

Spaces for Feminist Commoning? Creative Social Enterprise's Enclosures and Possibilities

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Abstract: This paper contributes an intersectional feminist analysis and methodological approach to debates about commoning and social enterprise. Through a narrative description of feminist social enterprise projects based on action research with the Kinning Park Complex, a social centre with a radical history in Glasgow's South Side, I demonstrate how contemporary community economic development models can entrench intersectional exclusion. Specifically, I show how market-oriented social enterprise models reproduce precarious work, hinder cooperative ethics, and promote depoliticised notions of difference. However, I also investigate the ways that community organisers and activists at KPC are re-working these neoliberal models to carve out spaces for feminist commoning. Through these acts, women-identifying and non-binary activists, artists, and community organisers grapple with the classed, raced, and gendered politics of community organising and foster solidarities across difference.

Keywords: commoning, feminism, community planning, race, neoliberalism

Over the past few years, Kinning Park Complex's (KPC) weekly pay-what-you-want KP community cafe has created a feminist urban commons in Glasgow's South Side Kinning Park neighbourhood. At large collective tables, people from a range of backgrounds—seniors living on limited incomes, young people working in zero-hours contract jobs, anti-poverty activists, refugees and asylum seekers, artists, community development practitioners, and people in addiction recovery programs—share delicious meals created out of perfectly good food destined for the landfill. KPC is a community-led social and arts centre that supports a range of social enterprise initiatives promoting upcycling and zero-waste initiatives. It has also assisted in establishing social enterprise projects run by and for migrant women.

According to critical urban researchers, social enterprise projects promoting hybrid social and business goals exemplify the spread of neoliberal values in the community development sector. At the same time, KPC staff and volunteers leverage social enterprise funding to program politicised talks and film screenings. The centre also provides affordable, sometimes free, meeting spaces for working class and women of colour-led organisations, as well as LGBTQ+, sex worker, and migrant justice activist collectives. Moreover, it facilitates reflexive and critical community development forums including *Make a Place*, a workshop for women-

identifying and gender non-binary staff, participants, and volunteers (Kinning Park Complex 2018). Through these activities, KPC carves out an explicitly feminist urban commons within and against neoliberal social enterprise. These activities spark what Chandra Mohanty (2003) refers to as solidarities across difference that should be considered a political as well as an ethical goal in anti-capitalist struggle.

In this intersectional feminist analysis of neoliberal community development, I employ a lens attentive to gendered, raced, classed, and ableist power relations and structures (Curran 2017; Isoke 2013; Parker 2017). Specifically, I explore the limits and potential for commoning within social enterprise projects constrained by market-oriented policies. Critical urban scholars question whether community organisations can implement progressive and radical projects within an era of austerity and increasingly corporatised social care (Amin et al. 2002). However, this research often overlooks the potential for ethical, more-than-capitalist anti-racist, queer, and feminist projects to emanate from social enterprise projects, including spaces of commoning which Amanda Huron (2018) defines as “the practice of collectively governing the resources necessary for life” in her book *Carving Out the Commons*.

In this paper, I contribute to feminist analyses of commoning by turning a diverse economies lens on a few of KPC’s social enterprise initiatives to critically reflect on my action research with the centre. My analysis demonstrates how, as public-private community development strategies download social reproduction responsibilities onto grassroots groups, these neoliberal agendas can hinder politicised advocacy work, naturalise precarious labour, and favour marketable notions of diversity. At the same time, I show how the politicised and reflexive staff and volunteers at KPC continually re-work these contradictory social enterprise models to carve out spaces of feminist commoning. Disrupting neoliberal policies in this way, women-identifying and non-binary volunteers, activists, and community members are able to engage in anti-racist feminist community organising.

In the first and second part of this paper, I provide a brief introduction to the context of social enterprise in KPC and Glasgow’s Kinning Park neighbourhood, as well the methods that I mobilised for this research. In the third section, I provide an overview of debates about social enterprise, including critics who charge that these neoliberal formations deepen intersectional inequalities. I also mobilise a diverse economies lens to discuss the potential of participatory research to uncover and amplify alternative and more-than-capitalist practices and solidarities “co-evolving” (Larner 2014) within, alongside and against market-oriented social enterprise. In the fourth part, I recount the successes and struggles of a catering social enterprise run by and for migrant women based at KPC. I also reflect on my experiences with *Make a Place*, a workshop for women volunteers and activists that I co-facilitated with the centre’s staff and volunteers. Here, I will discuss how neoliberal social enterprise models can constrain collectivist feminist politics, but also how working class, racialised, and LGBTQI+ activists are continually re-working these projects to engage in reflexive and intersectional activism across sites and scales.

Context: KPC in Austerity Glasgow

For decades now, third sector organisations and city officials have struggled to ameliorate social exclusion, poverty, and deprivation in Glasgow. Over the century the loss of trade union safety nets that accompanied industrial jobs has resulted in deepening social exclusion for working-class families (MacLeod 2002). City officials and planners further reinforced social isolation as they re-housed inner-city communities in large peripheral estates and new towns far from the city's centre. Since the 1970s, the familiar problems of "poor transit links, high unemployment, social and economic isolation, crime, substance abuse and ill-health became endemic" (Amin et al. 2002:58) have shaped daily life in post-industrial Glasgow.

Within this context, Glasgow City Council, third sector and philanthropic groups have strived to restructure and diversify its local economy by catalysing new investment via social enterprise (Amin et al. 2002). Because it was home to a such a diverse range of small-scale community-based projects administered by local intermediaries and the City Council, UK policy makers celebrated Glasgow as a site of social enterprise innovation throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Amin et al. 2002). Since the mid-1990s, social enterprise projects in Glasgow have operated within a restrictive audit culture, a top-down bureaucratic approach, and professionalised regeneration policies (Amin et al. 2002).

Based in the aging science wing of a Victorian elementary school building, KPC is a community interest company, or CIC, an organisational model introduced by the UK government in 2005 under the Companies Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise Act. CICs are designed to allow social enterprises to direct their profits and assets towards the public good (CIC Association 2020). As an arts-based CIC, KPC generates revenue by renting out kitchen space, artist studios, and community halls for theatre and music events, activist gatherings, and dance and yoga classes. By providing affordable meeting space, KPC strives to reduce isolation, build friendships, and create a real sense of community (Kinning Park Complex 2018). Currently, the centre supports a range of short-term and long-term voluntary initiatives, including a bike repair and community gardening program, as well as social enterprise projects promoting creativity, sustainability and local economic development. These projects have included KPC couture, a plastics upcycling program that transforms plastic waste into jewellery, Code Your Future, a program providing refugees and asylum seekers training in coding and IT skills, and the KP Community Café, a pay-what-you-want café featuring food from Fare-share, a local social enterprise that redistributes surplus food destined for the landfill into healthy meals (Kinning Park Complex 2018). In 2018, KPC secured £197,000 in funds from the Scottish Big Lottery Fund to upgrade the aging building and construct a social enterprise hub that will support social and economic development projects across the city.

When I conducted this research between 2017 and 2018, austerity policies created enormous pressures for residents living in Glasgow's South Side Kinning Park Neighbourhood. At that time, 45% of children in the area were living in poverty and people with disabilities bore the brunt of £56 million of cuts to social care programs across Scotland (2019 Glasgow Disability Alliance). Meanwhile, asylum-

seekers living in the South Side and across Glasgow were living on an allowance of £36.75 a week and were not allowed to work while they waited for their claims to be decided (Lyons and Duncan 2017). Seeking to stave off social isolation, access healthy food and take part in recreation programs in a warm and friendly space, residents from across Glasgow took part in KPC's projects (Kinning Park Complex 2018). According to a 2017 survey, a large number of KPC's volunteers and project participants were asylum-seekers and refugees, seniors and disabled people, and artists and activists from various anti-poverty, anti-racist, feminist and LGBTQI+ organisations and collectives (Kinning Park Complex 2017).

KPC originally emerged from a fierce struggle against austerity policies. From 1976 to 1996, the aging building was home to a range of recreation programs for moms and toddlers. In 1996, a group of activists, mostly moms and grandmothers, occupied the building after Glasgow City Council threatened to close the social centre in a round of cutbacks to community spaces across the city (Nolan 2015). At that time, Glasgow City Council mandated £23 million in cuts to local community services after "Glasgow City" became the newly created single tier local authority thanks to the Local Government Act of 1994 (Nolan 2015). The re-drawing of these local boundaries had been economically detrimental for the newly established Glasgow City Council, as some of the removed areas included wealthy suburbs that previously generated important tax revenue.

In response to the lively, politicised, and persistent occupation that was supported by seasoned anti-road construction anarchist collectives, the city council agreed to rent the space to Scotland in Europe, a local voluntary organisation, for a "peppercorn rent" of one pound a year (Nolan 2015). At this time, a few of the activists were hoping to transform the building into a space primarily for artist's studios, exhibitions, and performances. Meanwhile, community organisers working with the centre were committed to creating an accessible arts and recreation space for working-class families, seniors, migrants and refugees, and anti-racist and anti-sectarian groups. In line with these values, from 1998 to 2009, the building provided a lively convergence space for a range of childcare and recreation activities and grassroots community organisers.



Figure 1: "This centre exists" (source: author's photo) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

In 2009, when Glasgow City council faced another fiscal crisis, it cancelled concessionary rents for grassroots organisations throughout the city and raised KPC's rent from £1 to £6000 a year (Nolan 2015). To generate this revenue, the community centre implemented several public-private green and creative enterprise models including renting artist studios, programming the KP community café, and seeding a range of social enterprise initiatives promoting local economic development and employment training.

Methodology: Research Practices for Feminist Commoning

In 2014, I arrived in Glasgow as a post-doctoral researcher interested in arts-led community development and activism. While attending arts events at KPC I learned about some of the social enterprise organisations that it has supported, including the migrant catering collective run by a group of migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women. A few years ago, KPC provided resources for this fledgling social enterprise group by offering it affordable access to its large kitchen space. Within a short amount of time, the collective became a popular choice for unions, third sector organisations, and community groups from across the city seeking delicious North and East African and Polish food. Once the group achieved self-sufficiency and required a larger commercial kitchen, it moved to an empty café space in Glasgow's East End (Interview, June 2017).

As I developed relationships at KPC, staff and volunteers described their frustrations with researchers analysing their projects without investing their time and energy into the social centre. Taking heed of this criticism, I engaged in a praxis-oriented approach for my analysis of feminist commoning by regularly attending weekly community meals, volunteering at KPC events, and co-organising and co-facilitating a dedicated *Make a Place* workshop (Athena Co-Learning Collective 2018, Cahill et al. 2007; McLean et al. 2015). All aspects of the workshop research—defining questions, choice of methods and data sources, data analysis and presentation of findings—were formed in collaboration with KPC staff and volunteers. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 people participating at the centre and in social enterprise projects in Glasgow more broadly. Selected through snowball sampling, six of the interviewees were women connected to the catering collective I discuss in this paper.

Participatory action research with social enterprise organisations can offer nuanced insights into anti-racist and feminist acts of commoning within such projects. Embracing what Richa Nagar (2014:2) refers to as “multi-directional pedagogy”, participatory methods encourage people from marginalised social locations to collaboratively shape research questions and to analyse findings (Torre and Fine 2004). Such methods provide opportunities to learn from what Aziz Choudry (2010) refers to as the “incremental, below-the-radar, often incidental and informal forms of learning and knowledge production that can be so important, but hard to recognize, let alone document and theorize”. Moreover, these methods can connect participants and their knowledge of everyday life to broader political-economic dynamics such as exclusionary systems of city building

and they also express a commitment to a feminist ethics of care (Cahill et al. 2007; Cerecer et al. 2019; McLean et al. 2015).

Nevertheless, like all academic research, community-based participatory approaches can reflect the white supremacist, patriarchal, classed, and ableist norms that dominate larger society (Mott 2018). Indeed, critics have described this mode of analysis as being “as white as professional golf” (de Leeuw et al. 2012). However, the exclusions and tensions that can arise in these participatory processes can challenge researchers and participants to re-think the purpose and politics of knowledge production and community-engaged scholarship. They can also help forge solidarities across communities with reflexive, intersectional feminist research and praxis (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Lerner 2014; Nagar 2014).

Relying on a narrative voice about my experience working with social enterprise projects in this paper, my aim is to amplify examples of politicised feminist commoning growing between the cracks of these heterogenous and contradictory initiatives (Federici 2018). My partial and situated feminist positionality is best described as an ongoing commitment to intersectional feminist activism and research with communities at what adrienne maree brown (2017) refers to as “the speed of trust”. I also acknowledge that my practice is influenced by my multiple subject positions including those of a privileged, yet precarious researcher, white settler from a place called Canada, and cis-gender identity. Moreover, my intention is to not distance myself from whiteness as I reflect on and interrogate white feminism in this paper. I acknowledge that I have made mistakes and will most likely keep making them as I engage in this work, but I am committed to keep learning and living with discomfort (Athena Co-Learning Collective 2018).

Social Enterprise: Neoliberal Traps or Spaces for Feminist Commoning?

Over the past decade, critical urban researchers have investigated the global proliferation of social enterprise initiatives promoting entrepreneurialism, employment training, and social and economic development. Proponents claim that these strategies can foster humane, cooperative, and sustainable forms of social organisation (Amin 2009; Amin et al. 2002). They also contend that these hybrid organisations, positioned inside and outside of capitalism, are generating social change and cultivating new forms of grassroots expertise as they provide economic development and skills training opportunities for underrepresented immigrant communities, queer youth and people with disabilities (Jones et al. 2019).

However, there is not one agreed upon definition for social enterprise. Indeed, this umbrella term can be understood as a “social construct that can be viewed from varying perspectives and dimensions” (Sepulveda 2015; Teasdale 2011). In the UK, these strategies date back to the 1800s when cooperatives and community enterprises supported disinvested neighbourhoods with trading opportunities and skills training (Teasdale 2011). The term now refers to a range of employee-owned businesses, credit unions, cooperatives, development trusts, community interest companies and non-profit organisations. While some of these models

mirror and mimic business strategies and follow commercial logics, collectivist and communitarian social enterprise models can include grassroots worker cooperatives and solidarity economies that value democratic practices and equity principles.

The current UK social enterprise sector emerged out of a constellation of factors including the rise of New Public Management models of the early 2000s. At that time, state organisations, private sector think tanks and consultancy groups devised and promoted business approaches to governing third sector community service provision (Nicholls and Teasdale 2017). Influenced by these policies, in 2009 and 2010, the government of then Conservative leader David Cameron encouraged Big Society initiatives, or the offloading of community care and services on to neighbourhood organisations and individuals (Dowling and Harvie 2014). Within a Big Society context, social enterprise initiatives harnessed the communitarian ethics and voluntary labour of charities, church groups, and grassroots organisations to provide community services as the state cut back support.

Social enterprise initiatives are also shaped by the specific contexts in which they are practiced. For example, while Glasgow-based food security strategies may mirror projects in Sao Paulo, Brazil, each initiative is shaped by vastly divergent histories of community organising and state, NGO, and third sector planning paradigms (Teasdale 2011). Because these projects bring together diverse assemblages of actors and initiatives, collectivist and private sector values can also co-exist within specific social enterprise projects and be calibrated to reflect their local context (Hossein 2018; Lerner 2014).

Critical scholars charge that the global rise in popularity of these initiatives signals the spread of neoliberal community development models within an era of increasing fiscal stress and anti-welfare state ideology. As Perry Anderson (2000) writes, third way projects implemented via social enterprise are the best ideological shells of neoliberalism today because they naturalise citizen responsabilisation agendas and offload economic development and care work on to neighbourhood-based organisations (DeFilippis 2004). In order to receive funding, community organisations implementing such projects are often coerced to comply with restrictive metrics and auditing schemes that factor in the “advantages of a socially and environmentally sustainable society embedded in a capitalist economy” (Federici 2018:90).

Critics also charge that social enterprise projects often avoid oppositional or resistive politics because they rely on philanthropic, public, and private funding and are connected to mainstream organisations and institutions (Lerner 2014; Wolch). Oli Mould (2018:200), for example, critiques public-private creative social enterprise strategies in London for reproducing “unidirectional and homogenising” projects and encouraging unthreatening and depoliticised community development goals that align with urban regeneration schemes. Relatedly, Angela McRobbie (2016) shows how creative industry social enterprise strategies often naturalise precarious work as they rely on interns and offer low-paying and piece-meal employment.

Feminist scholars also critique social enterprise projects for entrenching intersectional hierarchies because these strategies often offload already devalued social

reproduction and care work on to grassroots organisations led by racialized Black-Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women and 2SLGBTQ+ community members (Cahaus 2019; Parker 2017).¹ Moreover, critics charge that contemporary social enterprise models can reproduce what Bannerji (2002:201) refers to as a “multi-cultural inclusion model” of political, economic and moral regulation that disciplines the conduct of “othered” categories including that of visible minority, ethnic, and immigrant. Within this context, these strategies often value superficial and market-friendly encounters with diversity.

Because this sector tends to be led by cis-gendered, university-educated white women, social enterprise models also raise difficult questions about the politics of white supremacy in feminist organising. Socialised to be nice and non-confrontational, professionalised white women often downplay women of colour’s experiences and engage in collaborative projects without assessing and taking seriously intersectional power dynamics (Bonds 2020; Syed and Ali 2011). As a result, these community economic development strategies can reproduce what Ahmed refers to as performative allyship instead of addressing and contesting structural inequalities (Ahmed 2017).

Meanwhile, feminist diverse economies researchers question the extent to which well-worn political-economy pathways of critique reinforce a capitalocentric approach to analyses of social enterprise. J K Gibson-Graham 1996 define capitalocentrism as an analytic stance that posits capitalism as all consuming, omnipresent, and coherent. For diverse economies researchers, this standpoint is limited and limiting because it “obscures ways of seeing, understanding and living in a world that are not in relation to capitalism” (Huron 2018:37).

Instead of seeking out and diagnosing the nefarious effects of neoliberal policies, feminist diverse economies researchers (Community Economies Institute 2019; Gibson-Graham et al. 2013) uncover and amplify the myriad possibilities within contradictory community development strategies. With this approach, they “search the world again for things again that are already there” (Dombroski forthcoming), including “the actual initiatives, ideas and techniques” (Larner 2014:191) involved in sustaining such projects. Emphasising specificity, these methods posit community initiatives as “neither unitary nor immutable” and “always in interaction with other cultural formations or discourses” (Kingfisher 2002:165; see also Roelvink 2016).

As Huron (2018:155) contends, a diverse economies approach is particularly useful for documenting and theorising how social enterprise organisations can carve out spaces for commoning “within, against and between” capitalist practices. Commoning refers to communal strategies of collectively owning land, community space, and housing that unsettle traditional binaries of public and private, individual and society, state and market (Federici 2018; Huron 2018). Huron (2018:155) engages with commoning scholars who claim that the everyday work of commoning isn’t inherently political because it mostly involves making sure people have access to what she describes as “stuff—food, water, housing—in order to live”. However, for Huron, these activities support communities with important social reproduction labour and generate more-than-capitalist alternatives making us re-think what counts as political.

Both diverse economies and Marxist feminist scholars including activist and theorist Silvia Federici (2018) call for research on feminist commoning that unsettles colonial gender and race hierarchies (see also Hossein 2018). In this way, feminist commoning often involves strategies to provide non-commodified and collective modes of social reproduction and care work (Harcourt 2019). Emphasising mutuality, sharing and reciprocity, these practices foster horizontal power structures and intimate connections (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Harcourt 2019; Hossein 2018). Creative commoning spaces that involve arts practice, food and feminist activism can also “re-enchant the world” (Federici 2018) in an era of isolation, anxiety, and competition (Kern and McLean 2017).

For some time now, anti-colonial feminist scholars have both researched and practised commoning to carve out spaces for historically excluded women of colour and working-class activists and community workers (see Taylor 2017). Citing the work of Saidiya Hartmann, Da Costa (2016:242) demonstrates how lower caste women working in India’s neoliberalised creative industry sector find ways to “steal away” in order to create spaces of communal learning, solidarity, and pleasure (see also Anzaldúa 1982; Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar 2006). For Da Costa, such acts reveal everyday feminist strategies of refusing and re-working mainstream economic development regimes to foster solidarity and care. Da Costa and Hartmann’s attention to heterogeneity and agentic potential also echoes feminist activists and theorists of colour who do not have the privilege of being able “to ignore multiplicity in the same way white women might” (Domroski forthcoming; see also Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015).

Social Enterprise at KPC: Contradictions *The Successes and Struggles of a Catering Collective*

In many ways, KPC’s relationship with the catering social enterprise exemplifies feminist commoning practices of co-learning, care and fostering non-commodified social reproduction (Federici 2018). In interviews, a few of the collective’s members described how KPC staff and volunteers assisted the under-resourced women with grant writing skills and by connecting them with third sector and philanthropic partners engaged in social enterprise across Scotland. By offering affordable access to the kitchen and the building’s meeting halls, KPC also created space for the collective to weave important social safety nets. One of the collective’s members, a woman of Eritrean descent, described the intense social isolation that refugee and asylum-seeking women face as they negotiate life in an unfamiliar city with minimal and sometimes no incomes or access to social networks and community programs. For her, volunteering with the catering collective was a way for women to “laugh, to make friends, and meet other moms who speak your language and know about your culture and life” (Interview, July 2017). She also claimed that volunteers working with the collective would take three buses and travel up to two hours across the Greater Glasgow Area to participate in projects and cooking workshops that provided opportunities to stave off social isolation.

At the same time, the interviews also signalled the ways that market-oriented technologies of neoliberal social enterprise governance can restrict commoning in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. When they first started out, the caterers intended to practice collectivist social enterprise by building connections with similar community organisations across Glasgow. One of the caterers, a working mom from Poland, claimed:

When we started the collective, our goal was to be a worker's cooperative that followed a horizontal approach to organising and working. We wanted to build an organisation where we shared all the tasks, from producing and delivering food, to attending book-keeping and marketing workshops. (Interview, July 2017)

However, to access grants, the collective is required to engage in training with philanthropic and private sector mentors, including workshops on strategies for competing with similar grassroots organisations. Working within what Parker (2017) identifies as a competitive, masculinist, and corporatised community development context, the caterers find it difficult to forge solidarities with similar grassroots organisations striving to practice cooperative ethics. Reflecting on this competitive context, the same woman noted: "we can't really follow a cooperative style ... we have to follow a business style, like any business where the boss calls the shots" (Interview with collective member, June 2017). The women also quickly learned how market-oriented community planning initiatives that mirror private sector values often normalise precarious work, what McRobbie (2016:30) refers to as the "pathologies of precarity" that characterise creative industry social enterprise.

To effectively run an organisation that combines social development and business goals, the moms and caregiving caterers often work overtime and for little, often no pay. "I work evenings writing grants, then I am up early peeling potatoes, making pastries, delivering food all over the city, and going to social enterprise training ... and I have three kids ... there is so much to balance in this exhausting work" (Interview, June 2017), one of the women stated.

Furthermore, interviews with the collective revealed how social enterprise schemes that espouse positivity and "joy" (Ahmed 2017) anchored in and reproducing white hetero-patriarchal systems of power can render racialised asylum-seeking and refugee women as "killjoys". For example, the collective initially aimed to engage in food-based projects that also addressed the trauma of UK border policies because some of the women had first-hand experience surviving detention centres. However, they soon realised that current funding and training models provide minimal resources and offer little support for projects that draw attention to racist and xenophobic border policies. One woman of North African descent described how the collective must report on their progress in private-sector and think tank-influenced auditing schemes that value more "positive success stories" (Interview, June 2017), not "negative" stories about trauma and struggle. "We have been told that stories about trauma, about loneliness are negative ... you can't sell food and run a business if you appear to be negative" (Interview, June 2017), she stated.

She also described how the collective struggles with the politics of marketing and image projection. For example, she pointed out how private and third sector funders value advertising materials that feature women in Hijab and North African women preparing food. “Funders like a friendly and multicultural look, an ethnic look. It is trendy and progressive” (Interview, June 2017), she laughed. Echoing critics of marketised and easy-to-consume notions of diversity (Catungal and Leslie 2009), she claimed that this emphasis on marketing multiculturalism in their advertising diverts attention from racialised structural inequalities. Moreover, she stated that:

Scottish funders like these images because they fit with the story that this country is not racist and more progressive than the rest of the UK ... but we have a long way to go, refugee and asylum seeking families cannot access housing, jobs, healthy food in this city. (Interview, June 2017)

In a similar vein, interviews with the women caterers signalled how social enterprise models can reproduce particularly depoliticised white feminism. One of the caterers discussed how private sector marketing mentors pressure the collective to appeal to what she described as “a white and middle-class look” (Interview, July 2017) on their website and in their marketing materials.

They want to see a posh style for women interested in trendy gourmet food, you know, all white walls and fancy food on wooden boards ... not a style for working women and migrant living in the East End working different jobs. (Interview, June 2017)

She also added “white, middle-class professional women in social enterprise leadership roles who cannot relate to the experiences of poor migrant and refugee women have all the mentoring and training roles, they are the bosses” (Interview, June 2017). As a result, white women in leadership roles materially benefit from circulating celebratory stories of diversity without engaging in the difficult work of reflecting on their privilege and how white supremacist standards are built into third sector and social enterprise structures (see Jones and Okun 2001; Syed and Ali 2011).

In another interview, a planner who has worked with food-based social enterprise projects around the UK, expressed conflicting feelings about the proliferation of such initiatives in the grassroots community sector (Interview, July 2017). Mirroring scholars who critique always-morphing neoliberal planning regimes, she described how these initiatives are cropping up, “cookie cutter-like ... projects that bring together women, poor people, food, gardens and art, the same social enterprise models again and again” in Glasgow’s disinvested communities and across the UK. For her, such interventions can create important social space for isolated seniors and moms. At the same time, such interventions are currently popular because they require minimal public support from philanthropists and state funders. She also claimed that images of working-class women, including racialised refugee and asylum-seeking women, in social enterprise marketing materials generate “feel good” stories for private sector organisations pursuing corporate social responsibility goals. These interventions can “paint over” the

brutality of austerity cuts, the privatisation of community spaces, and the loss of affordable housing to public-private regeneration schemes in Glasgow (Interview, July 2017).

Make a Place Workshop

The contributions of the women-identifying participants who took part in the *Make a Place* workshop, including members of the catering collective, also add criticality and nuance to our understanding of the feminist commoning practices that can emerge “within, between and against” (Huron 2018) neoliberal social enterprise. To learn more about social enterprise projects at KPC, I co-organised and co-facilitated the *Make a Place* workshop with KPC staff, volunteers, and activists. KPC staff came up with the idea of this workshop after some women voiced their frustrations towards who they described as the “shouty white guy activists” (Workshop notes, October 2017) who tended to take over community events. In response, KPC planned the two-hour workshop for women-identifying and non-binary volunteers, staff, activists, and artists participating in the centre’s projects to discuss strategies for supporting feminist community organising.

In group discussions the 15 women who participated in *Make a Place* disclosed that they worked in a range of employment sectors. Of the 15 women, four worked in community development, seven in a combination of creative industry, retail and service industry employment, two were employed as precarious care workers, and two women disclosed that they were unemployed and living on benefits. Because five of the women were recent migrants from Syria, Sarah Shaarawi, an Egyptian-Scottish playwright and founding member of Glasgow’s Workers Theatre (Workers Theatre 2019) who has programmed work at KPC provided simultaneous Arabic translation.

I started the workshop with a 10-minute introductory talk that introduced feminist concepts of solidarity and commoning, and cited Gibson-Graham et al.’s (2013) *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*, Silvia Federici and Audre Lorde. Shaarawi then read some excerpts from a play that she was writing about feminist activism in Cairo, and a KPC staff member gave a short talk about KPC’s history of feminist organising. The participants then broke into three groups of five and we discussed the following questions: What are the benefits of KPC’s community projects? Have you faced any barriers attending programs at the centre? And, how can KPC effectively break down these barriers?

In workshop discussions, a woman stated that “KPC has always been a place for feminist activists, for anarchists, it’s our home” (Workshop notes, 2017). The lively conversations then uncovered how, inspired by KPC’s past, the centre directs funding from organisations promoting sustainability, resilience, and entrepreneurialism to engage in politicised social reproduction and care work. For example, for the KP community café project, the centre employs a paid chef-in-residence who trains men from a local mental health and addictions recovery program to prepare food that would otherwise end up in the landfill. For this project, KPC staff invite activist collectives and artists from across Glasgow to program

social justice-oriented arts events and gatherings. Over the past three years, these gatherings have included a rich array of intergenerational and intersectional feminist projects: talks by Repeal the Eighth, an Irish feminist reproductive health movement, a North African International Women's Day dinner, and screenings of documentaries about women activists in Kurdistan, Palestine and South Africa. According to workshop participants, these gatherings are important spaces of care for seniors, newcomers, refugees and asylum seekers, people in recovery, and students and workers toiling away in isolating and precarious jobs. One woman, a health care worker from Poland, described how the people who take part in KPC's meals "come from all over the city in search of a place to socialize, access healthy food, and learn about other initiatives and services in Glasgow" (Workshop notes, 2017). "Because of these meals I have made friends and have social supports in a new city", she explained.

In these discussions, I also reflected on my experiences attending the meals and how these encounters in commoning, multi-sensory spaces of "re-enchantment" (Federici 2018), enriched my life as a fixed-term researcher living in Glasgow. I described how KPC's chef-in-residence created all kinds of inventive concoctions —beetroot lasagne, West African fusion burritos and Eritrean meals co-created with Eritrean volunteers are some memorable examples. These unusual meals also sparked some great banter with strangers on rainy winter nights. Moreover, each week, I met people from all kinds of backgrounds while setting up and cleaning the main hall: asylum-seeking moms who travelled to Glasgow with their children, activists contesting zero-hours contract jobs, retired seniors, and men and women of all ages in addiction recovery programs. At one dinner, a retired doctor from Newcastle who had moved to Glasgow to live near his son, gave advice to an El Salvadorian mom about how to heal her baby's diaper rash. In this exchange, an anarchist from the Basque Region who was at the centre for an activist workshop translated his helpful tips from English into Spanish. At other dinners, feminist activists hosted zine-making workshops, spaces to learn about histories of Glaswegian women trade unionists, anarchists, and anti-racist activists.

At the same time, KPC staff and I were careful not to romanticise the communities that evolve in the centre (Joseph 2002). In contrast to corporatised social enterprise strategies that can gloss over structural inequalities and avoid difficult discussions about intersectional power relations, KPC staff encouraged participants to discuss their frustrations with the centre's programs. In response, women working with a collective of BAME women-identifying, trans, and non-binary refugee activists who have experienced the violence of UK detention centres described the barriers they have faced participating in projects at KPC and in grassroots organisations across the city. One woman reflected on the prohibitive transit costs of getting to and from community meals and gatherings in social centres around the city. For her, these costs create serious barriers "for refugees and asylum seekers living on a few pounds a day" (Workshop participants, October 2017). She and other BAME-identifying workshop participants also raised their frustrations about the "white middle-class university educated women", including university researchers like myself, who tended to initiate and lead KPC's programs. For her, third sector and community development leadership in Glasgow reproduces

familiar classed and racialised hierarchies for women of colour activists, community workers, and volunteers. Meanwhile, another woman expressed anger towards the casual transphobia that she encountered while attending the community meals, including “being misgendered when I lined up for food and helped out with putting away tables after dinner”. At the same time, she acknowledged that the white working-class men who made these comments had probably not had the “access or privilege to learn about trans politics and non-binary pronouns” (Workshop notes, 2017). For her, KPC was a space where people came together and “we figured things out because staff, volunteers and people using the space were committed to making a safe space, a welcoming place”.

Committed to learning from agitations and vulnerabilities and working collectively (Nagar 2014), KPC staff and volunteers continue to prompt difficult conversations about intersectional power imbalances and to translate these ethics into praxis through small acts of solidarity. Whenever they can, the centre’s small staff made up of mostly white cis women and one racialised cis man continue to address uncomfortable racialised and gendered structural inequalities. These interventions include covering transit costs for refugee and asylum seeker volunteers and participants living with meagre resources and offering Halal food at all gatherings.

I witnessed how staff practised these principles at another workshop on community economies that I organised in March 2018. At this event, KPC staff provided me with bags of pound coins to cover transit costs for refugee and asylum-seeking women. Leading up to the workshop, they also offered mutual support, but also held me accountable by making sure that I provided free and healthy meals that included Halal options and protein options for vegans and vegetarians. In another community meeting in March 2019 where KPC staff discussed future redevelopment plans, they made commitments for diversifying hiring and future governance bodies. “The goal is to not offer a seat at the table, but to have BAME, refugee and LGBTQ+ communities run the show here, give them the keys”, stated one KPC staff member (Interview notes, 2017). Over the past two years, the centre has also offered reduced-rate, sometimes free, organising and event space for working class trans and non-binary collectives, BAME community organisers, and refugee and migrant rights groups.

Regarding transphobia at KPC, staff invited the Scottish Trans Alliance to conduct a trans and non-binary audit of the centre, a process that ensures that community organisations understand and implement trans and non-binary equity, rights and inclusion within programming (Scottish Trans Alliance 2018). KPC staff have also provided space for Alternative Pride, an alternative to events featuring corporations, banks, and the police. Furthermore, the centre offers affordable and free space for trans and non-binary organisations, sex worker collectives, anti-racist and migrant-led organisations. Taken together, these micro-practices of solidarity (Mott 2018) are deliberate steps to negotiate the differences in embodied social privilege that accompany race, class, gender, language, and citizenship status.

These reflexive and politicised commoning practices at KPC are interconnected with broader consciousness-raising activities that feed into acts of solidarity across

sites and scales. Many of the women who participated in the workshop and continue to take part in KPC projects were already deeply involved in organising across Glasgow and they continue to meet up at the weekly community meals and social events. As they gather in these “convergence spaces” (Routledge and Derickson 2016), the women continue to forge affinities and alliances with networks of grassroots organisations, artists and activists that spark further interventions.

Conclusions

In this paper I provide an overview of critical research on social enterprise. I demonstrate how proponents and critics of this mode of community economic development often reproduce capitalocentrism. While social enterprise advocates value such projects for supporting innovative business training, critics claim that these market-oriented strategies hinder cooperative values and normalise precarious work. Meanwhile, diverse economies researchers amplify the ways that community organisers, activists, and artists are building spaces of commoning within and against initiatives constrained by capitalist logics. These examples from KPC point to a feminist pre-figurative politics of making material change in the here and now.

My participatory research with KPC uncovers how social enterprise training and mentoring schemes can entrench intersectional inequalities for feminist community development organisations. Specifically, I show how an emphasis on professional development, image projection, and marketing can silence the experiences of racialised migrant and refugee women. I also demonstrate how market-oriented initiatives can build white women’s professional qualifications while reinforcing racialised and classed hierarchies.

At the same time, the *Make a Place* workshop reveals the potential for organisations practising hybrid business-community development models to re-work neoliberal initiatives and make space for feminist commoning. Inspired by the 1996 occupation, KPC staff continually find ways to implement a range of public-private initiatives to survive. Their actions demonstrate how market-oriented social enterprise models do not fully determine the collectivist interventions that can co-evolve within, between and against neoliberal community development models.

Importantly, instead of glossing over intersectional tensions, KPC staff and volunteers encourage difficult and reflexive conversations to make material changes in their daily operations. Even before they respond, staff and volunteers hear the perspectives of working class, racialised and LGBTQI+, refugee and asylum-seeking community members, show a sensitivity to their lived experiences, and approach them as experts in their own lives. As a white woman, I am cautious not to congratulate myself and other white activists, community workers and researchers for doing the bare minimum. Indeed, there is still a long way to go towards unsettling the intersectional inequalities that community development work and university research continues to reproduce (Ahmed 2017; Athena Co-Learning

Collective 2018). Nevertheless, the small acts of consciousness-raising taking place at KPC offer lines of flight towards forging solidarities across difference.

To conclude, this analysis of the contradictory politics of social enterprise signals the structural marginality that these market-oriented initiatives can reproduce. At the same time it points to possibilities for forging solidarities within these constraints. Within an era of marketised community development initiatives, community organisers and the people who share the KPC space are continually finding ways to craft spaces for feminist commoning. In these lively and caring spaces of re-enchantment and solidarity, people are pushing back at the isolation, loneliness, and everyday intersectional violence of austerity urbanism.

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Endnote

¹ I use the acronym Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) in this paper while acknowledging that it is an insufficient and homogenising umbrella term. I used this term because the women of colour organisers I interviewed referred to it frequently. See Ali (2020).

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