five of its social institutions (i.e., political, economic, technological, anthropocentric, and competition dimensions), which are then related to its beliefs about materialism (Kilbourne *et al.*, 2009: p. 265).

Throughout the history of industrial capitalism, the evolution of marketing system has been guided by the values inherent to the DSP. In other words, the functioning of capitalist markets reproduces an anthropocentric view of the natural world, an individualist understanding of freedom, a competitive view of human relationships, and a unidirectional view of human progress based on the combined pursuit of endless economic growth and technological development (Kilbourne *et al.*, 2009; Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Kilbourne, 1998; Kilbourne *et al.*, 1997). These

values are in-built criteria against which the performance of management is evaluated precisely because marketing systems have evolved to satisfy needs that emerge within the cultural background constituted by the DSP (Kilbourne, 1998). Consequently, Kilbourne (1998) argues that environmentally friendly extensions of marketing management, such as green marketing, are unable to offer a meaningful approach to reform marketing systems in a sustainable manner.

Moreover, Assadourian (2010) highlights that markets are embedded in cultures and thus, the practices of buyers and sellers obey changes in the cultural context in which consumption is embedded. Within the affluent world, and increasingly within developing countries, the dominant culture in which marketing systems are embedded is consumerism (Assadourian, 2010). Consumerism is defined as a culture in which the individual consumption of goods has become the main source of meaning, contentment, and acceptance. Similar to the DSP, research on consumerism highlights its mutually reinforcing coexistence with marketing systems. In this regard, consumerist culture normalizes the idea that an endless increase of material outputs is the main indicator of human progress, whilst alternative goals such as equity or simplicity are perceived as either secondary or undesirable goals. Consequently, it is suggested that as long as the ubiquitous culture of consumerism continues to shape the functioning of the marketing systems embedded within it, attempts at reorganizing such marketing systems in a way that current levels of consumption are reduced runs the risk of being perceived as a failure - rather than success - and therefore challenged by consumers (Assadourian, 2010). Regrettably, as consumerism and DSP expand geographically and become less contested across cultures it is increasingly difficult to reorganize global marketing systems according to less materialistic principles (Kilbourne *et al.* 2009). These arguments emphasize that large-scale cultural change is a *sine qua non* condition for integrating the principles of sustainability into markets. Given the urgency

of environmental action, governments, businesses, consumers, activists, scholars and other parties interested in environmental reform are encouraged to confront the cultural hegemony of consumerism through the embracement of a green commodity discourse (Prothero *et al.* 2010).

As far as market materiality is concerned, macromarketing approaches to the environment have not been more attentive to the material dimension of markets than their counterparts in green (micro-) marketing management. For macromarketing, markets are institutional outcomes whose building blocks are fundamentally immaterial, including, regulations (van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996), shared value-systems or paradigms (Kilbourne, 1998), discourses (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Dolan, 2002), or cultures (Assadourian, 2010). The material dimension of markets, including the commodities that circulate through them, the technologies and infrastructures of production, or the embodied practices of consumers, is acknowledged yet subordinated to the social forces discussed above (see Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997). In other words, the material configuration of markets is regarded as a by-product of the social forces at work including, for example, insufficient regulatory frameworks, environmentally perverse economic incentives, shared consumerist values, technological optimism, etc. Therefore, macromarketing scholars tend to subordinate the pursuit of changes in the material dimension of markets, such as market devices, commodities, technologies or infrastructures, to either changes in environmentally policy (Annukka, 2011; Thøgersen, 2005) to a transformation of the dominant social values that legitimate the configuration of the material world (Kilbourne, 1998; Assadourian, 2010).

2.4 Markets and the new political economy of sustainability: contextualising the literature review

Drawing upon Tadajewski (2010: p. 211), it is central for critical scholars to 'appreciate that all ways of thinking about marketing theory and practice are political'. Therefore, the existence of a green market paradox within the literature on green marketing management should not be readily assumed as a mere knowledge-gap in the discipline. Indeed, it will be argued here that the lack of attention to green markets, beyond a narrow focus on exchanges between atomised consumers and businesses, is not ideologically neutral but a deeply political choice related to what appears to be a global shift towards green growth at the turn of the Twenty First Century (Bina and La Camera, 2011).

The idea of economic growth as a synonym of prosperity has historically exerted a profound ideological influence on contemporary marketing thought (Varey, 2010; 2012). For example, as early as the 1950s, Drucker praised modern marketing for being the most effective engine of economic development' (1958: p. 252), and therefore, he concluded, people in less developed nations were to embrace marketing if they wanted 'to break the age-old bondage of man to misery, want, and destitution' (158: p. 259). More recently, Hunt echoes Drucker's ideas as he conflates notions of marketing, economic growth and development as follows: 'sustainable marketing is tied to sustainable development; sustainable development is tied to the wealth of nations; and the wealth of nations is tied to economic growth' (Hunt, 2011: p. 213). Conceptually, economic growth, measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is a macroeconomic indicator that merely quantifies the monetary value of economic exchanges in a given economy. However, to put this in terms that are more familiar to marketers, it is relevant to highlight that GDP growth, at least in the context of consumer-driven capitalist economies, is intrinsically bound to increases in consumption of goods and services (Fornell *et al.,* 2010). For

example, drawing upon the World Bank statistics (World Bank, 2012a), household spending represents around 60% of the EU´s total GDP and over 70% in the United States. These figures contrast with the proportion of GDP represented by household spending in China that only represents between the 40% and 30% of their national GDP. Therefore, economic growth can be understood as a global zero-sum game, in which production-focused economies such as China can increase their GDP through manufacturing only because such commodities can be exported and consumed elsewhere.

The process of economic growth has been described by Gould *et al.* (2004) as a treadmill, particularly as constant increases in productivity on the supply side require an analogous growth in the capacity of consumers to desire and purchase the commodities being produced. Given the treadmill-like dynamics of the growth model, Firat and Dholakia (1998) identify an explosion in aggregate consumption as a response to formidable gains in productive capacities achieved in the affluent world since the industrial revolution. From the seventeenth century, the productive capacity of European economies began to increase due to a combination of factors, including the liberation of market activity from feudal control and private ownership of productive forces, scientific knowledge applied to enhance industrial production, and uninterrupted flow of resources from peripheral colonies to the metropolis. Other countries such as the United States or Japan, soon followed European nations and rose as productive superpowers. For nearly two centuries, productivity increases in the global economy were offset by a corresponding growth of demand, which was able to absorb the unprecedented number of consumables being produced (Firat and Dholakia, 1998). Yet in the twentieth century, particularly after World War 2, mass-production capabilities started to saturate the capacity of markets to absorb their outputs. In the words of Firat and Dholakia (1998: p. 42), this process involved the realisation that ‘as mass-production technologies

exploded the capacity to produce, consumption began to fall behind and to create a bottleneck for economic growth'.

With economic growth being hindered by the incapacity of demand to absorb the outputs of an increasingly productive global economy, national governments began to experiment with monetary and fiscal policies intended to deal with the problem of underdemand by creating purchasing power. Nevertheless, the creation of purchasing power is not, by itself, sufficient for enhancing demand. In fact, marketing practices and technologies are central in this process given that 'in the end people, acting as consumers and participating in market-based exchange relationships, lubricate the economy and keep it ticking over' (Shankar *et al.,* 2006: p. 490). In this regard, Drucker argues the centrality of marketing for economic growth as follows:

> Marketing can convert latent demand into effective demand. It cannot, by itself, create purchasing power. But it can uncover and channel all purchasing power that exists. It can, therefore, create rapidly the conditions for a much higher level of economic activity than existed before (Drucker, 1958: p. 256).

Therefore, as increasing consumption becomes an essential element to achieve economic growth, marketing found legitimacy within the endless growth paradigm to the extent that it translated macroeconomic interests into the planning and practices of management (Varey, 2010; 2012). However, in the words of Marion (2006: p. 255), 'when marketing ideology asserts that economic evolution tends towards some state that is globally optimal, it is producing legitimization'. Therefore, by equating economic growth and prosperity, the marketing ideology not accomplished legitimacy, but also it simultaneously provided legitimation to the growth paradigm (Varey, 2010).

However, following nearly two centuries of unprecedented economic growth, the continuity of the latter at the turn of the Twenty First Century appears to be threatened by a confluence of economic and ecological constraints. Bina and La Camera (2011) have referred to this scenario as a 'double crisis' whose most salient manifestations are climate change and the credit crunch of 2007. The double crisis confronts the global economy with a dilemma (Jackson, 2009). On the one hand, the return of economic growth is a central priority to address the devastating effects of the economic crisis, particularly those related to rampant unemployment and increasing income inequalities. On the other hand, escalating environmental pressures related to climate change, pollution, peak-oil, biodiversity loss, or rising food and energy prices, call into question the ecological feasibility of returning to a growth model sustained on materially intense consumption (Jackson, 2009).

Knowing that the traditional solution of stimulating demand is likely to have adverse impacts on natural ecosystems, policy responses to the double crisis argue a green turn in the global economy as a means for returning to the path of growth without compromising existing sustainability commitments (Bina and La Camera, 2011). Calls for a 'green turn' are being made in an increasing number of policy reports (e.g. OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2011), whose common narrative structure has been examined by Urhammer and Røpke (2013). According to these authors, the green turn narrative begins with an acknowledgement of the environmental failures related to the current economic configuration called 'business as usual'. In the OECD's (2011) view, the shift from business as usual to the green economy requires new economic frameworks and dynamics to secure the desirable allocation of capital by regulating and investing in and reforming economic institutions such as the tax system. In addition to these reforms, the UN suggests a Green New Deal (UNEP, 2011) through which national governments undertake heavy investments in greening infrastructures and strategic economic sectors such as transportation, food, or energy. From

this perspective, when the right frameworks are in place, and governments make the right investments in green sectors, market competition is expected to trigger a race for technological innovation (Urhammer and Røpke, 2013). As new environmental technologies replace their conventional counterparts, it is assumed that the economy will experience a process of dematerialisation throughout which material and energy consumption will be gradually decoupled from economic outputs (Victor and Jackson, 2012).

Once this transformation makes national GDP less dependent on energy and material consumption, it is argued that green growth can become a new source of employment, social stability and prosperity while simultaneously reversing serious ecological threats such as climate change, deforestation or pollution (OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2011). According to a report released by the Department for Innovation, Business and Skills (CBI, 2012), the UK is among the leaders of the transition towards the green economy, holding the six place behind the US with (£645bn), China on (£435bn), Japan with (£205bn), India (£205bn), and Germany (£140bn). Notwithstanding the current economic climate is having a negative effect on the overall growth of the UK economy, the green sector 'has continued to grow in real terms, carving out a £122 billion share of a global market worth £3.3 trillion and employing close to a million people' (CBI, 2012: p. 6). Indeed, the UK accomplished a 3.7 per cent share of the global market for low carbon and environmental goods and services in 2011 (LCEGS). These figures suggest that the market for LCEGS is central to the UK economy and its contribution to exports is expected to halve the UK's trade deficit in 2014/15 (CBI, 2012).

2.4.1 Green markets as Utopia and marketing ideology

Having explained how the marketing ideology provides legitimation to the conventional growth paradigm, it is central to extend these critical

arguments to the emergent green growth paradigm. The review of the literature suggests that research on marketing and the natural environment has traditionally adopted a micromarketing focus, a normative orientation and a managerial perspective. With the exception of macromarketing scholars, the prevalence of these assumptions has prevented the development of a critical conceptualisation of markets beyond a generic form of dyadic exchange between environmentally concerned individuals and organisations. From this perspective, green markets involve aggregates of atomised consumers and businesses. The former express their environmental concern through the acquisition of environmentally superior goods and services. The latter operate as neutral providers of those goods and services, whose role is limited to the provision of that which is demanded by green consumers. So conceptualised, green markets are a pre-existing reality, whose architecture is fundamentally grounded in the psyche of individual consumers, which will automatically surface once the adequate adjustments are made in the green marketing mix. As green markets are transformed into a purely technical concern for management and governments, issues of power, conflict or exploitation are systematically excluded from the study of green marketing.

Drawing upon Marx, Harvey (2011) argues that the possibility of endless economic growth requires the existence of a universal market that eliminates temporal, geographical, and cultural barriers to trade. In the words of Harvey, ‘capital must strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange and conquer the whole earth for its market. It must also perpetually strive to annihilate this space with time’ (Harvey, 2011: p. 155). As the same growth dynamics are maintained in the so-called green economy, it is suggested that green growth depends on a constant expansion of demand to absorb the increasing number of greener commodities being produced.

If Harvey's (2011) critical arguments are extended to the green economy, it follows the possibility of green economic growth requires the existence of a universal green market, whose uniformity enables to 'tear down' and 'annihilate' any barrier to the circulation of green capital. In this regard, the prevalent conceptualisation of markets in the green marketing literature provides academic legitimacy to green growth. The literature on green marketing, by reducing market relationships to the marketing dyad, enable the material, historical and cultural diversity of markets to be flattened into a universal, generic, ahistorical form of commercial exchange. Having been reduced to a universal structure of exchange devoid of history, culture or materiality, such green markets emerge as ideal settings in which the frictionless flow of green capital enables societies to address the conflict between economic growth and the natural environment.

Moreover, at this point, it is crucial to highlight the process of abstraction through which notions of green markets –in plural - are conflated with *the* green market – in singular. It is argued that collapsing the plurality of markets within an abstract entity called *the* green market has significant ideological implications. In this regard, Aldridge (2005: p. 6) suggests that 'the market in this sense is not simply a set of social arrangements; it is an ideal, or a vision, or an ideology. It involves a theory of how human beings relate to one another and how social order is achieved'. In other words, as the diversity of forms that markets adopt in different historical periods and societies is concealed, the emergence and development of markets, indeed their very existence, is assumed a singularity of capitalism. Consequently, against a great deal of anthropological evidence, there appears to be no alternative to capitalism without having to abandon markets and embrace either totalitarian forms of command-and-control or a return to bartering. From this perspective, the possibility of a transition to sustainability undertaken outside the boundaries of capitalism becomes automatically dismissible as being anti-markets and by extension, as

implying a return to totalitarian, impractical, outdated or undesirable systems of provision. However, as Venkatesh and Peñaloza (2006: p. 147) remind us, 'markets are not universal, self-contained entities, but rather take on distinct discursive forms and material practices across various social contexts and over time'. Not only such plurality problematizes the purported uniformity of the market as a universal entity (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006), but also highlights the market as a capitalist utopia[5] rather than a concrete economic reality.

In his classic work, Thomas More coined the neologism Utopia by combining the Greek words "outopia" (nowhere) and "eutopia" (a good place). The original idea of utopia evolved into a prolific literary genre in which diverse types of ideal communities were depicted, placing an emphasis on the idyllic, yet fictional, character of such utopias. Within the literature on marketing, excellent reviews of the notion of utopia can be found elsewhere (e.g. Brown *et al.,* 1996; Maclaran and Brown, 2001; Maclaran and Brown, 2005). Nevertheless, according to Maclaran and Brown, the concept of utopia has been further elaborated within the field of utopian studies to highlight the centrality of utopian thinking, as it 'provides a crucial critical function for engaging with reality and for perpetually rearranging one's place in that reality' (Maclaran and Brown, 2001: p. 369). Given that utopias reflect the evolving consciousness and values of the society that produces them, it has been argued that an analysis of utopian writing reveals 'more about the sayer than the said' (Maclaran and Brown 2001: p. 370). Moreover, in the context of capitalist societies, it has been noted by Brown *et al.* (1996: p. 680) that the discipline of marketing 'can be defined as the production, distribution and consumption of utopias'. By extending these arguments to critique the literature on green

[5] Particularly in the neoliberal version (Witkowski, 2005).

marketing, it can be argued that notions of a green market, which conceptualise the latter as a universal structure of dyadic exchange, is one such social utopias produced by marketing (Brown *et al.,* 1996) and economic science (Bina and La Camera, 2011). As argued above, the literature on green marketing depicts the green market as a good place, a green utopia in which sustainability problems can be solved without businesses, consumers or governments, having to renounce to the material gains of endless economic growth. Simultaneously, such green market is depicted as a no-place, which adopts the form of a rationalist abstraction devoid of any temporal, material or cultural obstacle which could obstruct the free-flow of green capital.

As argued above, utopian thinking transpires culture. Therefore, in the context of postmodern consumer culture, the role of utopias tend to be ambivalent, manifold, fragmented, and provisionally 'inscribed in countless everyday practices and cultural forms—daydreams, myths, fairy stories, fine art, film, theatre, and television programs like Survivor' (Maclaran and Brown, 2005: p. 321). As these appear to be the main characteristics of utopias enacted within the context of postmodern consumer culture, scholars have raised their scepticism towards the validity of utopias for emancipatory action (Jameson, 2005). Within the specific context of sustainability, this green market utopia operates as a defence mechanism by which the modern narrative of human progress, built on certainties about techno-science, capitalism and liberal democracies, is prevented from confronting its own failure to address serious ecological problems 'at the brink of the apocalypse' (Smith, 1998).

2.5 Green growth and its discontents: degrowth as a challenge to the dominant sustainability discourse

Assumptions about green markets are central to the legitimation of the green growth paradigm as a response to the double crisis identified by Bina and La Camera (2011). However, critics have questioned the adequacy of green growth to address sustainability concerns. An alternative to green growth, namely degrowth, has been called for in order to address the limitation of the former. The following section begins by criticising the idea of green growth as a feasible response to sustainability. Such criticism will be articulated around four central arguments. Having done this, the alternative view offered by advocates of degrowth will be explored.

2.5.1 The scale of the ecological crisis

According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005), humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively over the past 50 years than in any comparable period of time in human history. In their assessment, the MEA researchers (2005) provided an extensive list of the ecosystem services[6] that have been most seriously damaged as a result of human economic activities including fisheries, waste treatment and detoxification, regulation of air quality, regulation of regional and local climate, regulation of erosion, water supply, water purification, protection against natural hazards, spiritual fulfilment, and aesthetic enjoyment. The

[6] Ecosystem services are defined as 'the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems, which the MEA describes as provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. Ecosystem services include products such as food, fuel and fiber; regulating services such as climate regulation and disease control; and non-material benefits such as spiritual and aesthetic benefits. Changes in these services affect human well-being in many ways' (MEA, 2005: p. 26).

notion of the ecological footprint has great illustrative power when trying to understand the extent to which ecological limits have been breached at a global scale. According to WWF (2012), the so-called ecological overshoot has increased relentlessly since the 1970s, reaching an alarming 50% deficit in 2008 (see Fig 2.1). In the words of WWF, 'this discrepancy means it would take 1.5 years for the Earth to fully regenerate the renewable resources that people used in one year' (WWF, 2012: p. 38).

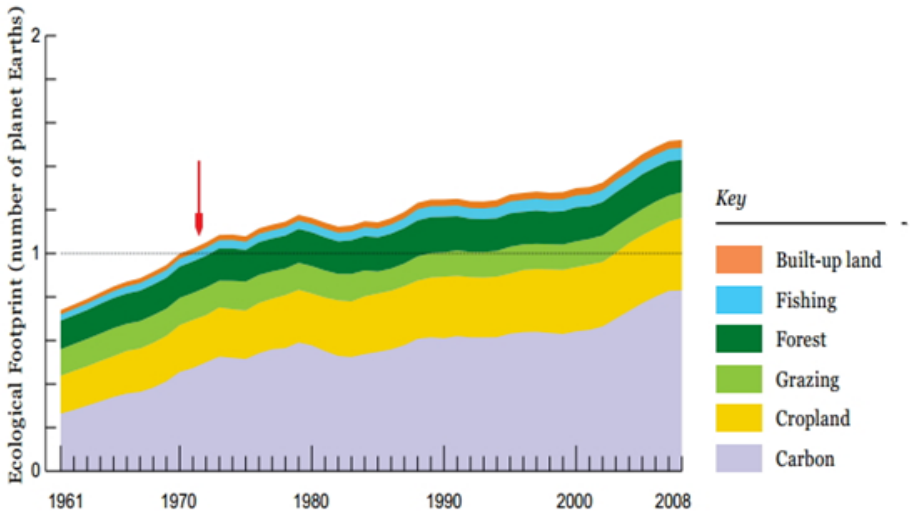


Figure 2.1 Global ecological footprint from 1961 to 2008 according to WWF (2012: p. 38).

As far as longer term projections are concerned, the OCDE (2012) estimates that, by the year 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 2 billion and the size of the global economy will be four times larger than today. Moreover, this report highlights that the intensity of economic growth is likely to be particularly high among emergent economies, including highly populated countries such as China, India, Russia and Brazil, with the result of billions new consumers in these countries increasing their environmental footprints. Given these trends, the OECD argues a baseline scenario within which climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and increases in hazardous chemicals and

polluting substances, are likely to severely affect the habitability of the planet (OECD, 2012). The report concludes 'that the prospects are more alarming than the situation described in the previous edition, and that urgent – and holistic – action is needed now to avoid the significant costs and consequences of inaction' (OECD, 2012: p. 19). Figure 2.2 shows that, in terms of ecological footprint, the projections suggest that the biocapacity required to sustain economic activities will be that of 2 Planet Earths by 2030 and 2.9 Planet Earths by 2050 (WWF, 2012). As noted by Victor and Jackson (2012), the urgency and scale of these problems questions the adequacy of green growth as response to these trends.

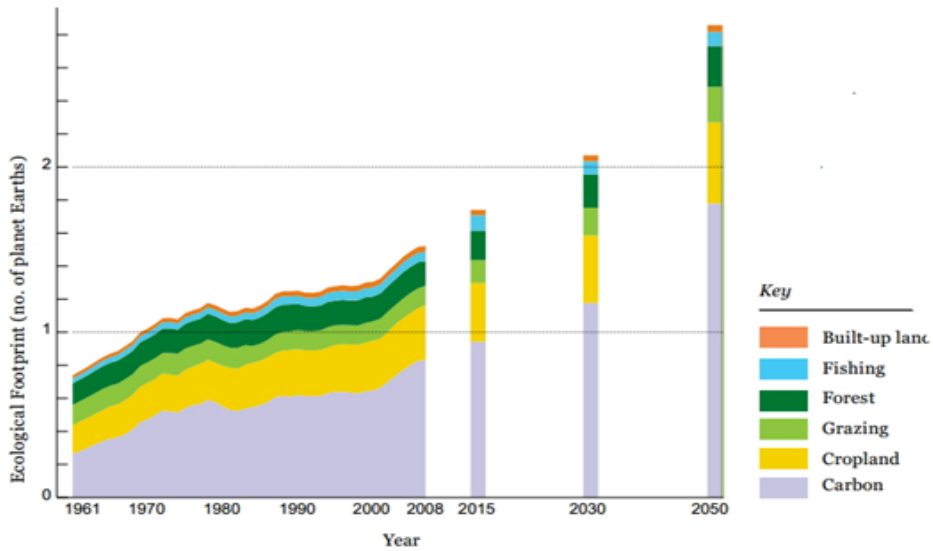


Figure 2.2 Projections for the growth of the global ecological footprint in the year 2050 according to WWF (2012: p. 100).

2.5.2 Green growth and natural capital

Green growth is based on the assumption of infinite – although certainly slower than usual - substitutability between human made capital and natural capital (Dresner, 2008; Daly, 2005; Ekins *et al.,* 2003). The distinction is relevant here. Human made capital, or manufactured capital, comprises both material and intermediate goods:

> material goods, tools, machines, buildings, infra-structure, which contribute to the production process but do not become embodied in the output and, usually, are 'consumed' in a period of time longer than a year. Intermediate goods, in contrast, are either embodied in produced goods (e.g. metals, plastics, components) or are immediately consumed in the production process (e.g. fuels) (Ekins *et al.*, 2003: p. 167).

On the contrary, natural capital refers to the diversity of ecosystem services provided by the natural environment, including:

> provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fiber; regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling (MEA, 2005: p. V).

The notion of substitutability implies that a slow depletion of natural capital can be offset by gradual increases in human made capital (Daly, 2005; Ekins *et al.,* 2003). For example, it is suggested that a reduction of land productivity as a result of intense agricultural practices can be offset by developments in genetics (genetically modified food), more efficient fertilizers and pesticides, or enhanced logistics. Nevertheless, the idea of absolute substitutability between different types of capital has been questioned by ecological economists, who argue the existence of critical natural capital which cannot be substituted by human made capital (Daly, 2005; Ekins *et al.,* 2003; Neumayer, 2003). Daly illustrates this point with the following example:

> Man made capital cannot substitute for natural capital. Once, catches were limited by the number of fishing boats (man-made capital) at sea. Today the limit is the number of fish in the ocean;

> building more boats will not increase catches. To ensure long-term economic health, nations must sustain the levels of natural capital (such as fish), not just total wealth (Daly, 2005: p. 102).

Hence, whilst it is acknowledged that green growth may enable a certain degree of substitution of natural capital by manufactured and human capital, it is argued that wholesale substitutability 'appears improbable, certainly with current knowledge and technologies' (Ekins *et al.*, 2003: p. 169). In other words, green growth has ecological limits too.

2.5.3 Green growth and rebound effects

Green growth relies heavily on ecological improvements accomplished by increasing the material and energy efficiency of economic activities. However, ecological economists have stressed the need to be cautious about eco-efficiency improvements. In this regard, the so-called rebound effect or Jevons's Paradox, is often used to challenge the value of environmental improvements driven by efficiency gains (Sorrell, 2009; Sorrell and Dimitropoulos, 2008). The rebound effect is defined by Druckman *et al.* (2011) as the unintended increase in energy consumption as a result of energy saving measures being put in place. The review of the literature carried out by Druckman *et al.* (2011) suggest that the actual size of economy-wide rebound effects is difficult to measure, although empirical research conducted into energy efficiency have found rebounds effects varying from as little as 15% (which implies that 15% of the total energy savings are taken back by the rebound effect) to 175% (which implies that energy savings actually backfire with the result of a 75% increase in energy consumption relative to non-energy saving conditions).

2.5.4 Green growth is unable to address the problem of increasing global inequalities

It should not be forgotten that proposals for a global shift towards green economic growth are being made in a context of extreme inequality between affluent and non-affluent nations. In this regard, the World Bank (WB, 2012b) estimates that 1.28 billion people in the world are living on less than $1.25 a day, 739 million people were undernourished in 2008 – with100 million of them being children under 5. In 2010, 2.7 billion lacked access to improved sanitation and more than 1 billion practiced open defecation, posing enormous health risks (WB, 2012b). The gap between high and low-income countries continues to widen. In this regard, the UNDP highlights that the per capita income gap between developed and developing countries, far from contracting, has increased by 0.8% between 1970 and 2010 (UNDP, 2012). Put differently, 'in 1970 the average income of a country in the top quarter of the world income distribution was 23 times that of a country in the bottom quarter. By 2010 it approached 29 times' (UNDP, 2012: p.42). However, issues of global redistribution and equity are largely absent from the green growth narrative, which continues to embrace the idea of trickle-down economics (Bina and La Camera, 2011).

Moreover, current proposals of green growth do not take into account striking differences regarding the relative weight of ecological footprints across different nations (MEA, 2005; OCDE, 2012; UNEP. 2012; WWF, 2012; World Bank, 2012b). In this respect, the World Bank acknowledges that high-income countries 'with 16 percent of world population, still account for more than 75 percent of global consumption and 41 percent of global emissions of carbon dioxide' (World Bank, 2012b: p. 2). Unlike less affluent nations, particularly those in the South, the world's most affluent economies have historically benefited from a careless exploitation of nature in the pursuit of their own economic growth. Nevertheless, the

notion of green growth puts all economies at the same level without taking into account these historical responsibilities. This is particularly unfair when it is expected that the main beneficiaries of green economic growth will be precisely the same affluent nations whose economies have historically benefited most from damaging the environment. In this regard, Victor and Jackson (2012) modelled the potential effects on global equity of the UN proposal of a global green economy (UNEP, 2011). Among other findings, Victor and Jackson (2012) concluded that the absolute gap between high and low income countries could rise from $41,000 in 2011 to $110,000 in 2050 even under the most ambitious green economy scenario suggested in the UN proposal.

2.5.5 Sustainable degrowth as an alternative to green growth

The notion of green economic growth has been challenged by its inability to respond to a number of challenges. Critics highlight the rapid degradation of natural ecosystems, the existence of irreplaceable natural capital, the so-called rebound effects related to efficiency improvements; the negative impact on the issue of global equity or the increasing gap between high and low income countries, as critical limitations of green growth. Within this context, sustainable degrowth, or sustainability without growth, is gaining relevance as a feasible alternative to rethink the project of sustainability on a finite planet (Jackson, 2009).

Drawing upon Martinez-Alier *et al.* (2010: p. 1741), the notion of degrowth involves 'both a concept and a social-grassroots (Northern) movement with its origins in the fields of ecological economics, social ecology, economic anthropology and environmental and social activist groups'. As a concept, Kallis defines degrowth as

> (...) a socially sustainable and equitable reduction (and eventually stabilisation) of society's throughput. Throughput refers to the

> materials and energy a society extracts, processes, transports and distributes, to consume and return back to the environment as waste (Kallis, 2011: p. 871).

Fundamentally, the notion of degrowth departs from the emphasis on green growth to the extent that, unlike the latter, it assumes that society's throughput cannot be reduced with a growing global GDP (Kallis, 2011). Moreover, unlike the notion of green growth, sustainable degrowth places the issue of inequality at the centre of the sustainability project. Therefore, in the face of the challenges posed by a growing population (OECD, 2012), whose needs are to be satisfied with the constraints posed by increasingly degraded ecosystem (MEA, 2005), advocates of degrowth opt for a better redistribution of existing wealth rather than continuing expanding the size of the green economy. In other words, degrowth proposes a selective reduction of material and energy consumption within high-income countries in order to enable low-income regions to increase their consumption without exceeding the Earth biocapacity (Victor and Jackson, 2011). In other words, advocates of degrowth highlight that besides the expansion of green economic sectors through the diffusion of cleaner technologies, an adequate transition to sustainability will require a large-scale downshifting of affluent economies. If this latter point is ignored, as the green growth approach does, critics suggest that global sustainability goals are unlikely to be accomplished promptly enough to prevent severe climate change.

It is important to clarify that degrowth is not a reduction of GDP *per se*, but a reduction of the material throughput of society. However, given the direct dependency of GDP growth from intense material and energy consumption, it is expected that a gradual decline in terms of GDP rates will inevitably occur as a result of the implementation of degrowth (Jackson, 2009). Therefore, degrowth (reduction of society's throughput)

is to be distinguished from the effect (decline of GDP rates), despite both events being mutually related.

This issue brings to the fore the structural dependency on GDP growth that characterises the functioning of institutions in capitalist economies (Jackson, 2009). Increasing unemployment, foreclosures, repossessions, cuts in public services, or increasing inequalities, illustrate the devastating effects that GDP stagnation can have on the prosperity of nations. According to Jackson (2009), the most fundamental features of capitalist economies were conceived in a period in which the existence of limits to economic growth could not be foreseen. In other words, capitalist economies have been designed on the assumption that economic growth could continue forever, despite temporary slumps or business cycles. Hence, either through markets or government action, only a constant expansion of GDP can ensure that loans are repaid, jobs are created, wages and profits are paid, and governments can raise revenues to provide public services. However, if, as argued by ecological economists, GDP growth requires an increasing consumption of raw materials, energy, or C02 emissions, a decline of economic growth is inevitable due to cumulative ecological pressures such as resource scarcity, biodiversity loss or climate change.

Drawing upon Jackson (2009), it is precisely the structural dependency on GDP increases, which is inbuilt in the design of capitalist institutions, that makes the global economy particularly vulnerable to the existence of ecological limits to growth. If degrowth will occur, whether we like it or not, the actual choice is between planning for a soft landing or wait for the crash (Latouche, 2009). Greening economic growth will only serve to delay the inevitable reality-check. Nevertheless, the concept of degrowth entails the argument that a planned reduction of society's material throughput, and the subsequent decline in GDP, can be turned into a desirable and sustainable alternative to green growth (Martinez-Alier *et al.*,

2010; Schneider *et al.*, 2010). As noted by Kallis (2011), the strength of the degrowth concept is precisely that it entails a vision of a smooth process for downshifting the economy through institutional changes, managing collectively, equitably and democratically, a "prosperous way down" (Odum and Odum, 2001). Hence, downshifting within affluent economies does not necessarily have to imply a loss of prosperity given that, under certain conditions, institutional frameworks and policies, degrowth is expected to deliver welfare enhancements in the longer term.

2.6. Reclaiming markets for degrowth: heterotopian market practices and alternative currencies

2.6.1 Summary of the key points drawn upon the literature:

- Notions of the market have become a foundational element within contemporary sustainability debates. Indeed, the view that markets have a central role to play in enabling the transition towards sustainability has replaced the critical perspective advanced by early environmentalism. Simultaneously, and somewhat paradoxically, those disciplines which have traditionally produced the majority of normative knowledge about markets, such as marketing (Venkatesh *et al.* 2006) or economics (Callon, 1998), appear to have taken the notion of markets for granted.

- By extending this paradox to the area of sustainability and marketing, it has been argued that green markets are 'everywhere and nowhere in our literature', to paraphrase Venkatesh *et al.* (2006). Indeed, with the exception of macromarketing approaches, the literature on green marketing reduces green markets to a generic structure of dyadic exchange devoid of history, materiality or culture (Schaefer and Crane, 2005).

- Arguably, a conveniently stylised market concept can be justified as a means to simplify managerial decision-making through green marketing models. However, the prevalence of these assumptions conceals an ideology that prevents a critical appraisal of the new political economy of sustainability, namely the shift to green economic growth (Bina and La Camera, 2011). In this regard, green growth has been argued as a response to the current convergence of environmental and economic pressures which constraint the expansion of global economic growth (UNEP, 2011; OECD, 2011). From this perspective, green markets are depicted as utopian settings that, properly harnessed with the right price-signals, will enable global capitalism to reconcile ecological and economic objectives by eroding barriers to green capital.

- Nevertheless, critics have argued that calls for green growth fail to address issues such as the alarming levels of ecological damage in a number of key areas, the rebound effect, the widening gap between rich and poor, and the need to preserve critical natural capital. Therefore, critics have cogently argued that global sustainability objectives can be accomplished only if affluent economies abandon the pursuit of green growth in favour of degrowth (Victor and Jackson, 2011). Besides efficiency improvements in certain sectors of the economy, the notion of degrowth involves a voluntary macroeconomic contraction of material and energy throughput within the affluent world to allow a more equitable share of resources between high and low-income countries (Kallis, 2011). However, in degrowth terms, the process of downscaling affluent economies can be planned to result in enhanced quality of life for their citizens. Among other things, this process entails the construction of new marketing systems which are able to deliver prosperity without growth (Jackson, 2009).

2.6.2 The centrality of reclaiming markets for degrowth

As far as implementation issues are concerned, notions of degrowth continue to be hampered by the assumption that there is only one type of market - whose features are largely universal regardless of minor variations on the surface. Indeed, under the assumption that markets can only exist in their current capitalist form, a view which is widely embraced within disciplines such as economics and marketing, advocates of degrowth are misrepresented as being anti-markets. These assumptions lead to the conclusion that, somewhat inevitably, a transition to degrowth implies a return to primitive systems of provision such as bartering, self-sufficiency, or central planning. In other words, by removing markets from the horizon of degrowth, the latter is automatically associated with systems of provision that historically have proved unable to organise economic life in complex societies. For example, in this regard, Fisk (2006) remarks:

> Many now regard marketing as a cost of capitalism rather than as an essential service without which there would be no supply support available to consumers. Could the world's 6.5 billion people survive if they go back to hunting and gathering? (Fisk, 2006: p. 215).

Similarly, objections to degrowth are stated in the following fragment from Burroughs:

> (..) in a no growth system what happens to our current stock of goods? Do we all just freeze and get to keep what we have? (This does not seem like a very good deal for the poor.) Would we be expected to voluntarily redistribute wealth? What if someone refuses to voluntarily give up what they have? Are we to compel them or convert everything to public property? How do you

> accomplish all this without institutionally mandating it? (Burroughs, 2011: p. 129),

Given these arguments, the transition to degrowth tends to be easily dismissed as implying unfeasible alternatives for organising economic life in a society that has abolished markets. Nevertheless, such charges against degrowth are fed by the assumption that markets, and by extension marketing systems, can only exist in their current capitalism form. However, to counter this view, the present work has argued that the assumption of market homogeneity is a discursive accomplishment of marketing ideology rather than an accurate depiction of reality (Marion, 2006). Indeed, given that markets are plural rather than uniform realities (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006), notions of degrowth can be positioned as neither anti-market nor pro-market in an abstract sense. In other words, although notions of degrowth may reject certain market-logics, which are seeing as reproducing growth-driven capitalism in a greener form, a transition to degrowth is entirely compatible with other types of markets. Consequently, it is necessary to move beyond the pro/anti market rhetoric and open up a debate about what type of markets are compatible with the vision of a degrowth society. The challenge is precisely to reclaim markets, not to abandon them.

2.6.3 The construction of heterotopian markets through alternative currencies

The kind of market practices that may be compatible with a future degrowth society are going to be difficult to find within a market-landscape that has been intensely transformed by two centuries of unprecendented economic growth (Varey, 2010; 2012). Yet, alternative markets may exist as small socio-technical experiments, undertaken by communities of degrowth activists, which are ephemerally enacted at the periphery of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, the task of reclaiming markets for

degrowth urges marketing scholars to reactivate our critical imagination regarding markets, not only through conceptual critique but also through empirical inquiries into unconventional market-forms. Drawing upon recent developments in the literature (Maclaran and Brown, 2001; 2006; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2012), the notion of heterotopia emerges as a point of departure to make a positive contribution in this direction. Indeed, recent scholarly work has begun to transcend the rather cynical view of utopian thinking, as a form of false consciousness, escapism or self-delusion. Within the literature of marketing, a significant step has been made by Maclaran and Brown (2001; 2005), who contend that utopian thinking is neither positive nor negative in essence. Drawing upon the work of Marin, these scholars highlight that utopian thinking is better approached as a neutral, ambiguous, or even paradoxical field, allowing contradictions to play against one another rather than being resolved or indeed repressed (Maclaran and Brown, 2001; 2005). Therefore, it is not the nature of utopian thinking that prevents it from becoming a collective device for emancipatory action. Rather, it is due to their embeddedness in postmodern consumer culture, and the relentless commodification of the contexts in which utopias are enacted, which means utopian thinking becomes a mirror image of the former rather than a collective horizon for escaping it (Maclaran and Brown, 2001, 2005). Having acknowledged that utopias are inevitably shaped by the context in which they are enacted, a second conceptual move has been made to overcome these limitations. In this regard, scholars have started to examine utopian thinking and praxis within non-commoditised spaces which lay at the fringes of postmodern consumer culture (Kozinets, 2002; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2012).

These critical arguments appear to converge within the recent scholarly interest in the concept of heterotopia. In particular, notions of 'heterotopias of resistance' have been used to explore spaces that 'foster critique and experimentation, generating new ways of thinking and doing' (Chatzidakis *et al.* 2012: p. 495). Although all heterotopias have a central utopian

component, particularly to the extent that they are driven by collective visions and ideals, it is important to distinguish between these two concepts. In this regard, heterotopia is a concept associated with the work of Foucault (1967), who employed it to refer to spaces which cultivate alternative, and often marginalised, forms of organisation that challenge conventions about social and spatial order. It is precisely their disrupting, radical and often marginalised nature what places heterotopias at the fringes of dominant social, spatial, cultural and economic order. Moreover, according to Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012), utopias are focused on a future state of perfection to be accomplished, whereas the concept of heterotopia draws attention to the 'here and now'. In other words, the concept of heterotopia emphasises the material practices enacted for utopian thinking rather than its realisation. Consequently, the emphasis on action and practice, as opposed to pure idealism, prevents notions of heterotopia from becoming a speculative concept - whose study is confined to the world of ideas. Moreover, the heterotopias' self-awareness as 'work in progress', and their emphasis on the 'here and now', allow heterotopian practices to contain contradictions and paradoxes without them being automatically discarded as unachievable.

The present work extends the notion of heterotopia to the study of markets in the context of degrowth. As argued above, this conceptual development is heavily indebted to the work of other scholars, particularly Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012), but also Maclaran and Brown (2005). However, whilst the latter work focuses on the centrality of place for encouraging political action among consumers, the present work is specifically concerned with the transformative role of markets, and the sociomaterial practices in which they are enacted. Similarly, it is precisely the focus on markets, rather than a focus on consumption and consumer practices, what distinguishes the present inquiry into heterotopia from others such as Kozinets (2002). Given these arguments, it is important to identify an empirical context in

which heterotopian market practices can be subjected to empirical examination.

For marketing scholars, money is a defining feature of markets (Shaw, 1995). In this regard, Shaw (1995: p.12) distinguishes between two forms of commercial exchange, namely bartering and market exchange. For Shaw, the most obvious difference between these forms of trade is that the latter involves the use of money. In standard economic theory, money is defined by the essential functions that it performs, namely *medium of exchange, store of value, unit of account* and *standard of deferred payment* (Ingham, 2004). Whilst the nature of money is largely taken for granted, as economists tend to study money in purely quantitative terms, money has been described as one of the most formidable social technologies (Ingham, 2004). Indeed, money is social all the way through. Markets and money are inseparable concepts, particularly as it is only through the use of money that bartering can be replaced by the kind of multilateral exchanges that characterise markets (Ingham, 2004). Nevertheless, despite the centrality of money for the emergence of markets, the relationship between monetary innovations and market transformation remains largely unaddressed by marketing scholars. Two exceptions are Dholakia's (2011) work on Finanzkapital and Peñaloza and Barnhart (2011) study on credit/debt's normalisation among US consumers. Dholakia (2011: p. 92) uses the term Finanzkapital to 'capture the growing and deep penetration of very large financial institutions and their investments processes into all aspects of globalised capitalism – and of people's life in general. According to Dholakia (2011), a gradual transformation of capitalism, one which involved a shift from industrial capital to financial capital, was endorsed by rising financial powers during the Twentieth century. Within this context, the operations of financial markets have become increasingly important to understand the changing structure of markets and corporate behaviour, as well as the policies enacted to shape them (Dholakia, 2011). Similarly, Peñaloza and Barnhart

(2011) have focused on the changing meanings of credit/debt relationships and how these changes affect consumers. In this regard, these authors identify cultural processes involving an alarming normalisation of credit and debt among US consumers, which render the latter vulnerable by exposing them to new financial risks (Peñaloza and Barnhart, 2011).

Given these arguments, and drawing upon the work of North (1999; 2010), and Seyfang and Longhurst (2013), alternative currencies emerge as a suitable area of inquiry to explore these critical issues. Indeed, what counts as money within a particular community has traditionally been defined by a central authority. With the emergence of modern nation states, the power of the state to define money has fundamentally rested upon the activities of central banks. However, throughout history, multiple currencies have been developed and employed by communities, particularly when legal tender was no longer performing its functions adequately (Kennedy *et al.*, 2012). In this regard, the term alternative currency encompasses a plethora of social innovations that perform money functions, whose development occur outside of the circuits of legal tender (Blanc, 2011). Blanc (2011) differentiates between alternative currencies which pursue territorial, community and economic purposes. Concisely, alternative currencies that pursue territorial purposes seek to affect monetary relationships in a geographically defined space. Whilst they are respectful to the national monetary sovereignty, they are employed with the purpose of strengthening specific actors in a specific geographical area by avoiding resources draining towards powerful centres. Community purpose currencies seek the promotion of well- being, empowerment, autonomy and social exchanges of a given community. In this regard, the community may exist or be created as a result of the currency. Unlike the previous type, a community is not defined by specific geographical boundaries. The last type of alternative currency involves those that seek economic purposes. They are established to influence

economic activities in specific directions; for example, they could aim at their protection (through a form of protectionism allowed by the use of a convertibility rule that restraints outflows), their stimulation (through the constraint of local use of the currency), their re- orientation (through specific rules stimulating, for example, environmentally oriented practices).

Further criteria for mapping alternative currencies is established by Pfajfar *et al.* (2011), who distinguish between backed currencies, un-backed currencies, and mutual credit system currencies. The first type of alternative currencies is backed with legal tender money, for which they can be exchanged at a fixed fee. Un-backed currencies are tied to labour time, goods and services, but they are not convertible into legal tender. Mutual credit systems represent an alternative paying network in which there is no initial stock of cash in the system. A common type of mutual credit systems are Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS). Whilst these taxonomies are useful to navigate the complexities of alternative currencies, Blanc (2011) acknowledges that features overlap in real life, and it is likely that alternative currency schemes display mixture features.

For the purposes of the present work, it is central to highlight the heterotopian nature of alternative currencies, particularly with regards to the notion of degrowth. The work of North (1999; 2010) is enlightening in this respect, as he demonstrates how communities are able to use alternative currencies as a micro-political tool for subverting the existing social order from below. Alongside other financial innovations, the history of alternative currencies is closely related to the pursuit of emancipatory goals, first through the practices of the so-called Utopian Socialists such as Owen or Proudhon, and later in the hands of deep ecologists (North, 2010). It is argued that alternative currencies are social technologies with a capacity to restore a sense of political empowerment and affect social change within atomised, fragmented, and excluded communities (North, 1999). Moreover, deployment of alternative currencies means 're-

embedding economic relations into a form of social regulation controlled by those excluded from mainstream financial relations' (North, 1999: p. 70). The adoption of alternative currencies has been more specifically related to the pursuit of degrowth objectives (North, 2010; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Scholars highlight that, in general, 'the rationale is that money is a socially-constructed institution, so alternative systems of exchange, or financial services provision, can build-in more sustainable incentives and structures than conventional money' (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013: p. 65). In this regard, and besides the advantages argued above, alternative currencies have been implemented with the aim of achieving a range of degrowth objectives, principally the creation of social capital, localization of economies, valuing non-productive labour, and enabling collaborative consumption to reduce environmental impacts of current life- styles (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013).

2.7 Research aim:

Given these arguments, the purpose of this research is to reclaim markets as collective settings, which can be linked to emancipatory practices in the context of degrowth.

Notions of heterotopia have been drawn upon in the literature to identify liminal spaces, in the periphery of consumer culture, which articulate practices of resistance with radical political thought (Chatzidakis *et al.,* 2012). For the purposes of the present work, this concept has been extended to visualise the construction of alternative economic spaces, undertaken by communities of degrowth activists, which seek to subvert the growth imperative through the enactment of heterotopian markets. In particular, the focus is placed on the role of alternative currencies, whose capacity to empower communities has been highlighted regarding degrowth transitions (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013).

To explore these ideas in action, the enactment of one such heterotopian market through the implementation of an alternative currency will be empirically examined. Given the ethnographic nature of this inquiry, no specific objectives have been formulated. The purpose is to keep the research scope intentionally broad. These issues are further discussed in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 3.0 Methodology

The present discussion draws heavily upon the work of scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), Blaikie (2007; 2010) and Law (2004), who see qualitative research design as a holistic process rather than a series of disconnected choices regarding preferred methods of data collection, interpretation and representation. From this perspective, a consistent research design begins by acknowledging that methodological decision-making is not a technical exercise that takes place in a vacuum (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Rather, researchers are regarded as members of a plural interpretative research community (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), whose practices are entangled in a set of methodological and ontological assumptions known as research paradigms[7] (Blaikie, 2007; 2010). Following Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006; 2007), the ontological and epistemological premises of the present work are encompassed under the paradigm of *practical constructivism*. In many respects, practical constructivism is a variation of social constructionism (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). However, practical constructivism moves beyond the latter's concern with meanings in order to explore the enactment of market realities as webs of sociomaterial practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). Such ontological argument is informed by recent developments in contemporary social science, fundamentally Actor-Network Theory and Practice Theory (Araujo, 2007; 2010; Cochoy, 2008; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006;

[7] The number and taxonomies of the main research paradigms indentified in the social sciences vary depending on the authors. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2005: p. 24) identify *positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, feminist, queer theory, ethnic, Marxist and cultural studies*. Blaikie (2007) discusses *Positivism, Critical Rationalism, Classical Hermeneutics, Interpretivism, Critical Theory, Social Science Realism, Feminism, Contemporary Hermeneutics, Structuration Theory* and *Ethnomethodology*. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) argue the existence of three main paradigms in contemporary social science, namely *postpositivism, critical realism* and *social constructionism*, with their respective varieties. Morgan (1980) distinguished between *radical humanist, radical structuralist, functionalist* and *interpretive* paradigms.

2007). To discuss the differences and similarities between social constructionism and practical constructionism clear, the present discussion will discuss one in relation to the other.

Following this epistemological and ontological discussion, this section will address rather concrete aspects of the research design. It will begin by explaining the overall research strategy. In this regard, the empirical work has been undertaken through an ethnographic research strategy (Neyland, 2008), which combined retroductive and abductive principles (Blaikie, 2007; 2010). According to Neyland (2008), the unpredictable nature of fieldwork makes ethnographers avoid strict methodological instructions or recipes when dealing with methodological concerns. Therefore, ethnographic strategies tend to be loosely planned in advance, thus the notion of “ethnographic sensibilities” to general methodological issues is more adequate than that of ethnographic guidelines or principles (Neyland, 2008). The ethnographic sensibilities that guided the present inquiry will be discussed in this chapter. Figure 3.1 summarises these methodological arguments.

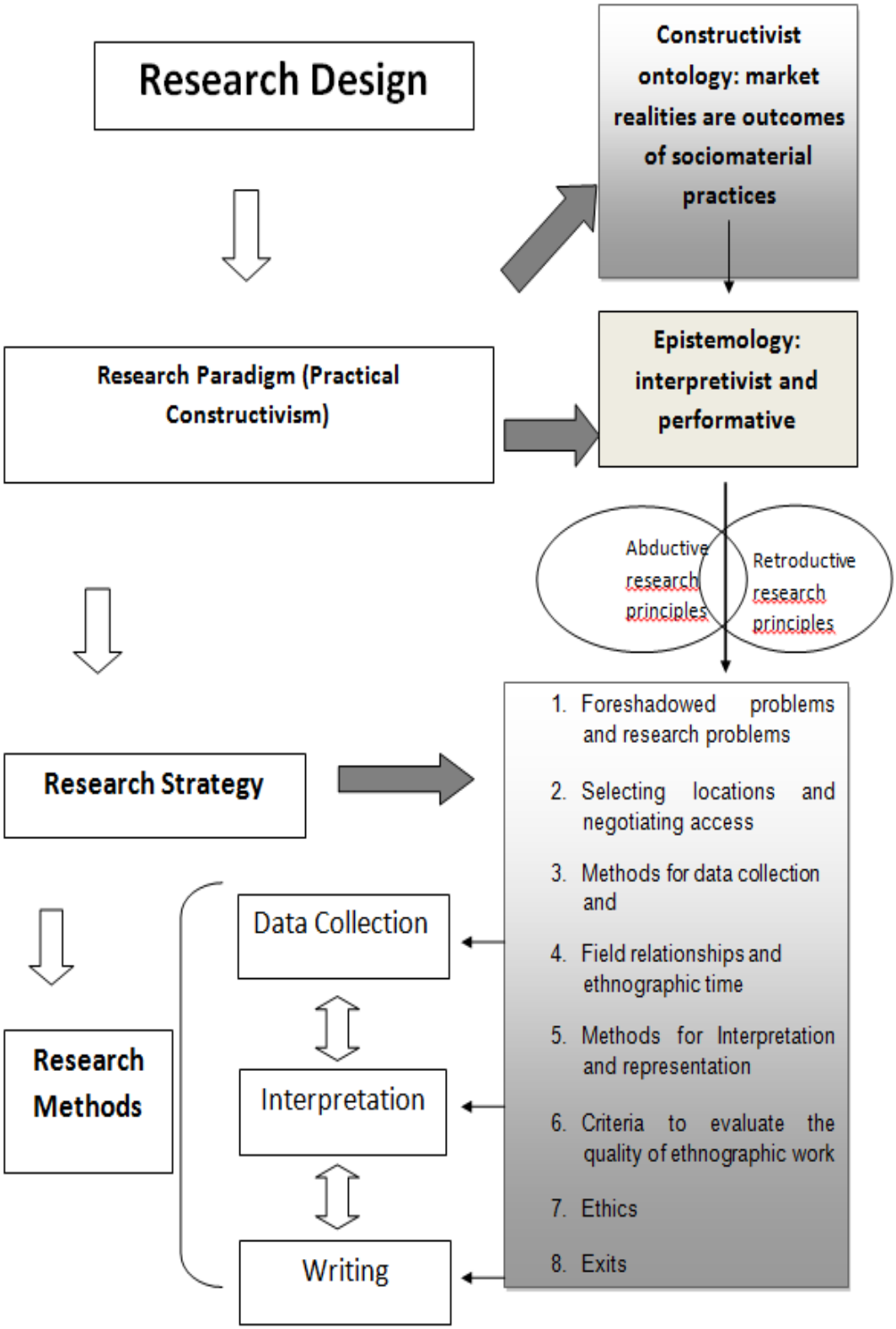


Figure 3.1 Summary of the research process

3.1 Ontological considerations

Originally, the term ontology was employed to label a specialised branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of what exists. However, ontological arguments about the nature of the social world are hardly confined to the work of philosophers. Indeed, whether ontological assumptions are explicitly acknowledged or not, social science research is inevitably entangled with assumptions about the nature of reality (Law, 2004). In most texts on research methods, ontological arguments tend to be classified into dichotomies such as objectivist/realists or subjectivist/constructivist (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In more detail, Blaikie (2007) acknowledges that both ontological realism and idealism, rather than being monolithic concepts, emerge in multiple forms within the literature. In this regard, he identifies five types of realist ontologies, namely *shallow realism, conceptual realism, deep realism, subtle realism, cautious realism*, in addition to various *idealist* ontologies, namely *atheistic idealist, constrained idealists*, or *agnostic idealists*.

However, notwithstanding ontological arguments having grown in number and sophistication, as the work of Blaikie (2007) illustrates, it appears that the traditional divide between constructionist and realist ontologies continues to shape the majority of discussions on ontology (Latour, 2005). Given that the present work embraces a market ontology which is simultaneously realist and constructionist (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009. P. 33), the following discussion addresses this divide by drawing upon recent conceptual developments is the social sciences, namely Actor-Network Theory (henceforth ANT) and practice theory. Within the discipline of marketing, these ontological arguments have been developed by scholars working from the perspective of market practices (e.g. Araujo, 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007).

3.1.1 Actor-Network Theory and the centrality of materiality[8]:

According to Law, 'ANT is an approach to sociotechnical analysis that treats entities and materialities as enacted and relational effects, and explores the configuration and reconfiguration of those relations' (Law, 2004: p. 157). Therefore, by being sensitive to materiality, relationality and process, ANT offers a potential answer to some of the ontological deadlocks of social constructionism (Law, 2004). For Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), the roots of ANT can be traced to the second wave of social constructionism developed in the field of science and technology studies (STS), which emerged in response to the ontological idealism underpinning early social constructionist studies.

Since the foundational work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), social constructionist scholars have emphasised that reality, as we know it and relate to it, is the outcome of inter-subjectivity. In other words, the existence of a purportedly objective reality does not determine human behaviour because the former is entirely inaccessible to human cognition. Rather, humans make sense of reality by giving meanings to it. However, social constructionists clarify that such meanings are not subjective in an individualist sense. Rather, meanings are inter-subjective, particularly to the extent that they have to be shared in order to enable social interaction. Hence, social constructionism highlights that the fabric of human behaviour is to be found on such shared meanings and the inter-subjective processes through which they operate (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). It is

[8] Whilst the term ANT remains in use, it is important to remain terminologically cautious here as the meanings of the terms actor, network and theory in ANT differ from their most common usage in the social sciences (Latour, 2005). Indeed, there have been various attempts at replacing the term Actor-Network Theory with others such as Sociology of Translations (Callon, 1986), Sociology of Associations (Latour, 2005), or Material Semiotics (Law, 2004). However, internal controversies about the adequate terminology appear to have settled in favour of keeping the original name (Latour, 2005).

argued that specific people, mainly experts or authorities, produce worldviews that apply to specific historical and geographical contexts. Whilst representations of reality are inevitable selective, their collective acceptance among members of a given society or culture makes them appear as universal truths. Hence, social constructionists argue that even those ideas that circulate as unquestionable truths, or objective facts, such as the knowledge produced by the natural sciences, are inevitably shaped by dominant values and assumptions implicit in scientific paradigms (Kuhn, 1970). What is believed to be real in a particular culture depends on what is known, and what is known depends on the social conditions in which knowledge is produced, validated and disseminated (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). More recently, the influence of postmodernism prompted the emergence of more extreme versions of social constructionist positions, which contend that the very idea of an external reality can be reduced to a rhetorical effect of language deployed within specific discursive practices (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). An example of this position is Derrida's widely cited dictum 'there is nothing outside text' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Given this strong ontological idealism, it should not come as a surprise that advocates of scientific realism, particularly those with a strong inclination for positivism or logical-empiricism, became fierce critics of social constructionism.

However, critics of social constructionism were not merely external, and a number of scholars working within the constructionist camp were dissatisfied with what they perceived as an attempt to reduce reality to an inter-subjective fiction (Hacking, 1999). Hacking (1999) argued that the metaphor of social construction placed an excessive emphasis on human intentionality, thus turning the construction of reality into a mere exercise of literary fiction. More extensively, Latour argues:

> For other colleagues in the social as well as the natural sciences the word construction meant something entirely different from what

> common sense had thought until then. To say that something was constructed in their minds was to say that something was not true. They seemed to operate with the strange idea that you had to submit to this rather unlikely choice: either something was real and not constructed or it was constructed and artificial, contrived and invented, made up and false. Not only could this idea not be reconciled with the sturdy meaning one had in mind when talking about a well constructed house, a well designed software, or a well sculpted statue, but it flew in the face of everything we were observing in the laboratories: to be contrived and to be objective went together (Latour, 2005: p.90).

This criticism began to be addressed within the field of Science and Technology Studies by ANT scholars from the 1980s onwards (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). In particular, it was argued that a central limitation of social constructionist accounts of scientific practice was their tendency to turn the human/social world, with its shared-subjectivities, discourses, values, ideologies, norms and symbolic interactions, into rather omnipotent architects of reality (Latour, 2005). Concurrently, the material dimension of the world was entirely dismissed as having no significant effect on the symbolic practices through which the world is constructed (Latour, 2005). In this regard, Latour (1992) referred to material objects as the “missing masses” of social theory.

In response to these limitations, the ontological argument advanced by ANT scholars suggests that ‘realities are being constructed. Not by people but in the practices made possible by networks of elements’ (Law, 2004: p. 21). This ontological position emphasises the centrality of materiality. It highlights that attempts at shaping the world in particular manners requires the ‘cooperation’ of both humans and non-humans. However, materiality is not always compliant to human intentionality and the material world can pose extreme resistance to the symbolic and material practices which

attempt to shape it. Indeed, material objects are neither passive witnesses nor a backcloth for human interactions: they may enable or constrain, aid, support, visualise, transport, enhance, make possible, deliver or fail to do so (Latour, 2005).

According to this ontological argument, ANT began to develop an approach which sought to make materiality both visible and amenable to social inquiries without falling into either technological or social determinism. For that purposes, the principle of generalised symmetry, according to which neither the symbolic nor the material should be privileged by constructionist explanations of society, became a critical methodological breakthrough developed by ANT (Callon, 1986). As reality is approached from a symmetric perspective, the boundaries between the social and the material become blurry. In the literature on consumer research, these developments have crystallised into the emergence of post-humanism (Campbell *et al.* 2010; Bettany and Kerrane, 2011). The term actor, with its clear anthropocentric connotations, is replaced by the rather more open term actant (Law, 2004). An actant is a type of generalised actor which does not necessarily have to be human, but can also be an idea, an object, a technology, bacteria, an infrastructure, an organisation, etc. (Latour, 2005).

According to Latour (2005), what makes an entity qualify as an actant is its capacity to affect or make a difference in the world. Given ANT's emphasis on relationality, such capacity to act does not emanate from any essential property of the actant itself. Rather, an actant's capacity to act emerges from an association, relatively obdurate or precarious, with other actants (Law, 2004). Hence, ANT draws upon the concept of heterogeneous relationality with the purpose of addressing reality as an undetermined flux of practices in which actants, both humans and nonhumans, are entangled, mutually configuring each other into emergent, sometimes

obdurate but most of the times ephemeral, realities (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; 2009; Mol, 2002).

In the marketing literature, this emphasis on non-humans and materiality has focused on market devices (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). For example, empirical studies have brought to the fore the organising power of mundane objects in the context of retailing, including shopping carts, displays, turnstiles, or food tins (Cochoy, 2008), or sophisticated technologies such as Blackberries, Google's search engine (Orlikowski, 2007) or Radio Frequency Identification devices (Simakova and Neyland, 2009). Such market devices, objects and technologies are depicted as actants, or co-participants, which play a central role in the process of shaping markets (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). From this perspective, market realities emerge as sociomaterial networks whose successful enactment requires of an assemblage of theories, symbols, technologies, people, etc. (Araujo, 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007; Cochoy, 2008).

3.1.2 Market practices and the making of markets

These ontological arguments beg the question of how actants are assembled and what are the specific processes through which market realities are enacted. An answer to this question is given by practice theories. The notion of practice has been traditionally employed as an umbrella-term which encompasses a rather plural research tradition in the social sciences, whose roots can be traced to the work of diverse authors such as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Giddens or Bourdieu (Schatzki *et al*., 2001; Schatzki, 2005). Giddens has famously stated in his theory of structuration that the research domain of practice-based approaches '(…) is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time' (Giddens, 1984: p. 2). However, as noted by Reckwitz (2002), to say that

practice theories treat practices as the unit of analysis without clarifying the meaning of practice is no less than tautological. In this regard, Reckwitz (2002) distinguishes between practice as Praxis - referring to the whole spectrum of human action as opposed to theory – and practices as Praktik, which he defines as:

> (...) a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002: p. 249).

Importantly, Orlikowski (2007) highlights that practice theories have traditionally been "social theories" because they retained a strong focus on humans, whilst the material world was rendered passive, invisible, or irrelevant to early practice theorists. In this respect, early practice theories have been labelled as 'human centered' (Orlikowski, 2007: p. 1437). Nevertheless, under the influence of ANT, practice theories have gradually evolved to incorporate materiality through the development of concepts such as sociotechnical ensemble (Bijker, 1995), mangle of practice (Pickering, 1995), actants (Latour, 2005), material semiotics (Law, 2004) or object-centered sociality (Knorr-Cetina, 1997). These arguments highlight that market practices not only intertwine different skills and competences with symbolic resources, but also with material devices, artefacts and technologies, whose integration is necessary for a successful performance (Cochoy, 2008).

Market practices have a dual nature in the sense that they are both relatively coherent entities whilst, simultaneously, their very existence depends on specific and differentiated performances (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001). As coherent entities, the notion of practice involves a 'temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings' (Schatzki,

1996 in Warde, 2005: p. 133) which enable relatively stable patterns for action. However, such patterns of action can only emerge 'by and through the routine and reproduction' of practices in specific performances (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: p. 44). In other words, it is argued that 'a practice represents a pattern which can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice' (Reckwitz, 2002: p. 249). Consequently, the reproduction of practices across time and space implies their deployment in specific performances and, simultaneously, each specific performance is structured by the existence of a previously organized practice (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, there is an inherent tension between practices as relatively organised entities and their variation in specific performances (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001). From this perspective, markets are the practical accomplishments of efforts for organising economic activities and formatting commercial exchanges (Araujo, 2007). Therefore, the existence of markets, their form, their temporal and geographical stability, depend on the effective performance of a myriad of material practices through which they are enacted (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). If markets are not enacted in practice, they cease to exist, nonetheless much of this enactment takes an infrastructural form in contemporary capitalism and it therefore goes unnoticed (Araujo *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, in the same manner that the apparent durability of infrastructures is always open to challenges and disruptions, which are only partially prevented by substantial resources and efforts being allocated to their control and maintenance, so it occurs with market exchanges (Araujo *et al.* 2010: p. 6). Because market practices are fluid, undetermined and relationally heterogeneous, their building blocks cannot be located in any purportedly determining social structure - such as institutions, paradigms, discourses, or culture (Araujo, 2007). Nor can the foundations of markets be sought in mental dispositions of market actors - such as specific beliefs, attitudes or cognitive processes (Andersson *et al.* 2008). Rather, it is argued that markets are embedded in market practices. Consequently, markets are

not finished entities and scholars should remain particularly attentive to even the most apparently mundane processes of market-making, unmaking and remaking, shifting their research focus from marketing nouns to marketing verbs (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). In other words, because markets have to be constantly enacted in practice, they are better understood as an on-going process, involving multiple practices, actors and equipment, whose outcome is always undetermined and therefore open to failure and change.

The distribution of market practices crosscuts traditional marketing domains of production, exchange and consumption. In this respect, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) contend that it is conceptually sterile to draw *a priori* distinctions between the different practices that partake in shaping markets. For example, broadly speaking, it has been argued that the practices that aim at shaping the overall structure of markets, such as the establishment of legal frameworks, are inevitably intertwined with practices aimed at managing exchanges, such as advertising or retailing practices, or the practices of consumers and users after purchase (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). Like actor-networks, practices constitute networks which expand beyond the specific moment of exchange. This observation is consistent with Schatzki's (2001) argument that practices have fuzzy boundaries as they are interlinked with other practices, conforming bundles and constellations of practices. As Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007: p. 142) put this: 'market practices is all there is'. Table 3.2 summarises the key components of practical constructivism.

Practical Constructivism		
Constructivist ontology (not social constructionist)		**Interpretivist epistemology (not just subjectivist)**
Actor-Network Theory	Practice theory	**Interpretivism** (as a response to logical empiricism)
Heterogeneous Relationality	Dual nature of practice: practice as coherent entities and practice as performances	**Reflexivity**
		Performativity
Materiality, symmetry and actants	Market practices: markets as practical accomplishments	**Critical Performativity**

Table 3.2 Key components of practical constructivism

3.2. Epistemology interpretivism, reflexivity and performativity.

3.2.1 Interpretivism as a challenge to logical empiricism

The notion of epistemology is concerned with 'the relationship between the inquirer and the known' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: p. 22). In other words, epistemology asks questions about what are the most adequate ways of knowing and how can we differentiate between adequate and inadequate knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Since the mid twentieth century, the discipline of marketing came under the influence of scientific epistemologies, firstly in the form of logical empiricism (Wilkie and Moore,

2003) and later as a post-positivist variety of the former (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 17). Concisely, logical empiricism starts with the premise that the researcher and the known are completely independent entities (Blaikie, 2007). Moreover, logical empiricism assumes that the social world operates according to mechanistic laws, whose functioning is independent of the researcher interpretations. Therefore, the pursuit of objectivity became an important part of the research process (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). The epistemological guidelines of logical empiricism, and the adoption of the techno-scientific culture associated with it, were actively promoted within marketing 'slowly during the 1950s, increasingly during the 1960s, and, as doctoral programs completed their adjustments, in a dominant manner through the 1970s' (Wilkie and Moore, 2003: p. 126). Under the influence of logical empiricism, the discipline of marketing became an extension of scientific management, whose task was to generate valid and reliable knowledge by testing theoretical hypothesis under experimental conditions, preferably through quantitative research methods (Hunt, 1994).

Although the history of interpretivism in marketing has been traced to motivation research from the 1930s (Tadajewski, 2006a), the prevalence of logical empiricism did not encounter significant resistance from advocates of interpretivist epistemologies until the 1980s (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). Fundamentally, interpretivist scholars argued that that the effective practice of marketing management required, among other things, an in-depth understanding of consumers' identities, subjective experiences, or cultural meanings related to products and brands (Belk *et al.*, 1989; Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). Moreover, against the view of marketing as an extension of scientific management, to which the epistemology of logical empiricism was intrinsically bonded, scholars argued that the practice of marketing resembles more an art than a science (Brown, 1995; 1996). From the perspective of management as an art, it was argued that the emphasis on reproducing a natural science

model failed to apprehend the aesthetic, symbolic, and literary aspects of marketing phenomena that are central to marketing management (Brown, 1995; 1996). The attainment of such understanding encouraged the adoption of a broad range of qualitative methodologies informed by non-positivist epistemological traditions, including, among others, phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, postmodernism, naturalism, feminism and humanism, which are generally subsumed under the label of interpretivism (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). As marketing phenomena is approached as an inter-subjective accomplishment, interpretivist epistemologies suggest that the purpose of research is to provide an understanding of the processes through which people give meaning and interpret their own actions in the context of marketing (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). This involved a shift from the pursuit of logical descriptions, which characterised logical empiricism (Blaikie, 2007) to explanations (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009) and interpretations of marketing phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Interpretive epistemologies are particularly concerned with understanding the lived experience of a given community of interest to marketing, fundamentally consumers, which are acknowledged as co-participants rather than passive subjects. Contrary to logical empiricist arguments, it follows that 'knowledge cannot be sought from the standpoint of any purportedly external, objective position, but from the lived experience of the research co-participant' (Tadajewski, 2006a: p. 430). Hence, the epistemological emphasis on quantification, standardisation and control which characterised logical empiricism is substituted with the use of qualitative methods to capture the subjective, culturally-specific, and spontaneous aspects of marketing phenomena, be it related to management (Hackley, 2003) or consumption (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

3.2.2 Reflexivity

Given these arguments, it was suggested that an open and plural methodological scenario, in which interpretivist and logical empiricist paradigms coexisted, would enable marketing scholars to select the approach that best suited the specific area of marketing knowledge that they sought to develop (Arndt, 1985). However, by examining the relationship between marketing knowledge and power, a second line of critique shifted the terms of this debate beyond narrow concerns about the relative strengths and weaknesses of different epistemologies (Tadajewski, 2006b). Indeed, whilst critics agreed with interpretivist researchers that the specific variety of logical empiricism adopted in business schools was a burden for critical thinking in marketing (Tadajewski, 2010), it was suggested that the call for methodological pluralism did not pay due attention to the social conditions in which methodological choices are made (Tadajewski, 2006a). Moreover, it was argued that the central role of marketing discourses in the process of not simply knowing but constructing market realities remained largely unaddressed within these epistemological debates. From a social constructionist perspective, it has been argued that marketing's conceptual and rhetorical repertoires produce persuasive discourses and representations of reality which are instrumentally deployed to serve the interests of different constituents (Hackley, 2003). For example, historically, marketing discourses have been modified and mobilised to accommodate the interest of management (Hackley, 2009), marketing practitioners (Hackley, 1998), business schools and academics (Brownlie and Saren, 1997), or national governments (Tadajewski, 2006b). Other authors have argued a close link between the adoption of marketing discourses and the spread of neoliberal capitalism (Witkowski, 2005), consumerism (du Gay, 1996) or economic growth (Varey, 2010). Therefore, as the production of marketing knowledge is entangled with ideology (Marion, 2006) and power (Skålén *et al.,* 2006), researchers have

to be aware that the choice of particular marketing theories, models and frameworks is not simply an epistemological judgement but a political one.

Interpretivist scholars have traditionally drawn upon the notion of reflexivity to address their concerns with the role of marketing knowledge in the social construction of market realities. For that purposes, reflexive research in marketing rejects 'the positivist injunction that 'reality' exists external to the researcher' in order to 'recognise the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge about marketing phenomena' (Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008: p. 10). Concisely, the notion of reflexivity encompasses a series of textual practices, including multi-perspective, multi-voicing, positioning and destabilizing, through which the interests and values of the author, concealed under the purported neutrality of marketing texts, are rendered visible to the reader (Alvesson *et al.,* 2008). Moreover, reflexive accounts must add to the former a critical examination of the institutional context in which knowledge is produced and legitimised (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

The notion of reflexivity is, indeed, crucial to practical constructivist approaches to markets such as the present. However, a crucial challenge for reflexive approaches is to trace the connection between marketing representations and the material existence of markets without exaggerating the role of symbolic processes such as inter-subjectivity. The latter maintains an idealist market ontology that practical constructivism seeks to avoid by incorporating materiality to the study of market practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). In this regard, the notion of performativity pushes the limits of reflexivity beyond the Cartesian divide between symbols and matter, words and worlds, by examining the sociomaterial continuities which configure the relationship between theory and practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). As Heiskanen remarks: 'performance is not only language, but also action' (Heiskanen, 2005: p.182).

2.3.3 Performativity, non-performativity and critical performativity

Concisely, an interest in performativity entails an empirical effort to explore the connection between what appears as ideas and representations of reality, be they theories, concepts, statements, metaphors, discourses, or visual representations, and the material existence of the phenomena that such ideas claim to represent (Mackenzie, 2004). Therefore, drawing upon Cochoy, 'a performative science is a science that simultaneously describes and constructs its subject matter. In this respect, the "performation" of the economy by marketing directly refers to the double aspect of marketing action: conceptualizing and enacting the economy at the same time' (Cochoy, 1998: p. 218). As noted by Araujo *et al.* (2010), ideas about the market, from disciplines as diverse as economics, law, engineering and certainly marketing, may become templates that not only represent, but also affect how markets work. Broadly speaking, the performative effects of market theories can result 'from ideas invading actors mind-sets and discussions (…) becoming linked to incentives or disincentives to action (…) or becoming inscribed into devices with which market actors engage' (Araujo *et al.* 2010; p. 6). Similarly, Moor (2011) argues that the ability of market theories to transform economic life does not rest merely on their power to generate persuasive descriptions imbued with authority and expert credentials. Rather, the power of market theories is to be found in their capacity to influence 'the design of environments, institutions and technologies' in which market practices take place (Moor, 2011: p. 311). Although the large majority of studies have focused on the performative power of economics (Callon, 1998) and finance (Mackenzie, 2004), there is a growing recognition that marketing theories can be as important as the former for performing markets in contemporary capitalism (Araujo *et al.*, 2010; Zwick and Cayla, 2011).

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006; 2007) have provided a more detailed account of marketing performativity by drawing upon the notion of

translation. These authors use the concept of translation to denote a process by which something – such as, for example, an idea, a rule, a statement, a product, a metaphor, or a technique – is able to spread across time and space. Drawing upon Kjellberg and Helgesson:

> The assumption that sets translation apart is the insistence that power resides with others. No initial or inherent force is ascribed to an entity itself. If no one "picks it up", nothing happens. Those who do pick it up, contribute in a non- trivial way to its existence and future development. Any transportation implies a transformation of that which is being moved. If an entity remains the same despite being spread, then this requires explanation (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006: p. 843).

Given these arguments, the notion of performativity goes beyond reflexivity because it rejects the dualist separation between the world of ideas and the world out there. Therefore, central for Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) is to highlight that marketing theories and the materiality of markets do not belong to different ontological realms, nor can they be reduced to one another. There is ontological continuity between realities out there and ideas about reality because both are enacted in heterogeneous webs of sociomaterial practices (Orlikowski, 2007). In other words, the notion of performativity acknowledges that what appears to us as purely symbolic, such as marketing theories, discourses or concepts, and that which appears to have a very material existence, such as organisations, retail stores, distribution channels, product purchases, can be seen as belonging to the same ontological realm, namely that of practice (Schatzki, 2005), and heterogeneous relationality (Law, 2009).

Given these arguments, the analytical starting point of performativity is that both ideas about markets and real life markets are enacted in webs of sociomaterial practices. Different practices are interlinked through chains

of translations. Therefore, the apparent abstraction of market ideas is simply an outcome of representational and discursive practices whose material traces have been deleted from sight (see Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). Hence, just like market realities, market theories are regarded as a practical outcome. In other words, market ideas involve the transformation of concrete discursive and representational practices, which are able to spread across time and space by being translated, for example, into academic papers, PowerPoint slides, reports, press articles, textbooks or professional journals. Subsequently, such ideas may be 'picked up' by political parties and be transformed into normalising practices such as the enactment of laws and regulations – or deregulations - (Reverdy, 2010). Market ideas may be picked up by management and translated into specific modifications of the layout and composition of retail spaces (Cochoy, 2008), new products (Neyland and Simakova, 2010), the implementation of market segmentation (Sunderland and Denny, 2011) the creation of loyalty schemes (Kjellberg, 2010) and consumer databases (Zwick and Nott, 2009) or market research practices such as focus groups (Grandclement and Gaglio, 2011). They may spread and intertwine with consumer practices (Warde, 2005), such as, for example, those of DIY (Thompson and Shove, 2008) or Nordic Walking (Shove and Pantzar, 2005).

Within the area of critical management studies, scholars have discussed the relationship between performativity and the possibility of developing critical knowledge which seeks emancipation from dominant managerialist ideologies (Tadajewski, 2010). An initial response to the idea that all marketing knowledge is performative has been to argue that the notion of performativity has no place in critical management studies (Fournier and Grey, 2000). In this respect, Fournier and Grey (2000) contend that the purpose of critical management studies is precisely to counterbalance the performative power of managerial theories by destabilising their purposes, concepts, language, and values, as well as the practices that the former

naturalise and legitimise as inevitable. For those purposes, it is argued that critical knowledge should remain committed to methodological pluralism, ontological denaturalisation, and reflexivity, precisely by adopting a non-performative stance (Fournier and Grey, 2000). However, other authors are beginning to rethink the role of performativity in critical management studies (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Spicer *et al.,* 2009; Tadajewski, 2010). For example, Spicer *et al.* (2009) highlight that it is necessary that critical management studies move 'beyond the cynicism' that pervades the field 'by recognizing that critique must involve *an affirmative movement* alongside the negative movement that seems to predominate in CMS today' (Spicer *et al.,* 2009: p. 538 my emphasis). Likewise, Tadajewski suggests that it is crucial to transcend such a non-performative, deconstructive and reflexive stance if critical marketing studies are to be relevant for society, particularly for those stakeholders who are systematically neglected due to their economic irrelevance to commercial marketing management (Tadajewski, 2009: p. 214). The notion of critical performativity opens up new spaces to rethink the relationship between critical theories of management and their relevance for society (Spicer *et al.* 2009; Tadajewski, 2010; Alvesson and Spicer, 2012).

If theories have a performative potential, in the sense that they do not simply describe but also contribute to enact particular market realities (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; Araujo, 2007; Cochoy, 2008), it is reasonable to suggest that critical theories can contribute to perform new market realities in which values of emancipation, fairness, justice or sustainability, can be enacted in practice. According to Spicer *et al.* (2009), the notion of critical performativity 'involves an active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices' (Spicer *et al.,* 2009: p. 538). Therefore, critical performativity emerges as 'an affirmative movement', yet to be developed 'alongside the negative movement that seem to predominate in critical management studies

today', (Spicer *et al.,* 2009: p. 538). In other words, critical performativity taps into synergies between deconstructive and constructive practices, in which the nature of existing market theories is questioned not only to reflect upon them but, essentially, to actively engage in the construction of alternatives. Consequently, critical performativity represents a positive commitment to the enactment of alternative market realities that expands the critical purposes of denaturalisation and reflexivity. Rather than asking questions about whether market realities are natural or social constructions, critical inquiries shift their interests towards what kind of market realities are desirable and, most fundamentally, how can they be enacted in practice.

This does not mean that critical marketing scholars are expected to perform alternative market realities on their own. Drawing upon the literature on market-practices it has been argued that the performative relationship between market theories and market realities is neither straightforward nor always observable. Indeed, the performative potential of market theories involves multiple alliances, and relationships between human and non-human actants as well as multiple translations, negotiations, redefinitions and displacements of original ideas, identities, intentions, and the practices through which they are enacted. Not only do existing power imbalances turn the project of critical performativity into a particularly uncertain and undetermined one. Moreover, given the hegemony achieved by existing ways of thinking about the market, it is likely that the kind of practices and actors involved in the making of alternative market realities, or market heterotopias, are to be found in peripheral, often marginal, contexts.

In conclusion, these epistemological arguments suggest that the production of knowledge by marketing scholars should not only be reflexive, regarding our own practice as researchers, but also performative – particularly in the sense of critical performativity. More specifically,

academic practices are involved in the production of market representations which are inevitably entangled, through processes of translation, with market-making practices. If heterotopian markets are performed through practices, whose enactment involves particular skills, competences, discourses and material devices, and such practices are to be translated across temporal, geographical and cultural contexts, it is central for critical research to facilitate processes of "translation". Therefore, the present work acknowledges classical epistemological concerns with issues of representation and reflexivity, but it goes one step beyond them by seeking to participate in the enactment of alternative market realities. Table 3.3 summarises the key epistemological arguments.

Epistemological debate	Summary of key arguments	Suggested solutions
Logical empiricism Vs. Interpretivism	The prevalence of logical empiricism is not beneficial to marketing, as it neglects the aesthetic, cultural and symbolic aspects of management.	Pacific coexistence of multiple paradigms in marketing and methodological pluralism.
Power/knowledge and critique of methodological pluralism in marketing	The choice of paradigms is undertaken under existing power dynamics and thus, it does not depend on their epistemological adequacy. There is a close link between knowledge and reality, as social realities are largely constructed on the basis of expert-knowledge, truth-claims and authority discourses.	Embracing reflexivity as a central element of research in marketing. This means acknowledging the situated, value-laden, and discursive nature of knowledge and research. Therefore, reflexivity acknowledges research as an activity in which the researcher produces selective representations of social realities which constructs them in specific ways.
Performativity as an	The notion of reflexivity	Performativity explores

extension of reflexivity	places an excessive emphasis on representation and inter-subjectivity. Theories contribute to construct the realities which they claim to describe although this process is not solely symbolic, as the notion of reflexivity suggests.	the complex webs of translations through which certain practices related to knowledge-production are connected to the practices that shape real life markets.
Non-performativity or critical performativity	Should critical marketing approaches be performative or non-performative?	Embracing the notion of critical performativity can strengthen critical marketing studies by moving them beyond the emphasis on denaturalisation of existing management practices to a proactive engagement with the making of alternative market realities.

Table 3.3 Key epistemological arguments summarised

3.4 Research strategy:

Having discussed the main epistemological and ontological issues concerning the study of market practices, now attention will turn to the research strategy implemented in the present work. Drawing upon Blaikie (2007; 2010), it is important to consider different styles of explanation and understanding in order to design a consistent research strategy. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2010: p. 3) refer to these logics of explanation as 'explanatory models'. In this respect, Blaikie (2007: p. 56) distinguishes between four main styles of explanation or understanding in the social sciences, namely inductive, deductive, abductive and retroductive.

In order to be ontologically consistent, the choice of a research strategy for the present inquiry had to bear in mind that the relational ontology embraced by practical constructivism prevents causal explanations

because it entails a procedural and fluid understanding of reality (Law, 2004). Indeed, it has been argued that the pursuit of causal explanations inevitably obscures the complexity of phenomena by narrowing down the number of elements involved and their interrelationships (Law, 2004). When a given process, such as the making of markets, is analysed in all their complexity, it becomes evident that causes can always be broken down into sub-causes, which can be further dissolved by breaking them down into more causes *ad infinitum*. In other words, all causes are caused by other causes, which themselves are effects and causes simultaneously. Therefore, the pursuit of causal explanations requires a process of black-boxing messy and complex chains of action, turning explanations into an exercise of 'purification'- without which causality vanishes (Latour, 1999).

The study of markets, in this case heterotopian markets, from the perspective of practical constructivism seeks to open up the black-box of "the market" rather than providing a causal explanation. Such a challenge requires the adoption of ethnographic tools which facilitate the tracing and mapping of complex associations between the heterogeneous actants that constitute markets and the practices through which such assemblages are enacted (Latour, 2005). Where to stop tracing such complex chains of action, or making them invisible in the way causal explanations do, becomes a political rather than epistemological choice, one that the notion of relationality attempts to soften if not to avoid altogether (Latour, 2005).

Given these arguments, the present work embraces an interpretivist epistemology, which denies the possibility of pursuing objectivity through detached observation. Consequently neither inductive nor deductive research strategies have been considered to undertake the present work. Instead, the focus has been placed on the processes of abduction and retroduction and how they can be combined throughout the research process (Blaikie, 2007; 2010). Indeed, unlike the linear logic of linear causality followed in deductive and inductive research strategies, both

abductive and retroductive research adopt the idea of spiral reasoning or iteration between theory and data. In other words, the researcher does not move in one direction, from theory to observation or from observation to theory as the logic of deductive and inductive research respectively imply. Rather, the researcher fluctuates between theory and data, moving back and forth, so 'during the process, the empirical area of application is developed, and the theory is also adjusted and refined' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 4). As these two research strategies share an interpretivist epistemology, it is argued that abductive and retroductive approaches are not concerned with prediction, which is confined to inductive and deductive research strategies (Blaikie, 2010). Abductive research strategies are suitable for accomplishing *understanding,* defined as an empathic effort to see the social world from the perspective of the research participants by providing *thick descriptions* of social phenomena, whilst retroductive research focuses on providing *explanations* by establishing the links between observations and theory (Blaikie, 2007; 2010).

The different nature and role played by theory in these types of research strategies is crucial to understand potential limitations as well as synergies that may emerge when retroductive and abductive modes of reasoning are pragmatically combined. For abductive research strategies, theory-building is perceived as a process by 'which the researcher assembles lay accounts of the phenomenon in question, with all their gaps and deficiencies, and, in an iterative manner, begins to construct his or her own account' (Blaikie, 2010: p. 156). Central for abductive research is that it seeks to produce thick descriptions that pay attention to the multiple layers of meanings and symbolism (Geertz, 1973). Given that the notion of thick description has been traditionally adopted by social constructionist research, the focus of description has generally been placed on the multiple layers of human inter-subjectivity. Nevertheless, the symmetric perspective adopted by practical constructivism, in which neither humans

nor non-humans are privileged as the initial focus of analysis, posed a potential limitation when considering the possibility of producing a thick description in the original sense of the term (Geertz, 1973). To address this problem, ANT scholars have developed an alternative to the former, namely the notion of 'deployment' (Latour, 2005: p. 36). Latour acknowledges that 'the useful notion of thick description provides a welcome attention to details but not necessarily to style' (Latour, 2005: p. 136). Therefore, Latour argues that 'the task is to *deploy* actors *as* networks of mediations – hence the hyphen in the composite word Actor-Network' (Latour, 2005: p. 136 my emphasis). Having clarified the particular turn that the pursuit of 'thick descriptions' takes in ANT work, reformulated as deployment, the present work will use both terms interchangeably.

However, whilst heavily influenced by ANT, practical constructivism and ANT are not to be confused as the same thing. Indeed, the notion of practical constructivism has other conceptual influences beyond ANT, among which practice theory is perhaps the most significant one (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007; Araujo, 2007; Araujo *et al.* 2010). For practice theory, the notion of practice has a dual nature, namely practice as relatively coherent entities and practices as specific and unique performances (Reckwitz, 2002). Both aspects of practice are inseparable (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; Schatzki, 2005) and whilst practices as performances are fluid, variable, and always undetermined, they should not be understood as entirely spontaneous outcomes of human agency. An example is the practice of driving a car. Although each performance of driving a car involves a situated and unique practice, with its respective variations, adaptations, and uncertain outcomes, driving a car is also an organised activity which is organised by webs of heterogeneous elements, including particular skills and competences, traffic signs, systems of penalties and sanctions, infrastructures or the vehicle itself. Within this context, ANT's conceptual footprint on practice theory can be summarised

by the realisation that objects and devices are co-participants in the enactment of market practices (see Orlikowski, 2007). Therefore, non-human elements of practice are, at least *a priori*, considered as important as their human counterparts in the enactment of practice (Cochoy, 2008; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Thompson and Shove, 2008).

Yet, notwithstanding ANT placing a strong emphasis on examining the emergence of orders, or patterns, without imposing on them external categories that may obscure the local work of mediators (Latour, 2005), the notion of practice entails a sensibility to theory that may create frictions with the radical abductive approach advocated by the former. In this respect, retroductive research approaches are concerned with the task of explaining a particular phenomenon 'by establishing the existence of a hypothesised structure or mechanism that is responsible for producing an established regularity' (Blaikie, 2010: p. 155). According to Blaikie (2010), retroductive research strategies seek plausible explanations of a given phenomenon by drawing upon existing theories in order to postulate the nature of underlying mechanisms and conditions under which they may be operating to cause observable phenomena. Given that the notion of practice, as a coherent entity, involves one such theoretical mechanisms which may be imported to the field in order to explain the enactment of heterotopian markets, it is unavoidable to appreciate a relationship between practical constructivism and retroductive research strategies (Alvesson and Sköldberg , 2009). At this point, it is relevant to insist on the view of theory as a multi-dimensional rather than one-dimensional concept (Van Maanen *et al.*, 2007). Thinking about theory as a multi-dimensional concept means that:

> A theory, in principle, could be a guess, conjecture, speculation, supposition, proposition, hypothesis, conception, or model, with those at the formal end of the spectrum more likely to be in print. But, even in print, what is conventionally treated as theory displays

> high variation in terms of range, focus, interest, complexity, sweep, elegance, level of analysis, presentational character, implications for next steps in the collective research process, and so forth. (Van Maanen *et al.*, 2007: p. 1147).

When theory is considered from a broadened perspective, the boundaries between explaining and describing social phenomena become blurry (Latour, 2005). In a somewhat sarcastic tone, Latour remarks that 'if your description needs an explanation, it's not a good description, that's all. Only bad descriptions need an explanation' (Latour, 2005: p. 147). Other authors emphasise the explanatory power of theories grounded in close interpretations and in-depth studies, of local contexts and events (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Visconti, 2010). Unlike the traditional view of theory development through falsation (Blaikie, 2007), approaches such as Grounded Theory highlight that the adoption of frameworks and concepts developed outside the field tend to be an inadequate strategy for building theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The latter emphasise the centrality of resisting 'intertextual influences from earlier theories' in order to explain social phenomena (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 71).

Crucially, by shifting the terms of the debate beyond pure dichotomies, these arguments opened up the possibility of rethinking the relationship between abduction and retroduction, formal and informal theories, explanation and description, in more pragmatic and reflexive terms. Moreover, reflexive concerns about description, interpretation and explanation, have to be able to relate to pragmatic concerns that emerge from the situated practice of fieldwork (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Indeed, I soon realised that my engagement with theoretical ideas at different stages of the research process could hardly be decided *a priori*, particularly given the difficulty to separate my need of theoretical guidance – or the lack of it - from my situated experiences and practices as a researcher. The latter involved a fair amount of 'ethnographic complexities'

(Neyland, 2008: p. 26) which shaped my choice of a research design – considered in holistic terms. Among other things, I had to juggle with logistic contingencies, manage a research project, establish relationships and participate with members of the community, try to find out what I wanted to observe as an ethnographer, take notes (take many notes!) and pictures, generate reflections, arrange interviews and focus groups with key informants or just informally speak to people. All these complexities had to be managed in the face of time constraints, sticking to a tight budget and ensuring high ethical standards.

Hence, whether in terms of methodological guidance for data collection or conceptual frameworks to guide interpretation, a reflexive and pragmatic engagement with academic theories and research exemplaries proved to be relevant to avoid the additional limitations of purely abductive and purely retroductive research strategies. Perhaps this was not only relevant, but also unavoidable. The following excerpts from my research diary illustrate some of the difficulties and challenges that encouraged me to adopt such position:

> I had a number of questions in mind when I started the fieldwork, which I thought were broad enough to undertake an ethnographic study. I was determined to keep all my theoretical assumptions suspended in the limbo of academia so I could walk into the field with an open mind. I could hardly have been more mistaken. Indeed, as I spent more time participating in the community of el PUMA, I become more aware that my initial questions are dysfunctional to undertake this empirical work. They produce me anxiety as I direct all my attention, resources, skills, and time to pursue them and leave other possibilities unattended. My judgments are entirely contaminated by the language of marketing, much more than I initially thought. My concerns are essentially formulated from a theoretical perspective which ignores the

local conditions and experiences of these people. I wonder if having formulated questions or done any previous reading for my literature review has become the main sources of bias in this research.

I now remember with great regret my naïve appreciation of ethnographers praising the wonders of leaving our theoretical lenses at home before immersing ourselves in the field. How is such a thing possible when one is confronted by overwhelming pressures to make sense of new ideas, experiences, practices, routines, or ways of doing? How can I possibly be certain about what kind of things are to be observed or what kind of questions are to be asked without the guidance of theory? Perhaps the answer is that certainty is just an epistemological illusion, whether academic theories are used or not, but at least one can feel the comfort and relief of having the friendly hand of an expert to cling to.

Moreover, it is central to emphasise the importance of internal sources of theory in contrast to external ones. What I call external theories are those formal theories which the researcher imports to the field through his readings and familiarity with a body of literature. This is regularly a concern when the researcher position is that of a so-called expert on the basis of an overwhelming academic background compared to that of the research participants (Neyland, 2008). However, my experience with the Puma community is that a significant number of participants had strong academic backgrounds and thus they were extremely familiar with a range of formal theories in economics, sociology, psychology or anthropology, which they employed to inform their practices. Rather often, I did not have to draw upon any external theoretical repertoire to make sense of empirical materials as I could learn and draw upon their theoretical

frameworks, sources and references. The following fragment of my research diary illustrates this:

> From the study of Aborigines in distant lands to the engagement with disadvantaged communities in urban settings, ethnographers have traditionally been very sensitive to reflexive concerns with authority, power and expertise. Therefore, it is frequent that during the fieldwork stage the ethnographer consciously avoids making ostentation of his or her academic knowledge in front of the participants. However, less than a week here has been enough time for me to realise that the majority of these people are extremely well versed in a variety of disciplines such as economics, philosophy, sociology, anthropology or psychology. Not only are they familiar with the social sciences; Moreover, they don't shy away to debate complex ideas, both among them and with me, from a variety of disciplines. Being unfamiliar with their rich theoretical repertoire makes difficult the task of making sense of their conversations; and more worryingly, not being able to participate in the discussions makes one feel like an ignorant in front of them.

To reiterate, tensions between the adoption of retroductive and abductive research strategies emerged during the research process. On the one hand, accomplishing a thick description of heterotopian market practices, which could capture their situated, specific and emergent nature, was a central purpose of the present research. However, on the other hand, the view that thick description of heterotopian market practices could be developed through a purely abductive research strategy, namely one that resists any connection to existing theoretical arguments, had to be abandoned given the arguments above. The present research strategy intentionally adopted an ambivalent position towards theory that enabled a combination of retroduction and abduction on pragmatic and reflexive

grounds. It was in such constant movement between abduction and retroduction that significant synergies between description, interpretation and explanation were found (Blaikie, 2010; Alvesson and Sköldberg , 2009). The process will be detailed below.

3.5 Ethnography:

In connection to the arguments above, Blaikie (2007; 2010) contends that abductive and retroductive reasoning can be effectively combined in ethnographic research strategies that produce explanations built upon an in-depth understanding of contextualised accounts of the experiences and practices of local actors. Likewise, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009: p. 131) draw upon Geertz (1973) to suggest that ethnographic thick descriptions are a crucial step for elaborating explanations which seek to situate the ideographic aspects of phenomena within an 'intelligible frame'. In this regard, it has been argued that 'because of its relative freedom from a thoroughly specialized vocabulary and a privileged conceptual apparatus, ethnography continues to carry a slight literary air compared to other forms of social science writing' (Van Maanen, 2006: p. 13). However, simultaneously, Wolcott (1990) argues that ethnographic accounts, whilst maintaining loose ties with formal theories in anthropology and sociology, cannot be completely detached from them. His remark about what makes a study ethnographic is particularly illuminating in this regard: 'I hold that ethnography promises more than "being there", "thick description", or "case study" broadly defined' (Wolcott, 1990: p. 69). Given these arguments, ethnography emerged as an overarching methodological framework to undertake empirical work.

As far as definitional issues are concerned, ethnography tends to be incorrectly reduced to specific practices such as participant observation (Bryman and Bell, 2007), fieldwork (Arnauld and Wallendorf, 1994), or reflexivity (Van Maanen, 1988). However, 'there is a sense in which all

social researchers are participant observers' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 1), and fieldwork, as an interactive practice close to participants, appears to be a common feature of various qualitative research approaches (Gummesson, 2003). Moreover, whilst ethnographic accounts tend to be highly concerned about issues of representation (Van Maanen, 1988), awareness of the literary aspects of research accounts is hardly confined to academic ethnographers (Brownlie and Saren, 1997). These arguments make it difficult to establish clear definitional boundaries between ethnography and other sorts of research methods, particularly those that involve a qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Such difficulties suggest that it is more productive to define ethnography 'in a liberal way, not worrying much about what does or does not count as examples of it' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 1). Drawing upon the work of Law (2004) on 'soft methodologies' as creative endeavours, and inspired by Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) notion of the researcher as a bricoleur, I defined ethnographic research as a creative assemblage of methods for data collection, interpretation and representation, in which the researcher acts as a bricoleur, whose choices are shaped, informed, influenced, and guided by his or her immersion in the field, rather than his or her detachment from it.

The definition above is consistent with Neyland's (2008) view of ethnographic research strategies as open ended and non-prescriptive plans for action, whose flexible nature enables researchers to make pragmatic choices when dealing with the messy, unexpected, confusing, uncertain, surprising and even perplexing aspects of empirical work. However, whilst it is important to recognize that, 'even less than other forms of social research, the course of ethnography cannot be predetermined', emphasis on flexibility and adaptability does not mean 'that researcher's behaviour in the field can be haphazard, merely adjusting to events by taking the line of least resistance' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 24). Indeed, reflexivity is central to ethnographic

research strategies for it encourages researchers 'to think about what they are doing while they are doing research, to reflect upon the principles they carry into the research' (Neyland, 2008: p. 30). Therefore, strategy, as 'a basis for ethnographers to move back and forth between the everyday practicalities of their research and the general direction in which they would like the research to move' is not generated as a methodological recipe, or a prescriptive set number of steps to be followed. Rather, a certain strategic stability emerges from the researchers' ongoing consideration towards a relatively flexible number of issues that Neyland (2008: p. 30) labels as 'ethnographic sensibilities'. For the purpose of the present discussion, a number of ethnographic sensibilities, adapted from the work of Neyland (2008), Law (2004), Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) and Van Maanen (1988), will be examined below by placing a particular emphasis on how they were addressed in practice.

3.5.1 Ethnographic sensibility 1: foreshadowed problems and research problems

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2003), a central concern in the pre-fieldwork stage of the research is that the researcher identifies a 'foreshadowed problem' and transforms it into a 'research problem'. Foreshadowed problems refer to 'an intellectually thoughtful set of ideas that will guide the access negotiations, the initial fieldwork, the early writing of the out-of-the-field diary' (Delamont, 2004: p. 224). For Malinowski, the fundamental source to generate foreshadowed problems was 'good training in theory and acquaintance with its latest results' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 24). Nevertheless, contemporary ethnography contemplates a wider range of possibilities to stimulate inquiry, ranging from existing theories which are to be tested or developed in new contexts, to the absence of detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon, an observation of a surprising set of facts, significant personal experiences, or interest in remarkable social events. Neyland

(2008) adds to the former list other potential sources such as the pursuit of objects and technologies, methodological developments, an interest in a focal area, an involvement in organisational problem-solving or a commitment to the exploration of specific social issues. The following reflexive fragment from my research diary illustrates the process through which a foreshadowed problem, initially based on theoretical concerns, gradually acquired a political and critical tone by a reflexive reading of the literature combined with subjective personal experience:

> Initially, the concern that triggered my inquiry was a purely theoretical interest in clarifying the meaning of the term market in the context of marketing and environmental sustainability. I wanted to study green markets beyond the idea of green market segments largely because of my familiarity with macromarketing frameworks. However, following my reflexive literature review, I began to realise that the rather unsubstantial use of the term market was hardly neutral or innocent. On the contrary, the notion of a green market remained instrumentally vague to legitimate a specific ideology that reduced sustainability concerns to the endless pursuit of economic growth. Yet it did so in disguise of green economic growth. Gradually, I started to realise that taking for granted the nature of green markets as a capitalist singularity was literally killing our capacities to visualise market alternatives to deal with sustainability concerns beyond their prevalent (unsustainable) form. This argument resonated with my personal experience during a previous ethnographic study that I carried out in an eco-village in Spain. While there, I realised that the idea of a green market had a very different meaning for the eco-village dwellers other than buying and selling green products. I observed that their sustainable economic practices were fundamentally driven by reciprocity and kinship rather than by any kind of green economic

> rationality. My initial reaction to these findings was to question whether what I found in the eco-village were proper market practices. I connected the dots a few years later by, somewhat paradoxically, finding an answer to this question in another question, namely "and why not?". I could not think of a single reason other than ideological fundamentalism to reduce the notion of green markets to one universal category, with specific form and essence.

However, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2003), foreshadowed problems are to be transformed into specific research problems before the fieldwork begins. In this process, they are to be formulated in manners for which an empirical answer can be provided. For the purposes of the present research, the foreshadowed problem discussed above turned into more specific interest in describing concrete practices and devices that make possible the enactment of an alternative currency. Drawing upon my research diary, the following extract illustrates this process:

> I remember myself spending substantial amounts of time grappling with the fact that I had a highly theoretical argument in mind that was not particularly easy to turn into an empirical enquiry. The idea of having to do a whole PhD in the library was haunting me at the time. I wanted to get out there to see –and hopefully learn- how the notion of market was being reinvented in practice. I wanted to demonstrate an appreciation for these practical efforts with an empirical study which could make them visible in the literature. But what on Earth could be the meaning of a heterotopian market beyond a conversation between two academics, I used to wonder. I spent days and nights reading, reflecting, writing (yes, writing was incredibly useful), talking to people, attending workshops, presenting my work, or watching documentaries. I discussed my ideas over and over again with my

friends, with my supervisors, with myself, and with others. These efforts gradually fructified. Now I can say that only a few challenges have been more daunting, and certainly more rewarding, than that of turning initial foreshadowed problem into a concrete research problem.

Such a research problem remained broad, open and flexible, so it could adapt to specific issues that emerged in the field. Yet it constituted the initial platform that articulated my inquiry during the pre-fieldwork and early fieldwork stages. At this point, it is important to acknowledge that the process of developing a research problem does not end here. Arguably, it is only when the final draft of the ethnographic account is written that the research problem addressed within the text adopts relative closure (Van Maanen, 1988).

3.5.2 Ethnographic sensibility 2: Selecting a case, location and negotiating access

The task of selecting a suitable case and gaining access to a location in which empirical work can be undertaken is a crucial methodological concern in ethnographic research. Having shaped my foreshadowed problems into an interest in alternative currencies, critical decisions were to be made regarding, for example, what type of alternative currency initiative was going to be studied and what location was going to be used during the fieldwork stage. In the present work, the case selected was an initiative called Moneda Social Puma (henceforth Puma currency scheme) in Seville. The reasons and criteria for this choice will be discussed below.

In methodology texts, this process of selecting cases tends to be discussed into the rather technical language of sampling (e.g. Bryman and Bell, 2007; Silverman, 2004). The most widely employed forms of non-probabilistic sampling in qualitative research are theoretical sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Whilst it is difficult to justify

that one single sample logic was followed in the present research, and some ethnographers even reject the notion of sampling (O'Reilly, 2009), the selection of a suitable location for the present work was informed by readings on non-probabilistic sampling procedures. However, in order to avoid the conceptual weight born by the notion of sampling as a prescriptive series of steps to select a population, I will discuss them in terms of theoretical relevance, convenience and accessibility, snowballing procedures and linguistic concerns.

As far as theoretical relevance is concerned, this idea relates to the notion of theoretical sampling. The latter is a sampling procedure, widely employed in Grounded Theory, which involves the selection of cases based on their potential to generate relevant theoretical insights on one topic, event, organisation, process or phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As far as the selection of a case was concerned, it is important to bear in mind that the area of alternative currencies is not a monolithic category. In other words, multiple types of alternative currencies exist. Therefore, the literature on the subject emerged as a good starting point to select what type of alternative currency was going to be used as a focus of the inquiry (e.g. Blanc, 2011; Pfajfar *et al.*, 2011). The review of the literature highlighted that there are three ideal-type logics underpinning alternative currency initiatives, namely territorial, communitarian and economic reasons (Blanc, 2011). However, whilst conceptual taxonomies of alternative currencies were a useful starting point to select a case, such ideal types tend to overlap in real life - and it is likely that alternative currency schemes display mixture features (Blanc, 2011). Hence, a second part of the case selection process involved exploratory research on specific alternative currency initiatives. Therefore, various initiatives of community currencies were contacted both in the UK, with the purpose of exploring their suitability as a case study as well as their accessibility. During such exploratory stage, I considered the characteristics of various initiatives through a combination of primary and secondary sources,

ranging from newspapers and TV documentaries, as well as phone interviews and email exchanges with members or the initiative´s own website.

Besides issues of theoretical relevance, convenience and accessibility reasons were important in the process of selecting the Puma currency scheme as a relevant case. Indeed, convenience and accessibility are important criteria in ethnographic research, as the latter tend to involve difficult negotiations to spend relatively large periods in particular settings. In this regard, the task of finding a suitable location for empirical work involved long negotiations with various initiatives which demanded a heavy investment in terms of time, effort and money. For example, most of the times I contacted an alternative currency initiative they required the preparation and presentation of a research proposal. The content of such proposals could not be standardised, as it had to be tailored to the specific needs and conditions of each community, and thus their preparation involved a significant amount of time and effort. Face-to-face meetings required frequent travelling. Moreover, negotiations for access were not always easy, often unfruitful, and occasionally resulted in a significant amount of disappointments and frustrations. Indeed, it was not unusual that hopes and expectations generated after an initial contact vanished in the aftermath of further negotiations. Reasons for this were diverse, ranging from difficulties in arranging a specific period of time in which fieldwork was mutually convenient for the initiative and the researcher, to an absolute lack of communication. Other initiatives explicitly stated that they were too busy to dedicate their time and resources to 'look after' an outsider.

Moreover, whilst linguistic concerns are not strictly involved in non-probabilistic sampling procedures, they played a role in the selection of an empirical context to undertake the present work. Drawing upon the phenomenology of Schutz (1964), it is argued that the possibly for

researchers to learn alien cultures stems from the basic premise that, as social beings, they are equipped with the same basic competences, skills and tacit knowledge that make social life possible. This is particularly important in ethnographic research. In the words of Hammersley and Atkinson (2003: p.9), 'ethnography exploits the capacity that any social actor possesses for learning new cultures'. However, whilst we may all be equipped with basic capacities to learn culture, language can become an enabler or barrier when it comes to managing relationships in the field. If language is a key tool for communication, the possibility of being able to capture the nuances of social interaction is entangled with our linguistic competences. Indeed, I became aware of these issues through my previous experience with ethnographic research. Therefore, from the initial stages, I narrowed down the search for cases to English and Spanish speaking initiatives. As Spanish is my mother tongue, finding a location in Spain became a preferable, although not an exclusionary criterion.

Findings of my exploratory research revealed that the MSP initiative displayed a suitable combination of the three ideal logics argued above (Blanc, 2011). In this regard, Puma currency scheme was intentionally designed to strengthening a community which was, to a large extent, located in one specific geographical area of the city of Seville. Simultaneously, it was intended to shape economic exchanges towards products and services which had positive ecological and social impacts. Moreover, it was the largest scheme in terms of number of users, with over 700 members at the time. Considering that the size of some of the other projects considered was either unknown or less than 500 users, the Puma currency scheme proved to be relatively successful in this respect. Gradually, it became apparent that Puma currency scheme was an extremely interesting case from a theoretical perspective. As far as accessibility and convenience issues were concerned, negotiations with the Puma currency scheme went extremely smoothly in comparison with previous attempts in other currency initiatives. Later, I learnt that, unlike

others, people in the Puma currency scheme were accustomed to hosting researchers in the social sciences, as well as journalists or activists that requested contact. Indeed, they had a working-group exclusively dedicated to coordinating the relationship between the community and academics interested in their activities. Moreover, the location was in a Spanish speaking country. Given these arguments, the Puma currency scheme emerged as a suitable case to undertake my ethnographic inquiry into heterotopian market practices.

3.5.3 Ethnographic sensibility 3: methods for data collection and field relationships

Data collection was undertaken through a creative combination of formal and informal methods of data collection, which involved the following:

1. Informal data collection events, interactions and conversations
2. Participant observation
3. Ethnographic interviews with key informant
4. Group discussion
5. Research diary and field notes
6. Documents and archives
7. Informal data-collection events, interactions and conversations:

It is important to clarify that the nature of ethnographic research makes it difficult to trace a clear boundary between formal and informal data collection. In this regard, O'Reilly (2009: p. 125) highlights such difficulties when she discusses the unclear distinction between in-depth informal conversations and ethnographic interviews. Likewise, Hammersley and Atkinson (2003: p. 139) highlight that 'the dividing line between participant observation and interviewing is hard to discern'. Apart from the special case of participant observation, which will be discussed below, the line between formal and informal data collection in the present work was

traced by the existence/absence of a prior arrangement between me, as a researcher, and the participants. To clarify this issue, it is central to acknowledge that the main research instrument in ethnographic research is the researcher. By arguing the researcher is a sentient being that is fully immersed in a research context, ethnographic research acknowledges that data collection may occur in unexpected manners such as for example through an exposition to 'unsolicited accounts', overheard conversations, or unplanned observations in places that are being used for other purposes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: pp. 126-127). Therefore, whilst formal methods can be deployed and withdrawn at will, the ethnographer's mind, eyes, or ears cannot be "switched off" outside those situations whose meaning has been formally negotiated with participants as a data-collection situation. Indeed, within the present research, encounters with relevant information often occurred in situations that were unplanned, fortuitous or accidental.

Whilst such informal data collection events proved to be extremely valuable, it also posed a number of methodological issues upon which it was necessary to reflect. For example, a crucial challenge when dealing with informally gathered information involved the unavoidable dependence on memory, with all its limitations, as the only possible means to retrieve it. In this regard, recording and retrieving informally gathered data is often a task that remains largely dependent on the researcher's fragile memories about "what happened", "what was said", or "what was done". The following fragment from my fieldnotes contextualises this challenge:

> Although it is generally a good habit to always carry with me a small notebook and a pen, or mobile phone, so I could keep ethnographic records when necessary, it is not always possible or adequate to use these tools. I have learnt from previous ethnographies that there are occasions when using a recording device in informal situations, whether it is a mobile

> phone, a camera, a tape recorder or a notebook, is the most effective way to stop the flow of naturally occurring interactions in the field. I realised that even just asking people for permission to take notes during an informal interaction can be perceived as rude, unconsidered or instrumental behaviour. Not being sensible to these issues puts one at risk of appearing as opportunistic and not trustworthy, and possibly of ruining all the rapport and trust built upon with the participants.

Other difficulties regarding the process of recording and retrieving informally gathered data can be added to the difficulties identified above. Informal data collection occurred unexpectedly, allowing no time for reflection, under conditions of stress or distress, in situations in which neither probing questions could be asked nor the "rewind", "pause" or "zoom" buttons could be used to obtain a clear picture of the information or activities going on. For example, relevant cues could emerge from an overheard conversation between two strangers, appreciated during an informal interaction with people, witnessed from distance, or spontaneously confessed by a participant without soliciting it. Therefore, in isolation, this information often appeared as partial, incomplete, fragmented or incoherent. As I reflected upon these challenges, I realised the importance of proceeding with caution as to make the best possible use of informally gathered information.

A number of strategies were applied to address these problems. For example, following informal observations, interactions or conversations, my thoughts and memories about it were recorded in audio. The audio recorder of my mobile phone proved to be a particularly suitable tool for this task, particularly as I could always have it on me, it was rather discrete in comparison to a notebook, and it avoided the inconvenience of writing up field notes *in situ*. In general, these audios involved descriptions and interpretations of the situation which were subsequently transcribed into

texts, to which further reflections were added. Importantly, to differentiate information gathered within informal situations from data collected by formal methods, it was important to make this distinction visible. A “Capital I” on the margins of the text was used to symbolise this issue and a brief description of the context and conditions under which this data was obtained was provided. Moreover, informally gathered information was taken neither at face value nor was used in a literary sense. Rather, its value resulted from its centrality in constructing the background knowledge which informed and guided the deployment of formal data collection procedures. In other words, informally gathered information constituted the hinterland of formal data collection.

1. Participant observation

According to Denzin, ‘meaningful interpretations of human experience can only come from those persons that have thoroughly immersed themselves in the phenomenon they wish to interpret and understand’ (Denzin, 1989: p. 26). As a participant, the researcher becomes a member of a group or community, taking part in their activities, sharing emotions and experiences, or participating in interactions that constitute their social world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). In doing this, the researcher intends to gain access to insider accounts and shared experiences, witness routine activities and exceptional events taking place in the community, or become aware of specific norms, beliefs, myths or meanings, which are generally restricted to participants (Wolcott, 1995). The ethnographer becomes a participant observer not just by being there, but by using this involvement in the field to accomplish a level of understanding about a particular phenomenon (Wolcott, 1995). However, there are different ways to undertake participant observation, which may be understood along two dimensions, namely covered/uncovered and participant/observer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005).

Drawing upon Gold (1958), four positions can be distinguished regarding the participant/observer dimension, namely the complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer. Complete participation is problematic, as the researcher 'runs the risk of going native and therefore losing any sense of objectivity, whilst the complete observer can become so overtly detached that loses the ethnographic perspective' (O'Reilly, 2009: p. 154). A more contemporary view involves thinking of the participant/observer dimension not so much in terms of fixed categories but as a continuum in which researchers oscillate (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003; O'Reilly, 2009; Neyland, 2008). My engagement in participant observation involved constant shifts between an emphasis on participation and an emphasis on observation. In doing this, I intended to transcend the idea of participant observation as constituted by fully discernible categories and practised it as a fluid process. I reflected on the general purposes of observation and participation (O'Reilly, 2009), as well as situational and personal constraints (Wolcott, 1995), in order to decide what aspect of participant observation was going to dominate each specific performance. As far as purposes were concerned, participation was emphasised when the purpose of my performance was to make the strange familiar, whilst a more observant role was adopted when my intention was to make the familiar strange (see O'Reilly, 2009). As far as personal and situational constraints are concerned, it was not always possible to choose when doing participant observation. For example, sometimes I was politely invited to aid members of the Puma currency scheme to undertake their activities and therefore I had no choice but to become a full participant. Participation in the field involved the adoption of various roles that were negotiated with the community. In this regard, I found myself involved in activities as diverse as acting as an English/Spanish interpreter, stocking the stands of the so-called Supply Centre, serving drinks in community events or taking part in all the different working-groups within the community. On other occasions, involvement was not possible due to the

sensitive nature of the situation, such as, for example, when the community was involved in conflict-resolution activities, or due to my lack of expertise, such as, for example, when people arrived to open a Puma currency account during the welcoming days. In the latter case, I was restricted to adopting a rather observant role.

Another methodological concern about participant observation is whether it is undertaken overtly or covertly. Whilst reactivity and unnatural behaviour can be negative outcomes of people knowing that they are being observed, O'Reilly (2009) warns ethnographers against the potential dangers, including physical dangers, as well as ethical concerns, involved in carrying out uncovered observations. From the moment that I requested formal consent to undertake research within the community, my participant observation became fundamentally overt. The following extract from my fieldnotes illustrates this point, as well as how adopting an overt position helped me during my first days in the field:

> Since the very first day I arrived, I am introduced to people as "the researcher" or the "PhD student" that "is coming from Manchester to study us". A playful emphasis on the words "*to study us*", generally pronounced in a teasing tone, and the big smiles in their faces, did not only indicate their awareness of the fact that I have a research interest in them. I believe that these words involve a kind effort to defeat any initial distrust that could emerge towards me –due to my condition as a researcher- with humour.

According to Neyland (2008), ethnographic texts do not give enough attention to the practice of observation. It is as if observation develops as a practical know-how for which little guidance can be given in advance (Neyland, 2008). My experience in ethnographic research suggests that the latter is true, but only to a certain extent, and that practical advice and

familiarity with the experience of other researchers can be used to enhance the observational skills and competences of the ethnographer. Moreover, as I discussed above, theoretical concepts, when used reflexively - rather than as theory-testing devices- can become a useful compass to guide participant observation. For example, Neyland (2008) suggests beginning by observing everything, and gradually working with both familiarity and strangeness to build up observations on key events and activities. Walcott (1995) gives more specific advice to researchers engaged in participant observations, who could improve their practice by, for example, observing their own observation practices, reviewing constantly what they are looking for, trying to capitalise on bursts of attention, trying to assess what they are doing - that is their participation, or reflecting on note taking and writing-up practices as a critical part of fieldwork. This advice was put into practice to undertake participant observations of key events and community activities (see table below), which were carried out alongside informal forms of participant observation (see sensibility 2). These observations were made by following a rather unstructured format and involved varied degrees of participation. Data collected during these participant observations involved audio and video records, pictures and field notes. The table 3.4 summarises these activities:

Events	Number of observations and duration	Emphasis placed on:
Mercapuma (Street Market)	1 event (2 hours)	Mainly observation
Central de Abastecimiento (Supply Centre)	4 events (2 hours per event)	In three occasions emphasis was placed on observation and in one occasion the emphasis was mainly on participation
Welcoming sessions	4 events (about 2 hours per event)	Mainly observer
Parties and celebrations	1 event (about 4 hours)	Mainly participant
Meetings of the Supply Centre working-group	2 events (2 hours per event)	Mainly participant
Meetings of the working group for Community Caring	3 events (2 hours per event)	Mainly participant
Meetings of the working-group of Communications	1 event (2 hours per event)	Mainly participant
Meeting of the welcoming working group	1 event (2 hours)	Mainly participant
MSP general assembly with all working-groups	1 event (about 3 hours)	Mainly observant

3.4 Formal observations of key events and activities in the field

2. Ethnographic Interviews with key informants:

In line with the ethnographic strategy followed in this research, multi-method qualitative data collection involved seven ethnographic interviews with key informants. Drawing upon Sherman-Heyl´s (2001) definition of ethnographic interviewing encompasses 'those projects in which researchers *have established respectful, on-going relationships with their interviewees,* including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and *enough time and openness* in the interviews for the interviewees *to explore purposefully with the researcher* the meanings

they place on events in their worlds' (Sherman-Heyl, 2001: 369 my emphasis). This definition can be broken down in order to unravel how ethnographic interviews were implemented in the present research.

A central feature of ethnographic interviewing is that previous relationships of trust and rapport precede the interview event. Unlike other approaches to interview, this is a distinctive feature of ethnographic interviewing. For example, the existence of previous relationships between interviewees and interviewers in perceived as a potential source of bias by researchers using interview data from objectivist perspectives. However, within ethnographic interviews, the existence of positive relationships with the interviewees is not only a precondition for interviewing informants but also a source of quality. Moreover, whilst ethnographic interviews share a number of characteristic with other types of interpretivist approaches to interviewing, the emphasis on positive relationships having to be established before, rather than during the interview, is a distinctive element of the former. In other words, ethnographic interviews see rapport as a precondition for the interview, rather than an outcome of it. In this respect, the possibility of undertaking ethnographic interviews is entirely dependent on the quality of the relationships established between the researcher and the participants in the field. Therefore, a common practice employed by ethnographers to build such relationships is to combine ethnographic interviews with a substantial period of participant observation. In the present research, participant observation was undertaken for a period of six weeks. Nevertheless, it was only after four weeks in the field that I perceived that the levels of rapport, trust, and mutual understanding established with the participants were adequate to undertake ethnographic interviews. Consequently, it was after week four, and not before, when interviews began to be carried out. Centrally, it is not simply the amount of time in the field, but the type of field relationships built with the participants, what counts as preconditions to carry out ethnographic interviews. Details about field relationships are provided

below, within the fourth ethnographic sensibility, so they do not need to be discussed here. Another important element of ethnographic interviews, following Sherman-Heyl's definition (2001), is that they are undertaken for a significant length of time. If the additional time required to build up rapport and positive relationships prior to the interview event is taken into account, the time investments demanded by ethnographic interviews is significantly higher than other interview approaches. All seven interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and thus regular breaks were needed in order to avoid tiredness.

As far as implementation issues are concerned, ethnographic interviews tend to be carried out, when possible, in unstructured formats. It is in this respect that ethnographic interviews share much in common with in-depth conversations in context as well as other interpretivist interviewing techniques (O'Reilly, 2009). Although semi-structured formats are compatible with ethnographic interviews, unstructured styles tend to be a preferred option. Therefore, I undertook seven unstructured interviews with key informants. With regards to preparation, a brief set of prompts was prepared in the form of an '*aide-memoire'* (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 474). Among these memory prompts there were no explicit questions, but a list of five general areas that I was interested in, namely *life-story of the interviewee in relation to the initiative*, *general description of activities carried out in his or her working-group*, historical developments *in these activities and reasons for change*, *remarkable events*/*crucial incidents*, *expectations and future developments*. These themes were inspired by my readings of alternative approaches to interpretivist interviewing such as life-story and critical incident interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Along the lines of Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) active interview, the interviewer and the interviewee become mutually involved in the co-production of meaning. Moreover, unlike active interviews, ethnographic interviews acknowledge that the ethnographic context of the interview is at

least as important as the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee during the interview event (Spradley, 1979). Given these arguments, it was decided that the five generic areas above were suitably unprescriptive. Therefore, when new themes emerged, the interaction was flexible enough to allow interviewees to take turns and follow a different path. Moreover, to conclude the interview, all interviewees were explicitly invited to raise any issues that they thought may be relevant but had been overlooked through the interview.

As far as the selection of key informants was concerned, seven people from different working groups were interviewed in total. Table 3.5 summarises demographic characteristics of the interviewees. The main criteria applied to select interviewees were the following:

1. Interviewees were required to have been involved in the community for a long period. Indeed, all the interviewees were involved in their respective working groups for at least sixteen months.

2. Consistent with the criteria established in ethnographic interviewing, the existence of a rapport between me and the interviewees, prior to the interview event, was a crucial element in the sampling process. This criterion was also met.

3. In addition to the former, availability was an important factor when selecting people for interviews. Particularly given the amount of time involved in undertaking this type of interviews, availability factors had to be taken into account. However, probably related to criterion two, none of the people invited to take part declined the invitation.

To conclude, all interviews were recorded in audio files that were later transcribed into texts. Moreover, a notebook was used to take notes on

key issues and ideas that emerged during the interview, as well as to make records of my fresh impressions and reflections, once the interview finished.

Interview number	Interviewee age	Interviewee gender	Involved mainly with
A1	30	Female	Welcoming/enrolment working group
A2	32	Female	Supply centre group
A3	34	Male	Community care group
A4	40	Male	Mercapuma
A5	38	Female	Steering group
A6	55	Male	Currency studies working group
A7	31	Female	Communications group

Table 3.5 Interviewees' demographic characteristics.

3. Planned group discussion

A planned group discussion with six so-called producers was undertaken as part of the data-collection process. Importantly, terms such as focus group or group interview have been intentionally avoided as they fail to capture the self-organising nature of the event. By labelling the process as self-organising, I am trying to direct attention to the leading role played by the participants themselves in arranging the group discussion, as well as the informal and innovative ways in which such group discussion was carried out.

After a few weeks in the field, it became apparent that those individuals who identified themselves as 'producers' tended to maintain strong relationships of cooperation and mutual support. This was a surprising observation, particularly as the group of producers involved people that were competitors in a conventional market sense. Therefore, following the literature (e.g. Bryman and Bell, 2007), I considered that a focus group would be more adequate to explore group interactions than separate

interviews with individual producers. After a focus group was thoroughly planned and designed, a formal request was made to recruit producers for the event. However, I had no choice other than thinking that something was wrong with this methodological choice when the course of events took an interesting turn. Drawing upon my fieldnotes:

> Me: by the way, I am thinking about setting up a Focus Group with producers to find out more about more about the PUMA network. I would be grateful if you and other producers could participate in it. It is going to be fun and...
>
> Producer (interrupting me): we are not going to be part of a new product launch, are we? My friends and I would be more than happy to talk with you about anything you want, but we don't do Focus Groups around here. You can leave Focus Groups to your marketing students in the Business School. Here we prefer to talk.

This embarrassing incident helped me to realise that, despite having embraced a flexible methodological strategy, my thoughts on data-collection methods continued to be constrained by the formalities and strictures of conventional methodology textbooks. However, once in the field, what can be done when our methods encounter resistance by the social realities that we want to study? Personally, I answered this question by negotiating with the participants how they would like to organise a group discussion. Surprisingly, the main suggestion was to do this as a picnic. It took me some time to realise that having a group discussion during a picnic was not necessarily incompatible with the aims of a focus group. Indeed, as the producer above repeatedly assured to me, this was probably the only manner in which I could convince people to participate. Once my initial reluctance was overcome, the producer took care of the organisation of the event; she recruited other producers, found a suitable

location and arranged a time with them. Meanwhile, I simply worried about two things, namely how to conduct a planned group discussion in a manner that was not perceived as a focus group and what kind of food I could cook for the picnic.

Therefore, a planned group discussion took place in the form of a picnic with me and six producers. As previously argued, the procedure to recruit participants was left entirely in the hands of the participants, who circulated emails, made phone calls, and used word of mouth to contact other producers in the network. In technical terms, this procedure resembled snowball sampling. Other than limiting participation to people who were identified as producers by fellow producers, there were no specific sampling criteria involved in the selection of participants. All the participants that took part in the discussion were women of different ages, ranging from twenty-five to sixty-two. The absence of males is partially explained by the fact that an overwhelming majority of producers in the community are female, something that was clarified by the participants during the discussion. The gender bias identified here proved to be an interesting finding that was further pursued during fieldwork.

Following a brief time for introductions, in which permission was requested to record the interaction in audio, the discussion was conducted in a non-directive manner. Hence, my level of involvement as a “moderator” was rather low, limiting my role to that of asking very general and open questions about their practices and experiences, and encouraging participants to lead the discussion to issues or topics that they regarded as relevant. In general, exchanges between participants were balanced, in the sense that all people contributed to the discussion, and offered a rich variety of interactions. The discussion lasted for two and a half hours approximately, and its content was digitally recorded and transcribed. Moreover, whilst unnecessary note taking was avoided to avoid altering the informal flow of the interaction, I made a few key notes, reflections and

comments, which were used to supplement the process of analysis. Once the group discussion concluded, I was enthusiastically approached by every single one of the participants who made rather positive comments about the event. Two things became clear after listening to the producers' feedbacks, namely that the group discussion had been an enjoyable experience for them and that I could earn a substantial amount of Pumas with my skills for cooking vegetarian paella.

4. Research diary and field notes

According to O'Reilly (2009: p. 70), 'fieldnotes are the written record of the observations, jottings, full notes, intellectual ideas and emotional reflections that are created during the fieldwork process'. Notwithstanding note-taking is a pivotal practice during fieldwork, not sufficient attention has been devoted to field-notes in the literature (Emerson *et al.,* 1995). Following Emerson et al. (2001), I divided my fieldnotes into three types, headnotes, jottings and full notes.

Headnotes are "notes" about experiences and events that are mentally recorded with the purpose of writing them up. In this regard, it can be argued that head notes are different from regular memories to the extent that the former are intentionally recorded with the purpose of writing them up later. Such notes held in memory are particularly useful when one has decided to adopt a fully participant role, or when the conditions under which observation takes place make the activity of taking notes disruptive, inappropriate or dangerous. Jottings or scratch notes involve brief comments, keywords, drawings, list of words, diagrams, or any other inscription made on the go with the purpose of elaborating them later. In this regard, scratch notes function as annotations that supplements headnotes by triggering the researcher's memory. However, fieldnotes are complete only when they are written up into full notes. Full notes involve the production of a coherent narrative supplemented with details about

how, when and who was involved in a relevant interaction or event. They are descriptions that help to organise the researcher experience in the field by adding details and structure, developing tentative explanations or asking questions (Emerson et *al.*, 1995; 2001). Importantly, fieldnotes are not 'raw data' or records of a purportedly 'pure' experience of the researcher (Kouritzin, 2002). Rather, fieldnotes are artefacts created in the field and limited by researchers' 'inability to "accurately" record everything they see' (Kouritzin, 2002: p. 119). Fieldnotes are necessarily selective, incomplete, purposeful, and angled (O'Reilly, 2009). Therefore, as Kouritzin (2002: p. 119) concludes, 'it may not be necessary, or even desirable, for researchers to purge fieldnotes of their colourful, descriptive, and connotative language'.

In parallel to fieldnotes, I kept a personal diary that I called the research diary (Burgess, 1981). The content of the research diary traces relevant changes in my own feelings, thoughts and reflections as I progressed through the PhD thesis. Therefore, whilst the content of fieldnotes was fundamentally focused on fieldwork, the research diary recorded my reflections throughout the entire research process. The research diary deals as much with the personal as it does with the academic aspects of the present research, serving as a textual bridge between my subjective experiences and relevant external events. I tried to write regularly, preferably on a daily basis, although such commitment was not always possible to fulfil. The research diary became a valuable source of information to supplement all data collected in the fieldwork stage.

5. Organisational documents and archives

Documents are widely employed in ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 190) as they provide interesting insights about how collective action is organised in specific settings (Neyland, 2008). Within the present work, I gathered the following types of documents:

1. Internal emails. The communications working group added me to an internal mail list so I received all the emails circulated among the participants. These emails were important not only in terms of their informative value about events and activities taking place in the community, but were also a rich source to study “backstage” interactions between participants.

2. Social networks and websites: The Puma community are also very active online. They have a website and a blog, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. Unlike the email-list, documents and information gathered through Facebook, Twitter and the Puma website provided rich information about interactions between the community and the public.

3. A third source of documents were previous studies and materials produced by the community and the Casa Palacio Pumarejo Association. A peculiar aspect of these documents was that they were selected by members of the community and given to me on a CD in case they were helpful for my research.

3.5.4 Ethnographic sensibility 4: field relationships and ethnographic time

Field relationships and ethnographic time are discussed together because a central argument underlying the use of ethnographic approaches is that long-term involvement in fieldwork is necessary to build the relationship with members that make possible the gaining of an in-depth understanding of their cultural practices. In other words, an extensive period of time spent in the field is justified as a means of developing field relationships based on trust, rapport, mutual understanding and empathy, or cultural competence, which provide ethnographers with privileged access to study the social world of the participants. Simultaneously, the nature of

ethnographic work exposes both researchers and participants to field relationships which may be potentially dangerous, unpleasant, exploitative, distressing, or even traumatic. The type of relationships established between the researcher and the participants may also have methodological implications, particularly as the former runs the risk of ´going native'. The notion of 'going native' applies to ethnographies in which the researcher develops an overt rapport with participants. The result are ethnographic accounts that offer a rather uncritical celebration of the community under study rather than an in-depth understanding of their culture and practices (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: pp. 110-112). The following anecdote retrieved from my fieldnotes reflects this fear of going native:

> Today I called a good friend in Manchester to tell him about all the interesting things that I am seeing here. For more than 45 minutes, we talked about the PUMA and its people. As I was speaking, I realised that my voice was acquiring an increasingly passionate tone, to an extent that it resembled a fervent speech more than a conversation. The thought that perhaps I am going native crossed my mind. Suddenly, I interrupted him: "hang on, mate, please don´t think I am paranoid or something but I have to ask you an odd question: do you think that it is actually me who is telling you all this or do I sound as if I have been abducted by a sect?" After explaining my concerns with the possibility of going native, and the implications it could have for data-collection, he confirmed that he could not appreciate any signs of brainwash in me. Then we burst in laugher.

To prevent going native, my experience in the fieldwork involved a constant effort to sustain ambivalent relationships within the community and its members as insider/outsider (Lofland, 1971), stranger/friend (Everhart, 1977) or marginal native (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003).

Moreover, the emergence of exploitative field relationships was prevented by openly negotiating our mutual expectations in a non-coercive manner. Since I started conversations with the Puma currency scheme, they made clear that they refused to be exploited by researchers that simply want to use them instrumentally for their research purposes. Therefore, they expected me to give something back to the community in exchange for their participation, help and support. These negotiations were kept open and fluid during the six weeks of fieldwork. The following points illustrate some of my contributions to the community that were agreed upon:

- We agreed that I will provide an executive summary of my PhD thesis which can be useful for them to the extent that it will make visible aspects of their daily practices that, precisely due to their familiarity, remain invisible to them.

- We agreed that I will discuss with them my theoretically informed view of how their micro efforts to generate alternative economic networks, based on reciprocity and solidarity, fit with other phenomena identified in critical accounts of marketing.

- We agreed that, during the fieldwork, I was going to volunteer for a number of activities organised within the community.

- We agreed that, during the fieldwork, I was going to become a user of Pumas.

- We did not agree, but by the end of the research I made a donation of 200 Pumas – bought with 200 Euros – to fund different activities of the community.

- We agreed that I will continue my relationship with the initiative by contributing to the recently created working group of Currency studies (see section 4.4.5).

Regarding the process of building relationships of trust with members of the Puma community, this is an aspect of ethnographic research that cannot be controlled or planned in advance. Personally, I tried to remain not only genuinely respectful to the views and opinions of the participants, but also extremely confidential and trustworthy with all information that I was given. After all, the latter involved nothing more complicated than remaining faithful to the basic principles of courtesy and common sense (Wolcott, 1995). More difficult was to keep myself constantly sociable and conversant. Indeed, ethnographic research involves heavy emotional investments, occasional feelings of loneliness, strangeness, or incompetence, which are difficult to understand by those researchers who have not done ethnographic research themselves. Hence, whilst most of the times it was extremely pleasant to join people in informal activities and places, such as going for a stroll by the river or having a few drinks in the crowded bars of Plaza del Pumarejo, it was not easy to stay sociable during those moments when one felt cheerless or distant.

As far as the acquisition of cultural competence is concerned, I was tacitly allowed to play a role which resembled what Hammersley and Atkinson define as an 'acceptable incompetent' (2003: p. 103). That is, a student fresher, a person in a new job, or a military rookie, who find themselves in strange surroundings, it is only by listening, watching, asking questions and making blunders, that the researcher can acquire key competences to develop relationships in the field (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). In a reasonable period of time, lay novices are expected to demonstrate a reasonable level of competence at risk of being formally or informally sanctioned by senior members of the organisation. However, unlike lay novices, the ethnographer faces additional pressures to avoid excessive

familiarity with the key cultural competences required to become a member of the community. In this regard, the researcher has 'to maintain a self-conscious awareness of what is learned, how it has been learned, and the social transactions that inform the production of such knowledge' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003: p. 101). During my fieldwork, I performed a role in which I was tacitly allowed to behave somewhat incompetently, in cultural terms, despite all the orientation and guidance that was being given to me by members of the community.

In the present study, fieldwork involved six week of participant observation. A traditional assumption underlying most ethnographic work is that difficulty in establishing positive field relationships rests upon the fact that they take time (Neyland, 2008). Therefore, the relation between time and the process of building field relationships will be discussed to conclude this section. Historically, anthropological ethnography involved lengthy immersions in the field, often for years. However, with the adoption of ethnography in other disciplines of the social sciences, such as management studies, the average time spent by ethnographers in the field has been substantially reduced (Bate, 1997). Somewhat sarcastically, Bate highlights the shortening of ethnographic time by arguing that organisational ethnographers 'rarely take a toothbrush with them these days' (Bate, 1997: p. 1150). Without denying that spending long periods of time in the field has important implications for building adequate field relationships, I argue that there is no linear correspondence between the temporal length of fieldwork and the quality of the relationships established with the participants. Multiple factors can have an influence on the type of relationships established with participants, including, among others, the intensity and type of interactions in the field, previous familiarity with the culture or language of the participants, the existence of affinities and commonalities, positive or negative expectations based on earlier experiences, fortuitous events or personal skills of the researcher. Moreover, as noted by Neyland (2008), there are a number of strategies

which can be applied for shortening data-collection time, without losing the advantages of ethnographic research. Following Millen's 'time deepening strategies', the present study zoomed into important activities and key events by deploying specific observational techniques, and relied upon key informants that offered a great deal of relevant data rather rapidly (Millen in Neyland, 2009). Moreover, another strategy to enhance ethnographic time was revisiting the field (Burawoy, 2003). Four ethnographic revisits, of one-week length each, were undertaken with the purpose of either pursuing emerging issues in more depth or building on previous observations made during the fieldwork. In this regard, the approach to ethnographic time adopted within the present work situates it along the lines of microethnography (LeBaron, 2006).

3.5.5 Ethnographic sensibility 5: methods for interpretation and representation

Although the process of interpretation in ethnographic research begins before data-collection (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), a more systematic set of interpretative practices tend to be applied after fieldwork (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Contrary to logical empiricist epistemological traditions, interpretivist scholars suggest that 'facts emerge from the text via a process of interpretation. They are results, not points of departure' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 99). Nevertheless, whilst facts are constructed during the process of interpretation, they are not constructed by the researcher "out of thin air". For the present ethnographic research, facts, as the outcomes of interpretation, emerged through a hermeneutic reading of ethnographic texts, which was informed by an embodied experience in the field and aided by a set of interpretative practices known as thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Finally, these facts were given a narrative form and a written account of the process was produced. As fieldwork has already been discussed previously, this section will focus on how a

hermeneutic reading of texts was combined with thematic analysis, and how a written ethnographic account was assembled together.

All data gathered constituted the whole data corpus of the present analysis. More narrowly, texts were arranged in data items, which refer to each individual piece of data collected which make up the data corpus. In other words, the data corpus of the present ethnography was constituted by the following data items:

- Seven ethnographic interviews: recorded in audio files and transcribed.
- A planned group discussion: recorded in audio file and transcribed.
- A field diary: three notebooks which included field notes on participant observations and supplementary information from interviews and group discussion.
- A research diary: three notebooks with my reflections on the whole research process).
- Archives: a whole range of documents, both internal (e.g. internal emails, memos, or diaries) and external (e.g. news or documentaries about the Puma initiative).
- Other: video records and pictures.

Finally, the notion of data extract refers to a coded piece of data, which has been extracted from a data item. Although numerous data extracts may be taken from the corpus data for analytical purposes, only a selection of these extracts will feature in the final analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.79). Following data-collection, these data had to be managed and interpreted. Drawing upon Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), interpretation is conceptualised as a hermeneutic process through which the researcher moves from a state of *pre-understanding* to a *pattern of interpretation*. A pattern of interpretation involves the emergence of an

overarching set of *sub-interpretations* of texts which make individual details of texts understandable, 'while at the same time growing from them' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 99). The various sub-interpretations that emerge in the process of configuring a pattern of interpretation are to be gradually refined, in terms of their internal and external consistency, through the interpretative process. Therefore, a pattern of interpretation should include facts from the interpreted materials which, simultaneously, are not contradicted by them. Two other important elements of hermeneutic interpretations are *texts* and *dialogical reading*. Regarding the former, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) suggest that it is central to define texts as meaningful signs, rather than reducing them to written words, in order to avoid linguistic reductionism in hermeneutics. Therefore, pictures, audios, videos, or social interactions, were also read as texts broadly defined. As far as the last element of the hermeneutic process is concerned, embracing a dialogic approach to reading involved 'asking questions to the text and listening to it' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 101). Hermeneutic interpretations integrate these aspects in a circular rather than a linear process as illustrated in figure 3.6.

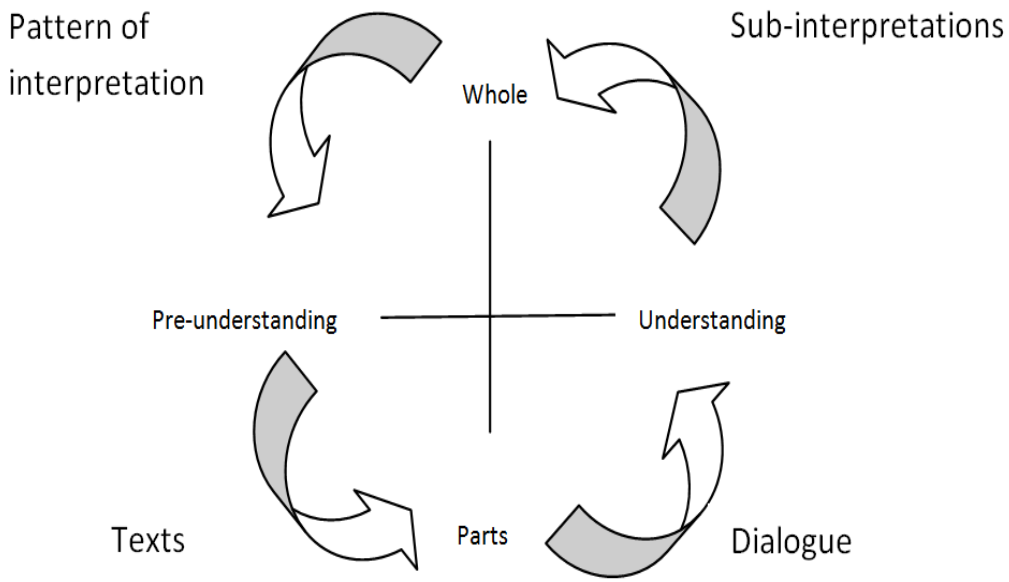


Figure 3.6 Elements of hermeneutic interpretations (adapted from Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: p. 104).

A thematic analysis was produced in the process of hermeneutic interpretation. Thematic analysis involves a qualitative method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p 79). Therefore, thematic analysis can provide a detailed description of a data set by indentifying, analysing and reporting emergent themes, or patterns. Unlike quantitative analysis of texts, such as content analysis (see Bryman and Bell, 2007), a theme is not dependent on quantifiable measures such as word frequency, but rather on whether it adequately captures underlying patterns in relation to the research purposes (Boyatzis, 1998), namely studying the practices of implementing and using an alternative currency. Thematic analysis also differs from other qualitative approaches to build-up categories from data, although such differences should not be overstated (O´Reilly, 2009). In this regard, Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that thematic analysis can be differentiated from other analytical approaches that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis, or grounded theory. For example, whilst grounded theory has developed in varied form since its initial formulation, this approach is fundamentally concerned with the task of generating a plausible theory of a phenomenon grounded in data. In narrative analyses the focus is on using narrative theory to uncover the stories drawn on by people to make sense of their identities and actions. Discourse analysis draws on the performative effects of language to study how different cultural elements, including rhetorical tropes, interpretative repertoires, or metaphors, are mobilised by individuals in discursive practices to construct the social world. Unlike these approaches, Braun and Clarke (2006: p. 81) contend that researchers need not subscribe to the implicit theoretical commitments of these approaches in order to produce a ‘named and claimed’ thematic analysis. It is precisely such freedom from any specific theoretical commitments - prior to the analytical engagement with empirical materials- that makes thematic analysis highly consistent with

the nature of ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003; Neyland, 2009; O'Reilly, 2009). The interpretative process was aided by computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), Nvivo, which emerged as an extremely valuable tool to store and manage large amounts of data. It is important to highlight that the use of Nvivo did not replace traditional practices involved in thematic analysis such as, for example listening, reading and rereading, writing, sorting, selecting, abstracting, comparing, or relating, nor it denied the 'playful, creative, transformative, imaginative, and representative' aspects of interpretative data-analysis (Spiggle, 1994: p. 500).

Whilst the iterative and procedural nature of interpretative research problematises the idea of following separate steps, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest providing explanations of how a thematic analysis is carried out in practice in the form of step-by-step discussions. Hence, drawing upon the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), the present thematic analysis involved:

- A first step involved a process of familiarisation with the data. Such a sense of familiarity was accomplished by transcribing all interview and group discussion data, as well as by turning my research diary and fieldnotes into digital formats. All data items were digitised and stored in Nvivo.

- A second step involved the process of coding the data. By engaging in a close reading of texts, initial codes were applied to data extracts. However, the coding data is an open process and therefore initial codes were modified and data extracts were recoded throughout the interpretative process.

- As data codes were gradually refined, the next step involved the search for initial themes. This search for themes was undertaken by

applying reading strategies developed in Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2009) hermeneutic approach such as, for example, by entering a dialog with data that combined questions directed at the whole with questions directed at specific texts. Gradually, codes converged into initial themes, or *sub-interpretations*, as Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) put them.

- A fourth step involved the emergence of a *pattern of interpretation* from the data (Alvesson and Sköldberg , 2009). This step was accomplished by considering whether sub-interpretations were internally consistent with other texts from the data set, as well as externally consistent with extra-hermeneutical texts drawn upon the literature. In the process, initial sub-interpretations were modified and refined, and the resulting themes were defined and given a name.

- Finally, the emerging themes were articulated, and thus fixed, in an ethnographic narrative (Neyland, 2009). It suffices to say here that the final narrative in which the thematic analysis was presented combined the three ethnographic genres identified by Van Maanen (1988), namely realist, impressionist and confessional tales. See further discussion below.

Regarding representation issues, Van Maanen (1988: p. 7) argues that 'any claim to directly link fieldwork (and the immediacy of its experience) to the ethnography itself, unmediated or untransformed by narrative conventions, will not hold. No transparency theory can be confirmed in ethnography'. In his analysis of ethnographic writing, Van Maanen (1988) identifies three dominant styles, namely realist, impressionist and confessional. Realist tales are those ethnographic accounts in which the author-fieldworker disappears into his or her described social world. According to Van Maanen (1988), realist conventions produce the effect

that a given description of culture does not come out of the interpretation of the research but from the participants themselves. Confessional tales are blurred accounts which combine a subjective description of culture, acknowledged as such, with a reflection on the role of the author in the making of ethnographic research. As reflexivity is central in confessional tales, this approach is characterised by reflexive accounts about how the researcher's subjectivity, as well as his or her methodological choices and fieldwork activities, are involved in the production of a specific view of culture. Impressionism encompasses the third set of narrative conventions identified in ethnographic writing. Rather than being concerned with what actually happened, or the reflexive experience of the ethnographer, impressionist tales celebrate the aesthetic value of ethnography and openly focus on the aspects that made fieldwork remarkable. Therefore, when a careful selection of empirical materials are assembled together and 'told in the first person, as a tightly focused, vibrant, exact, but necessarily imaginative, an impressionist tale of the field results' (Van Maanen, 1988: p. 102). To be certain, these narrative genres are not incompatible with one another and contemporary ethnographic writing acknowledges the possibility of exploring creative combinations of various textual conventions (Van Maanen, 1979; Neyland, 2009). Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (2003: p. 244) suggest that 'there are many genres and styles of both fact and fiction' in ethnographic research, which the 'would-be ethnographic author will profitably explore' in all their 'range and diversity'.

As I have argued above, the notion of heterotopian markets (Chatzidakis *et al.*, 2012) implies new ways to imagine the notion of market beyond the growth paradigm (Varey, 2010; 2011). Hence, the value of assembling a multiplex market narrative in the present ethnography rest on its capacity to subvert what Brownlie and Saren refer to as 'our over-determined styles of communication' which, he contends, 'are often directed more towards the perpetuation of those conventions, than towards rendering possible

new ways of imaginizing the marketing world' (Brownlie and Saren, 1997: p. 264). In other words, a combination of multiple genres can be deployed to produce a subversive market narrative that seeks to render visible transformative market-ing practices in the context of sustainability. Inspired by the work of Van Maanen (1988), the present PhD Thesis combines a number of *realist, impressionist* and *confessional* textual conventions, which have been strategically deployed to assemble a coherent narrative in a process that resembles that of a film *montage* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: p. 4). For example, realist narrative conventions such as third person writing, or the use of quotes, citations and references to support my arguments, have been drawn upon to situate this inquiry within, as well as between, existing debates in the literature. Along with realist conventions, the adoption of a confessional style sought to incorporate reflexivity and self-consciousness into the present work. Examples of confessional tropes can be found when I discuss the making of the present ethnography by, for example, rendering instances of "backstage activity" visible to the reader or displaying the author's subjectivity with excerpts of my own research diary. Moreover, Van Maanen (1988) highlights that impressionist tales are deployed to involve the reader not only intellectually, but also emotionally, with ethnographic texts. Within the present work, impressionist conventions have been frequently employed, for example, when sequences of actions and events that took place in the field are described in a vivid and colourful style.

3.5.6 Ethnographic sensibility 6: criteria to evaluate the quality of ethnographic work

Whilst it is argued that quality does matter in interpretative research (Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2009), the pursuit of standards to assess the quality of interpretive studies has been problematised from anti-foundationalism epistemological positions (Thompson, 1990). In this regard, the work of Guba and Lincoln has had a substantial impact across

the social sciences (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, 1995). These authors argue that, although interpretivist studies cannot be assessed in terms of reliability and validity, scholars may consider alternative criteria to assess their work, namely trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, 1995). However, unlike the stable agreement on validity and reliability that prevails in quantitative research, it is argued that discussions on quality criteria among interpretivist researchers operate as stimuli to maintain an open-ended and context-sensitive methodological dialogue, rather than a definite set of prescriptions (Lather, 1993: p. 693). Given these arguments, the quality criteria applied in the present work builds upon the work of Guba and Lincoln on authenticity and trustworthiness without being constrained by it. Indeed, these criteria served as an initial platform from which I started to ask questions about how to assess the quality of my work. For example, as I recorded in my research diary:

> (...) but beyond these definitions, what exactly do trustworthiness and authenticity mean for my PhD? Should I let these criteria shape, if not condition, the process of data-collection, or should I think about trustworthiness and authenticity only after fieldwork is completed? If they really are flexible and context-sensitive concepts, how can I relate them to my research purposes? Should I adapt them at all?.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is a multidimensional concept, which is accomplished when the study in question is able meet criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. I will explore these dimensions in more detail below and how I did (or failed to) address them in this research.

1. *Credibility* is concerned with questions about whether the research findings involve a plausible explanation or understanding of a particular phenomenon. Drawing upon Lincoln and Guba (1985), both prolonged engagement and persistent observation are

suggested as useful criteria to evaluate the credibility of the present study. Nevertheless, other concerns about credibility revolved around questions about who were going to be the arbiters of my study's credibility, or to whom this research had to be credible. Whilst the plausibility of my findings for members of the academic community is going to be assessed first through a PhD Viva, and later through peer-reviewed publication processes, I was concerned that the participants should have something to say about the credibility of this research. After all, and given the ethnographic nature of the present work, participants from the Puma community were particularly well placed to assess whether my findings were a plausible explanation of their practices. To address this issue, I drew upon the strategy of member-validation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This involved regular engagement with the research participants to discuss their views about the plausibility of my findings with them. Member-validation was carried out though different set of practices and involved different people. For example, it involved individual strategies applied after fieldwork. These included the use of informal meetings and conversations with key informants, particularly those involved in the ethnographic interviews, during my revisits to the field. It also involved a formal presentation of my findings to the community. Whilst members' views about my findings were consistently positive, a word of caution is necessary here. Indeed, it has to be borne in mind that member-validation of this research was restricted to a very limited number of people rather than involving all members of the community. Indeed, with different degrees of involvement, no more than twenty-five people, out of the seven hundred members that constitute the community, showed either interest or availability to comment on my findings.

2. *Transferability* is the degree to which research findings apply beyond the bounds of the project. So argued, the transferability of the findings is considered between two or more empirical contexts. As the present study has been based on a single ethnographic case, the transferability of my findings to other settings or communities was a difficult criterion to ensure. Indeed, it can be argued that low transferability has been a necessary trade-off for in-depth and careful consideration to the unique aspects of the Puma currency scheme. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that supplying a thick description of the phenomena in question, as well as the context in which the study took place, can be an effective technique for facilitating transferability in single-case studies. Whilst the present study is consistent with the use of thick description as a transferability criterion, it may be possible to speak of transferability in a different manner, namely that of transferring from an empirical to a theoretical context. From this perspective, transferability claims in the present work did not entail the possibility of extending my findings, admittedly bound to a specific empirical context, to another empirical context. Rather, transferability is judged in terms of the capacity of my findings to be transferable to existing debates in a theoretical context. This approach does not relate to the concept of external validity, as it intended to enrich on-going debates in the literature rather than testing the validity of existing theories. Therefore, an assessment of the theoretical contributions of the present study is argued as a criterion to address its transferability.

3. *Dependability* is concerned with the quality and adequacy of the research practices employed throughout the research. Therefore, this criterion involves an auditing process carried out by fellow academics, generally members of the same interpretative community as the researcher, in which the adequacy, consistency and quality of practices employed to collect, manipulate, interpret

and represent data, are assessed. As in all auditing processes, transparency is a prerequisite to ensure dependability. In this respect, it is important to be explicit about the rationale for key methodological decisions made. Moreover, it involves the creation of a so-called audit trail by keeping records of fieldwork notes and transcriptions of interviews and group discussions, which are available to inspection. Exhaustive records of all these processes have been kept, digitalised and stored in Nvivo. Nevertheless, a problem with the former aspect is that all data employed in the present research has been collected, recorded and analysed in its original language, namely Spanish, which renders difficult their audit by non-Spanish speaking peers. However, these limitations have been counterbalanced by an additional effort, mainly although not exclusively in the methodology chapter, to explain and justify methodological choices in the present PhD Thesis. Therefore, methodological auditing is facilitated not only providing records and extensive procedural detail, but also by incorporating a reflexive perspective of the research process. Such efforts to meet the criterion of dependability explain the unusual (long) length of the methodology chapter in the present thesis.

4. Confirmability: is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, within ethnographic research, confirmability cannot be established by seeking a direct correspondence between findings and reality - as ethnography is an interpretative process that draws on the subjective experience of the researcher in the field. Therefore, as Bryman and Bell (2007: p. 414) argue, confirmability can be established if the researcher can demonstrate to have 'acted in good faith'. In this regard, confirmability of the present work is closely related to the criteria of credibility and dependability, as it concerns the possibility of tracing the

relationship between data and findings in a reflexive rather than a direct manner. Moreover, credibility also involves the possibility of establishing a degree of consistency rather than verification between the research findings and the literature on the area. Drawing upon the work of Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), the various themes that have emerged from the data through a hermeneutic interpretation have been related to what these authors call extra-hermeneutic materials. The latter involve patterns and elements in the broader context, which have been identified by previous research, and may be drawn upon to enhance the confirmability of the data. It is important to insist that this effort to make connections with the literature is not related to an intent to verify or falsify theory, in the manner that logical empiricism advocates.

Along with trustworthiness, *authenticity* is a central criterion to ensure the quality of interpretative research (Lincoln, and Guba, 1985). Concisely, notions of authenticity are employed to encourage interpretative research that 'foster action' and promote 'social justice, community, diversity, civic discourse, and caring' in cooperation with them (Lincoln, 1995: p. 277-278). Within the present work, authenticity has been related to the notion of critical performativity (Spicer *et al.* 2009; Alvesson and Spicer, 2012) due to their overlapping emphasis on the capacity of research to encourage diversity and foster positive social change. The latter notion has been extensively discussed above and thus, it suffices to highlight here that critical performativity seeks knowledge that can inform critical practice. In the context of sustainability, this means knowledge that goes beyond critique by contributing to perform new market realities that are able to subvert, even at a micro-scale, the prevalent management paradigm and its structural dependence from economic growth (Varey, 2010). Hence, authenticity in the present work has been accomplished by rendering visible heterotopian market practices, such as the making of an

alternative currency, whose existence challenges the totalising view of the market as a capitalist singularity. Moreover, likewise the notion of authenticity, critical performativity involves, above all, a commitment to transformative action. Consequently, assessing the quality of the present research in terms of authenticity criteria will also involve a consideration of its capacity to inform transformative market practices. In this regard, the knowledge generated in the present study can be embedded into a future attempt to establish an alternative currency for students in the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Inspired by the practices documented in the Puma community, the implementation of an MMU student currency could be designed to alleviate students' burden of debt by enabling non-monetary exchanges of good and services among them, encourage community-involvement and reciprocity in the university, or shifting consumption towards reused and recycled materials.

3.5.7 Ethnographic sensibility 7: ethics

The practices involved in conducting ethnographic research pose a number of ethical challenges for the researcher. According to Neyland (2008), an ethical baseline for ethnographic research can be found in the institutional rules, or research standards, for ethical behaviour. In this regard, the present work adhered to the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Guidelines for Good Research Practice (Academic Board Research Degrees Committee, 2002), and it was checked against the MMU Application for Ethical Approval and an MMU Ethic Checklist (both forms are available here: http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/rke/ethics-forms/). However, Neyland (2008) is concerned that such standardised ethical rules, and the YES/NO format which characterises ethical checklists, are insufficient by themselves to ensure that ethnographic research is ethically conducted. For example, a crucial ethical dilemma faced by researchers undertaking ethnographic research involves the nature of observation practices. In particular, covert observation can potentially raise ethical

concerns which are to be taken into account in order to avoid charges of deception (O'Reilly, 2009), voyeurism (Van Maanen, 1978, or even espionage (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2009). The present ethnography was carried out in the form of overt observation. Therefore, ethical concerns related to covert observation did not apply to this work, at least in principle. In this regard, informed consent from the Puma community was requested by email. Before formal permission was given to me, my request was distributed through the community mail list and discussed in open assembly. Whether or not every participant actually read this email or took part in the relevant discussion is something difficult, if not impossible, to be certain of. Whilst informed consent was requested prior to formally agreed observations, for example observations of key events and activities, it is impossible to have total certainty as to whether every person was aware of my role as a researcher when informal observations were made. In these occasions, I took into consideration the content and context of each observation while bearing in mind basic ethical principles such as, for example, not causing harm to the participants, avoiding their exploitation for research purposes, or respecting their confidentiality and privacy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). Open consent was requested to record participants in audio or video, as well as for taking pictures of them, and no particular vulnerabilities were identified among the participants. Moreover, all participants stated that they did not mind if I used their real names, and that the type of information requested from participants was neither sensitive nor personal. Nevertheless, I decided to anonymise them to avoid unexpected troubles. Therefore, all the names in the text are not real names, but fictitious names used to ensure that privacy is maintained. Another important ethical concern, according to Neyland (2008), is that the researcher fulfils all his commitments with the research participants. In the present work, they involved an executive summary and a presentation of the findings of my PhD thesis and a document to relate their activities to the literature on critical marketing. Both documents are in preparation at the moment of writing up these

words, and they are to be delivered before June 2014, as agreed. Whilst I have scrupulously paid attention to ethical issues throughout the entire research process, it is important to highlight that ethics is not “an exact science” when conducting ethnography. In the words of Hammersley and Atkinson (2003: p. 287), ‘it is salutary to remind ourselves that the ethnographer is very much part of the social wold we are studying, and is subject to distinctive purposes, constraints, limitations and weaknesses like everybody else’. Therefore, reflexivity emerged as a sensitising notion to deal with the ethical complexities of ethnographic work in situations where ethical guidelines and prescriptions offered insufficient assistance (Gillemin and Gillan, 2004).

3.5.8 Ethnographic sensibility 8: exit

For Hammersley and Atkinson (2003), disengagement with the field is generally a matter of saying ‘goodbye’. However, according to Neyland (2009), there are three key issues that are to be addressed by ethnographers leaving the field. Firstly, there are issues regarding whether the information collected is adequate for the research purposes. Secondly, another issue is concerned with the fulfilment of responsibilities and agreements towards with the participants.

In ethnographic research, the notion of informational sufficiency resembles that of theoretical saturation in Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, unlike the former, informational sufficiency extends beyond the process of interpretation and theory-building to encompass participant observation practices. Snow (1980) provides various general criteria for researchers to apply the notion of informational sufficiency to their own research. In this respect, Snow (1980) highlights the role played by subjective experiences of the researcher such as, for example, feeling that they have lost any sense of scepticism and detachment. Moreover, researchers may feel that they have gained reasonable competency to

provide a detailed picture of the community and its members. Another experience to consider informational sufficiency involves the researcher feeling less and less confident about his or her observations, or finding nothing interesting or new to report (Snow, 1980).

Nevertheless, not only epistemological criteria determine the right moment for ethnographic exits. In this regard, the researcher must ensure the decision of leaving the field is consistent with the commitments and obligations established with the participants (Neyland, 2008). In the present work, such obligations and commitments have been discussed above. In other words, leaving the field involved me asking questions such as ´do I have sufficient information to provide them with an interesting perspective on their own practices? Have I done enough participation to contribute to the development of the community? These questions were answered by constant reflection and open post-fieldwork communication with the participants.

Chapter 4: An ethnographic inquiry into the Puma currency

4.1 Empirical context

The present research has been undertaken in an area of Seville called El Pumarejo. As a melting pot of cultures, Seville is heir of a rich history which transpires through every corner of the city. In the eyes of the curious visitor, this city deploys a unique visual ecosystem of churches, palaces, bridges, gardens, towers, and other magnificent monuments, which stand as silent witness to past imperial glories. Life in Seville runs through an intricate structure of narrow streets and bustling marketplaces, where independent retailers find shelter against the ruthless expansion of large supermarket chains across Spain. Somewhat inevitably, each of Seville's shady streets leads the ambler to one of the numerous municipal squares that constitute the social heart of the city. Here, people slow down their pulse in the afternoon only to return in the evening, when the merciless heat, which depending who you ask either punishes or blesses this part of the world, begins to show some compassion for both locals and tourists. Indeed, it is not until 7 p.m. when bars and cafes around the city gradually turn into lively places as people gather together around a cold "caña of Cruzcampo" – half-pint of a delicious local beer- to socialise with friends and family after work.

The reader is probably familiar with this tale of Seville, as it contains many of the literary elements of Andalusian folklore that have made the place a favourite destination for tourists from all over the world. Surely less well-known than the former, is Seville as a city with a long history of social struggle that became particularly intense from the Twentieth century onwards. The present research has been undertaken in el barrio de El

Pumarejo - popularly abbreviated as “El Puma”. This is a traditionally working class area of Seville, nestled within the old part of the city, in which the rebellious footprint left by communist and anarchist groups during the 1930s continues to transpire in the present. In 1936, with the occupation of Seville by fascist armies during the Spanish Civil War, the inhabitants of El Pumarejo were intensely repressed. And so were their radical political culture and practices. Initially, this repression came in the form of prosecutions, executions and incarcerations of dissidents within the area. Gradually, authorities opted for more subtle approaches which involved the abandonment of any commitment to improving the living conditions of residents. As authorities saw el Pumarejo as a focal point for political dissidence, the chosen strategy was to deliberately turn the place into a pocket of crime, marginality and deprivation. For almost forty years, the area was intentionally forsaken and neglected to decay. Gradually, El Pumarejo experienced a proliferation of social problems related to homelessness, prostitution, and drugs and its residents were stigmatized as dangerous and marginal outlaws - a stigma that still persists today.

In 1979, when democracy returned to Spain, the area experienced its second renaissance as a breeding ground for radical political thought and praxis. El Pumarejo became a hub of Seville’s social activism from the 1980s to the early 2000s, attracting numerous activists operating within the so-called new social movements such as environmentalists – Ecologistas en Acción, feminists – Mujeres de Negro - and pacifists – La Casa de La Paz. Moreover, a group of young squatters took over an abandoned oil factory, that was renamed as “CSOA Casas Viejas”, in which they opened up a community library, a cooperative bar, and hosted numerous political and community events. In parallel to the resurgence of radical politics within El Pumarejo, local authorities announced their plans for an urgent and profound regeneration of the area. Importantly, such shifting political priorities were not so much for the benefit of local residents as for those related to urban speculators. At the time, influential

actors with stakes in the urban development industry saw the regeneration of El Pumarejo as an opportunity to profit from the kind of speculative practices that signified Spain in the 1990s - and caused the housing bubble that burst in 2008. The approach was to buy cheap properties from local residents, relocate pockets of marginality to the periphery, and regenerate buildings and infrastructures damaged by decades of abandonment, to then market El Pumarejo as an expensive place for upper-classes seeking a bohemian corner within the city centre. Inevitably, these economic interests soon clashed with those of the local residents who, in turn, articulated a series of community responses to prevent speculative practices in the area. As will be discussed below, the so-called Casa Palacio Pumarejo (Pumarejo Palace) became the focal point of this struggle, which served to revitalise the communitarian spirit in the area.

The Pumarejo Palace is a magnificent building, whose origins date back to the 18th century. With more than 2000 square meters, the structure dominates Plaza Pumarejo with uncontested architectural authority. Nevertheless, the Palace is also integrated within the peculiar social context of the area. In conversations with residents, I was repeatedly told that the harmonious relationship between the building and its surroundings is due to the diversity of uses that the Palace has claimed across its history. Among others, the Pumarejo Palace has served most obviously as a palace - for an affluent family of traders, but also a prison, a school for adults, a hospice, a library, and even a host of cock fights. Since the late 19th century, the building underwent various reforms by different landlords which turned the upper levels into apartments that have been let to local residents at relatively affordable prices ever since. Yet in the mid 20th century, new uses and users were incorporated to the Palace, including small retailers, bars, artisans' workshops, and more recently, a working space for diverse organizations with political, ludic, or communitarian purposes. Hence, the addition and coexistence of communal, residential

and commercial uses within the building has undoubtedly shaped the material and cultural significance of the Pumarejo Palace, turning it into a pivotal element which articulates the whole area. Indeed, as one of the key informants stated in one of the interviews: it is almost as if the building and the neighborhood were part of the same living organism. Images 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, provide a series of pictures of the Pumarejo Palace and the Pumarejo Square.

Image 4.1 View of the Pumarejo Palace and the Pumarejo square (LLoveras, 2013a).

Image 4.2 View of "Casa Mariano", a traditional bar embedded in the building (LLoveras, 2013c).

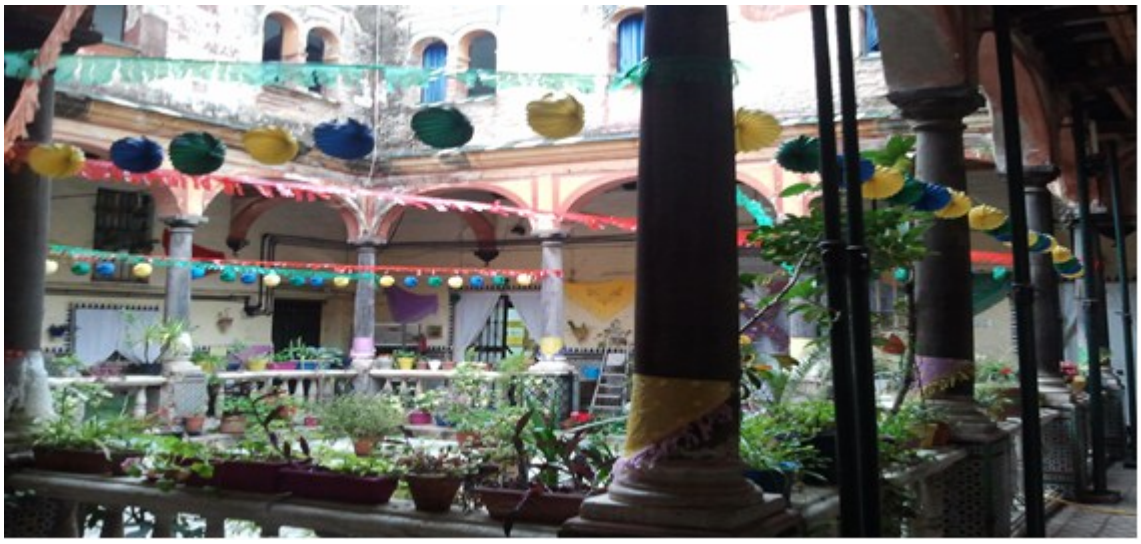


Image 4.3 Image of one of the Pumarejo Palace's patio (LLoveras, 2013b).

Image 4.4 One of the balconies of the Pumarejo Palace (LLoveras, 2013d).

4.2 A necessary introduction to Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS)

If, as Law argues (2004), the purpose of ethnography is to render the "mess" of social life visible by showing it in all its complexity, each LETS should inevitably reveal itself as different when casting an ethnographic glance upon them. Nevertheless, somewhat paradoxically, a generic explanation of LETS is unavoidable to effectively approach the fluidity and dynamism of this slippery market reality. Given these tensions, a reflexive

injunction becomes necessary before I can proceed with this discussion. In this regard, it has to be acknowledged that this introduction to LETS is by no means intended as a representation of the Puma currency scheme. Indeed, the present work highlights that, whilst the Puma currency is inspired in a general LETS format, the specific web of sociomaterial practices through which the Puma currency is enacted is significantly more diverse than the general LETS label allows. Consequently, the general features of LETS are introduced here as a narrative device, deployed to aid the reader in navigating a nuanced account of the ethnographic experience that will follow.

Essentially, a LETS involves a trading network of people that use an alternative currency to exchange goods and services among users. Whilst LETS do not necessarily involve the circulation of physical notes or coins, it requires an alternative currency to operate as a unit of value for the community. It is a common practice to give such currency a name that is significant for the users, in this case, the new currency was called “Puma” – and it was represented with a green Puma silhouette on a white background as shown in Image 4.5. Concisely, LETS are based on the idea that conventional money is a form of exchangeable credit backed by the authority of the state. In other words, money is credit in the sense that it is an abstract claim on goods and services rather than having any intrinsic value. In the case of LETS, it is not the state but a community that endorses the creation of credit/money to pay for goods and services exchanged within a network of people.

Image 4.5 The Puma currency Logo (Red Moneda Social Puma, 2012).

Therefore, broadly defined, LETS are mutual credit systems in which credit is issued in the course of community-bounded exchanges. The process is rather simple. A LETS network is established with all its members starting with an opening balance account of zero. Moreover, a LETS requires a directory in which members create a list with all the goods and services offered and required within the network. Using the information in the directory, users start to carry out exchanges with one another. In every exchange, the account of the purchaser is credited with the amount for her or his purchase. Simultaneously, the account of the supplier is debited with exactly the same amount credited in the account of the purchaser. The sum of all accounts in the network has to be zero at any one time, although some individual balances will be negative while others will be positive. That is, those individuals whose balance accounts are negative are net recipients of credit. Importantly, this credit is issued not by individual creditors but by the community. Neither interest is paid by people whose balances are "negative" nor is interest earned by those whose balances are “positive”. Credit worthiness is backed by recipients’ commitment to earn, at their later convenience, credits from someone else

in the network. In other words, credit issued in LETS is backed by mutual trust among members that debtors have both the capacity and willingness to earn credits by offering something of value to the network at a later point in time. As far as the size of the scheme is concerned, the Puma currency network encompassed more than seven hundred participants. Drawing upon their own accounting information, a total of 11.515 Euros and 42975 Pumas were exchanged during the year 2013. Information about previous years was not available at the time of request. Prices in Pumas vary widely, as they tend to be negotiated between sellers and buyers in almost every sale. Nevertheless, some indicative prices can be drawn on to provide the reader with a general idea of the exchange value of the Puma currency. For example: a loaf of organic bread can be bought for three Pumas, the price of a childcare hour is around five Pumas, the price of bicycle servicing can range between fifteen and forty Pumas, and an hour work of an English-Spanish translator can be purchased for around 20 Pumas.

4.3 Embedding heterotopian markets: the importance of place, community and practical concerns

The first theme that emerged from my engagement with data is concerned with the notion of market embeddedness. Whilst originally developed in the field of economic anthropology through the work of Polanyi (1967), notions of embeddedness have been employed in the marketing literature to highlight that market behavior cannot be fully understood unless attention is paid to the context in which such behavior occurs[9]. Given that contexts vary in terms of history, culture, or materiality, notions of

[9] Authors differ in what they regard as relevant contextual features for explaining market embeddedness. An answer to this question will be provided when discussing the contributions of the present research.

embeddedness suggest that markets cannot be assumed as outcomes of a purportedly universal and fixed set of features. The present study reveals three embedding elements that are central to understand the emergence of a heterotopian market through the implementation of an alternative currency scheme in El Pumarejo. Such embedding elements involve place, community and practical concerns. These are discussed below.

4.3.1 The centrality of place as an embedding mechanism for heterotopian markets

To better understand how place operates as an embedding mechanism in the in the context of El Pumarejo, I will draw upon conceptual links between the empirical context and marketing literature on heterotopian space (Chatzidakis *et al.*, 2012). This analysis of El Pumarejo will extend work of Maclaran and Brown (2005) on utopian retail spaces to the study of heterotopias of resistance. Although their work is not specifically concerned with the study of heterotopias of resistance, Maclaran and Brown (2005) provide a relevant framework to explore the relationships between place and utopian imagination, which can be usefully adapted to understand the former. According to these authors, consumers' experiences within utopian spaces through three main processes, namely *sensing displace*, *creating playspace* and *performing artspace* (Maclaran and Brown, 2005). As far as sensing displace is concerned, Maclaran and Brown (2005) explain how utopian spaces evoke a sense of spatiotemporal dislocation among consumers by conveying the experience of travelling between two worlds. This sense of displace is created within El Pumarejo - both within the area and the within building, yet with a strong political content that brings the place closer to the heterotopias of resistance discussed by Chatzidakis *et al.* (2012). For example, one notices that is approaching El Pumarejo by the increasing amount of graffiti, posters, and stickers decorating the walls with radical political

messages that are not seen in other parts of the city centre. These messages disrupt the rather dull uniformity that characterises the political discourse of the main political parties and the Media in Spain. As one of the informants told me in one of the interviews:

> "The Media is narcotic for the masses. You see? (pointing his finger to the front page of El País, one of the main newspapers in the country). All you hear from them (politicians) is the same flat message: we have lived beyond our means... and my apologies, but this is bullshit! They are lying. They prefer not to tell us that what is in crisis is the whole model of industrial capitalism... Nothing has to be mended because this is the twilight of our... (he pauses), their civilisation based on greed! We need to create alternatives from the bottom and that's what we are doing around here" (Interview A1).

Unlike other places in Seville, street messages within el Pumarejo do not generally belong to political parties. Hence, their content does not appeal to potential voters. Instead, it is almost as if every wall, corner or streetlamp within the area seeks to nag the ambler and encourage a reflection upon the capitalist system - which is described as patriarchal, exploitative, environmentally destructive, racist, and unable to secure historical rights to healthcare and education for all. Moreover, the area abounds with messages that highlight the need for a cultural revolution to transcend the dominant worldview upon which, they argue, capitalist democracies rest. For example, a blue sign, visibly posted in one of the rooms of the Pumarejo Palace, questioned the traditionally confrontational way of doing politics by reminding visitors that "Affection is Revolutionary". This statement is of particular relevance as it is widely quoted within the communications, emails, social networks, or text messages, which circulate among members of the Puma currency. By inquiring about this message in one of my interviews, the informant stated that:

> “Yes, affection is revolutionary! Unless we realise the truth of this, we are not going to get rid of the tyranny of productivity. There is no time for revolutions in the productive economy (...) Neither will women be emancipated unless we render visible the value of affection and all those unpaid tasks of caring, traditionally performed in the household, which are central for the sustenance of life” (interview A5).

Hence, whilst unpretentious in form, the content of this message conveys the importance of “caring values” and highlights the worth of reproductive labour, which is central for degrowth as well as for eco-feminist perspectives (Dobscha, 1993; McDonagh and Prothero, 1997; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Stevens *et al*., 2013). Therefore, as these examples illustrate, it is argued that the very experience of place in El Pumarejo exposes the visitor to messages whose content produces a sense of political dislocation by encouraging thinking ‘outside the box’ of mainstream politics. Examples of these graffiti are shown in images 4.6 and 4.7.

Image 4.6 "sistema productivo" - translated as "productive system" (LLoveras, 2013e).

Moreover, displacement occurs as one is confronted with a cornucopia of alternative retail spaces within the area of El Pumarejo. Crucially for the present research, the majority of these alternative retail spaces, with the associations and individuals that run then, are proactive participants in the Puma currency. Such retailers challenge the prevalent understanding of retail space as devoid of explicit political content in other parts of Seville. Therefore, as I became familiar with the labyrinth of streets and squares of El Pumarejo, I discovered a plethora of spaces that crossed boundaries between the commercial and the political. For example, a number of shops in the area seek to challenge large agribusinesses not only by selling fair trade and organic groceries, but also by organizing regular talks, seminars and group discussions on the politics of food. Moreover, located on one side of the Pumarejo square, "El Ecolocal" identifies itself as a "free-shop" in which people can "go shopping without money". Strictly, El Ecolocal is not a commercial space. Instead, it operates as a

second-hand depot where people donate items in good conditions for anyone to take. However, it is their positioning as a free-shop, which offers additional activities as a time-bank, talks or expositions about environmental topics, what is of interest.

Image 4.7 "El Puma ruge. Casa Pumarejo, rehabilitación y revitalización" - translated as: "the Puma is roaring. Pumarejo Palace, reappropriation, rehabilitation, revitalisation" (LLoveras, 2013f).

Without having to leave the Pumarejo surroundings, it is possible to find further examples of these hybrid spaces. For example, a local bookshop called "Relatoras", which is explicitly positioned as a feminist bookseller, offers much more than a vast array of tittles specialized in gender politics and literature. It also operates as a space that articulates feminist groups in the area - by acting as a meeting point, organizing public talks, discussion groups, or editing books on the topic, among other activities. Nearby, in "Tremallol", former industrial warehouses have been reconverted into workshops for artisans and artists of various types. Here, the selling of handcrafted products emerges as an explicit political stance against industrialism. Not only can their customers buy artisan products in

these beautifully reconverted warehouses. Moreover, everybody is welcomed to receive training courses, free of charge, on bygone knowledge and practices of traditional artisans. By doing this, Tremallol emerges as a space that denounces the decay of traditional professions that date long before the days of mechanized production. Furthermore, within El Pumarejo, it is easy to encounter therapists that offer natural treatments to heal bodies against the interests of big pharmaceutical companies as well as humanistic psychotherapies of all kind that seek to treat people holistically rather than treating mere symptoms. To adapt Maclaran and Brown's (2005) framework to the study of heterotopias of resistance (Chatzidakis *et al.*, 2012), it is argued that these features of place make one experience a sense of "political dislocation" in the area of El Pumarejo. Within this context, one feels transported to a different place, a place in which various dystopian aspects of industrial capitalism, particularly those that generally go unnoticed, are rendered visible, explicit, crude.

The second process identified by Maclaran and Brown (2005) as constitutive of utopian space is that of creating playspace. Within playspaces, Maclaran and Brown (2005) argue, there is a tolerated coexistence of tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that are left to play against one another without being resolved[10]. The configuration of playspace acquires political significance and becomes a subversive process within the context of El Pumarejo. Indeed, given the arguments above, it would not take long for cynics to dismiss El Pumarejo as not living up to the rather radical critique that it poses to the mainstream. Indeed, despite the sense of political displacement argued above, a closer

[10] Given that the present work is not explicitly concerned with retail spaces such as shopping malls, the ludic element highlighted by Mcclaran and Brown (2005) is not going to be considered here.

examination reveals the existence of multiple contradictions and paradoxes inhered by this place. For example, users of laptops, smart phones, Mp3 players, and other electronic gadgets, are part of the background here just as they are in any other part of Seville, and commercial brands and logos are not difficult to spot in the streets of El Pumarejo. Moreover, alongside the alternative retail spaces argued above, El Pumarejo has multiple conventional supermarkets and a plethora of shops that do not display the strong political inclinations of the former. Even a few convenience stores popularly known as “Chinos” operate in the area with apparent success. Such convenient stores, run by Chinese migrants, are known for their aggressive pricing which is carried out at the expense of ethical and quality standards.

As a playspace, nevertheless, El Pumarejo allows these contradictions to play against one another without suppressing them. Indeed, the existence of tensions and paradoxes within the area is not only acknowledged by residents, but also actively embraced as central to sustain the diversity that enriches their community. These arguments are illustrated in the following extract from one of the interviews:

> El Puma means community and community means diversity. It is this diversity that makes us strong against external attacks. For example, I remember a negative campaign launched against us by a conservative newspaper. Journalists sought to create a false impression that we were a bunch of radical leftists and squatters that wanted to keep the Palace for ourselves. It was an important newspaper and we were concerned that sevillian people would get a distorted image of our activities in El Pumarejo Palace and the local environment. Almost immediately after these articles were published, people of highly conservative profile began to appear in the Media to deny all accusations against us. You can’t imagine our surprise when we saw these individuals, radically different from us,

> acting in our defense! Shortly after we found out that our advocates were members of an association for the preservation of Sevillian traditions. They were aware that these so-called radical squatters were, despite ideological differences, the most proactive group acting in defense of the city's heritage. The fact that our defense was carried out by publicly known traditionalist, religious, conservative individuals gave us credibility and strengthened our position among people that otherwise would be suspicious of our activities (interview A6).

The resignification of paradox and contradiction as plurality and diversity, turn the configuration of playspace in El Pumarejo into a process of great political significance. Such political significance emerges clearly as one observes the diverse uses of the municipal square situated opposite the Pumarejo Palace. During weekdays, this square is filled with chairs and tables, catered by local bars that do not hesitate to use public space for purely commercial purposes. However, during weekends, the square is taken over by the Mercado Cultural and El Mercadillo de Trueque. In these events, activists promote sustainable consumption by arranging a so-called alternative marketplace in which people barter, share, repair and reuse old objects. Here, as second-hand objects are displayed, swapped or exchanged for a small amount of Euros, or Pumas, a space which is generally used for commercial purposes acquires subversive meanings - allowing practices that temporarily challenge the so-called throw-away culture. Therefore, these arguments highlight that the creation of playspace is not limited to the study of retail spaces and they can be extended to the notion of heterotopias of resistance (Chatzidakis *et al,* 2012). Indeed, it is precisely because heterotopias are work in progress that the creation of a playspace, in which conflicts and paradoxes are not suppressed but allowed to play against one another, is of central importance to enact practices which are subversive to the dominant socio-economic order within El Pumarejo. In other words, as contradictions are

regarded as crucial for sustaining a plural and inclusive community, their existence in El Pumarejo is neither denied nor perceived as a failure, but actively embraced as a positive tool for bringing about transformative social change within the area.

To conclude this analysis, the last process argued by Maclaran and Brown (2005: p. 216) is the performance of artscapes in which consumers of utopian place become 'artists of the imagination' and 'cocreators of meanings'. These authors draw upon the theater metaphor to highlight the existence of artistic elements within utopian retail places that go beyond their functionality for the acquisition of goods and services. Unlike the work of Maclaran and Brown (2005) the focus of this work is not retailing but consumer resistance. Therefore, as I have done with the two previous processes, this work establishes the link between performing artscape and practices of resistance. In other words, the discussion addresses how place can evoke artistic and self-expressive values in addition to its political instrumentality as a space for subversion. In this regard, El Pumarejo, and the communities that inhabit it, has become a place where arts and politics are inseparable. This becomes evident as one witnesses highly imaginative combinations of art, irony and humor, with which people here convey a concise, yet profound, political content in the graffiti and slogans that decorate the walls of the both the palace and the area of El Pumarejo. Moreover, during fieldwork, I participated in the Second National Gathering of Alternative Currencies in Spain, which was organized by the Puma community. Music played a central role through the event, with various performances by pop local bands, a young opera singer - see image 4.8, or even by encouraging participants to improvise with musicians, all paid in Pumas. In the course of this event, the relationship between arts, money and degrowth is illustrated by the following extract from fieldnotes.

The last lecture concluded and I, with most participants, headed to the closing event (of the conference/gathering on social currencies). I was tired after three days of intense work but I thought that this could be a great opportunity to engage with the community. The shadow of this PhD chases me! People from the Puma had arranged a number of musical performances, an opera singer, a jazz band, a gospel choir and local flamenco musicians. They prepared a vast buffet with delicious meals that they cooked for 150 guests. The venue was beautifully decorated and the atmosphere was fantastic. Everything looked so...expensive (I try to resist the word) and yet everything was free (of Euros). I approached one of the speakers to talk about the content of his lecture. However, the band playing in the background was so great that we ended up having a conversation about money and the commodification of music and other arts. He laughed at the idea that good music is going to disappear unless we reward talented musicians with money by securing adequate property rights. He argued the opposite as he insisted that, unless we liberate people's musical talent from the pressures of the growth economy, it is good music that is in danger of disappearing. With a beer in hand, we wondered about the prospects for aesthetic and artistic practices in a world where people had to get back to the rudiments of life. We agreed that degrowth would mean that people will have more time for music, dancing, acting, and drawing for pleasure and that alternative currencies should strive at this. A week here has been enough for me to realize of the thin boundaries between the professional and the amateur, particularly as the arts are concerned. El Pumarejo and the Puma currency are living examples of this.

Image 4.8 Young opera singer performs during the Second National Gathering of Alternative Currencies in Spain organised by the Puma community (LLoveras, 2013g).

Another opportunity to explore the constitution of artscape in el Pumarejo emerged as I discovered that many of the users of the currency attend acting lessons, paid in Pumas. These acting classes are, however, slightly unconventional, to the extent that they are focused on developing actors capacity to improvise. That is, the public is prompted to choose three words, any three words that they like, and then the actors have to improvise a play in relation to them. Here, acting emerges not only as an art but also as a powerful political practice for the implementation of the currency. This occurs for various reasons. In this regard, the scene turns into an improvised forum in which political topics, ranging from degrowth, to money, or the crisis, are raised and interspersed with humor or drama through the plays performed by the actors.

4.3.2 Community processes as an embedding mechanism for heterotopian markets

Like the dynamics of place argued above, communities and social ties operate as an embedding mechanism for the heterotopian market practices enacted through the Puma currency. Under close inspection, the history of El Pumarejo reveals social struggle as a traditional focal point for the construction of communities of dissidents within the area. However, these historical processes are excessively broad to establish meaningful connections with the functioning of the Puma currency. Therefore, drawing upon ethnographic insights of El Pumarejo, this discussion addresses these processes at a lower level of abstraction by examining ongoing efforts to protect the Pumarejo Palace from gentrification processes. This struggle resulted in the emergence of the Neighbors Association in Defense of the Pumarejo Palace (NADPP). The second community-building process addressed here is related to the emergence of alternative economic cultures in Spain (Castells *et al.*, 2012). Likewise, the ethnographic nature of the present enquiry enables this discussion to move beyond abstract levels of analysis to engage with the local and concrete. Therefore, the focus will be placed on a particular community, namely that of Degrowth Seville, whose actions are crucial to understand the emergence and development of an alternative currency within the area.

As argued above, the Palace is home for a number of residents, mainly elder people. It also hosts small shops and bars, as well as areas which are regularly used by neighbors for community purposes. Since the early 1990s, the city of Seville became immersed in gentrification processes which, as argued, were often concealed as urban development plans. Due to their particular characteristics, the area of El Pumarejo in general, and the Pumarejo Palace in particular, became targets for speculative practices in the property market which clashed with the interests of

neighbors and residents. In the late 1990s, the owners of the building were approached by a famous chain of hotels with an interest in opening a luxurious hotel in the old Palace. Although the landlords decided that selling the building would be a more lucrative deal than keeping its current residents, the tenancy law in Spain protected long-term tenants from being unilaterally evicted. Therefore, in order to force tenants out, the landlords decided not to do necessary repair work in the building until the structure started to become unsafe for users and residents. Although numerous complaints were made to the council, local authorities decided to turn a blind eye on these issues. Indeed, families and shopkeepers living in the Pumarejo Palace for generations were perceived by developers and planners as a burden for the Council's plans to regenerate the area. The rationale was that the multiplier effect of a luxurious hotel could contribute to turn El Pumarejo into the type of residential area that the Council were interested in. Indeed, it was argued that a new hotel would not only bring a touch of glamour and sophistication to the area, but also a constant stream of visitors avid for new shops, cafes and restaurants.

In response to this abandonment, the community started to organise itself to protect the building and its residents, and they did so by starting the NADPP in the year 2000. This grassroots organisation attracted a heterogeneous network of people, constituted by residents and fellow neighbours, political activists, squatters, academics and a vast array of professionals, ranging from journalists to, lawyers and architects. The most significant action undertaken by this collective involved the production of an extensive piece of research in which the architectural and cultural value of the building were robustly argued and supported with adequate evidence. As a result of this work, which was assessed by experts in Heritage, the building was granted legal protection as Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC), or 'a monument of great architectural and cultural interest' in 2003. In the formal declaration, great emphasis was placed on the centrality of preserving 'the diversity of uses' that have historically

characterised the Pumarejo Palace. Initially, the BIC declaration was perceived as a central victory by the NADPP. The council of Seville expropriated the building in 2009, with the pretext that the landlords were not fulfilling the preservation duties established in the BIC. However, different local governments, having become the owners of the Palace since its expropriation, have continued to neglect necessary repair work in the building. Image 4.9 shows a press conference organised by the NADPP in the Pumarejo Palace to denounce the neglected situation of the building in 2012, and the subsequent demonstration in image 4.10.

Image 4.9 Press conference delivered by the NADPP in 2012 (Unknown author, 2012).

Image 4.10 Demonstration for the Pumarejo Palace in the streets of Seville (Unknown author, 2011).

To reiterate, private investors perceived the purchase of the Pumarejo Palace as a profitable investment which involved plans to convert the building into a luxurious hotel. Landlords framed their property as a commodity to be sold in the property market regardless of the social, cultural, material, and historical significance of the building. Moreover, neither local authorities nor the regional government were interested in preserving the emblematic building, with its multiplicity of uses, which had historically articulated the broad community of El Pumarejo. Against existing regulations, the building was intentionally neglected and essential repair work was not undertaken by the owners, first landlords and then the council of Seville, with the purpose of forcing existing residents out. Indeed, the deterioration of the building added further pressures on residents and shopkeepers to abandon the Pumarejo Palace, who were unable to afford the costs involved in undertaken such essential restoration work. Tired of this situation, in which neither the private nor the public sector have been able to provide solutions to the community, the NADPP launched a platform called “We Will Do It By Ourselves”, that seek to raise funds to preserve the building through community initiatives and

crowd-funding. To date, and despite legal protection granted by the BIC declaration, the future of the Palace remains uncertain for a variety of reasons which are of no immediate relevance for the purposes of the present thesis.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding a dense web of resources for critical thinking and praxis being in place within El Pumarejo, the idea of implementing an alternative currency scheme was not originally formulated by any of the activist groups operating within the area. Rather, it was a group of young degrowth activists that approached El Pumarejo in the pursuit of a suitable place to put their projects into practice. The proliferation of degrowth groups across the country has been related to the rise of alternative economic cultures in Spain in the aftermath of the economic crisis (Castells *et al.*, 2012). The rapid deterioration of welfare indicators in Spain as a result of the economic crisis that began in 2008, has triggered a relentless erosion of trust in political and financial institutions which affects large segments of the population (Castells *et al.*, 2012; Taibo, 2011). Hence, whilst trust in financial and political institutions has gradually declined since the beginning of the crisis, social movements have gained increasing public support among Spaniards. In this regard, sociological analyses highlight what Taibo (2011) identifies as 'a resurgence of libertarian practices' and Castells *et al.* (2012) refers to as 'the rise of alternative economic cultures'. The proliferation of degrowth groups are part of this growing interest in finding alternative ways of organising political and economic life outside existing institutional frameworks.

In 2011, Degrowth Seville was looking for a suitable location to implement an alternative currency scheme for the city of Seville. Given the peculiar idiosyncrasy El Pumarejo, and its reputation as a friendly environment for critical thinking and praxis, members of Degrowth Seville approached the

platform in defence of the Pumarejo Palace. As I was told by one of the key informants:

> "In the group of Degrowth Seville we had spent some time deliberating about how to translate our theoretical reflections into practice. We felt that it was the right time to dare as most people in Spain do not believe in politicians or expect them to find solutions to problems that break their life and the lives of their beloved ones. We felt that the time has come for social movements to move from words to deeds and create real alternatives that communities can touch, smell and see. We had had three projects in mind. One of them involved a community allotment where we could teach organic agriculture to people. Another project was a weekly fair in which artisans and organic local farmers could sell their products without intermediaries. The third project we wanted to undertake was an alternative currency scheme which could help people to abandon the Euro economy that so much scarcity has created within a sea of abundance. We needed a place to make it happen and there is no better place to do things differently in Seville than El Pumarejo. All this occurred in 2011, when we started with about 20 users, and now we are over 700" (interview A2).

Therefore, a group of approximately 20 people started to hold regular meetings in which they discussed opportunities and barriers for launching an alternative currency scheme within the area of El Pumarejo. Following a series of informal meetings, the group contacted Julio Gisbert, who is one of the main experts in alternative currencies within Spain, to deliver a workshop on alternative currencies within El Pumarejo Palace. Veteran members make constant reference to this event as a landmark in the eventual launch of currency. According to them, the workshop enhanced the morale of the group, provided a horizon of concrete possibilities and constraints, and made possible the acquisition of basic knowledge and

skills required to start up the currency. However, most importantly for the purposes of the present discussion, this event became an opportunity to integrate, for the first time, members of Degrowth Seville, the NADPP and a large number of local residents that attended the workshop. Indeed, the experiences of participants render visible a gradual consolidation of a 'community of communities' through the idea of implementing an alternative currency scheme within the area. Drawing upon different interviews:

> "To me, the alternative currency workshop was an opportunity to meet people, do loads of networking and make friends that last to date. Meeting local residents and their struggles to protect the Palace was a particularly touching and motivating experience." (Interview A1)

> "It is beautiful how easily strangers begin to cooperate by sharing a vision for a better world. This was precisely what we accomplished during Julio's workshop. Without strong friendship bonds I have no doubt that El Puma would collapse in less than a month." (Interview A6).

> "When I think back about these days (the workshop) I am certain that the most important lesson for us was to discover that we could trust each other because we were all in the same boat." (Interview A2).

These arguments illustrate the significance of communitarian processes as an embedding mechanism to understand the emergence of a heterotopian market in El Pumarejo. As a sense of trust and reciprocity grew among members of the Puma currency, the community was able to gain access to an increasing amount of human and material resources that are crucial to understand its functioning. For example, community-

building processes enabled the gradual articulation of a complex and diverse social network around the Puma currency. Gradually, the embryonic group grew in size, complexity and diversity as different individuals, from different backgrounds, started to take part in the currency scheme. In less than one year, the amount of members rose from twenty to nearly seven hundred. This exponential growth, which involved a diversity of people, interests and motivations, is unthinkable without the early social backbone provided by Degrowth Seville, the NADPP and local residents. Moreover, a so-called Grupo Motor[11] (Steering Group) was established. The steering group was, and stills is, behind the performance of essential tasks of coordination, communication, and organisation without which the Puma currency would be unthinkable. Membership to the Puma Steering Group has always been open to all members of the community, and the degree and nature of individuals' involvement has always been voluntary and variable. However, to date, it is noticeable that the majority of people regularly involved in the coordinating activities undertaken by the Steering Group were originally either members of the NADPP and Degrowth Seville, or local residents.

Besides these developments, the configuration of the Puma community, as a 'community of communities', enabled an effective integration of the currency with the neighbours and the neighbourhood. This integration was crucial for gaining access to communal resources existing in the area. Of particular importance was the possibility of using the so-called "Centro Vecinal" – Neighbour's Hub – to undertake essential activities regarding the planning, coordination and implementation of the Puma currency scheme. El Centro Vecinal is an area of the Pumarejo Palace that functions as a working space for diverse associations and groups, whose activities are carried out for the benefit of the neighbourhood. Crucially,

[11]See section 4.4.2

residents define this space as “neither private nor public, but common”. In other words, despite being part of a residential space, local residents do not consider this space as private. Similarly, despite the building being owned by the council of Seville, residents do not consider this space as public, in the sense of belonging to a public authority. Instead, the space belongs to the community of El Pumarejo and it is only through communitarian process, in this case by working in activities that benefit the community, that such space can be freely used.

4.3.3 Practical concerns as an embedding mechanism for heterotopian markets:

Interestingly, the heterotopian market studied here is not solely embedded in place and community networks. In addition to the former, it is important to highlight that the Puma community envisaged the alternative currency as a problem-solving device. Drawing upon ethnographic data, the focus of the discussion will be placed on two practical concerns that can be found behind the inception of the Puma currency, namely:

1- The need to introduce an economic dimension into the NADPP.

2- Concerns about how to relink needs and resources within the community without relying on the Euro.

In 2011, the NADPP was in the middle of an internal debate as some of the most active members raised concerns that their involvement in the struggle to protect the palace had become a full-time occupation. Besides their involvement in internal activities of coordination, information, deliberation, or decision-making within the NADPP, activists had to undertake an increasing amount of external activities such as attending meetings with local authorities, fund-raising or answering Media inquiries. In their view, it was impossible for them to remain fully committed to the

common good, which in this case involved the protection of the palace, without neglecting their own need to earn a living. An initial suggestion to address this problem was that the association collected and redistributed a small amount of Euros as a way of 'giving back' to the most highly involved individuals. However, this suggestion raised suspicion that doing such a thing would not be different from paying "a salary". It was argued that such system of incentives reproduced individualistic values and, most importantly, it run the risk of turning "activists" into "employees". Suddenly and without previous warning, these concerns prompted a controversy that threatened to fracture the community.

This internal controversy revolved around two different understandings of the word "economy" within the NADPP. Some of its members were suspicious that all the talk about "economic issues" was a euphemism for money. In this regard, relationships within the community had traditionally been based in reciprocity and mutual support. If participation in the NADPP was as indeed an act of selflessness, they argued, Euros should not be allowed to mediate the relationship between individuals and the community. Therefore, for those who shared this view, there was no space for an economic discussion within the NADPP. However, other members contended that the economy could not be reduced to a monetary dimension. Instead, the economy involved questions about "sustenance". The use of the term sustenance was intentional to emphasise that communitarian processes had to be "sustained" by members. Therefore, unless communities find economic mechanisms to provide for those members that sustain them, communitarian processes run the risk of draining the energy of those individuals that work for the common – who simultaneously have to provide for themselves. In other words, the necessity of introducing an economic dimension in the NADPP was justified as a means to prevent the community from becoming a parasitic entity whose existence is sustained at the expense of individuals. This argument for lifting the economic taboo within the NADPP was compelling

in conceptual terms. Nevertheless, it encountered strong resistance due to their incapacity to devise a solution without having to resort to explicit or implicit redistributions of Euros among members.

However, when Degrowth Seville approached the NADPP with a proposal for starting an alternative currency scheme in the area, the latter saw an opportunity to solve their economic dilemma. Drawing upon an interview with one of the veteran members of the Puma currency, who is also actively involved in the NADPP:

> "It took us so much effort to convince our own people (from the NADPP) of the full potential of the (Puma) currency! They were unable to see how the (Puma) currency can transform the relationship between the individual and the community beyond their outdated ideas and prejudgements. They used to call me a capitalist because I dared to mention the word "economy". Can you imagine how painful is to be called a traitor by the same people that you are giving all your energy for? Some grew resentful and certain wounds remain open today" (interview A6)

Therefore, the alternative currency was a practical solution to solve the problem of sustenance within the NADPP without having to use Euros. Indeed, money created by the community, and whose value remained tied to the community that created it, could be employed to support individuals whose dedication to the community prevented them from securing their own livelihoods. Consequently, an economic dimension could be incorporated to communitarian relationships without the risk of betraying the centrality of values such as reciprocity, fairness, autonomy and egalitarianism. Gradually, the economic controversy around the issue of sustenance of the NADPP was settled by the alternative currency scheme.

Moreover, the present work reveals a second practical concern which operates as an embedding mechanism for the Puma currency. This revolved around the question of how to link existing needs and available resources within the area in ways that were consistent with the perspective of degrowth. In this respect, the task of subverting dependency relationships between communities and the macroeconomic system is a central priority for degrowth. In this regard, Degrowth Seville envisaged the implementation of El Puma currency as an answer to the systemic failure of existing systems of provision to meet the needs of the local community. In Seville, like many other parts of Spain, the effects of the crisis have produced a scarcity of jobs that, by extension, have resulted in a scarcity of money. However, for members of Degrowth Seville, this failure preceded the financial crisis that began in 2008, and can be traced to the prevalence of systems of provision that are not designed to meet the needs of capital rather than the needs of the community. As argued by a member of Degrowth Seville who is actively involved in the Puma currency:

> "The Puma is not just a temporary solution to weather the storm of the current crisis. This idea must be put up front... we are not poor! Make sure that you (referring to me) take good note of this (laughs)... we are rich because we have plenty of talents, skills, knowledge, capacities, affections; these things are abundant here. But the system is a machine that devours our prosperity by limiting choices to the amount of money in our pockets. It is not the crisis but the system that creates artificial scarcity." (Interview A4).

Drawing upon degrowth discourses, Degrowth Seville sought to localise economic exchanges within El Pumarejo. It did this by placing a strong emphasis on the existence of abundance within the community, which tis rendered invisible by, among other things, the monetisation of value. For Degrowth Seville, it was crucial that the community of EL Pumarejo was

able to identify essential needs that could be fulfilled by using locally available resources. Importantly, this was not a call for absolute self-sufficiency but an effort to accommodate economic life to what they referred to as a “more human scale”. Prior to the launch of the Puma currency, a number of assemblies were organised in which members of Degrowth Seville and the NADPP shared their concerns and exchanged viewpoints. For members of the latter it was not difficult to agree with Degrowth Seville about the centrality of redefining needs and resources in more local and communitarian terms. Similarly, Degrowth Seville shared the interest of the NADPP in securing sustenance, although they sought to extend it beyond a specific struggle to preserve the Pumarejo Palace. An examination of early assembly proceedings reveals that, among other concerns, the content of these discussions focused on the identification of relevant needs and resources. In this regard, the community established the following needs that had to be met through the implementation of an alternative currency scheme:

1. To build a network based on mutual support, reciprocity, and redistribution of resources. Such network seeks to provide an answer to neighbour’s needs for accommodation, nourishment, hygiene, healthcare, dressing, energy, education, mobility, services (e.g. household repairs), etc.

2. To promote commercial activities through networks of small producers, distributors and independent retailers, whose products meet three fundamental criteria, namely products that are local, ecological and artisan.

3. To incorporate networks of professionals that can provide relevant services to the community, e.g. legal, IT, etc.

4. To raise funding for community projects which are of interests for neighbours. For example, to repair and restore the Pumarejo Palace or to create a community bank of microcredit.

5. To prevent potential speculative practices with the new Puma currency.

6. To contribute to build a social fabric that encourages communication and networking among neighbours, small retailers, NGOs, and associations of all kinds within the area.

7. To put in place self-sustenance mechanisms within the community that provide to those who work for “the common” with the means for their sustainment.

8. To preserve and encourage values and practices related to cooperation/collaboration, collective creativity, caring and mutual trust.

As it occurred with the identification of the community needs argued above, the group mapped existing resources through collective processes of assembly and deliberation prior to the launch of the Puma currency. Among others, the list of resources identified included:

- Independent retailers such as “La Gallina Clueca” or the artisan market at Tremallol, which are involved in the production and retailing of products that meet the criteria argued above, namely local, ecological and artisan. Also, social markets such as the “Cultural Market” of the Pumarejo Square were cited as a community resource.

- Groceries and food: priority should be given to local farmers involved in organic agriculture that could exchange directly to consumers without intermediaries. There are a number of communitarian allotments in the area and surroundings where people grow organic food that could be included here.

- Services and professional networks. Here, their main resources are related to the abilities, talents and skills of professionals within the community. Bringing a broad range of professionals to the Puma network was central.

- Spaces available within the area for education and learning – broadly defined. This included the Pumarejo Palace, as well as a number of the alternative retail spaces argued above in which retail space used for multiple purposes other than the purely commercial ones.

- The time-bank in El Ecolocal

- Possibility of looking after communitarian allotments.

- Others: the list was left open as the resources available within the community were argued to be not static but dynamic and in constant change and renovation.

Therefore, the purpose of the alternative currency was to link resources and needs, or production and consumption, to put it in marketing terms. These arguments appear to suggest that the problem faced by the Puma community was not substantially different from those that legitimise the existence of marketing systems based on conventional money. However, further exploration reveals that the Puma currency was a practical response to address a substantially deeper economic problem. The

present work reveals that practical concerns emerged as the community redefined notions of “the economy” and “the economic” beyond monetary concerns. In other words, members questioned the so-called economic problem, which revolves around notions of scarcity, endless needs, and exchange value. To reiterate, models of the market in disciplines such as Marketing and Economics tend to assume that human needs are endless and the resources to meet them are scarce. Moreover, value is framed in terms of utility and market actors are regarded as utility-maximisers. Drawing upon the former assumptions, it follows that, under conditions of perfect competition, exchange value can be used as a proxy of value – the value of things is reflected in how much people are willing to pay for them. From this perspective, markets emerge as an efficient solution to allocate scarce resources in a manner than value, assumed as value of exchange, is maximised. However, the Puma community sought to redefine the role of markets as problem-solving devices by re-embedding them in a different set of problems than those posed in conventional economic textbooks. These involved:

1. A redefinition human needs in terms of community, trust, reciprocity, and mutual support to replace the idea of endless needs devoid of social content. This involves the emergence of a new economic actor that differs from the individualist, utility-maximiser, assumed by economic and marketing literature.

2. Such a redefinition of needs involved a corresponding redefinition of the resources available to meet them. Here, the Puma community sought to challenge the view of scarcity, which they argue is artificially created, and replace it with one of abundance.

3. A redefinition of value beyond the utilitarian logic of exchange value. The creation and exchange of value, in this context, was

related to the establishment of meaningful social ties, ecology, locality, or artisan labour.

Through these processes of collective reflection, participants acknowledged that existing markets were unable of allocating existing resources to existing needs. The task of creating a new type of market within the area became a communitarian priority, particularly as existing markets were inadequate to resolve the economic problem of the Puma community. In this context, the adoption of an alternative currency scheme emerged as a particularly powerful tool to undertake this challenge. Indeed, the Puma currency can be interpreted as a problem-solving device whose development is embedded in the very problems that it sought to address.

4.4 Organising market practices in heterotopia

The previous themes highlighted the embeddedness of the Puma currency in place, community and practical concerns. Whilst understanding embeddedness is important to unveil the plurality of elements constitutive of markets, it still conveys a rather static picture of how a heterotopian market is enacted, a view which the forthcoming themes seek to overcome. To undertake this task the focus will shift from market embeddedness to market performance in heterotopia. In this regard, the following themes explore concrete practices through which a heterogeneous web of ideas, products, places, devices, communities, or practical concerns, is assembled in El Pumarejo as to enact a heterotopian market in practice. The first type of market practice that will be explored are those directly involved with the accomplishment of market exchanges within the Puma community. However, drawing upon the literature on market practices, it has been contended that markets cannot be reduced to exchanges (Araujo, 2007). Indeed, an exclusive focus on market exchanges would do little to challenge the inadequate view of

markets that prevails in the marketing literature (Araujo *et al.* 2010). Drawing upon the literature on market-practices, it is suggested that exchange practices, whilst important constituents of markets, require of a great deal of "infrastructural work" to ensure that such exchanges are effectively accomplished. Importantly, infrastructural work carried out through market-making practices, despite being crucial for organising market exchanges, tends to become invisible at the moment of exchange. In actor-network theory terms, it could be argued that market-making practices are black-boxed at the moment of exchange. Practice-based approaches to markets have referred to such infrastructural work as market-making or market-*ing* practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). Therefore, with the purpose of opening up the heterotopian market blackbox, this work addresses market making practices in heterotopia through an examination of the main organising activities.

4.4.1 Market exchange practices in heterotopia

According to Bagozzi (1975: p. 32), 'exchange forms the core phenomenon for study in marketing'. In this regard, the feature of markets that has received most attention by marketing scholars is that of exchange (i.e. Kotler and Levy, 1969; Bagozzi, 1975). Within the present work, the notion of market-exchange encompasses all those exchanges of goods and services that involve a payment in Pumas. In this regard, it is concerned with the use of Pumas to enable trade among members. Two fundamental types of payment coexist within the network, namely those that are made entirely in Pumas and those in which both Pumas and Euros are employed. Mixed payments Euro/Pumas are allowed when the exchange involve resources that cannot be purchased from other Puma members. For example, drawing upon one the interviews:

> "Let's say that I have to repair your old washing machine and I need some special piece to make it wash your clothes again. It could happen that somebody is recycling and selling exactly the same

> piece in Pumas. However, it is more likely that I will have to buy this piece with Euros. In this case, I would charge you the price of the washing machine component in Euros, and the labour in Pumas." (Interview A7, female 31).

Moreover, a number of independent retailers involved in the Puma network, including restaurants, bookshops, bicycle shops, grocers, etc. (see section 4.2.1), have the capacity to decide what percentage of Pumas they accept as a payment. The reason is that, like in the former example, it may be impossible for them to buy their supplies with the alternative currency. The figure of Pumas accepted by such retailers tends to oscillate between 5% and 20% of the total price.

Furthermore, market-exchanges within the Puma network can be classified depending on whether one of the parties involves the Community, for example one of the working groups, or they are carried out between two individual users. In this regard, all the working groups are signed up in the system and therefore they can trade with other members of the network. Consequently, market exchanges can be of two types, namely individual-individual or community-individual. By drawing upon these criteria, table 4.11 illustrates the different types of market exchanges identified above.

	Individual/individual	**Community/individual**
Paid entirely in Pumas	Two individual members exchange a good or service for Pumas.	One of the working groups and one individual member trade in Pumas.
Mixed payment Euros/Pumas	Two individual members exchange a good or service for an agreed amount of Pumas and Euros	One of the working groups and one individual member trade in Pumas and Euros.

Table 4.11 Types of market Exchange in the Puma currency scheme.

Moreover, as argued above, LETS are based on the idea of mutual credit. However, whilst the sum of all the accounts in the network is always zero, it is the case that some individual balances will be negative and others will be positive at a given moment. In this regard, individuals are allowed to continue trading despite not having a positive balance in their accounts. The community agreed to place a flexible limit of (-100) Pumas to the amount of debt that can be accumulated. However, as all LETS, this debt ceiling is merely a standard reference. In this regards, individual members are allowed to exceed the amount of -100 Pumas debit when they have gained the trust of the community – for example, by being a regular seller, working for the community, or using the Pumas debited to produce a clear benefit to the community).

However, having identified these four type of market exchanges as general categories it is acknowledged that an adequate understanding of market-exchange within the Puma network requires a more nuanced analysis of how such exchanges are accomplished in practice. Indeed, it is through the performance of concrete practices and devices that goods and services are traded within the Puma network. As far as the materiality of these exchange practices are concerned, the present work highlights the centrality of two market devices, namely the Puma passbook and a specialised type of software called CES.

Like the majority of LETS, and contrary to other schemes such as local currencies, the Puma currency scheme does not involve the circulation of physical notes or coins. Instead, Pumas are credits recorded in a personal passbook - see images 4.12 and 4.13. Therefore, to begin trading it is necessary to own one of the official Puma passbooks – which are provided, free of charge, by the Comisión de Acogida when individuals are signed up in the system (see section 4.4.4). The Puma passbook is a paper book used to record transactions made in the Puma account of the holder. In the front page, it contains the name and membership number of

the holder, as well as the Puma logo and the official postmark of the network – that helps to prevent fraud. Several modifications in the original device have resulted in a gradual reduction of the size of the passbook – its current size is 2 x 2.8 inches. This material modification was prompted by the realization that market exchanges were less likely to be successfully accomplished with bigger passbooks - for the simple reason that members did not carry the device with them at the moment of exchange. As stated in one of the interviews:

> "In the beginning we received various complaints from members telling us that they could not trade because not everybody carried the passbook on them. We sought the most effective ways to remind people of the importance of carrying the passbook with them all the time. In the middle of the discussion somebody asked: what if we make them smaller? Actually, it is quite chunky at the moment, isn´t it? And Eureka! It was not a problem in people's memory… It was a simple problem of portability!" (Interview A5).

Inside, the booklet displays boxes in which relevant details of the exchange have to be filled up by both parties. These details are printed name and surname, account number and signature of the other party in the exchange; a brief description of the object or service that is exchanged, date of the transaction, account balance both before and after the exchange. Therefore, the booklet enables the network to make their exchanges traceable.

Image 4.12 A Puma passbook (LLoveras, 2013h).

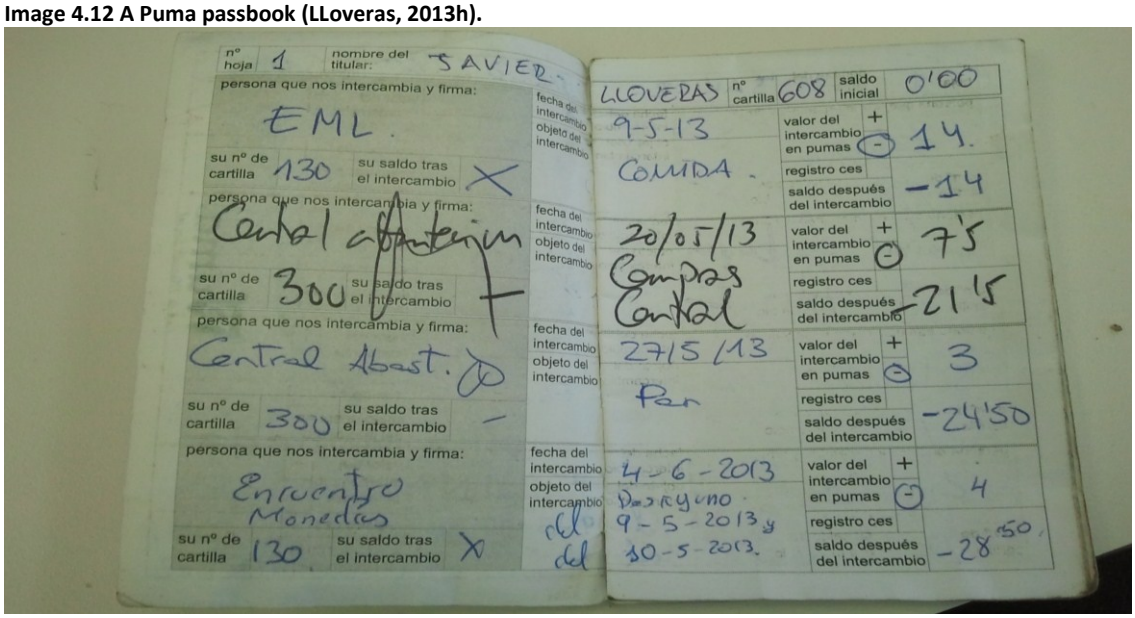


Image 4.13 Inside pages of my own Puma passbook after various exchanges (LLoveras, 2013i).

The second device organizing market exchanges within the Puma network is the software called CES, an acronym of Community Exchange System. This is an internet-based tool, embedded in the Puma community's website, whose working mimics a conventional online-banking service. Every time a new member signs up in the Puma scheme, he or she is given an account on the CES website. Members log in their accounts by entering their membership number and password in the Puma community's website. By logging into their accounts, members are able to view their balances and obtain online statements of their account. As

argued above, trading in Pumas does not involve the circulation of physical currency as money is created by recording credits and debits at the trading interfaces, first Puma passbooks and then the CES account of users. In this respect, the CES and the passbook are supplementary devices. This software offers other functionalities that are crucial to organise market-exchange practices in the Puma community. For example, by making available information regarding the account balances and statements of each user of the network, CES helps to regulate trust among users and the community. Moreover, CES can produce general trading statistics to show the amount of trading taking place within the network. The latter information is particularly relevant to inform epistemic practices undertaken by the Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda (see more on epistemic practices in section 4.4.5). In addition to the latter, CES includes a directory of goods and services produced and demanded within the network. In this regard, producers can advertise their services and products within the network. Simultaneously, this software also includes a so-called 'Wants List' where participants can advertise the goods and services that they require to satisfy their needs. These supply/demand adverts are supplemented with all the contact information required to arrange the exchanges between participants.

Trading practices begins within the directory of products services offered at the Puma's website. Like online retail sites, sellers provide a brief description of their products, besides adequate pictures and price information – either in Pumas or both in Pumas and Euros. They also read the 'Wants List' to track the needs of the community and potential buyers. The reverse is true for buyers. Once buyers or sellers have decided to carry out a market exchange, either as a buyer or a seller, the next step is to arrange the exchange by contacting the other party. The conditions of the deal tend to be arranged by telephone or email prior to the purchase. Once the product or service is purchased and delivered, both buyers and sellers exchange their respective passbooks to record the details of the

purchase. Every week users have to update their CES accounts by entering data about their last transactions, as recorded in the passbooks. The market exchange process is described in the fieldwork diary:

> The exchange ritual goes as follows: buyer and seller meet up face to face to seal their deal. At arrival, it is frequent to that at least one of them makes a joke or funny comment regarding the Puma currency. I interpret this as a strategy to create an informal atmosphere that makes the economic exchange look less impersonal, cold or "capitalist". Next they swap their passbooks and start to fill in the relevant details. Less experience members tend to request help to fill the form from their most experience counterparts. By having to fill in the passbooks with each other's details, these exchanges help to remember the names of other users. Questions such as "what was your name, sorry?" tend to develop into a longer conversation, which in turn, creates a warmer atmosphere around this event. When details are filled in, they swap the passbooks back, to shake hands, hug or kiss before they go.

Moreover, whilst bartering is not a form of market exchange - as it does not involve the use of Pumas, it is frequent for members of the Puma network to swap second hand products among them. Whilst CES directory also informs about bartering opportunities, these exchanges do not have to be recorded in the system. Bartering is privately arranged by the interested parties who decide the content of the deal, as well as the time, place and channel through which goods are exchanged. Moreover, a bartering event is organised by, and for, the women within the network. This event takes place every Tuesday in El Pumarejo Palace. Female members of the Puma community are invited to carry their old clothes along and swap them with other female members – see image 4.14. These different bartering practices are not only a means of getting rid of unwanted possessions, but also a ritual to strengthen mutual trust and

reciprocity within the Puma network. Indeed, I argue that bartering is entangled with market-exchange practices to the extent that members report a preference for selling or buying from people with whom they had previously exchanged.

Image 4.14 Participants in the one of the bartering event organised by and for female members of the Puma community (LLoveras, 2013j).

4.4.2 Market-making practices

Marketing's fascination with exchanges has gradually resulted in a conceptual synecdoche, namely that term market exchange has ended up subsuming the whole meaning of market. However, drawing upon the recent developments in the literature on market practices (i.e. Araujo, 2007), it has become clear that exchange practices depend on the performance of a broader set of market-making practices in which both human and non-human elements are involved (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). Likewise, the present work suggests that exchange practices represent the tip of the market iceberg as far as the making of a heterotopian market is concerned. In this regard, it is argued that Puma users can undertake their market exchanges thanks to the performance of a myriad of market-making practices, which configure a relatively stable

frame for the former. In this study, such market-making practices have been identified by asking about, observing and participating in the activities of the groups that constitute the so-called Grupo Motor – or Steering Group. Drawing upon my research diary:

> An accurate analogy to depict the functioning of the Steering Group could be that of a heart pumping lifeblood through the Puma's body. It is a centre that holds a dynamic periphery in constant expansion and yet, the Steering Group is a dynamic periphery in itself. Their effectiveness has caused a great impact on me, particularly as I think about the challenge of organising a network of seven hundred users, with new people enrolling on a weekly basis. Everything functions so smoothly that one could be tempted to imagine a team of full-time professional managers behind the Puma currency. However, to my wonder, this whole thing is organised by the skill, talent and enthusiasm of ordinary people, with no apparent formal authority, rules, timetables, contracts, wages or training in management.

However, it is important to highlight that the Steering Group is an informal structure, whose boundaries are not only highly porous but also in constant redefinition - with individuals coming in and out or temporarily adjusting their levels of involvement. Indeed, participant observation suggests that people's involvement in the Steering Group is highly flexible and open. In this regard, it is common to witness how individuals negotiate their level and type of involvement with the Steering Group by considering personal factors, such as their availability and motivation, and the needs of the community, namely 'what needs to be done'. Nevertheless, despite this commitment to openness and voluntariness, the existence of a Steering Group has been contested by some members of the Puma network on suspicion that it establishes a hierarchy between those users

who belong to it and the rest. For example, an email addressed to the Steering Group mail-list argued:

> "To my surprise, I have discovered that there is a so-called Steering Group in the Puma network. I had heard of working-groups and open assemblies, but never heard of a steering group before.
>
> If transparency, clarity and self-awareness are very important for us, who are the steering group? Are they the same people that started the currency? how about everyone else that has been involved more recently, do we have a voice?
>
> (…) I discovered that I am not part of the Steering Group, so from now on I am not going to attend any of the meetings that you arrange.
>
> (…) I think that the challenge is to be transparent, permeable and welcoming both between you (referring to the Steering Group) and the rest of the Puma members, even though they are not 'equals'." (This is a fragment of an email sent to the general mail list by another member of the Puma network).

Notwithstanding these arguments highlighting the existence of tensions to define the Steering Group, as well as how membership to the group is accomplished, or whether such membership is bounded to specific privileges, it is suggested here that these conflicts are based on a misunderstanding of how the network is actually organised in practice. To sidestep this problem, it may be more insightful to continue the analysis by focusing on what the Steering Group does in practice rather than who are the specific individuals that take part in it more regularly. Therefore, in shifting to a practice-based analysis of how the Puma currency is organised, emphasis must be placed of the specific functions that are

performed by different “comisiones” within the Steering Group. These “comisiones” are semi-autonomous working-groups which are arranged to perform specialised tasks - regardless of the specific individuals involved in them. The following comisiones have been identified and illustrated in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Working groups in the Puma currency scheme

4.4.3 Coordinating practices

Each of these comisiones, or working groups, operates in a semiautonomous manner to perform a specific function for the Puma currency scheme. Therefore, these working-groups are largely self-organised; for example, they establish specific objectives and targets, arrange meetings, or undertake actions as they consider both convenient and necessary. However, simultaneously, the coherence and stability of the Puma currency depends on the activities of these working-groups remaining interconnected. Therefore, what I identify here as "coordinating practices" refer to activities that seek to ensure a degree of coordination between different comisiones to prevent their work from becoming inconsistent with common goals or drifting away from one another. Fundamentally, these coordinating practices involve a combination of both online and face-to-face coordinating practices. As far as online coordinating practices are concerned, these are mediated through a general mail-list, which encompasses all members of the Puma network. This mail-list is used to circulate emails with regular updates provided by each working group. The content of these messages informs about decisions made within each comisión, or working group, as well as their ongoing activities and forthcoming projects. Moreover, these emails seek to encourage members' participation by requesting help and support – in the form of volunteers, advice, or resources – as needed by working groups. Nevertheless, online practices of coordination are not exempted from inconvenience and limitations. For example, some users complain about their mailbox being "jammed" by the amount of emails sent from the different groups. Others highlight the difficulty to follow the threads and the confusion resulting from what they perceive as information overload. Besides this, concerns have been voiced that online interaction could replace real-world interactions, thus emptying the relationships established among members of the Puma community from any trace of human content.

In order to overcome these limitations, so-called general assemblies are arranged on a regular basis inside the Centro Vecinal, the communitarian area of the Pumarejo Palace. These assemblies are an opportunity for users to voice their concerns, desires, suggestions or criticisms, as well as to express their gratitude and appreciation, regarding both the Puma currency and the activities of the different working groups. Whilst these events are fundamentally concerned with tasks of decision-making and consultation, their purpose is not exclusively informative or deliberative. In this regard, it is customary for general assemblies take place in a rather festive atmosphere and they are an opportunity to meet people and exchange experiences whilst sharing food and drinks. The norm is that at least one person from each working group has to be present to inform participants about their activities and answer their potential queries. Moreover, specific help requests are made by representatives of the different working groups to adjust their resources, particularly in terms of people, to the workload that they may be facing. Participation on these events is not limited to members of the network and any outsider interested in the Puma currency is welcomed to attend, listen and express her views in the assembly. However, to ensure that all members of the network are aware of the progress made in these events, regardless of whether they could attend them or not, volunteers take notes and commit to produce and circulate a Word Document in which the assembly proceedings are recorded.

Through their involvement in coordinating practices both online and face to face, members engage in communitarian processes of reflexion and self-questioning, which are crucial to the governance of the Puma currency scheme. Indeed, emphasis is placed on encouraging not only all users, but also other stakeholders of the Puma currency such as independent retailers in the area, neighbours, or activist within the area, to take part in these activities. Through these reflective processes, ideas and practices underpinning the Puma currency are subjected to critical scrutiny. The

following text is significant, as it helps to illustrate the entanglement between general organising practices and the exercise of collective reflection within the community. Drawing upon an email sent to the general mail-list to arrange a general assembly, it was stated:

> "Issue: We need you! You are an important piece in this jigsaw puzzle
>
> Hi to all in the Puma pack!
>
> As you surely know, we are in the middle of an important process of hibernation/reflection. Does it mean that we are simply sleeping our problems away whilst waiting for the cold weather to go? Not at all!
>
> We are licking our wounds, reorganising some ideas, and trying to answer important questions to continue our development, to do so happily, and to make this our/your project of an alternative currency network even more personal.
>
> This process of introspection has occurred to us as a vital need. Since we were born in March 2012, over 800 people have come to the Pumarejo Palace to find out about the currency, to become part of it, and to create this community that we are so proud of today. But this rapid growth has forced us to reconsider some of our initial ideas, restructure the way we work, and question who we are or what we want.
>
> (…) the time has come to reinvent ourselves; for this we need your ideas, your interests, your passion, your suggestions, your experiences!! We want to count on you for the next big Puma assembly, with everybody adding their enthusiasm to be reborn."

4.4.4 Enrolment practices in the Comisión de Acogida

“How does somebody join the Puma network and become a member?” I had this broad question in mind when I started to inquire about the practices of enrolment and initiation of new users within the currency. These practices rely largely on the actions of the Comisión de Acogida – which literally translates as Welcoming Commission. Indeed, the only way to sign up for the Puma currency is by attending welcoming events or “open days” run on a weekly basis. Therefore, every Monday, from 18:30 until 21:00, a couple of members from the Puma currency volunteer for signing up and welcoming new members. The activities of the Comisión de Acogida take place in a small office within the Centro Vecinal of the Pumarejo Palace. This office is a co-working space, which is shared with other organisations involved in social projects within the area. The room is decorated with leaflets, newspapers cut-outs and posters whose content is concerned with all sort of social issues, ranging from immigration rights to the anti-eviction movement campaigns, and, naturally, the Puma currency. No previous booking is required and thus, it is difficult to estimate in advance the amount of prospective members inquiring about the currency. However, in general, the turnout figures for these “Welcoming Mondays” ranges from 10 to 20 people.

I can hear a group of people standing outside the room. This old PC has been booting Windows for 10 minutes, but it is 18:34 and they sound rather impatient. Yes, they are impatient. A young woman knocks the door asks with a rude tone, “can I come in?” Before we can articulate a reply, she has already stepped right into the middle of the room. “I am in a rush”, she states, “and I want to open an account with the Puma today”. Whilst I contemplate the scene, I cannot help feeling irritated by the sense of entitlement that her words convey. “How can she not realise that we are doing these voluntarily?” I grumbled in silence, as one of my fellow volunteers was kindly helping her.

The scene above took place during one of my participant observations in the Comisión de Acogida, although similar incidents are so frequent that it could have occurred any other Monday, as I was told later. It highlights the crucial role of the Comisión de Acogida for identifying and redefining instrumentalist attitudes and individualistic ideas during the process of enrolment, or welcoming as they term it. Indeed, volunteers are aware that customer-like attitudes towards the Puma are to be replaced with a more communitarian vision. Ultimately, the Puma currency is a network based on reciprocity and mutual trust and the proliferation of these attitudes could do immense harm to the community. As stated in one of the interviews, regarding the purpose of the Comisión de Acogida:

> "We want people (new members) to become part of a community and not just another user of the currency. This is why we have to explain them that they are becoming part of a Puma pack that has great trust in them (....) when I explain this, I like to emphasise ideas such as reciprocity, trust, mutuality, etc. (...) and yes, we also make sure that everybody understands the transformative purposes and values behind the Puma community before they sign up for it (...) sometimes people are more excited about the idea of becoming part of a pack than they are about the currency, and this is a good thing." (Interview A1).

Less surprising than the former, the task of informing prospective members about the general functioning of the Puma currency is another central function of the Comisión de Acogida. Drawing upon one of my interviews with volunteers in the Comisión de Acogida:

> "Often, people have already decided to sign up before even knowing what the Puma currency is and how it works. If you ask me, I would say that 90% of people coming to sign up hardly know what a LETS is. Some even think that they are signing up for a

food bank! You see? Giving people good information about what is the Puma currency and how we function is crucial to avoid future problems." (Interview A1).

Observation of these practices reveals that informing people about how LETS work in general, and the Puma currency scheme in particular, requires a great deal of pedagogic competence, rhetorical skills and patience on the part of volunteers. The challenge is to communicate rather technical information in a simple manner - as to avoid discouraging prospective members with unnecessary complexities. Informative materials, such as leaflets, are employed by volunteers at this stage to facilitate and supplement their explanations. Moreover, to accomplish such a goal it is important for volunteers not to take for granted the apparent simplicity of concepts such as double entry bookkeeping, credit or debit, barter or market exchange. Indeed, the diversity of educational backgrounds, age groups, familiarity with the project, or even the mother tongue of people that come to the Comisión de Acogida suggests it is impossible to standardise the process. Whilst informing people about the community values and general functioning of Puma currency scheme is crucial, the last step in the welcoming event is rather administrative in nature. It is concerned with the creation of an account for the new user. This requires the applicant to fill in a form, handed out by the volunteer, with personal details such as name and surname, home address, email address and telephone number. As details are being entered into the system to create a new account, new members are given an individual Puma passbook to record their exchanges. The induction process is completed when the volunteer, by asking whether there are any further questions, corroborates that the new member does not have any fundamental doubt to start using the Puma currency. Image 4.14 and 4.15 illustrate the activities of the Comisión de Acogida.

Drawing upon Actor-Network Theory (ANT), it is suggested that the activities of the Comisión de Acogida constitute an obligatory passage point (OPP) for prospect members. According to Callon (1986), the process of enrolment in ANT depends on the successful operation of social and material modifications, also known as 'translations' or 'domestications', in the identity of actants. Therefore, OPPs are entry points to existing networks that are established to intervene upon the identities of enrolee actants. In other words, OPPs operate as strategically situated filters, or funnels, whose narrow end ensures that enrolees converge on predefined properties that are deemed as necessary to become part of an existing network. In this regard, it has been observed that a number of sociomaterial modifications are performed in the identity of prospect members during the welcoming session. As far as the material dimension is concerned, enrolment practices enacted at welcoming sessions result in new members being equipped with a material device such as the Puma passbook, or their attachment to a physical system of computers, forms and software, that make their activities traceable within the network. However, work for redefining the identities of enrolees at this OPP is also social, as it involves symbolic and discursive practices that seek to redefine meanings, knowledge and attitudes previously held by prospect members, concerning the Puma currency scheme.

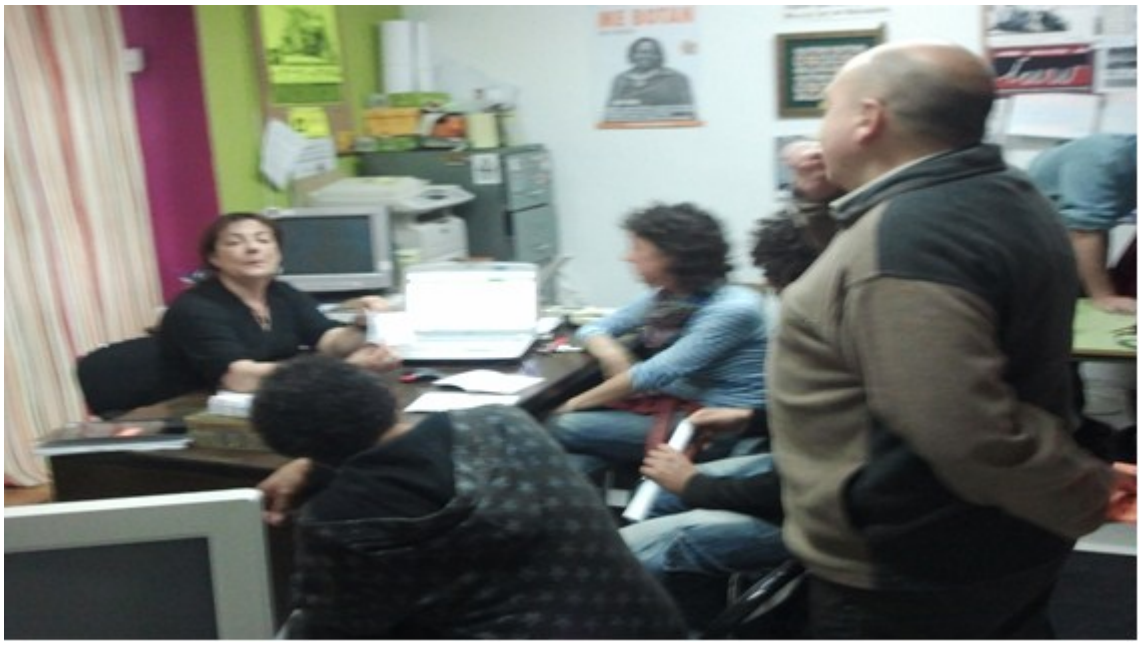
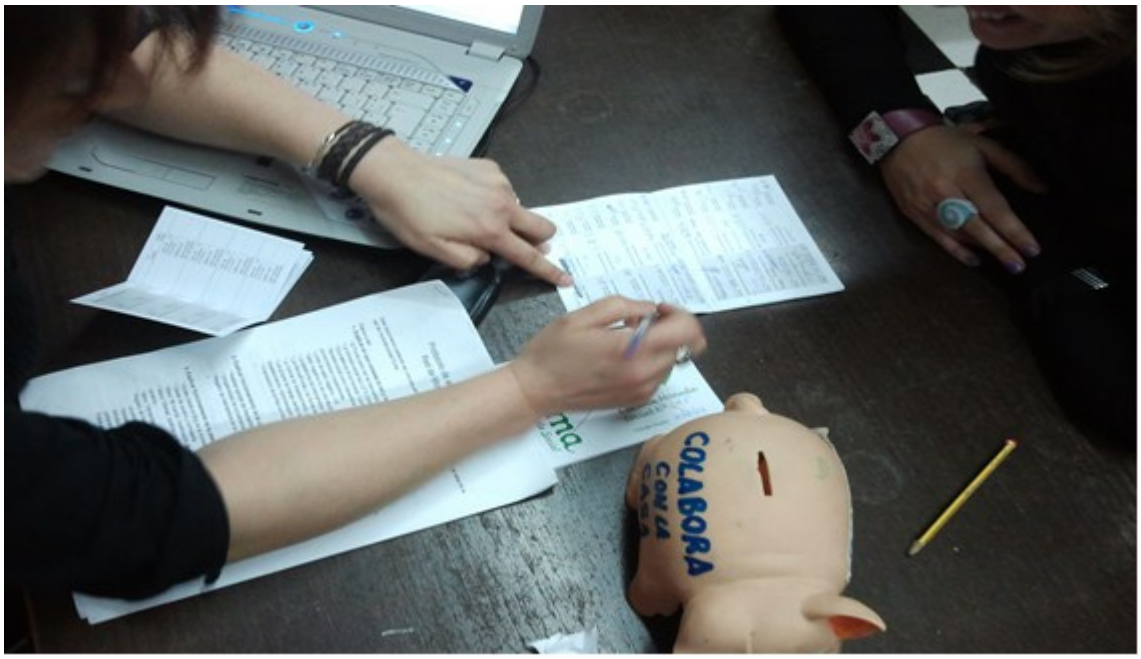


Image 4.14 volunteer of the Comisión de Acogida interacting with prospect members during one of the "Welcoming Days" (LLoveras, 2013k).



4.15 Volunteer explains how to use the Puma passbook to a new member (LLoveras, 2013l).

4.4.5 Epistemic practices in the Comisión de Estudios sobre la Moneda

If my approach to the function of the Comisión de Acogida revealed the significance of enrolment practices, my engagement with the Comisión de Estudios Sobre la Moneda – which translates as Currency Studies Group,

served to reveal epistemic practices undertaken within the Puma community. By epistemic practices, I am refereeing to those involved in the acquisition, production, and dissemination of relevant knowledge to inform the practices performed within the network.

Whilst epistemic practices crosscut various comisiones or working-groups in the network, their performance is rather focused on the Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda. Moreover, unlike others practices in the Puma currency, epistemic practices are geographically dispersed rather than being concentrated in one specific location. Indeed, such practices may be enacted at multiple sites, involving not only the Centro Vecinal of the Pumarejo Palace and its surroundings, but also universities, schools, or city councils across Spain and other European countries – such as Portugal, Holland or Denmark. Such geographic dispersion increases the difficulty to trace epistemic practices in comparison to those performed in other working groups. Nevertheless, as argued above, the activities organised by the Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda emerged an excellent focal point to undertake interviews and participant observation. Like the rest of comisiones in the Puma currency, participation in the Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda is open to all members and the amount of people involved may vary significantly.

Three main types of epistemic practices have been identified in the Puma community, namely knowledge management practices, knowledge production practices, and knowledge dissemination practices. Suffices to say here that, whilst separated for explanatory purposes, epistemic practices are interconnected through the events and activities organised by the Comisión de Estudios sobre la Moneda

I have coined the term *knowledge management practices* to refer to practices performed with the purpose of managing and coordinating requests by academic institutions, journalists, or independent researchers,

to undertake research about the Puma currency scheme. As stated in one of the interviews:

> "The volume of attention that we receive from universities has increased steadily since we launched the Puma (…) Anthropologists, sociologists, economists, and now marketing (pointing at me), have contacted us to carry out their research in El Pumarejo. The interest has mainly come from the two main universities here in Seville, but we have received people from universities in Australia, Denmark and now England! (…) having researchers among us is intellectually enriching but also time-consuming; it means showing them around, arranging and doing interviews, filing up questioners, etc. so we eventually reached a point in which couldn't cope with it. This is one of the reasons why we created the Comision de Estudios - de la Moneda." (Interview A6).

Another interviewee argued in relation to journalists inquiries:

> "When I think about the many journalists that have come here to cover the Puma currency in their newspapers or TV Documentaries, I cannot feel other thing than flattened. But experience has taught us (Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda) to be cautious when dealing with journalist, especially from international Media. Sometimes they are only interested in using the Puma currency to exaggerate the social and economic failure of Mediterranean cultures. I guess that these tabloid-like stories make them feel reassured, but El Puma is not a story of survival but one of joy and hope." (Interview A3).

Therefore, epistemic practices involve the coordination and management of external inquiries such as the present. Such management is crucial

given both the sheer volume of requests received and the possibility that they result in misleading representations about the Puma currency and its members. For example, during my fieldwork, and the subsequent returns to the field, I could count at least five master dissertations and two PhD thesis, including my own, as well as three TV documentaries and one article in the Wall Street Journal, all of them focused on some aspect of the Puma currency. Nevertheless, the community has developed a rather impressive infrastructure as to deal with these issues and make such inquires as least disruptive as possible for members of the Puma currency scheme. The process is the following: first, researchers or journalists contact the Puma community and they are required to outline a proposal. Such proposals are circulated through the general mail-list, generally besides a question such as: “does anybody volunteer to answer or help?”. The community allocates a research coordinator to each research project. The role of the coordinator is to mediate between the researcher and the community by facilitating the tasks of the researcher and reducing disruption for other members - who may be either unwilling or not interested in taking part in the project. When researchers are not local and they have to travel to Seville, the community offers the possibility of finding them a suitable accommodation within the network. Moreover, if researchers are not able to speak Spanish, they are offered fluent translators within the network for languages such as English, Italian and French. These activities are priced in Pumas, which means that the researcher has the possibility of earning Puma credits to pay for these services. Therefore, all researchers can sign up for the Puma currency and receive a special Puma passbook to undertake exchanges during their time in the field. In my case, I offered my skills as an English translator to help some Danish students doing their final research projects in anthropology, who in turn earned Pumas by selling typical Danish food within the network. Naturally, these services are optional and thus, there is no obligation or pressure placed on the researcher to buy them.

Besides these practices of knowledge management, the Comisión de Estudios de la Moneda performs what I have referred to as knowledge production practices. The latter are carried out with the purpose of enhancing their own understanding about "what they are doing" and "how they are doing it". This process is perceived as a means to enrich the conceptual foundations that inform transformative social practices in the Puma community. As recorded in my research diary:

> They may not do research and yet they think like academics. They may not lecture but they talk like academics. They may not publish journals although they certainly write like academics. Although, above all, it is their facility to ground theoretical concepts in daily practice and experience what make me realise that they are not academics. They belong to the world of activists. They do not abide the methodological formalities of academia because they have no time for it; instead, they use theories pragmatically to engage in transformative social action.

The practises of the Comisión de Estudios sobre la Moneda nurture conceptual enrichment in various manners. For example, through their engagement with researchers that do research about the currency, the Puma community builds networks with scholars working in national and international universities. These networks are used to organise workshops and seminars on topics that are of interest for the community. Since the inception of the Puma currency, the group has organised events on diverse issues such as degrowth, eco-feminism, alternative currencies and the social economy, or human development and wellbeing, which are open to all members of the network. For example, during fieldwork, I had the opportunity to participate in two national gatherings, one on degrowth and the other on alternative currencies. Academics that deliver these activities are remunerated in Pumas. Other practices for generating knowledge within the community involve regular reading groups organised

by the Comisión de Estudios. For these purposes, a topic is chosen in terms of its potential relevance to the community. Copies of key texts are distributed among volunteers, who commit to reading, discussing and translating their content into insights that are valuable for the rest of the community. Summaries of key findings and conclusions of such readings groups are circulated through the general mail-list in order to make them accessible to all members. Moreover, the Comisión de Estudios undertakes primary research on their own activities, particularly on issues related to the type and number of exchanges within the network, attitudes and motivations of users, etc. which help them to enhance their understanding. Finally, I refer as knowledge dissemination to those practices performed to respond to external requests by like-minded communities and grassroots groups seeking to either network with the Puma community or learn from their experience in order to start their own alternative currency scheme.

4.5.6 Communication practices in the Grupo de Comunicación

Through participant observation and interviews with volunteers of the Grupo de Comunicación, or "Communications Group", the present research has engaged with practices through which the Puma community establishes - and manages - effective communication channels with both internal and external audiences. Activities of the communications group involve both updating contents and answering queries in the Puma website, managing the Puma accounts in social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, and running a weekly Radio program called "La Farsa Monea", in which they address a range of topics that are relevant to the Puma community. The sites in which communication practices are enacted are multiple and diverse. In this regard, communication practices may require volunteers to attend meetings of the Grupo de Comunicación, which are held in the Pumarejo Palace, or travel to a community-managed radio studio, known as Radiopolis, from which La Farsa Monea is

broadcasted. However, given that the majority of communication work can be done online, volunteers of this working group are able to work with their own laptops from any location.

The Puma website (http://monedasocialpuma.wordpress.com/) is a central communication channel for both members and non-members of the Puma community. In this regard, volunteers of the Communications are responsible for updating the contents of the Puma website as well as for managing the blog and forum embedded in it. This website includes a section that explains the functioning of LETS and how these principles apply to the case of the Puma currency. Moreover, relevant information regarding key events – for example, the celebration of general assemblies, Mercapuma, or the Central de Abastecimiento – is regularly published in the Puma website. Besides these responsibilities, volunteers of this working group have created a compilation of links to relevant Media coverage of the Puma currency. These links, which can be accessed from the website, are also regularly updated. Moreover, the Puma website includes a blog and a forum. In the blog, volunteers publish and comment general developments in the realm of the social economy, degrowth, or alternative currencies, as well as reflections that are specific to the Puma currency. A forum is available to host open discussions on these topics that are moderated by volunteers of the Communications working group.

In addition to the Puma's websites, volunteers of the Communication Group manage the community's profile in two social networks, namely Facebook and Twitter. Facebook and Twitter accounts are used by the community to disseminate the contents of the website more than 2500 friends/followers that the Puma accounts have in each of these social networks. However, these social networks enable a more interactive relationship with others. The possibility of engaging in instant and multi-directional communications is perceived as central to build a virtual Puma community. In this regard, one of the volunteers stated:

> "The website is a good tool but only social networks give online communications a better sense of community, even though it is only a virtual one. Facebook enable us to get instant feedback for our activities; the amount of likes that our status updates receive, or, for example, the comments that we get from friends, or the conversations between friends of us that do not even know each other! These are valuable possibilities that we tap in to construct a virtual community (…) on the negative side, these social networks are harder work than the website, their management can be overwhelming!" (Interview A4).

Although all volunteers of this working group have a password to access and manage the Facebook and Twitters' account of the Puma currency, comments and status updates made in the name of the community are not signed by his or her author. In this regard, the identities and activities of the account managers remain anonymous for external users. Unlike the Puma's website, which is updated on a weekly basis, most volunteers acknowledge to log in the Puma accounts at least two or three times a day.

The last set of practices related to communication involve the preparation and broadcasting of a monthly radio program titled "La Farsa Monea" – that can be translated as the False Coin. The program is broadcasted from Radiopolis, a grassroots radio station created to provide an alternative platform of communication for local communities, charities, NGOs, and other organisations, with the city of Seville. In la Farsa Monea, volunteers of the Grupo de Comunicación carry out interviews and discussions through which members share their experiences with the Puma currency as well as other social initiatives related to Degrowth Seville or the Pumarejo Palace. The length of the program is 60 minutes and, although La Farsa Monea is broadcasted live, volunteers create a podcast that is uploaded on Puma's website.

It is possible to find benefits of the Radio Program beyond the merely communicative ones. Indeed, it is a unique opportunity for members to have an experience in the radio and share their personal experiences with the Puma currency. Some described this experience as therapeutic. According to one of the volunteers:

> "La Farsa Monea is an example of how putting our skills and talents at the service of the community helps us to grow as individuals. La Farsa Monea is a great opportunity for us to have an experience in the radio, doing something that we always wanted to do. Most of the Pumas (members) that participate in the program love it! It is also a space were we can share our experiences both positive and negative with all listeners. (…) most importantly, it (La Farsa Monea) helps the Puma to make visible existing communitarian resources such as Radiopolis and put them at the service of the community" (interview A1).

As far as the preparation is concerned, whilst interviews and discussions tend to open rather than structured, a degree of preparation has to be carried out prior to each program. Such preparation involves not only choosing the topics and preparing contents, but also arranging the guests that take part in it. Moreover, the council of Seville owns Radiopolis; however, the organisations and individuals that use Radiopolis are responsible for the management of this radio station. Therefore, volunteers of the Grupo de Comunicación are responsible to take part in these activities, which range from cleaning the studio to discussing timetables, along with other organisations.

4.5.7 Comisión de Mercapuma and their practices

The Mercapuma working group takes its name from the event that the group organises every second Saturday of the month. In this regard, the

Mercapuma event and the practices through which the Puma community organises it are deeply entangled with one another. Therefore, in this case, the focal points for data collection were both the activities of the Comisión de Mercapuma and the Mercapuma itself.

Mercapuma is a market fair that takes in El Pumarejo square – see Images 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17. Like most traditional marketplaces, this noisy, messy, and lively event differs substantially from the rather cold, stylised, and static market image conveyed by the marketing dyad. In this regard, Mercapuma emerges as a melting pot of music, colours, smells, and artisan skills that attracts a combination of artisans, buyers, passers-by, tourists, street musicians, and local residents. The majority of sellers arrive before 9 am to install their stands in the square. Nevertheless, as the square gets crowded, latecomers spread the array of stands into areas of the Pumarejo Palace - that have been arranged in advance for the occasion. Traditionally made bread and local beer, locally produced olive oil and vegetables, natural healthcare and beauty products, all of them prepared with organic ingredients, woodcraft and other artisan products, or second hand clothes, books, CDs; indeed, the cornucopia of products displayed within Mercapuma escapes succinct description. Therefore, somewhat unsurprisingly, an increasing number of ethically concerned shoppers from all over Seville see Mercapuma as a unique opportunity to discover and purchase, directly from the producers, an array of ethically sourced, ecological and artisan products that cannot be acquired in conventional supermarkets. However, Mercapuma is not simply a site for ethical shopping. During the busiest hours, which tend to be from 13:00 until 16:00, this fair emerges as a social canvas of the diversity of people and cultures that this traditional area of Seville hosts. Hence, the social and the economic dimensions of Mercapuma are closely intertwined to an extent that it renders meaningless any attempt at separating its economic dimension from both its cultural significance as a local festival and social dimension of community cohesion.

Nevertheless, to move beyond the surface, an adequate analysis of the Mercapuma requires an examination of its links to both the Puma community and the alternative currency scheme. An interesting feature is that, unlike the rest of exchanges that take place within the network, it is not necessary to be a member of the Puma network in order to buy products within El Mercapuma. Therefore, those individuals without Puma accounts are given the opportunity to buy a special type of Pumas with Euros - which I will refer to as Mercapuma notes to differentiate from the conventional Puma credits – see image 4.19. The exchange rate between Mercapuma notes and the Euro is 1/1 and reverse convertibility is not allowed. Thanks to the possibility of acquiring these vouchers without having to earn Pumas within the network, Mercapuma events are signified as an integrative rituals that celebrates the Puma's openness to the whole neighbourhood of El Pumarejo and its people – regardless of whether they have an active Puma account or not.

However, despite these demonstrations of openness to outsiders are central to Mercapuma, members of the Puma currency have expressed concerns that a total convertibility Euro/Puma could erode the social value of the latter. As one of the interviewees stated:

> "The whole point of the Puma currency is that you can only earn Pumas if you do something of value for the community. Can we assume that the labour of somebody who earns 1 euro is adding the same value to the community than the labour of somebody who earns 1 Puma? Certainly not! This is why we can´t just let people buy Pumas at their own convenience. Otherwise, where will the social value of our currency go if we allow this outside the Mercapumas?" (Interview A5).

Therefore, the community is cautious that the possibility of buying Mercapuma notes in Mercapuma does not conflate the value of Euros and

Pumas. To prevent this problem, the use of these vouchers has been limited to Mercapuma events rather than to the whole network. In other words, whilst conventional Puma credits can be used across the whole Puma network, the exchange value of Mercapuma notes is strictly bounded to Mercapuma fairs. Moreover, unlike buyers, sellers must have an account with the Puma community if they want to sell their products in Mercapuma. As I was told by various interviewees, the reason is to prevent Mercapuma turning into just another artisans' marketplace driven by purely commercial values. Consequently, the Comisión de Mercapuma seeks to strengthen the connection between commercial practices in Mercapuma and the values of the Puma community by ensuring that members of the network can pay at least 30% of the price of all products sold in the fair in Pumas. Drawing upon my fieldnotes:

> I started to wonder around the Pumarejo square, stopping in every stand and asking sellers how much could be paid in Pumas. Their answers to this question were as varied as were the people answering it. Whilst some sellers stated their eagerness to be paid 100% in Pumas, others left it up to the buyer to decide what percentage of Pumas was going to be used in the exchange. Many other sellers had a fixed percentage - with a 50% of the price in Pumas being the most popular option. I am unable to confirm that everybody in Mercapuma charges at least the 30% of their prices in Pumas all the time. Nevertheless my participant observation suggests that the majority of times people followed this norm.

However, not only sellers and buyers fill up the Pumarejo square during Mercapuma days. Moreover, it is possible to come across a number of people that are neither interested in exchanging Pumas nor Euros. These individuals, whose number is not significant in comparison to sellers and buyers, set up their stands in Mercapuma with the sole intention of

bartering. Therefore, four main ways of acquiring products in Mercapuma have been identified, namely:

1. Paying the full price of products paid in Puma credits as any other transaction carried out between members of the network.

2. Paying a percentage of the price paid in Pumas and the rest in Euros. Whilst the norm is that this percentage has to be 30% or higher, the most popular choice was 50% of the price paid in Pumas.

3. Non-members of the Puma currency network can pay for their purchases with Mercapuma notes. As Mercapuma notes are to be bought in Euros from the Comisión de Mercapuma, at a 1/1 exchange rate, these purchases are effectively made in Euros.

4. Both members and non-members can barter second hand items in the Mercapuma events.

Having unveiled some of the intricacies of Mercapuma, as well as its connection to the Puma currency network, the remaining part of this section will pay attention to the specific practices that make these exchanges possible. In this regard, these practices are fundamentally articulated through the Comisión de Mercapuma. Without a doubt, this is the working group that encompasses the highest number of volunteers across all the other groups in the steering groups. Whilst numbers may vary, approximately twenty volunteers are regularly involved in the organisation of management of Mercapuma. The Comisión de Mercapuma seeks to impregnate these events with strong artistic contents. Therefore, prior to the Mercapuma days, volunteers are busy arranging performances of local bands, theatre plays, popular games, or any other cultural activities, to take part in Mercapuma. These cultural activities are paid in

Pumas. Moreover, the Comisión de Mercapuma runs a Puma Network stand that is set up alongside the stands of independent sellers and barters. Unlike the case of independent sellers, any surplus of Pumas and Euros generated by this stand is not recorded into the account of individual members. Indeed, Mercapuma represents an important source of income for the Puma community, which then uses it to fund communitarian activities and projects. Here, volunteers of the Comisión de Mercapuma sell a diversity of delicious homemade tapas and drinks. A brand of local beer, called Es-Puma (a pun between “Puma” and “espuma” which means “foam”), is particularly popular among buyers. Therefore, volunteers are not only responsible for running the community stand in Mercapuma, but also for the entire logistic process that precedes the event. This involves activities such as planning, contacting providers of beer and soft drinks, buying ingredients, cooking the food, or storing everything in El Centro Vecinal, within the Pumarejo Palace. During Mercapuma days, Puma volunteers have to set up their stand early in the morning, serve customers, and clean up everything when Mercapuma closes. Besides this, volunteers of the Mercapuma group are responsible for selling Mercapuma tickets to non members during the event and ensuring that they are adequately used. Once the Mercapuma finishes, sellers can bring their Mercapuma notes to the Puma network stand, where they are exchanged for the correspondent amount of Euros and destroyed to avoid fraudulent practices. Indeed, as it occurs with all the organising practices carried out by the different comisiones that constitute the steering group, a great deal of trust is involved in this process.

Image 4.16 Mercapuma traders start to arrive to the Pumarejo square (Guerrero, 2013a).

4.17 Some market stalls spread into the Centro Vecinal inside the Pumarejo Palace (Guerrero, 2013b).

Image 4.18 Selling ecological washing up liquid in Mercapuma (Guerrero, 2013c).

Image 4.19 Two Mercapuma notes are exchanged for a second-hand cooking book in one of the stalls (Guerrero, 2013d).

4.5.8 Comisión de la Central de Abastecimiento and their practices

Like the case of Mercapuma, the Central de Abastecimiento – or supply centre – as an event cannot be easily separated from the practices of the

working group dedicated to organise it, namely the Comisión de la Central de Abastecimiento. Therefore, both the event and the activities of the group have been focal points of fieldwork. Suffice to say that participation in this working group and its activities is optional and open to all members.

As an event, the Central de Abastecimiento is one of the greatest innovations made by the Puma currency, which gives this network a significant advantage over other LETS. This development is enacted through a series of practices that enable the Puma network to undermine many of the traditional constraints of LETS, particularly those posed by self-sufficiency. As it was described to me by one of the volunteers:

> "The Central de Abastecimiento is one of our great successes! It helps members to acquire stuff that is necessary for their subsistence but cannot be produced by the network. For example, imagine that you need milk and nobody in the network can produce milk or give you milk for your Pumas. In that case, your only possibility would be to earn Euros somehow and then buy milk outside the network (…) obviously, you know we are small and unable to produce everything we need; but what if the network could earn Euros for you, buy the milk, and sell it to you in Pumas? In that case, you could continue to apply your skills, time, and talent to the community without worrying on whether you will be able to buy milk. This is basically what our Central de Abastecimiento does. Isn't it great?" (interview A4).

Therefore, the main purpose of the Central de Abastecimiento is to enable Puma members to acquire with their Pumas certain essential products that fellow members are unable to produce or exchange within the network on an individual basis. In this regard, the Central de Abastecimiento emerges as communitarian machinery deployed to wage war on the pressures that self-sufficiency places on the Puma currency.

In order to be able to buy products that are not produced within the network, the Central de Abastecimiento group needs to have Euros. This begs the question of how these Euros are generated. In this regard, there are two main sources of income for this working group, namely:

1) 50% of the Euros earned through the activities of the Comisión de Mercapuma – i.e. their stand selling tapas and drinks in Mercapuma events – are allocated to the Central de Abastecimiento.

2) Private donations of Euros by members and non-members.

It is a central concern for volunteers of this working group to make decisions about the type of products regarded as basic or necessary for the Puma network. To date, the focus of the Central de Abastecimiento has been placed on acquiring and supplying products that satisfy three types of needs, namely nutrition, personal care, and household care. Moreover, volunteers draw upon the criteria established by the Puma community, namely that all products must be ecological, local, artisan and ethical as general criteria to inform their choices. However, when it comes to the practicalities of decision making, these criteria are excessively vague. Hence, volunteers spend a significant amount of time doing research about both products and producers that are incorporated to the network through the Central de Abastecimiento. Moreover, individual members of the Puma currency can suggest the addition of new products by filling a form that is available in the Puma Currency's website. However, the product adequacy has to be discussed within in-group assembly prior to placing an order. Moreover, this group is responsible for planning the quantities of products that are going to be acquired by the Puma supply centre. Given the lack of adequate storage facilities, accurate demand forecasting is necessary to avoid waste, particularly as far as the quantities of perishable goods such as milk, fruits, meat or

vegetables, are concerned. Therefore, volunteers dedicate a considerable amount of their time and effort to tasks such as keeping records of previous sales and building Excel spreadsheets that are drawn on to adjust their purchases to potential demand.

The second set of practices undertaken by volunteers of the Comisión de Central de Abastecimiento are concerned with the task of contacting producers or retailers, placing orders and arranging deliveries. Crucially, these practices do not follow a rationalist, efficiency-driven, view of producer-retailer relationships. Rather the opposite is true. Within the interviews, volunteers acknowledged the importance of working closely with producers, and preventing opportunistic behaviours by thinking of them as fellow human beings, whose needs and the pressures that they face are to be taken into account. Therefore, they acknowledged the need to develop strong relationships between the Puma network and external producers build on mutual support, trust and cooperation. Ultimately, it is argued that there are strong strategic and political implications in these practices. Indeed, the incorporation of new producers to the network is crucial to strengthen the Puma currency, particularly as a larger variety of producers, willing to accept Pumas, is an essential step to alleviate community's pressures to earn Euro. Therefore, volunteers of the Comité de la Central de Abastecimiento carry out ideological work aimed at making external producers conscious of how their involvement in the Puma network could enhance both their lives and the lives of people in their communities. In this regard, emphasis is placed on the capacity of the Puma currency as an empowering tool for transforming economic and social reality in line with degrowth ideas. These efforts appear to be fruitful and, whilst initial purchases were made entirely in Euros, an increasing number of external producers appear to be accepting a percentage of payments in Pumas.

A last set of practices that will be examined in this section are concerned with the Central de Abastecimiento, as the event from which this working group borrows the name. A supplying centre is organised every Monday from 18:00 to 21:00 at the Centro Vecinal, within El Pumarejo Palace. Unlike Mercapuma, purchases in the Central de Abastecimiento are limited to members of the Puma network. Therefore, all economic exchanges here are made in Pumas. Volunteers, however, have to be there at least one hour before opening time as it is necessary to pick up deliveries, weight and pack/bottle products such as legumes, olive oil, washing up liquid, etc. and stock them in the shelves and tables that are used as counters. Whilst the majority of users of the Central de Abastecimiento make their choices in-situ, some users have pre-ordered their shopping basket by filling up a form and emailing it to the group before the previous Friday. Therefore, volunteers have to prepare these pre-orders and make sure that they are kept separate and ready for collection before 18:00. In general, two to three volunteers stay behind the counter to assist buyers and record the transactions in the Central de Abastecimiento passbook and account. The number of Puma members that acquires groceries in the Central de Abastecimiento has grown steadily and this growth has inevitably increased the workload for volunteers. As stated by one of the interviewees in an interview:

> "If the first time we opened the Central (de Abastecimiento) we had 20 users, now we can say that the number of people coming is rarely lower than 50! This is a proof of success, although it difficult for us to cope with the volume of additional work" (interview A7, female 31).

> "(...) when you ask me about the future of the Central (de Abastecimiento), all I can tell is what we want it to become. The way we see it is that an increasing number of producers should take over the role of the Central de Abastecimiento. We will be able to claim that the currency has bridged the divide between producers and consumers only when producers and consumers become directly involved in this platform... so we (volunteers) step aside from the Central de Abastecimiento." (Interview A4).

Paradoxically, the ultimate goal of the Comisión de la Central de Abastecimiento is to be able to step aside as producers and consumers take over the responsibility of directly managing their own exchanges. It is worth recalling here that one of the central purposes of the Puma currency is to empower individuals by encouraging them to take responsibilities for their own care as well as for care of the community. In this regard, the Central de Abastecimiento is perceived by volunteers as a necessary evil, which performs a middleman function that is acceptable only in the absence of alternatives. To address these issues, volunteers tap in the opportunities presented during these events to speak to members about the importance of taking responsibility for the Central de Abastecimiento by becoming involved not only as users but also as active organisers. Similarly, the group raises awareness among producers of the empowering effects of working closely with consumers by becoming involved in the organisation of this event. Image 4.20 shows one of the Central de Abastecimiento events.

Image 4.20 Members buying their groceries in the Central de Abastecimiento (LLoveras, 2013e).

4.5.9 Caring practices in the Grupo de Cuidados

The Grupo de Cuidados, which literally translates as the "Community Care Group", is central to the enactment of caring values and practices among members of the Puma currency scheme. Broadly defined, this group performs a set of practices through which the community uses the Puma currency to look after those members unable to care for themselves. Moreover, caring practices are envisaged as a means for rendering visible, and in turn rewarding, activities carried out by individuals to enhance the wellbeing of the community. Like all the other working groups that constitute the steering group, participation in the Grupo de Cuidados is open to all members of the community and carried out on a volunteer basis. The Grupo de Cuidados receives Puma credits that the community generates through the Central de Abastecimiento and use them to reward individual contributions to community care and other caring practices. With the purpose of making these decisions in the most transparent and inclusive manner, the group arranges weekly meetings to reflect, deliberate and make decisions on community care practices within the network.

The development of a caring function in the Puma currency scheme was not a fortuitous accident; instead, these practices draw heavily upon eco-feminist theoretical developments that have been incorporated to degrowth discourses and practices. As stated in one the interviews:

> "The growth economy has historically meant most men doing productive work for a crap wage, and us (women) doing the caring work for a "no-wage". (…) in the growth economy, the benefits of care are either invisible or undervalued. (…) if we are serious about degrowth we cannot afford this omission; we have to ensure that productive work in the community is not overvalued because excessive productive work can destroy life (…) and we cannot

> afford that care work is undervalued, because there is no possible degrowth without affection, caring, and looking after each other and the planet." (Interview A1).

This is a powerful statement to reflect upon the critical performativity potential of degrowth and ecofeminism theories. As these ideas are translated into concrete market-making practices and devices, particularly through the activities of the Grupo de Cuidados, it is suggested that degrowth, and ecofeminist ideas are able to shape heterotopian markets in specific directions that differ from the traditional view of markets. More concretely, participant observation and interviews with volunteers reveal various types of caring practices that are of great relevance to elucidate community caring processes enabled by the Puma currency. These practices will be discussed under broad categories, namely giving back practices, conflict resolution, Pumafunding and the provision of healthcare and education to the community.

Giving back practices: whilst the activities of the Grupo de Cuidados have broadened since its inception, "giving back" practices were central to the creation of a caring group within the Puma community. In this regard, the group was originally set up to provide an answer to the question of how the Puma currency could contribute to both make visible and reward the work of individuals that work for the community, often at the expense of undermining their own subsistence. Drawing upon one interview:

> "I have been involved with the Neighbours Association in Defence of the Pumarejo Palace for nearly 10 years (…) this experience made me realise that communities should never become parasitic of individuals. If communities and individuals are to be mutually supportive of each other's prosperity, they must find ways of giving back. When Degrowth Seville and the Puma currency came along, I saw this clearly more than ever." (Interview A6).

The Grupo de Cuidados organises a giving back process every three months, which is termed as “devoluciones del comun”. Concisely, through this process, the Community Care Group makes visible and acknowledges individuals’ contributions to community care by rewarding them with Pumas. The first step in the giving back process is to encourage each user of the Puma currency to undertake a self-evaluation concerning about his or her contribution to community care in the previous three months. To avoid misunderstandings about what the meaning of “community care”, the Grupo de Cuidados creates and circulates a document prior to the process of self-evaluation. This document provides criteria to aid members to distinguish between tasks and exchanges carried out by individuals to benefit other individuals and those carried out to benefit the community as a whole. Therefore, individual tasks, efforts, skills and talents are acknowledged in this self-evaluative process only when they are carried out for sustaining the community as a whole. Moreover, members are asked to rate such contributions as “sporadic”, “intermittent” or “continuous”. Each of these categories is attached a value in Pumas, namely twenty, fifty and one-hundred Pumas respectively, which are given back by the Grupo de Cuidados to reward these contributions.

Participation in the giving back process is not compulsory. Therefore, each individual in the Puma community is invited to write an email in which his or her contributions were stated and self-ranked within one of these three categories. Once all emails were received, volunteers of El Grupo de Cuidados are responsible for deciding whether the tasks stated by each member as community caring contributions were indeed so. Importantly, the purpose of this task is to ensure that all stated contributions to community care reflected the criteria established by the community. Therefore, volunteers are extremely cautious to avoid questioning people’s trustworthiness or making moral judgments on individual’s self-evaluation.

A number of initial problems had to be addressed by the Community Care Group in order to ensure the continuity of giving back practices within the Puma community. In particular, volunteers reported concerns among members regarding their difficulties to recall their contributions, the time-consuming task of writing up these contributions in detail, and the awkwardness experienced by having to make their claims public. To tackle these problems, volunteers of the Grupo de Cuidados undertook the daunting task of mapping all the tasks reported by members in their emails, grouping these tasks in themes, and creating a questionnaire to assist the giving back process. This device became crucial to organise people's self-evaluation and reporting of community care contributions. It involves a number of quantitative and qualitative items that members complete every three months. There are open questions which help to acknowledge that the process of identifying, valuing and rewarding community care practices is open ended and thus, inconclusive. Once the questionnaires are received, the amount of judgements to be done by volunteers regarding other members' answers is limited to the content of the open questions. Once questionnaires are received and processed, the specific amount of Pumas required each case is transferred from the Grupo de Cuidados account to individual members.

The second group of caring practices identified in the present work is concerned with conflict resolution within the community. Crucially for these practices, the Puma currency is employed by the Grupo de Cuidados to mediate and facilitate the resolution of conflicts in the name of the community, but never to solve them. As stated in one of the interviews:

> "We are not here to solve problems for people, as we do not believe in paternalistic approaches to conflict resolution. We, the community, must ensure that all individuals are empowered to be able to address their own conflicts and the Puma currency helps us to do this (…) I believe that individuals have the capacity to be reasonable, caring, compassionate (...) We use Pumas to build capabilities and resources that facilitate conflict resolution within the

> community; we are good at this, but we are not here to do justice, referee, judge, punish, or take sides with anyone in particular. This is the job of the police-state, not ours." (Interview A3).

Notwithstanding significant efforts having been made to ensure that market exchanges in Pumas are based upon mutual trust and reciprocity among members, the community faces limitations to eradicate misunderstandings, disagreements, or disappointments among the exchanging parties. Sources of conflict may involve a number of issues, many of which are not alien to conventional market exchanges. For example, disagreements regarding the adequate length for a product's guarantee, disappointments with the quality of the service, or frustration with delivery times. However, unlike conventional markets, in which conflicts are addressed through a sophisticated legal apparatus, the Puma currency relies on the restoration of members' trust and reciprocity as the only means to solve internal conflicts.

Therefore, when trust is undermined or reciprocity is broken in the course of market exchanges, the Grupo de Cuidados takes responsibility to support the process of conflict resolution. For such purposes, this group hires the services of two members of the Puma network whose professional expertise lies in the area of conflict mediation. Payments for conflict mediation are entirely made in Pumas and it is the Puma community, through the account of the Grupo de Cuidados that bear the costs of this service. However, volunteers are not only responsible for hiring conflict mediators and putting them at the service of the community. Moreover, they are responsible for booking a space in El Centro Vecinal for the mediation activities to take place, besides working side by side with the mediators if required. Given that it has been agreed that conflict resolution benefits not only those individuals involved, but also the community as a whole, the former are regarded as a significant development of the caring function of the Puma community

Pumafunding is the third set of practices undertaking by the Community Care group. The latter are concerned with the allocation of Puma credit to fund projects that are in the interest of the community as a whole. This development of the community care function emerges from a conviction that a caring community must ensure that cultural and artistic activities of value for the community are to be supported by it. In this regard, volunteers of the Community Care Group coordinate a micro-funding system called Pumafunding. Therefore, volunteers receive project proposals for Puma credit, evaluate whether these are both affordable and suitable to the interests of the community, and then seek funding for it. Funding decisions are never made on an individual basis, but always through group discussion and debate instead. Moreover, the practices of Pumafunding involve the task of finding donors and lenders of Pumas and Euros to fund these projects. There are two main sources of funding within the Puma community, namely individual members and the community as a whole. In both cases, Pumas and Euros are either lent without interests or donated to support the project. When individuals lend Pumas and Euros to Pumafunding projects the Puma community acts as guarantor for the credit recipient through Grupo de Cuidados. During fieldwork, three projects were part of the Pumafunding system. One such project was concerned with reediting a book, written by a local writer, about the history of struggles of the Pumarejo area and the Palace. Once reedited, the idea was to sell it exclusively for Pumas in order to make it affordable for those members that did not have disposable Euros to buy it. A second initiative supported by Pumafunding was an entrepreneurial project to launch a social carpentry. Besides making and selling artisanal furniture, this social enterprise sought to provide a working space in which Puma members could borrow tools and receive training to make their own carpentry work. The last project funded through Pumafunding at the time was a theatre play with a strong political content that addressed issues of migration and gender, both topics of great interest for members of the Puma community.

The provision of healthcare and education to the community is the last set of caring practices identified within the present work. To date, the possibility that the Puma currency ensures some forms of alternative healthcare and education for members is in process of deliberation. The idea being explored is that the Grupo de Cuidados may take responsibilities for providing free healthcare treatments by drawing upon the resources of the community. In this regard, there are a number of healthcare professionals within the network that are willing to offer some of their services, ranging from psychotherapy to physiotherapy, in Pumas, as part of their contribution to community care. In this regard, the proposal of the Grupo de Cuidados is that the Puma community could use Pumas to bear the costs of these treatments for individual members that need them. As far as the provision of education is concerned, the Grupo de Cuidados is studying the possibility of offering studentships to provide training and education to members in "giving back" processes. That is, the community could acknowledge contribution in terms of community care by funding, either partially or totally, participation in training and educational courses offered within the network. It is difficult to predefine the range of courses and training that could be funded by these bursaries, as this would always depend on the specific services that fellow members would be willing to offer in Pumas. However, in the light of the current directory, the Community Care group is considering to create student bursaries to support learning of English, French, Italian and Spanish language, cooking, DIY, Reiki, Yoga, and IT, among other skills.

4.6 Symbolic practices and identities in heterotopian markets

To reiterate, the first part of this thematic analysis has explored contextual issues through notions of market embeddedness. A second set of themes emerged in relation the study of market assemblage, which has been explored through notions of market practices. The last set of themes

identified in the present ethnographic inquiry is concerned with symbolic practices and identities.

The Puma community encompasses a significant amount of symbolic and discursive practices that, when assembled with the market practices argued above, are central to the enactment of a heterotopian market. Indeed, a politically aware use of language, as well as other practices of symbolic representation, is perceived by Puma members as a tool to subvert the growth economy. The following extract from my research diary illustrates this observation:

> This episode occurred during a conversation with some Puma members after one of the general assemblies.
>
> Her question was thrown at me unexpectedly and caught me completely unprepared: "have you", referring to me, "read the book 1984?" I hesitated and answered, "Yes, I did in college, why? She carried on, "the part when the totalitarian government enforces everybody to use the Newspeak is pure genius, isn't it? If it only was fiction, but it is true story".
>
> I was not sure about where the conversation was going but she made a point that caught all my attention. She stated that economics is today's Newspeak and that unless we make a conscious effort to avoid it, Economics Newspeak becomes part of our talk and thought.
>
> She went on for a while saying that it makes her really angry when she hear the word "crisis" in the streets. It sounds like the massive scam of bankers was inevitable, or unpredictable, like an earthquake or a storm. People lost their houses and they blame it on the "crisis"... She stated: "you can't get angry against the weather, can you? You can´t change the weather, can you?" I smiled and replied: "well, certainly not here in Seville", she smiled back and said that if we want to construct alternative ways of living we also have construct alternative ways of talking about it.

In this regard, a great deal of symbolic work is deployed within the Puma community to redefine the boundaries of property regimes, rethink notions

of both and social obligation, wealth, or gender. Moreover, this re-signification work, which involves discursive practices and other practices of representation, has implications for the enactment of identities and subjectivities that subvert traditional market divides such consumer/producer or consumer/citizen.

4.6.1 Softening the boundaries of private property

It is common to think of property in terms of a dichotomy between public and private. In general, markets are regarded as the most efficient institution to allocate resources within the private domain, whilst the government does this within the public domain. However, one of the first things that I noticed after my arrival in Seville was that nobody used the words “private” or “public” in the Puma community. Most surprisingly, their avoidance of these term was not limited the use of language in formal events such as assemblies, emails, or group discussions. Indeed, the words private and public could seldom be heard in the course of casual conversations. As far as the former is concerned, members of the Puma currency make purposeful use of the term “privative” instead of private. To provide some examples of this: “private property” becomes “privative property”; “privatising something” is rephrased as “making something privative”; the “private sector” is “the privative sector”. Participants argue that are so custom to the meaning of the term private that we barely ever pause to reflect about how it constraints our understanding of property.

In this regard, members contend that the term private, as applied to properties, conveys the idea of legitimate ownership and possession. It implies that something, whether an object, a space, or an idea, belongs to one person or group and they have the right to use it or consume it as they please. Furthermore, Puma members suggest that the meaning of private is inevitably associated to both the emergence of a sense of scarcity, among those who have no access to the privatised good or service, and

the raise of individualism. Regarding the latter, it is argued that social responsibility tends to dissolve into self-responsibility when ethical decisions are framed as belonging to the private sphere. On the contrary, from the perspective of degrowth, mutual support and reciprocity are central principles for organising resource allocation in the economy. Hence, without denying the existence of private properties among them, members of the Puma community regard the term "privative" as more adequate to describe this ownership regime. Indeed, they believe that the term private places an excessive emphasis on the rights of the owner, whereas the term privative focuses on the lack of rights of non-owners or those excluded.

Hence, a number of subtle sanctions are deployed when somebody, which in this case it was generally me, uses the word private in a conversation with or between Puma members. Such sanctions are by no-means violent or explicit. Instead, they may involve subtle discursive practices such as paraphrasing a statement - and replacing the term private by privative, making jokes, or asking someone to repeat. For example, drawing upon an interview:

> "Do you mind if I make a remark about the language that you are using in your questions (asking to me)? Sorry but this annoys me. You keep using the work private, which in my opinion is wrong because it tells only half of the story. What is private is also privative, although not everything that is privative is private. For example, state ownership is also privative (...) let's play a new game; every time we say the word private I will pretend that I did not understand you and ask you to say it again" (fragment from interview A5).

Another example, this time the sanctioning strategy takes the form of paraphrasing:

> Me: "would you agree that some understanding of private property is necessary for using alternative currencies?"

> Interviewee: “umm, let me think... so you want to know if privative property is necessary for an alternative currency scheme, right?” (Interview with A6).

For members of the community, it is apparent that the existence of clear legal and social boundaries around property is necessary to allow growth-driven economic systems to operate under market principles. Nevertheless, the purpose of replacing the term private with that of privative is not to deny, demonise or abolish the former. Indeed, it is acknowledged that some forms of ownership and possession may not be inherently incompatible with sustainable degrowth. Interestingly, members relate their efforts to the enactment of what I have labelled as a “softer” meaning of private property. Unlike the clearly defined meaning of private property, prevalent in the growth economy, a more malleable understanding of private encourages market and consumption practices such as co-owning, sharing, leasing, or swapping, which are more open and collaborative than their conventional counterparts. In other words, as the meaning of private is confronted with its privative dimension, through discursive practices carried out by members, the former is imbued with rather collaborative and open meanings.

However, whilst it is suggested that members “soften” the symbolic boundaries of the term private through their discursive practices, it is also apparent that a sense of individual ownership and possession is voluntarily retained within the Puma community. As stated by participants in the focus group:

> “Female 45 - I don’t think that privative property is an obstacle to degrowth. Certain types of privative property are, but not all. For example, there are people who think of privative property as a non-negotiable quality. They hold to this outdated idea that their right to ownership prevails over the needs of other people around them. This is clearly unhealthy in degrowth terms because if we want to make the transition we may have to be more flexible about it” (from the focus group).

> "Female 29 - I am inclined to believe that a sense of ownership is natural to our desire for individuality. No bullshit here: we all have stuff that we cherish and to which we feel particularly attached. In a way, this makes us live our lives as unique individuals! The problem is when not even the sight of children starving is able to cast doubts on our sense of entitlement to privative property. (…) privative property is fine, even healthy, as long as it remains in touch with the needs of the community and the natural environment" (from the focus group).

It is precisely because the meaning of private have been moderated, rather than entirely eradicated from the community, that the Puma currency is able to retain a sense of 'marketness' (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011: p. 245). In this regard, marketing scholars have cogently argued that market exchanges entail a cultural process of value appropriation, alienation, exchange, and re-appropriation (Arnaould, 2013), which is enabled by the existence of a property culture – as well as the legal frameworks that secure property rights. However, to say that a culture of property is central for the enactment of market practices is not the same as saying that there is only one possible understanding of private property that determines marketness. In this regard, the Puma community is engaged in the process of reconstructing the meanings of property, along less privative lines, to enable the creation of markets compatible with degrowth.

4.6.2 Redefining the boundaries of the collective: from public to communitarian

Following a dialectical logic, it is someone inevitable that notions of the private create an "Other", namely the "public", to which the former is opposed. Nevertheless, as it occurs with the term "private", Puma members are noticeably reluctant to use the term "public" to identify collective property within the community. This was a surprising observation particularly, as I have generally assumed grassroots initiatives to be either sympathetic or at least supportive of the existence of so-called public

goods, public property, or public services. Nevertheless, members identify a "culture of the public" as a burden for degrowth transitions for a number of reasons that are captured in the following interview extract:

> "I can tell you three reasons why we have to reject the culture of the public if we want to make progress towards degrowth. Firstly and most obvious, the culture of the public is born with the welfare states of the 20th century; when we became custom to public services funded with the revenues of a World War, as well as ecologically and socially predatory economic growth. Secondly, the culture of the public legitimises the existence of large national states; it is a culture of "the larger the better", and this thought is hostile to the downsizing process that we (degrowth advocates) suggest. And last, the culture of the public is alienating in democratic terms as it is based on the concentration of decision-making in the hand of distant bureaucrats rather than more participatory forms of direct democracy." (Interview A4).

Moreover, other members highlighted their opposition to the idea of public on the basis of the privative nature of the latter. In this regard, and unlike the popular believe that associates the adjective "public" with the idea of "universality", Puma members emphasise the exclusivist nature of this culture of the public. For example, drawing upon one of interviews:

> "I think that the biggest lie, perhaps the one that has probably caused the most serious damage to the political left, is the "superstition" that bigger states will provide us with universal public services. There is nothing public, not to say universal, in the services provided by national states! In fact, public and universal are different things! If you do not believe me, you can go and ask the thousands of migrants pilling up behind the wire fences that protect the public services of our opulent Europe. (…) Well, I would tell our governments: many thanks for your dedication to protecting our public property from them, but we do not need this kind of public culture in degrowth!." (Interview A2).

The repertoire of discursive practices identified above applies to the re-signification of the public as privative, growth-dependent, or disempowering, for degrowth communities. For example, there is a conscious effort to avoid the term public to signify the services and goods

delivered by the Puma currency. The latter are identified as "communitarian" rather than "public". Drawing upon my research diary:

> Today, I participated in one of the meetings of the community care group. It was only six of us in the room and they were debating the creation of a community healthcare working group. In my turn to speak I praised the idea that the Puma currency could be used for the provision of "public" healthcare to the community. One of the participants stated that they were not interested in the provision of public healthcare, because this is the duty of the government and not theirs; we are here to provide communitarian healthcare, she said. I did not actually get the point she was trying to make and I tried to clarify that this was precisely what I meant: that it is a great idea to provide "public" healthcare to the community. She took a long sip to her coffee; then she looked at me and stated: there is a difference between public and communitarian, are you with me? And what we do here is definitely not public! It might not have been the most considered way of pointing my confusion between communitarian and public, but I got her point now.

However, such rejection of the public does not render Puma members advocates of privatisation, a process which, as argued above, is also opposed. Indeed, the values and practices underlying the relationship between members and the Puma network are clearly collectivists; and yet, such collectivism does not translate into a culture of the public that crushes individuality. For example, as stated in one of the emails that circulated the Puma mail-list during one of the process of collective reflection:

> "When we say that we are community what we mean is that we are a 'common unity'. The Puma pack is more than the sum of all the individual pumas. As individuals, who are unique and exceptional, we enrich this common unity by adding our individual talents, skills, potentials. But please do not forget that the common-unity feeds us back. I have only become the individual that I am because I am part of this wonderful pack and I am thankful for that."

Therefore, for Puma members, their embracement of a communitarian culture implies an acknowledgement that collective resources are not allocated by an abstract entity called the state. Instead, communitarian goods relate to individuals working in and supported by communities for their production and protection. Unlike public goods, which can be legitimately exploited for the benefit of an abstract totality called the state, their communitarian counterparts are exclusively dependent on the needs of the local community. To be certain, there is a privative element in communitarian goods, particularly as access to them is dependent on individuals' membership to the Puma community. However, unlike the boundaries of states, which pose enormous difficulties to limit who and how is entitled to benefit from public services, communitarian boundaries are porous and fluid. Therefore, access to communitarian resources in the Puma network depends on processes of involvement, care, affection, reciprocity and mutual support, rather than nationality, age or gender.

Given these arguments, it is apparent that notions of "community" and "the communitarian" are deployed within the community to end the stalemate between the public and the private. Communitarian values emphasise forms of involvement with and direct participation in local life that is not driven by a desire for profit. Simultaneously, such involvement is not considered to be entirely disinterested as communitarian values and practices involve an acknowledgement of individuals' contributions to the common good.

4.6.3 Eco-wealth

One of the tenets of degrowth is that national GDPs are not an accurate indicator of the wellbeing generated by a given economy. In this regard, advocates of degrowth argue that GDP increases are propelled by long working weeks and consumerist lifestyles, which constitute what is known as the treadmill of production and consumption. Consequently, degrowth

advocates call for an urgent redefinition of wealth beyond a purely monetary dimension. From this perspective, a new form economic valuation should encompass other issues that GDP indicators are unable to capture. However, how to translate such a generic proposition into meaningful experiences and practices of degrowth communities is a question that remains unresolved.

Within the community of El Puma members acknowledge the task of redefining wealth as a central challenge for the transformative potential of alternative currencies. For example, during the focus groups, some of the producers lamented that exchange value of labour within the Puma network did not differ substantially from the Euro economy, precisely because notions of wealth and value remained unaddressed. Drawing upon the focus group transcript:

> "Female 35: yes, we still have plenty of issues to sort out here. For example, we have a large allotment and I make pickles with the organic vegetables that we grow. I am also a degrowth militant, and I am convinced that organic food, and the labour of the people that produce it, is undervalued in the growth economy. So one of the issues that I wondered before joining the Puma currency was: what the value of my work will be in Pumas? From a degrowth approach it certainly should be different; however, the disappointing answer to this question is, I am afraid, that the value of my time and effort is the same. I do have to work longer hours than an electrician or a plumber to earn the same amount of Pumas than them. Does it mean that fixing a socket is more valuable than making pickles? Unfortunately, this seems to be case despite we all claim that food production is reproductive work and should become valuable in a degrowth economy. People still refuse to pay more than three Pumas for pickles, but they are happy to pay twenty Pumas for a socket replacement! Do you know why that is? Because most

people in the network use the Euro as a reference of value" (from the focus group).

Therefore, several assemblies have addressed the importance of making further progress towards a different understanding of value within the market enacted by the Puma community. The idea of Eco-wealth, or Eco-riqueza as Puma members refer to it in Spanish Language, is one of the main suggestions that have been made in this direction. As debates about the actual meaning of this neologism are ongoing, notions of eco-wealth do not have a clear meaning or definition. It is a fuzzy, rather elusive concept, as opposed to others such as GDP. However, drawing upon various interviews, a number of general themes have been identified in relation to the meaning of eco-wealth for participants in the Puma currency scheme. The idea of valuing reproductive work, as opposed to productive work, emerges a central point that articulates the meaning of eco-wealth for participants in the Puma currency scheme. In this regard, eco-wealth encompasses the value of work that is necessary to sustain the most basic conditions of a good and healthy life; examples given by members include services such as cooking, looking after children, ill and elderly people, doing shopping, cleaning, or counseling, but also healthcare. To achieve this valorization of reproductive work, according to interviewees, it will be necessary to undertake a parallel process of devaluation of productive work in the community. Another recurrent theme that emerges when interrogating the meaning of eco-wealth is concerned with the natural environment and the valuation of activities that empower members to engage in more sustainable lifestyles. Examples of the latter include work that facilitates members' involvement in activities related to self-production, repairing, recycling or reusing old materials. A third theme related to eco-wealth is concerned with activities that contribute to strengthen the relationships between the Puma currency, the Pumarejo Palace, and the neighborhood, as well as the relationships between members of the Puma community. This latter point is fundamentally

related to activities undertaken by the Community Caring group within the Puma community.

The challenge of redefining wealth as eco-wealth has been extended, from the emergence of a general concept to underpin the actual value of Pumas, to an additional dimension for valuing specific goods and services exchanged within the network. Such new layer of value is called “warmth”. In this regard, members argue that, within the growth economy, goods and services are valued in terms of quantity. Green forms of capitalism, they suggest, shift away from quantity and place greater emphasis on the quality of economic outputs. However, members highlight that degrowth communities must go one-step further than focusing on producing high-quality goods; in this regard, they are starting to consider how to use the Puma currency in order to value warmth. In Spanish language, these sequence of value layers works as a pun - “cantidad” (quantity), “calidad” (quality), and “calidez” (warmth).

Warmth, like Eco-wealth, is a concept whose meaning is elusive. Therefore, it is better conceptualized as a symbolic effort to redefine wealth in the context of a specific degrowth community rather than a clearly defined criterion. Drawing upon an interview:

> “Warmth is the affection that we incorporate to things we buy and sell; not affection in the sense of conspicuous experience, this is what advertising does… I mean affection in a deeper sense, just like kindness, or like the establishment of a bond between the products, the producer, and the consumer. For example, when somebody makes you a piece of art that you understand is artisan and unique! (…) To say that a product radiates warmth adds an emotional layer of value. This is what makes warmth different from quality, which is mainly about making good and reliable stuff. Quality can be standardised but not warmth, because warmth

> involves an acknowledgement of the personal and unique character of each market exchange in Pumas. (…) Warmth is what you feel when you receive a gift." (Interview A6).

However, understanding how notions of eco-wealth involve a transformation regarding how value is established and exchanged through the Puma currency, it is important to pay attention to the development of indicators to operationalise the concept. Again, it is difficult to provide specific examples of this because it is work in progress. For example, a debate sparkled as an increase in the amounts of Puma spent in the previous month was being described as a success by some members. Others disagreed on this point and asked questions about whether these ideas reproduced what they refer to as the myth of quantity, namely that the more means the better. Drawing upon the research diary:

> Today I witnessed a rather heated debate in one of the assemblies. The topic was whether it is possible to measure the success of the currency in terms of the amounts of Pumas that people spent. For some participants in the assembly, this was a clear error as it reproduced the myth of quantity. Therefore, it undermined the cultural transformation that they pursue. These critics made a number of interesting suggestions for the Currency Studies group to consider in more detail. I made some annotations in this regard. For example, they suggested the creation of qualitative indicators to make visible the type of relationships developed by Puma users in the course of exchanges. More ambitiously, some highlighted the possibility developing indicators that incorporated amounts of warmth and kindness towards people, the neighbourhood, the Pumarejo Palace, or the goods and services exchanged.

From the perspective of management, it could be tempting to subsume these activities under the new emergent concept of social capital, given

their direct impact on the enhancement of social relationships and wellbeing within the community. Indeed, during these debates regarding the development of eco-wealth indicators, I explained the idea of social capital and suggested to draw upon the literature on social-capital to undertake this task. Members did not rule out the possibility, however they made two main criticism to this suggestion. One such criticism was related to suspicion about the noun “capital”, regardless of the qualifier “social”. They related the idea of capital, even to social capital, to the growth economy and the relentless pursuit of capitalism for identifying “a stock” of social activities that are valuable in economic terms. A second criticism was related to the standardization of social capital indicators. It was suggested that trying to import standardized criteria of value was a contradiction in terms with the affective dimension of Eco-wealth and the valuation of the uniqueness of human experience.

4.6.4 Recreating credit relationships beyond notions of debt

As demonstrated by Peñaloza and Barnhart (2011: p. 744), notions of credit and debt are cultural phenomena, as people draw upon ‘collective values and practices as templates for living that structure credit/debt activities in relation to consumption’. Within the present study, cultural aspects of debt emerged as central to understand people’s experiences and practices regarding the use of the Puma currency. Indeed, as reported by a number of interviewees, the success of the Puma currency to become a tool for degrowth depends on its capacity for overturning the widespread association between economic obligations and notions of debt.

In this regard, the Puma community is immersed in a collective effort to transform debt meanings by recreating them as mutual obligations, based on trust and reciprocity. These arguments beg questions about what are the dominant meanings attached to debt and how they influence the

functioning of a mutual credit system such as the Puma. Regarding the former, interviewees identify a number of negative meanings associated to the idea of debt. For example, it is argued that, rather often, new and prospect users import an external debt morality to the Puma community; the latter is argued as inadequate to construct an exchange network based on mutual support and reciprocity. Drawing upon interviews and focus group:

> "Female 33: One of the things that worry people when they start to exchange in Pumas is what happens when they get in debt. They are concerned that, because everybody can see their balance accounts, their situation as debtors could undermine their trustworthiness. Why would the community trust me if I own so many Pumas? They ask me. I always reply that all of us are valuable human beings, full of talents and potentials" (a fragment from the focus group).

> "Some users have admitted to me that they participate less in assemblies, working groups or decision-making, when their balance accounts are negative" (Interview A3).

> "People's self-concept is negatively affected by feeling in debt! If the morality of debt is accepted at face value, there is a danger that some people start to see their role in the community as less valuable than those of purportedly hardworking creditors (…). We reproduce these values because most of us, including me, and probably you too, bear an understanding debt based on the protestant ethics of capitalism (…) communities in transition to degrowth cannot afford to stigmatise half of their own members, their debtors, as lazy people without moral integrity" (interview A7).

Therefore, given the negative moral meanings attached to debt, concerns are that a potential chasm can emerge between creditors and debtors, creating power imbalances and stigmatising some members of the community. Moreover, participants argue that there is an individualistic, and somewhat selfish, bias inherent to the anxieties caused by feeling in debt. At least for most people that start to trade in Pumas, debt is experienced as a loss of individual freedom and personal autonomy.

Some Puma users even cling to the idea that a negative Puma balance shackles them to do something for others in order to offset their negative account balance. However, for the most experienced members of the community, it is precisely the content of this “doing something for others” what makes the difference between being shackled to debt and being obliged to reciprocate. Indeed, settling a negative balance in a Puma account requires doing something of value for another member of the community or for the community as a whole. Hence, the Puma currency’s transformative capacity depends, largely, upon its capacity for augmenting members’ perceptions of social obligation. The more entangled people become in such webs of mutual obligations, the most likely will be for them to reciprocate, cooperate, or add value to the community in terms of Eco-wealth.

Therefore, members of the Puma currency scheme deploy a number of discursive practices to signify notions of debt as a social obligation. For example, the Puma community makes a conscious effort to avoid labels such as “debt” or “debtor”, which could create a divisive and unfair differentiation between individual members. Instead, members may talk about “negative balances”, or “people whose accounts are negative”, but the term debt is seldom used. Moreover, changing visual representations of debt within the network have become a topic of discussion and further symbolic action. In this regard, some participants in these discussion highlighted that the minus sign (-) before an amount of Pumas has strong symbolic connotations concerning debt. It was suggested that a strategy to prevent people feeling in debt could be sign up new members with an opening balance of one hundred instead of zero within their Puma accounts. Consequently, for example, ninety-five Pumas would be equivalent to minus five, and fifty Pumas would be equivalent to minus fifty. Therefore, whilst the actual credit/debit relationship would be the same - for somebody to have an account balance of fifty there must be one hundred and fifty Pumas in another account - a different

representation of such credit/debt relationship, one that does not include a minus sign, could be effective to avoid debt feelings.

A final strategy to subvert the meaning of debt within the Puma currency involves what they see as therapeutic work to help people discover their talents and potentials. In this regard, one of the interviewees stated:

> "It is common to believe that, if I am a plumber, all I can offer in Pumas are my plumbing skills. This works fine for some people; but how about people whose professional skills are of little interest for other members, for example a lecturer in marketing (she smiles at me to confirm that she is joking)? We struggle to find out all the valuable things that we can do for others because of the pressure to conform to the labour market. When this happens, we feel terrified about having a negative balance because we believe that we will be unable to earn Pumas in the future. However, you may be a plumber for a wage, but this does not reduce your whole life experience to plumbing! For example, besides plumbing, you may be good at sports and you could offer your services as a personal trainer to earn Pumas. (…) We help people to overcome their fear of debt by making them aware that they are more than one-dimensional beings. We are full of unvalued talents and hidden potentials." (Interview A7).

These arguments are consistent with the work of Peñaloza and Barnhart (2011: p. 749), whose findings suggest that debt tend to be negatively perceived 'as an obligation, negative, scary, something cumulative, the result of abuse, and what they owe'. However, in the case of the Puma currency scheme, there are tensions between the meaning of debt and that of social obligation that have not been explored by Peñaloza and Barnhart (2011). Indeed, contrary to notions of debt, a sense of social obligation, which is coproduced as members engage in discursive and representative practices such as the ones described above, emerged as a positive value within the community.

4.6.5 The feminisation of the Puma currency

The present research reveals that the Puma currency scheme is undergoing a feminisation process that influences the meanings and practices of the community. In this regard, a number of interviewees highlighted a gender ratio of one man for every two women in the Puma currency scheme. Whilst the accuracy of such observation cannot be contrasted with actual figures, fieldwork experience suggests that female participants outnumber their male counterparts. However, the feminisation of the Puma currency scheme identified in the present work is not simply acknowledged in terms of the larger percentage of female involved in the scheme. Instead, it is suggested that Puma members experience such process as a cultural shift towards a different understanding of the economy. For example, interviewees argued:

> "(...) the currency encourages us to let go the bread-earner mentality and I guess that we (men) are less comfortable than women with the new roles that the currency encourages us to embrace." (Interview A4).

> "I really don't know why, but it seems to me that women connect much better with degrowth ideas than men do. Women have a kind of "degrowth common sense", if you know what I mean (...) we learn from them because they find ways to turn abstract ideas into practical stuff!" (Interview A6).

> "Perhaps it is because they are educated to be emotionally more intelligent and manage social relationships better than we are, but the Puma network itself could not exist without feminine values like empathy, patience, cooperation (...)" (interview A3).

Indeed, it is widely held by members that addressing the relationship between gender and economic thought is crucial for making a transition to degrowth. In particular, when discussing gender issues with participants, they consistently identify growth-driven economic systems as propelled by a masculine understanding of the economy. The difficulties of masculine

economic thinking to come to terms with degrowth are interpreted by members of the Puma community as a historical by-product of a division of labour based on gender. Hence, it is suggested that whilst masculine economic thinking evolved to deal with activities that take place in an apparently limitless world, women have traditionally been concerned with the management of economic activities that took place within the boundaries of the village or the household. Therefore, it is argued that a transition to degrowth, and the subsequent acknowledge of ecological and social limits to the economy, will ultimately require the extension of feminine values to economic concepts and practices. In this regard, members, both male and female, are actively involved in the feminisation of the language and values of the Puma currency scheme to counterbalance to the prevalence of masculine economic thinking.

Discursive practices, and the adoption of what they identify as an “inclusive language”, are central to perform this feminisation of the Puma currency scheme. Spanish language has a grammatical gender. Concisely, this means that nouns or pronouns are not gender-neutral and they vary depending on whether they define masculine or feminine elements. For example, masculine nouns have the article "el" in singular form and the article "los" in plural. On the contrary, feminine nouns have the article "la" in singular form and the article "las" in plural. Likewise, “Nosotros” is the masculine pronoun “We” and “Nosotras” is its feminine counterpart. Importantly, when a plural encompasses both masculine and feminine elements, the grammatically correct construction is to use the masculine form by default. Nevertheless, discursive practices in the Puma community challenge these grammatical conventions in a systematic manner. Indeed, not only mix-gendered groups are labelled with feminine nouns and pronouns within the Puma currency scheme. Moreover, the use of feminine nouns and pronouns extends to statements that refer to men exclusively. In native speakers of Spanish language, particularly males,

the use of this so-called inclusive language creates rather unsettling effect. Drawing upon the research diary:

> Initially I did not find it easy to remember to use feminine plurals all the time, although I am getting used to it. However, there is a strong identity issue going on here as for I understand the logic of using an inclusive language, and I share its purpose, I cannot help feeling something 'weird' every time I use 'Nosotras' instead of 'Nosotros' to say We. It is not so much the fact that it is grammatically incorrect to do so, as it is that I do no not feel entirely included in feminine plurals. Surely, these emotional effects, even when I rationally follow the logic, prove the subversive power of inclusive language as a means to challenge masculine conventions.

Another discursive strategy to deploy an inclusive language is to replace "a" or "o", which define the gender of the word, with an "x". For example, instead of Nosotros or Nosotras, members use "Nosotrxs", which is a neologism that is gender neutral. However, the use of the x to neutralise language is limited to written communications. Whilst I initially thought that the use of inclusive language was limited to internal communications among members, I discovered that these discursive practices are also applied in external communications, such as for example those made in the Media.

Whilst language is argued by members as a central instrument to overcome the masculine bias within the Puma currency scheme, this feminisation process manifest in other social practices such as, for example, the organisation of assemblies. In some of the assemblies, female members raised the issue that men tended to speak more often than women did during these events. The majority of people acknowledged that this was the case. It was also agreed that the silence of female voices in group discussions and assemblies was something to be urgently overcome. However, a heated debate sparkled when the potential causes for women being less participative were discussed; for

the majority of men, the explanation was based on personality characteristics such as women shyness or being less used to speak in public than men. However, a number of female members argued that it was the format and arrangement of the meetings that made it more difficult for them to speak in public. In this regard, they criticised the practice of standing in front of audience and doing a presentation as a means to put one's ideas across. They suggested that they preferred to speak in other type of events, for example around a meal, when there is no clear separation between the so-called audience and the speaker. Moreover, other gender issues were raised. For example, some female members argued that it was difficult for them to attend the assemblies because they found it difficult to bring their children along with them or keeping them quiet during the whole event. Following these debates, some changes were made to accommodate this criticism about the format of the events. In this regard, assemblies became more informal, organised like a big meal, with all participants sitting around large tables full not only of coffee, biscuits, but also beers and tapas that people brought along from home. People swapped places to be able to discuss ideas in mini-groups. Moreover, areas of the Pumarejo Palace, in which these meetings are hosted, were arranged as a playground for children, with volunteers doing shifts to look after the children while their parents took part in the group meetings and assemblies. As stated in one of the interviews:

> "You can see that it is always more of us (women) taking part in the activities of the Puma. Yet we still speak less than men do and we make fewer decisions than they do too. (…) Only if we are able to rethink these micro-barriers we will be able to encourage women to adopt a more proactive role (…). Sometimes they say it, sometimes they do not say it, but some people here believe that paying so much attention to language is a waste of time. They think we are paranoid. However, I think that if we are to feminise the economy to make the transition, there is no excuse for degrowth groups to leave these micro-barriers untouched (…) here (in the Puma community) we are very conscious of it and we have made great progress since we started." (interview A7).

These arguments are consistent with various developments in the literature on marketing and eco-feminism. For example, Dobscha (1993) identifies that women's traditional role as primary care-taker have been extended to the natural environment. In this regard, Dobscha (1993) contends that women have been forced to become 'environmental housemaids'. Moreover, in their study on environmentally sensitive women, Dobscha and Ozanne (2001) highlighted that female participants constructed non-dominating and non-hierarchical relationships between them and nature, as well as between them and the community. Moreover, the idea of women having a so-called 'degrowth common sense' is consistent with the argument that women's imagination, ingenuity and creativity are central to construct more ecological ways of living beyond green consumerism (Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001). However, whilst traditional gender roles make women particularly prone to engage in ecological struggles, they simultaneously make them vulnerable to exploitation (Dobscha, 1993; Stevens *et al.* 2013). Indeed, Maclaran *et al.* (2009) demonstrate that participation in communities of critical thinking, despite being concomitant to radical critique and reflexivity, continue to be pervaded by a gender blind-spot that manifests in the reproduction of exclusionary practices. These tensions are acknowledged within the Puma currency scheme, although not necessarily resolved in their totality. Therefore, the making of a heterotopian market, as observed in the practices of the Puma members, is clearly concerned with a deconstruction and reconstruction of ideas, spaces and practices, in which the ecological identity of men and female are negotiated.

4.6.6 Market subjectivities and identities in heterotopia: enacting "caringzens" and "prosumers"

The last theme that emerged from data analysis is concerned with the enactment of identities that challenge the traditional divides between consumers and producers, as well as between consumers and citizens. In

particular, the focus of this discussion will be placed on how Puma members experience their involvement in the Puma currency scheme as both prosumers and caringzens. Whilst the former is a relatively well-established term in the management literature, and thus some clarification is required, the former is a neologism employed within the community.

It is apparent that terms such as “consumption”, “consumerism”, “consuming” or any other term related to the actions of consumers, such as “buying”, “spending”, “shopping”, acquire negative connotations when applied to describe practices within the Puma currency scheme. The label consumer appears to be largely avoided, when not openly ridiculed, by Puma members. For example, in the course of casual conversations, it is common to hear consumer acts being depicted as mindless outcomes triggered by advertising and Media manipulation. The consumer is represented as an “other”, whose lifestyle is intrinsically bonded to the growth paradigm. In this regard, notions of the consumer tend to imbued with negative meanings and qualities, such as a lack of reflexivity, political apathy, or a selfish desire to consume beyond limits or consideration to the impacts of consumption. When inquiring about this pejorative use of the term consumer, interviewees highlight consumer identities as carriers of hedonistic and materialistic values. For example:

> “During my days as a student at university, I read avidly the work of Bauman and Max-Neef. In late capitalism, consumption is no longer driven to meeting basic human needs. Instead, people mainly consume to fuel an endless reinvention of their selves, which comes at the expense of their mental health and the health of the planet.” (Interview A7).

> “I find it increasingly discouraging to walk around shopping malls or the main commercial areas in the city centre. I no longer do it, actually! You look at these masses of people and you think; is it the world really like this? Am I just living in the Pumarejo bubble? (…) they do not feel the urgency of Peak Oil or Climate change because their only concern is choosing between an IPhone or a Blackberry, or having both of them at the same time.” (Interview A2).

However, Puma members not only question consumer identities in terms of the hedonistic and materialistic values that they purportedly embody. Moreover, the role of the consumer is criticised as encompassing a type of market engagement, fundamentally based on individualism and political apathy, which is too limited to articulate the actual changes required to initiate the transition to degrowth. Indeed, this criticism extends to other expressions of consumer identity, such as those involved in ethical and green consumerism.

> "Obviously, buying organic food, or a hybrid car, is better than nothing; but you are still limited to what companies offer you, how much they want to charge you, and most importantly: your need an income! The higher your income is the more green stuff you can buy. However, you have to ask yourself how you earn an income to become a conscious consumer; and surely high incomes don't come from doing the most humanitarian jobs. You may consume for degrowth, but do you earn a degrowth-income?" (Interview A3)

> "Perhaps you can tic all the boxes to be a conscious consumer: you buy from small retailers, you check that all the products are ethically labelled, you boycott companies involved in environmental scandals such as BP. But what do you do when you arrive home? What do you do for your community? How are you transforming your own life and the lives of others? How are you helping your community to simplify life?" (interview A5).

These interview fragments render visible the link between consumption and production as two sides of the same coin in the context of degrowth markets. In other words, interviewees suggest that being particularly conscious when making consumer choices will not be sufficient to address the economic challenges of degrowth, unless such consumer choices involve a parallel transformation of individuals' role as producers. In this regard, the transformative capacity of the Puma currency scheme is related to the emergence of a specific type of market subjectivity, which has been identified as ethical prosumers.

A word of caution is necessary here given that the term prosumers, as used in the context of the Puma currency scheme, differs from its use in the literature on management (for a historical review of the concept see Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). In this regard, Kotler (1986) borrowed a definition of prosumers from Toffler to describe individuals who produce goods and services that enter their own consumption. More recently, notions of presumption have been drawn upon to depict processes of value co-creation in which the expansion of digital technologies enable companies to benefit from what Cova and Dali (2009) identify as 'the working consumers'. However, the role of prosumers acquires a political and ethical meaning in the context of the present research. Hence, as far as the Puma currency is concerned, the transformation of consumers in prosumers responds to logic of individual and communitarian empowerment to enable a degree of autonomy from growth-driven provisioning systems.

Therefore, whilst other types of market identities, such as the ethical consumer or the ethical entrepreneur, maintain the spheres of consumption and production as separate political spaces, prosumers in the Puma currency scheme emerge at the intersection between both realms. For example, in contrast to the emphasis of marketing literature on the environmental benefits of green consumption, members of the community highlight that participation in the Puma currency scheme is an empowering experience precisely because it enables people to rethink their role as producers too. In this regard:

> When I ask users about how participation in the scheme has changed their lives as consumers, most of them tend to emphasise that the biggest benefits have been experienced in their role as producers. Users frequently draw on a self-discovery narrative, in which the Puma currency forced/encouraged them to rethink their productive skills and talents and that, in so doing, they rediscovered themselves and their potential to transform the economy.

Moreover, the transformative capacity of prosumers in the context of degrowth is not limited to an individual process. In this regard, Puma members argue the emergence of prosumers within the Puma network not only in terms of individual empowerment, but as a form of collective empowerment too. In this regard, it is suggested that as an increasing number of Puma members discover their capabilities as prosumers, it becomes easier for fellow members to engage with the transition to degrowth. The following extract from the focus group illustrates this point:

> "Female, 27: It is amazing the amount of stuff that you can do with Pumas these days. For example, do you need exercising outdoors? Do you need yoga classes to improve your wellbeing? Do you need organic groceries to eat healthy? Do you need to learn a new language or get a book? Do you need to rent a room or hire a bicycle? You can do all this without spending a single Euro (…).
>
> Female 35: Yes, people have become more entrepreneurial and this makes our community and the local economy more self-reliant. Some of us have managed to become less dependent of an income. I feel much freer now and I am considering to work part-time.
>
> Female 27: Obviously is not easy, but we have learned to adapt our needs to what the community can offer us as much as we are attentive to the needs of the community".

In this regard, opportunities for making degrowth-friendly production choices, such as shortening the working week, and degrowth-friendly consumption choices, such as sharing, reusing or repairing, are facilitated by a collective transformation and interconnection of prosumers through the Puma currency scheme.

The second type of relevant identity identified in the present ethnographic work has been labelled as caringzens. The term caringzen is a translation of the Spanish neologism "cuidadana", which is employed by members of the Puma currency scheme to distinguish themselves from notions of

“ciudadanos”, or citizens. The Spanish neologism cuidadano is a variation of the term ciudadano – in English citizen – with the prefix cuidar – to care. Therefore, a Cuidadano is a citizen “that cares”. As stated in the following interview extract, the neologism Cuidadano was invented by accident:

> “We had this bloke putting up a tile mural in the Pumarejo Palace saying ‘Ciudadania Activa’ (Active Citizenship). However, this bloke made a spelling mistake as he put ‘Cuidadania Activa’ (Active Caringship) instead. When the builder realised his spelling mistake he felt embarrassed and immediately tried to mend it. Can you imagine his face when we congratulated him and told him that we actually wanted to keep it as it was! (…) what a delightfully unintentional stroke of genius! Cuidadania instead of Ciudadania, don’t you think that it is a brilliant play of words? It captures the spirit of El Pumarejo as any other term and it helps us to summarise in one word the outcome of endless debates that we had here” (Interview A6).

Therefore, Puma members identify the type of citizenship enacted within the Puma currency scheme with the term caringzen. Importantly, caringzens identities are constructed as a means of adapting contemporary models of citizenship to notions of degrowth. For example, unlike citizenship, the idea of caringzenship stands upon what members describe as a communitarian ethics of care that applies to small-scale forms of social organisation and participation. Drawing upon interview data:

> “In a degrowth society we need caringzens, not citizens (…) to me the difference between them is that caringzens do not have neat civic responsibilities like paying taxes, voting, or abiding the law (…) once you fulfil your civic responsibilities you can be totally careless to your community, you know? Instead, caringzens have caring responsibilities, which sometimes mean respecting privative property but sometimes could involve squatting for the community.” (interview A3).

> “I am not sure how to define caringzens’ responsibilities. Umm, I could tell you that national states but the community or communities to which caringzens belong are definitely important to define these

> responsibilities (…) the responsibilities of caringzens cannot be standardised, they are not universal; they depend on each persons' capabilities and the need of the communities." (Interview A2).

> "Here, in el Pumarejo, we have caring responsibilities for ourselves, for our friends and families, for the neighbourhood, for the Palace... I believe that caringzens cannot expect the council to meet the needs of the community because there is no affective bond between the council, or the state, and us." (Interview A4).

> "Degrowth is all about building a society made of small-scale, interconnected communities, and communities are made with caring people. The question is can we extend these responsibilities to large societies? My personal answer is no, or at least this is what I feel from my experience as a caringzen in El Puma. We make this community from our emotions, our memories and our affections." (Interview A1).

These fragments suggest that context-specific responsibilities are constitutive of an ethics of care underlying caringzen practices and identities. Hence, unlike notions of citizenship, the content of caringzen duties is neither universal nor predefined by national states; instead, these responsibilities are negotiated within the boundaries of the community, or communities, to which individuals are affectively bonded. In this regard, concepts such as mutual support, collaboration, affection, community, place, or reciprocity emerge as crucial lexicon to describe the construction of caringzens as degrowth subjects.

The enactment of prosumer and caringzen identities in the content of El Pumarejo can be related to existing debates regarding the type of political subjects that emerge in the context of contemporary sustainability debates. This debate has traditionally assumed the existence of two clearly separated identities through which consumers can engage with sustainability politics, namely the consumer and the citizen (Prothero *et al,* 2010; Prothero *et al.*, 2011). The literature tends to be polarised between those scholars who argue the consumer as a legitimate agent for transformative social change and those who limit this capacity to the

actions of citizens (see Gabriel and Lang, 1995). However, drawing upon their analysis of consumer narratives, Autio *et al.* (2009) problematize the idea of the green consumer as a monolithic type of sustainability actor. In this regard, it is argued that multiple identities, and forms of engagement, can coexist within the green consumer category – i.e. the antihero, the environmental hero, and the anarchist green consumer (Autio, 2009). Similarly, Prothero *et al.* (2010; 2011) have challenged notions of the green citizen as a monolithic category by suggesting the existence of two types of green citizenship identities, namely the collective green citizen and the individual green citizen.

Questioning the consumer-citizen divide is important to acknowledge that traditional subject positions as "the consumer" or "the citizen" are inadequate to understand how individuals engage in sustainability politics in the 21st century. However, whilst acknowledging such plurality is a step in the right direction, the existence of various types of green consumers and green citizens continues to assume that people engage in sustainability either as consumers or as citizens - regardless of their multiple varieties. In the community of El Pumarejo, however, it is apparent that members reject the enactment of green consumer or green citizen identities. Instead, Puma members involvement with degrowth result in the construction of new identities such as those of prosumers or caringzens, which transcend categories such as green consumers and green citizens. The emergence of new identities and subjectivities at the margins of green capitalism is consistent with the view of heterotopian markets as spaces for social innovation and radical politics.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and contributions

5.1 Contributions from the literature review on marketing and the natural environment

The present work builds upon the market paradox in marketing, identified by Venkatesh *et al.* (2006), to elucidate how notions of the market have been conceptualised within the area of marketing and the natural environment. This is an important contribution to the literature for a number of reasons: firstly, because markets have gradually become a foundational concept in contemporary sustainability debates (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000; Prothero *et al.,* 2010); secondly, because, although the term “market" is widely used by scholars, notions of the market appear to be loosely employed without much seriousness or rigour (Venkatesh *et al.,* 2006; Vargo, 2008; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007); thirdly because, to date, existing literature reviews within the area of marketing and the natural environment (e.g. Kilbourne and Beckman, 1998; Peattie, 2001a; Chamorro *et al.*, 2006; Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011) have not focused on how notions of the market have been conceptualised by scholars. It is argued that, with the exception of macromarketing scholars, environmental concerns have been largely dominated by a micromarketing perspective, which is managerial in orientation and normative in focus. As these assumptions have become prevalent in the literature, notions of the market have been flattened into a universal structure of dyadic exchange devoid of history, culture and materiality. Consequently, the market is depicted as a generic concept whose essential properties are independent of the context in which they are embedded.

5.2. Contributions to critical marketing literature

5.2.1 A critique of the generic market informed by degrowth

Drawing upon Tadajewski (2010), a critical appraisal of marketing knowledge requires an examination of the political conditions in which such knowledge is produced. Hence, a further contribution to the literature has been made by analysing these findings in relation to the political economy of sustainability and the recent turn towards the so-called green capitalism (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Therefore, by adding an institutional layer of analysis to the literature review, it is suggested that the generic view of the market is not simply an epistemological limitation of the literature. Instead, it is argued that the prevalence of these assumptions operates as an ideological device to legitimise a global shift to green economic growth led by affluent economies as a means to overcome the double ecological and economic crisis (Bina and La Camera, 2011).

Within this context, critical approaches to sustainability such as degrowth are systematically dismissed as being anti-markets due to their frontal opposition to the dominant market model in today's globalised capitalism (e.g. Borroughs, 2010). To put this in terms of formal logic, it appears that the prevalence of a generic market concept induces scholars to commit the category mistake, by which things of one kind appear as they if they belonged to another. In the present work, a potential solution to the conceptual deadlock has been suggested by drawing upon the observation that 'markets are not self-contained entities, but rather take on distinct discursive forms and material practices across various social contexts and over time' (Venkatesh and Peñaloza, 2008: p. 147). Indeed, by contesting the existence of a universal market concept, this thesis suggests that notions of degrowth can be labelled neither as anti-market nor as pro-market *per se*. Both positions would incorrectly assume the

existence of a universal market category that one could be either in favour of or against. Therefore, rather than reinforcing existing debates between market advocates and critics (e.g. Varey, 2010; Borroughs, 2010), which have become somewhat unproductive, a central contribution of the present work is to open up a democratic debate about the type of markets that could operate in a degrowth society.

5.2.2 Heterotopian markets as a conceptual proposition for ending the market-stalemate in the transition to degrowth

Opening up the market black box therefore emerged as an urgent task, particularly if a consistent challenge to the green growth paradigm is to be articulated without having to resort to an unfeasible return to bartering. It is important to be clear that embracing the plurality of markets should not become an end in itself, but a means to challenge the prevalence of the generic market concept that hampers the advancement of degrowth as an alternative to green capitalism. In this regard, this author dovetails with Cova *et al.'s* (2013) call for critical marketing scholars to abandon the traditional defeatism that characterises the critique of capitalism inspired by postmodernism. Indeed, if alternatives to green capitalism are to move beyond the periphery of marketing thought and practice, critical scholars have to be capable of 'detecting signs from a communist future', here defined as an alternative to the endless reproduction of capitalist relationships (Cova *et al.*, 2013: p. 221). Admittedly, identifying markets consistent with notions of degrowth emerges as a daunting task, particularly as the pursuit of economic growth appear to have become hegemonic in today's globalised capitalism (Varey, 2010). Within the current market-landscape, which in the affluent world has been sculpted by two centuries of unprecedented economic growth, the existence of alternative market-forms is more likely to occur at the fringes of consumer culture and not at its centre. Research findings suggest that existing work on heterotopias of resistance (Chatzidakis *et al.,* 2012) can be fruitfully

drawn upon by critical scholars to engage with, learn from, and contribute to, the practices and innovations of alternative communities that seek to reinvent markets in non-hegemonic conditions. In this regard, the present work demonstrates that members of the Puma currency scheme are actively involved in the reinvention of market practices from the perspective of degrowth. For example, through the implementation of an alternative currency scheme, members of the Puma community have proved capable of aligning notions of the market to processes of eco-localisation, building a strong and resilient community, questioning the economic centrality of productive work, advancing alternative values such as caring, and producing new subjectivities and identities that transcend traditional modes of engagement with sustainability as either citizens or consumers.

5.3 Methodological conclusions and contributions

5.3.1 Questioning the prevalence of logical empiricism in the area of marketing and the natural environment

According to Kilbourne and Beckman (1998), research on marketing and sustainability has been undertaken from methodological perspectives that have drawn heavily upon logical empiricism. More recently, Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) have confirmed this trend. In their extensive bibliographic study, Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) highlight that research on marketing/management and the natural environment is fundamentally normative, hypothetico-deductive and quantitative. These authors contemplate such methodological developments in a positive light:

> ‘The tendency for more formalized research is consistent with the previously observed trend to increasingly rely on a solid theoretical ground and build on the results of prior work before embarking on investigating specific environmental research problems’ (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011: p. 81).

Nevertheless, the purported adequacy of this methodological approach to study the relationships between markets and sustainability is questioned by the arguments put forward in the present work. Therefore, rather than celebrating the increasing adoption of logical empiricism by scholars working in the area, this author encourages caution, not to say scepticism, about the purported benefits of perpetuating existing models and theories of the green market within the discipline – continued through the adoption of a hegemonic methodology. Indeed, the latter is likely to hinder our marketing imagination, to paraphrase Brownlie and Saren (1997), and dismantle our capacity to envisage emancipatory practices beyond 'the horizon' posed by green capitalism (Cova *et al.,* 2013). In this regard, the present work argues the urgency to address these critical issues by encouraging the adoption of interpretivist and reflexive methodologies that enable scholars to explore the interplay between marketing knowledge and ideology in the area of sustainability.

5.3.2 Ethnography as a means to engage with heterotopian markets

If the previous methodological contribution focused on methodology, this one will be specifically concerned with the value of ethnographic research methods[12] to study heterotopias. Indeed, the nature of heterotopias of resistance, as liminal spaces in which the dominant social order can be temporarily subverted, makes them prone to ethnographic inquiries. Drawing upon my experience in El Pumarejo, I can enumerate the most important advantages of ethnography to study heterotopias:

1- Abductive reasoning: whilst not without its limitations, the possibility of approaching the field with a foreshadowed problem, as opposed

[12] Due to reasons of limited space, the focus of the discussion will be placed on ethnographic methods of data collection, which have been employed here. However, the majority of these arguments can be extended to methods employed in other methodological approaches such as grounded-theory or phenomenology (e.g. Goulding, 2005).

to specific research questions, proved extremely valuable for the purposes of the present work. Indeed, heterotopias are characterised for being spaces of difference. Therefore, in order to have a meaningful engagement with the Puma community, it was extremely important to pursue research questions that were grounded in their local experiences, concerns, meanings and material practices, rather than being imported from the literature.

2- Flexibility for data collection: in retrospective, I am dubious that a structured approach to data collection could have been successfully applied to study the Puma currency. Indeed, I encountered resistance to the implementation of conventional research methods - such as a “focus group”, or “interviews”, note taking - which were sometimes perceived as inadequate or opportunistic. These had to be creatively reformulated as a picnic, in the case of a focus group, or conversations, in the case of interviews. Moreover, the most interesting findings of the present work either occurred in, or were enabled by, unplanned events, casual conversations, spontaneous observations, or informal situations. Therefore, it is argued that the kind of methodological flexibility permitted in ethnographic studies is crucial to deal with fieldwork contingencies that are likely to emerge in heterotopias.

3- Emphasis on relationships: The present PhD thesis would not have been possible without people and the relationships of trust and reciprocity that I, as a participant observer, established with the Puma community. Most of the relevant phenomena in heterotopias such as El Pumarejo do not take place on the surface, and it only becomes visible to the inquirer with the assistance of members of the community. Therefore, the possibility of using methods such as participant observation, that encourage the emergence of more equalitarian and participative relationships between the researcher

and heterotopian communities, is crucial to get access to these realities.

4- Combining abductive and retroductive reasoning: whilst the present work has argued the relevance of abductive reasoning, the present work has argued the need to establish a dialogue between the heterotopian community and the community of marketing scholars. In this regard, the use of retroduction has been crucial to establish textual links with existing literature. Therefore, my concern with retroduction was not so much related to interpretative processes, but also to the communication of my findings in a manner that could be both relevant and intelligible to the community of marketing academics and students, as well as the community researched.

I suggest that the former are not only accidental features of my own research experience. Instead, I believe that they respond to the ephemeral, fluid, and somewhat elusive, nature of heterotopian market realities. Moreover, it is argued that the present use of ethnographic research methods for the study of heterotopian market realities makes a contribution to the "seventh moment" of interpretative research identified by Denzin (2001: p. 326), who argues that marketing and consumer research must embrace a more 'dialogical epistemology and aesthetic'. For Denzin (2001: p. 326), in this seventh moment, our methods are to 'involve a give-and-take and ongoing moral dialogue between persons' and 'enact an ethic of care and an ethic of personal and communal responsibility'. Likewise, the emphasis on ethnographic methods as a means to establish a conversation between heterotopian communities and the community of marketing academics can be seen as contributing to the "revivalist" and "therapeutic" modes of engagement for critical marketing scholars (Saren, 2009). To emphasise the relevance of these findings it is important to place them in the context of a broader methodological trend

which suggests an increasing employment of statistical research methods for data collection and analysis by scholars working within the field (Chamorro *et al*., 2006; Leonidou and Leonidou; 2011).

5.4 Conclusions and contributions of empirical work with the Puma Currency

This section will focus in the conclusions and contributions that can be drawn upon the themes that emerged through my engagement with data.

5.4.1 Place and heterotopian markets

It has been argued that the so-called marketing dyad assumes a structure of economic exchange whose placeless nature imbues the concept of market with an air of universality and ubiquity. To paraphrase Venkatesh *et al.* (2006), it is precisely by 'being nowhere' that notions of the market can be found 'everywhere'. Contrary to this view, the present work reveals that the configuration of a heterotopian market cannot be adequately understood without examining its embeddedness in place. In this regard, place emerged as a central theme in the study of the Puma currency. It is suggested that, by drawing attention to place, this work contributes to the literature that challenges the generic view of markets as placeless entities.

It is crucial not to conflate these arguments with an attempt to recast marketing's interest in marketplaces. Up front, this work acknowledges that nuanced accounts of marketplaces are an important step for the re-materialisation of markets in the literature. For example, ethnographic studies of bazaars (i.e. Varman and Costa, 2008) or modern shopping malls (i.e. Maclaran Brown, 2005) are extremely illuminating regarding how the social and material fabric of marketplaces frames economic exchanges. However, as argued by market-practice scholars (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007; Araujo, 2007), market-making practices

involve many other activities, devices and actors, beyond those involved in exchange practices between buyers and sellers. Thereby it is suggested that studies of marketplaces offer limited scope to study market materiality - as the former are fundamentally concerned with actual exchanges between buyers and sellers. Nonetheless, the neologism “market-places” can be used here to differentiate between marketplaces and the diversity places in which market-making practices are enacted. A focus on market-places acknowledges that such places can be multiple and interconnected. They may encompass marketplaces, of course, but also sweatshops, warehouses, offices, the stock market, or landfills in which goods are disposed of. They may involve ghettos or affluent residential areas. Hence, rather than being prescriptive about where to locate market-making practices, it may be more productive to allow each research project to reveal different place dynamics that contribute to perform the diversity of practices through which specific markets are enacted.

Within the present work, which is focused on heterotopian markets, the relevance of place has been identified by observing the peculiar characteristics of a particular area of Seville known as El Pumarejo. A discussion has been undertaken by extending the work of Maclaran and Brown (2005) to the study of heterotopias of resistance (Chatzidakis *et al.,* 2012). In this regard, it has been argued that the area of El Pumarejo produces a sense of displace, performs artscape, and creates playspace, yet in terms of radical politics and praxis. Indeed, a sense of political displacement is created within El Pumarejo as, for example, retail spaces blur the boundaries between political and commercial practices, or common space subverts mainstream meanings of the political as a synonym with representative democracy. Moreover, playspace in El Pumarejo emerges as contradictions are allowed to play against one another rather than being supressed. In this regard, it has been argued that members and local residents make sense of existing tensions within the area through meanings of diversity and pluralism. Finally, artscape is

performed within El Pumarejo by interweaving the artistic and the political in creative manners. Therefore, members of the community, as well as local residents, are encouraged to become artist of the political, as well as political artists, in terms of thought and praxis.

5.4.2 Community and heterotopian markets

The market concept entailed by the marketing dyad is not only a placeless entity. Moreover, markets are depicted as backcloths in which atomised actors operate within clearly defined roles in which they are enclosed - namely those of seller and buyer, consumers and producers, firm and customers. This reduction of market actors to isolated economic units, which are cut from any social ties other than selling and buying, renders the study of markets a breeding ground for rationalist approaches and linear models of human behaviour (Schaeffer and Crane, 2005). Most importantly, these assumptions reproduce the myth of a self-regulating market that is able to coordinate competing interests of selfish individuals through price signals (Peattie, 2007). In the political economy of sustainability, this atomistic view of the market actor legitimates a green turn of global capitalism (Bina and La Camera, 2012) based on an adequate pricing of externalities (van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996), environmental technologies and innovations, or green consumerism (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Nevertheless, an ethnographic engagement with the implementation of the Puma currency challenges this atomised picture by revealing the centrality of communities and social networks for the reinvention of markets in heterotopia.

Hence, whilst individual attributes, such as shifting individual values, attitudes, or motivations of participants, are of relevance, it is argued that the enactment of market practices through the use of an alternative currency scheme have to be ultimately understood as a relational process. More specifically, this research reveals that developing and launching the

Puma currency required a laborious process of weaving alliances between Degrowth Seville and the NADPP, and also with local residents in the area of El Pumarejo. These community processes were crucial for various reasons that have been discussed at length. For example, trust among participants was built through the organisation of collective activities, such as workshops and group discussions, which revolved around the idea of implementing an alternative currency scheme within the area. Gradually, social ties between these two communities and local residents were strengthened, and it became possible to establish a steering group. The steering group became the social backbone of the Puma currency as it contributed to stabilise the somewhat sporadic forms of participation that prevailed during the inception of the project. This involved activities of communication, coordination, organisation, deliberation and decision-making, or enrolment of new members, which were crucial to assemble an increasingly larger and diverse network of people. In less than a year, the Puma, as a "community of communities", grew from 20 to 700 members. Moreover, it has been argued that these social processes enabled an effective integration of the alternative currency scheme with local residents in El Pumarejo. Without these local connections, the Puma currency would have failed to gain access to human and material resources, such as the working space known as Centro Vecinal, which play a pivotal role to sustain the alternative currency scheme. Hence, it is argued that without such community-building processes preceding individual efforts to reinvent market through a community currency scheme, the latter would have failed.

Therefore, by highlighting rich social processes underpinning the enactment of a heterotopian market, these findings contribute to challenge the myth of individual autonomy assumed by neoliberal models of market governance (e.g. Isenhour, 2010). Hence, contrary to the dominant view of markets as quasi-spontaneous outcomes of individual rationality (Snehota, 2004), the present work argues the centrality of social ties, trust,

reciprocity, and communities, as embedding mechanisms for heterotopian market practices. To a large extent, this account dovetails with scholarly work in marketing that questions the atomised view of market actors inherent to the marketing dyad (Håkansson *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, notions of tribes, communities, or networks, have already become part of the lexicon of scholars to highlight the relational nature of consumer behaviour (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Nevertheless, with a few remarkable exceptions (e.g. Varman and Costa, 2008; Håkansson *et al.,* 2004), it is argued that these approaches remain exclusively focused on consumer practices. Given that emphasis has been placed on the role of communities in the enactment of a market rather than consumers, the present work makes a contribution to the literature by extending these arguments to the study of market practices more broadly defined (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007).

5.4.3 The embedding role of practical concerns

According to Araujo (2007), marketing has adopted a theory of the market from neoclassical economics in which the historical emergence of markets is explained as a response to a purportedly universal economic problem faced by humankind, namely that of economic exchange. Vargo (2007) argues that such market narrative is informed by Adam Smith's moral philosophy. Smith noted that the division of labour implies a shift in the purpose of productive activities from self-sufficiency to the production of a surplus of commodities for commercial exchange. In the beginning, commercial exchange was characterised by bartering (Shaw, 1995). However, as production becomes increasingly specialised, bartering turns into an increasingly challenging activity. In this regard, Shaw (1995) argues that markets emerged with the invention of money as a means to overcome the limitations of bartering - mainly the double coincidence of needs between exchange-parties – for rationally articulating labours' specialisation. Therefore, markets are depicted as a rational problem

solving-device, whose exclusive purpose is to arrange efficient monetised exchanges by making them calculable, impersonal and free from any social consideration beyond that of profit maximisation (Ingham, 2008).

The present work is consistent with a view of markets as problem-solving devices. However, contrary to the prevailing narrative, research findings suggest that the assumption of a universal problem of economic exchange is inadequate to understand the realities of concrete market arrangements in heterotopia. In this regard, this ethnographic inquiry evidences that that the Puma currency is embedded in practical problems that are context-specific rather than universal and abstract. More specifically, this study reveals that the market practices enabled by the Puma currency are rooted in concrete experiences of local communities that seek to reinvent their economic practices beyond the dominant model imposed by capitalist markets. For example, as far as the NADPP is concerned, the Puma currency was perceived as a solution to an internal debate concerning how to contribute to the sustenance of those individuals that work for the common without having to employ Euros. Similarly, Degrowth Seville sought to find a means to scale-down economic activities in the area. Therefore, the Puma currency was envisaged as a means to make the local economy independent from the macroeconomic circuits of value and commodity-exchange constitutive of the growth economy. Moreover, notwithstanding local residents in the area not having had articulated a concrete problem or concern before the launch of the currency, they reported a general interest in building up social cohesion within the area to which an alternative currency scheme could contribute. Through different processes of negotiation and deliberation, these problems were redefined in a general concern about how to facilitate the enactment of economic practices in the area that linked people's needs with existing communitarian resources, both of them redefined along highly socially and ecologically conscious lines. These findings contribute to destabilise the

unidirectional market narrative - that depicts markets as an outcome of economic rationality devised to make economic exchanges more efficient.

5.4.4 Market practices in the Puma currency scheme

As the present ethnographic account of the Puma currency progressed, the discussion has shifted from market embeddedness to processes of market assemblage. In other words, whilst previous sections focused on the context of the Puma currency, the second part of this work has examined this alternative currency scheme in action. More specifically, subsequent themes have unveiled the enactment of concrete practices through which a heterogeneous web of people, ideas, trust, symbols, products, places, and devices, are assembled together to configure a heterotopian market.

Therefore, the present ethnography has paid significant attention to the concrete practices Puma currency users employ as they participate in market exchanges. It has been suggested that multiple forms of market exchange and bartering coexist within the Puma network in ways that are mutually constructive rather than mutually exclusive. As far as the exchange parties are concerned, the present work differentiates exchanges that occur between individual members from those in which the community acts as exchange party. It is also apparent that not all trading within the community is carried out entirely in Pumas, and it is rather common for members to use both Euros and Pumas simultaneously as a form of payment. Bartering practices are intertwined with such types of market exchanges. Moreover, along the lines of the emergent body of literature on posthumanism (Campbell *et al.* 2010; Bettany and Kerrane, 2011), this study of exchange practices in El Pumarejo reveals that the latter do not merely involve human actors. On the contrary, non-humans actants are central to the enactment of market exchanges by members of the Puma currency. In particular, the pivotal role of two market devices,

namely the Puma passbook and the CES software, has been discussed in detail.

However, this research acknowledges that an exclusive focus on market exchange is excessively narrow to understand the functioning of the Puma currency scheme. Indeed, the distinction between market exchange practices and market-making practices highlights that the former are not spontaneous events; on the contrary, the practices involved in market exchange require significant amounts of infrastructural work to sustain them. Such infrastructural work is carried out through market-making practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007). Unlike market exchanges, which are the most visible and salient type of market practices, market-making practices tend to be "blackboxed" during the process of exchange (Latour, 2005). Therefore, opening up the heterotopian market blackbox in the context of El Puma required the identification and discussion of a number of market-making practices, namely epistemic practices, communication practices, community care practices, and enrolment practices, as well as other practices involved in the organisation of events such as Mercapuma and the Central de Abastecimiento. For example, epistemic practices contribute to manage, disseminate and produce knowledge within the community. Enrolment practices constitute an obligatory passage point in which the identities of prospect members are shaped in both symbolic and material terms. Communication practices contribute to sustain a large virtual community of members and supporters of the Puma currency that is not constrained by geographical boundaries or levels of engagement. Community care practices contribute to render visible and reward those activities that are necessary for the community to exist as an empowering space for individuals rather than parasitic entity. These community care practices contribute to shape exchanges among users of the Puma currency along views of "community care" informed by ecofeminism. Moreover, the organisation of events such as Mercapuma or the Central de

Abastecimiento involve practices through which degrowth ideas, including the importance of embedding markets in local neighbours or the emphasis on community self-reliance, are translated into practices of concrete practices of demand and supply. Like market exchange practices, this work has identified a number of non-human elements that partake in market-making practices, including physical, spaces (e.g. the Pumarejo square, the Centro Vecinal or Radiopolis), devices and technologies (e.g. market stands, computers, websites), showing the centrality of materiality for the Puma currency scheme.

5.4.5 The symbolic dimension of the Puma Currency Scheme

Although this work has criticised approaches to markets that reduce the study of the latter to their purely symbolic dimension, this is not the same as saying that culture, symbols or discourses are not central to the enactment of a heterotopian market. Inspired by ANT, this thematic analysis has sought to provide an account of the Puma currency scheme in which neither the material nor the symbolic aspects of markets are privileged over another. Instead, it is argued that contexts, material practices and symbols are mutually intertwined in heterogeneous networks for which no causal explanation can be given.

Hence, the last part of the present thematic analysis has discussed symbolic and discursive practices, as well as identities, that are enacted in the Puma currency scheme. For example, within the Puma currency scheme, it has been argued that discursive practices are deployed in a process of resignification of private property as privative property. Research findings suggest that the latter concept renders visible the rights of non-owners with the purpose of rethinking and softening the boundaries of private property. Besides the resignification of the meaning of private property, it is apparent that Puma members are involved in a parallel process of questioning the meaning of public property. In this regard, the

Puma community seeks to create a symbolic space to transcend what they see as a “culture of the public” and embrace new understandings of collective property related to community.

This ethnographic engagement reveals that the symbolic dimension of the Puma currency scheme is not limited to subverting notions of private and public property. Indeed, notions of debt have also become a focus of reflection for Puma members. In this regard, participants highlight tensions between the notion of debt and that of social obligation as a means of experiencing credit relationships within the Puma currency scheme. Whilst debt is described as creating a negative type of bond between a creditor and a debtor, notions of social obligation has been argued as necessary for establishing a network based on reciprocity and mutual support. Consequently, this section has discussed in detail how members of the Puma community deploy a number of symbolic and discursive resources to negotiate the meaning of debt as a social obligation.

Moreover, the Puma currency scheme emerged as a collective space for reflecting upon how the prevalence of masculine values in economic thinking hampers the transition to degrowth. Contrary to the masculine values underpinning growth-driven economic systems, it has been argued that members are involved in a process of feminisation of their discourses and practices. Furthermore, the present examination of the Puma community’s symbolic dimension reveals a redefinition of wealth as Eco-wealth. Whilst the actual meaning of Eco-wealth is rather elusive, it has been argued that the concept is related to the valuation of reproductive work, self-production, repairing, recycling or reusing old materials, as well as activities that contribute to strengthen the social bonds between members of the Puma currency, the Palace and the neighbourhood of El Pumarejo.

To conclude this analysis of the symbolic dimension of the Puma currency scheme, the last part of this PhD thesis has discussed the production of subjectivities and identities in the context of the Puma currency scheme (Prothero *et al.,* 2010; Prothero *et al.,* 2011). Research findings suggest that traditional subject positions as “the consumer” or “the citizens” are inadequate to understand how individuals engage in sustainability politics in the context of degrowth as members actively resist the enactment of green consumer or green citizen identities. Instead, they are involved in the construction of alternative identities such as those of prosumers or caringzens. In this regard, prosumers and caringzens emerge as a bottom-up effort to invent new forms of being-political within heterotopian markets. Indeed, whilst notions of the citizen or the consumer accommodate subjectivity to the political and economic structures of a growth-driven socioeconomic order, whose foundations are beginning to crumble under simultaneous social, economic and ecological crises, notions of prosumer and caringzens are tentative glimpses into a degrowth world in the making. This emergence of new identities and subjectivities at the margins of green capitalism is consistent with the view of heterotopian markets as spaces for social innovation and radical politics.

Within the literature of marketing, the symbolic fluidity of markets has been argued as having an empowering effect on consumers by granting them a degree of agency to negotiate multiple forms of engagement in market relationships (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). However, whilst the construction of new meanings and identities is central to the subversion of conventional market practices in El Puma, a word of caution is necessary here. In this regard, this work reveals that a reflexive questioning of meanings, symbols and identities offered by dominant market discourses, confronts communities and individuals with a new set of practical problems for which, in most cases, there are no ready-made practical solutions. Therefore, in order to be durable, the enactment of alternative market ontologies must be attentive not only to the cultural aspects of degrowth

(Assadourian, 2010), but also to the practical problems that confront these communities in transition.

5.4.6 Reclaiming markets for degrowth through market praxeology in heterotopia

These arguments may start to address the market paradox in marketing, which this author has identified as one of the main conceptual triggers of the present work. Drawing upon Venkatesh *et al.* (2006), markets are everywhere and nowhere in the marketing literature because they have not received adequate attention as legitimate objects of inquiry on their own right. Arnould (2013) has recently argued the urgency of constructing a 'praxeology of value' within the discipline of marketing, which he conceptualises as a theory of how values are created, exchanged, appropriated or shared, informed by practice-based approaches. Drawing upon the burgeoning body of literature on market practices (Araujo *et al.*, 2010; Kjellberg *et al.,* 2012), it is suggested that marketing praxeology does not have to be confined to the study of market values. In this regard, the praxeology of markets undertaken in the present research emerges as a parallel endeavour to the praxeology of value argued by Arnould, yet placing a specific emphasis on markets (Araujo *et al.,* 2010). Therefore, this empirical examination of a market in the making may inform scholarly calls for a shift from marketing to markets (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2006) or Vargo's argument for a normatively positive theory of the market (Vargo, 2007), from a market practice perspective.

However, the present work does not embrace a politically disinterested call to study markets for purely epistemological reasons. In this regard, the literature review has argued that the vague market concept that prevails in the literature is not neutral; rather, it operates a marketing ideology (Marion, 2006), which hampers the emergence of sustainability discourses

that challenge the notion of green economic growth. The difficulty to envisage sustainability alternatives beyond the growth paradigm is problematic, particularly as foreseen ecological and social pressures makes it necessary to open up a debate about degrowth within marketing (Varey, 2010; 2012). However, unless we are able to reclaim notions of the market beyond the dominant growth paradigm, marketing approaches to degrowth will continue to be dismissed as being anti-market. Therefore, this market praxeology contributes to "soften" the idea of universal market by imbuing market narratives with practices, social relationships, material objects, routines, places, skills and competences that highlight the multiplicity of real-life markets (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). Indeed, if markets are the outcome of market practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007), and market practices are fluid, unstable and complex assemblages of multiple performances (Warde, 2005), there is no reason to expect a distinct 'regime of value' that we can unproblematically identify as "the market" (Arnould, 2013).

These critical arguments endorse recent calls for a shift from reflexivity to critical performativity within the literature on critical marketing (Tadajewski, 2010), critical management studies (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012), and consumer research (Cova *et al.,* 2013). Ultimately, the challenge of reclaiming markets for degrowth begs the question of where to find subversive market narratives within the global market landscape sculpted by two centuries of unprecedented economic growth. The research findings suggests that heterotopias of resistance such as El Pumarejo offer a promising point of departure to interrogate market possibilities for an envisaged transition towards a degrowth society. To be sure, this ethnographic experience with the Puma currency scheme does not allow the author to make sweeping generalisations and bold statements about such market possibilities. However, with due caution, this work suggests that, as communities distance themselves from the growth paradigm, it is indeed possible to discern market practices that are more caring,

participative, communitarian, ecological, and local, than the present view of markets allows.

5.5 Recommendations and further research: methods and practices

Drawing upon these findings, the present work makes a number of recommendations and suggests further research required. Firstly, the embeddedness of the Puma currency scheme in concrete dynamics of place, communities and practical concerns, highlights substantial barriers for extrapolating the experience of this degrowth initiative to other contexts. In this regard, alternative currency initiatives akin to El Pumarejo, including Transition Towns, are likely to encounter barriers and enablers that are context-specific rather than universal. Therefore, the present work suggests that further research is required to enhance our understanding of the micro-processes through which market innovations for degrowth are developed and adopted within different heterotopian contexts.

Moreover, this work recommends relaxing the use of generic normative frameworks to implementing alternative currency schemes in favour of approaches that can be adapted to local contexts, needs and resources. Indeed, research findings support the idea that transformative market practices undertaken by degrowth communities, such as alternative currency schemes, could be enhanced by encouraging them to develop - and apply - frameworks grounded in their own experiences and practices, rather than importing them from prescriptive theory. Hence, further research may be conducted to examine the value of more empathic and less hierarchical research approaches, such as ethnography and action research, to encourage transformative market actions.

The findings of this ethnography highlight the potential benefits of adopting bottom-up, inclusive and collaborative approaches as a means of involving

people in the making of markets for degrowth. In this regard, it is apparent that the success of the Puma currency scheme can be largely explained by its capacity to embrace diversity and use it in their own advantage. It is also apparent that the openness and participative nature of decision-making, as observed in the Puma currency scheme, are able to steer not only community involvement, but also creativity and critical reflexivity within this type of initiatives. Nevertheless, further research is required to investigate whether these recommendations hold across contexts.

Furthermore, this work recommends being sceptical about the transformative potential of alternative currency schemes that are limited to affect market exchanges to make them local. In particular, I am refereeing here to local currency initiatives such as, for example, the Brixton Pound and the Bristol Pound. In this regard, the present research demonstrates that, besides exchange practices, the enactment of heterotopian markets involves a wide range of other market-making practices and symbolic processes. Whilst these market making practices tend to be blackboxed at the moment of exchange, they are crucial indeed to sustain the latter. Therefore, communities seeking to reinvent markets for degrowth will have to move beyond the surface of exchange practices (swapping one Pound for another) and address the infrastructural work required by a deeper transformation. In this regard, further research may be undertaken to explore in depth the relationship between market-making processes in heterotopia and the type of exchanges that take place within markets.

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LLoveras, J. (2013a) *Untittled* [Photograph: View of the Pumarejo Palace and the Pumarejo square] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013b) *Untittled* [Photograph: Image of one of the Pumarejo Palace's patio] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013c) *Untittled* [Photograph: *View of "Casa Mariano", a traditional bar embedded in the building*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013d) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of one of the balconies of the Pumarejo Palace*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013e) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of a grafitti: "sistema productivo" - translated as "productive system"*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013f) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of a grafitti: "El Puma ruge. Casa Pumarejo, rehabilitación y revitalización" - translated as: "the Puma is roaring. Pumarejo Palace, reappropriation, rehabilitation, revitalisation"*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013g) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of young opera singer performs during the Second National Gathering of Alternative Currencies in Spain organised by the Puma community*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013h) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of A Puma passbook*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013i) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of Inside pages of my own Puma passbook after various exchanges*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013j) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of Participants in the one of the bartering event organised by and for female members of the Puma community*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013k) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of volunteer of the Comisión de Acogida interacting with prospect members during one of the "Welcoming Days"*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013l) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of volunteer explaining how to use the Puma passbook to a new member*] In possesion of: the author.

LLoveras, J. (2013m) *Untittled* [Photograph: *Image of members buying their groceries in the Central de Abastecimiento*] In possesion of: the author.

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