Over the past few years, Kinning Park Complex’s (KPC) weekly pay-what-you-want community cafe creates 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 and community interest company that exists because residents, mostly moms and grandmothers, occupied the space for fifty-five days when Glasgow City Council cut its funding in the mid 1990’s. Currently, the centre is home to a range of social enterprise projects promoting upcycling and zero waste initiatives, including the weekly meals. The centre 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 politicized talks and film screenings alongside and right after the community meals. The centre also supports Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME), LGBTQ+, sex worker and migrant justice activists by offering free and affordable meeting space. Moreover, it facilitates community development initiatives 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 models. And these activities spark what Chandra Mohanty (2003) refers to as the solidarities across difference that should be political as well ethical goals in anti-capitalist struggle.

In this paper, I engage in an intersectional feminist analysis of neoliberal community development attention to gendered, raced, classed, and ableist power relations and structures

(Parker 2017; Isoke 2013; Curran 2018) by exploring the limits and potential for commoning within social enterprise projects constrained by market-oriented policies. Critical urban scholars question whether or not community organisations can implement progressive and radical projects within an era of austerity and increasingly corporatized social care. They claim that these initiatives are popular with philanthropic, private, and third sector funding organisations because they require minimal state support, promote public-private partnerships, and engage communities with aesthetically pleasing yet depoliticised activities (Amin et al. 2002).

These analyses, however, often lack inquiry into the intersectional dimensions of social enterprise models. They also follow well-worn capitalocentric lines of inquiry that posit neoliberal policies as all-consuming, unidimensional, and depoliticizing (Gibson-Graham 1996). Furthermore, 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. In her book *Carving Out the Commons* Amanda Huron defines commoning as “the practice of collectively governing the resources necessary for life” (Huron 2018).

Here I contribute to feminist analyses of commoning by investigating the complicities and potentialities of a few of KPC’s social enterprise initiatives. To do this, I mobilise a feminist diverse economies lens to critically reflect on the activities that I learned about and participated in as part of my action research with the centre. My analysis demonstrates how, as public-private community development strategies download social reproduction responsibilities on to grassroots groups, they hinder politicised projects, naturalise precarious labour, and favour marketable notions of diversity. However, I also demonstrate how savvy KPC staff and volunteers continually re-work social enterprise models in order to carve out spaces of feminist commoning. With these interventions, women-identifying volunteers, activists and community members engage in reflexive community organising and contest the violence of austerity, privatization and intensifying borders in the UK.

Overall, my analysis is inspired by Huron’s (2018) commitment to making sense of and amplifying everyday commoning practices proliferating all around us in the here and now. This paper is also a response to Dia Da Costa’s (2017) call for more fine-grained research on the ways in which racialized, working-class, feminist, and queer activists and community development practitioners re-work contradictory neoliberal community development practices in order to “reimagine a more robust ideology for life” (Da Costa 2016: 246).

In the first 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 mobilized for this research. In the second part, I provide an overview of debates about social enterprise, including critics who charge that these neoliberal formations deepen intersectional inequalities. However, I also mobilize a diverse economies lens to discuss the potential of participatory research for uncovering and amplifying alternative and more-than-capitalist practices and solidarities “co-evolving” (Larner 2014) within, alongside and against market-oriented social enterprise. In the third part, I recount the successes and struggles of a catering social enterprise run by and for migrant women based at KPC and my experiences with *Make a Place,* a workshop for women volunteers and activists that I co-facilitated with the centre’s staff and volunteers. I then discuss how neoliberal social enterprise models can constrain collectivist feminist politics, but also how feminist, BAME, and LGBTQI+ activists are continually re-working these projects to engage in reflexive and intersectional activism across sites and scales.

**Context and Methods**

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, fourty-five percent of children in the area were living in poverty and people with disabilities bore the brunt of 56 million pounds of cuts to social care programs across Scotland (2018 End Child Poverty Coalition; 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, 2017). Seeking space 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 (KPC, 2018). According to a 2017 survey, a large number of KPC’s volunteers and projects participants were asylum-seekers and refugees, seniors and disabled people, artists, and activists from various anti-poverty, anti-racist, feminist and LGBTQI+ organisations and arts collectives (KPC community survey, 2017).

Based in the aging science wing of a Victorian elementary school building, KPC is community interest company and arts centre that 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 bring people together, reduce isolation, build friendships, and create a real sense of community (Kinning Park Complex, 2019) Currently, the centre supports a range of short 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 (Kinning Park Complex, 2018). These strategies include 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 twice a week, pay-what-you-want café featuring food from Fareshare, a local social enterprise that redistributes surplus food destined for the landfill into healthy meals (KPC 2019). In 2018, KPC secured 197,000 pounds 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

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 and dependence as they re-housed inner-city communities in large peripheral estates and new towns far from the city’s centre. Since the 1970’s, 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) 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 with 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 City Council, UK policy makers celebrated Glasgow as a site of third sector, social enterprise innovation throughout the 1980s and early 90’s (Amin et al 2002). Since the mid-1990’s, social enterprise projects in Glasgow have operated within a context of a restrictive audit culture, a top-down bureaucratic approach, and professionalised regeneration policies (Amin et. al 2002).

 As I will elaborate in this paper, social enterprise initiatives within a neoliberal paradigm can reproduce exclusionary politics but also bring together heterogenous assemblages of activists and organisations that can proliferate politicized projects. However, as Wendy Larner (2014) points out, critical research on such organisations often position social enterprise practitioners as conscious agents of depoliticized market-oriented projects, a capitalocentric framing that risks shutting down radical and progressive possibilities (Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham et. al 2013; Community Economies Research Institute 2019).

I came across this over-determining stance when I discussed my research interests with colleagues investigating grassroots community development in Glasgow. Before engaging in projects, some of my critical colleagues tended to condemn initiatives taking place in centres like KPC as neoliberal strategies that do little to resist capitalism (see also Kern and McLean 2017). As a former community planner who has worked in a context of austerity cuts and public-private partnerships, I feel that this masculinist standpoint dismisses the efforts of under-resourced, often women-led organisations to create space for progressive projects within constraining circumstances. At the same time, as I will discuss in more detail, a few of KPC’s staff and volunteers and women working with projects taking place in the centre also expressed discomfort towards university researchers extracting from and writing about the projects taking place in the community space.

These tensions motivated me to use a praxis-oriented approach in this analysis of feminist commoning. Rather than analysing KPC projects as objects of study, I regularly attended weekly community meals and co-organised and co-facilitated *Make a Place* (Cahill et al 2007; McLean et. al 2015; Athena Co-Learning Collective 2018). All aspects of the workshop research -- defining questions, choice of methods and data sources, data analysis and presentation of findings -- was 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, 6 of which were specifically related to this KPC case study.

Relying on a narrative voice about my experience working with social enterprise projects in this paper, my aim is to amplify examples of politicized feminist commoning growing from the cracks of these heterogenous, contradictory, and contested initiatives (Fedirici 2018). My approach is best described as a partial and situated feminist positionality and I have an ongoing commitment to intersectional feminist activism and engaging in research with communities at what adrienne marie brown (2017) refers to as “the speed of trust.” I also acknowledge that my practice is influenced by my multiple subject positions including privileged, yet precarious researcher, white settler from a place called Canada, and cis-gender. 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 keep learning and living with discomfort (Athena Feminist Collective 2018). Overall, my goal is to unsettle white supremacist and heteropatriarchal capitalist practices and envision and enact anti-colonial, post-capitalist worlds via engaged research**.** As I will discuss in detail, my intentions are not borne out of my individual politics and position, but out of the desires and critical engagements of the communities at KPC.

**Social Enterprise: Neoliberal Traps?**

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 organization (Amin et. al, 2002; 2009; Seyfange and Smith 2007). 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 (Rankin and Mclean 2014; Jones et. al 2018).

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” (Chew and Lyon 2012; see also Sepulveda, 2009; 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 (Teasdale 2011)**.**

The UK social enterprise sector emerged out of constellation of factors including the rise of New Public Management models of the early 2000’s. At this 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 2016). Influenced by these policies, in 2009 and 2010, the Cameron government encouraged Big Society initiatives, or the offloading community care and services on to neighbourhood organisations and individuals (Dowling 2014). Following Big Society approaches, social enterprise models harnessed the communitarian ethics and voluntary labour of charities, church groups, and grassroots organisations to provide community service provision as the state cut back support (Dowling 2014).

Social enterprise initiatives are also shaped by the specific contexts in which they are practiced. On one hand, because think tanks, universities, NGO’s and state funding organisations share these strategies in globally-extending networks of fast policy transfer, often projects replicate similar community economic development models. On the other hand, social enterprise projects vary according to the specific urban and regional contexts, politics and histories that they are implemented in. For example, while a Glasgow-based food security social enterprise 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). Moreover, because these projects bring together diverse assemblages of actors and initiatives, collectivist and private sector values can co-exist within specific social enterprise strategies (Teasdale 2011, Larner 2017).

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. Parry Anderson (2000) writes, ‘third way’ projects implemented via social enterprise are the best ideological shells of neoliberalism today because they naturalise citizen responsibilization agendas and offload economic development and care work on to neighbourhood-based organisations (Amin et. al, 1999; DeFillipis 2004; Nicholls, 2006; Nyssens, 2006). Moreover, in order to receive funding, community organizations 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” (Fedirici 2018:90).

Critical social enterprise researchers also point out how such projects avoid oppositional or resistive politics because they rely on philanthropic, public and private funding and are connected to mainstream organisations and institutions (Wolch 1990, Larner 2014). Oli Mould, for example, (2018:200) shows how public-private creative social enterprise projects in London are often “unidirectional and homogenising” and encourage “unthreatening” community development goals that align with urban regeneration schemes. Relatedly, Angela McRobbie (2015) demonstrates how arts-based and creative industry social enterprise strategies naturalize precarious work as they often rely on interns and offer low-paying and piece-meal employment.

Feminist scholars, including McRobbie, show how social enterprise projects can entrench racialized, classed, gendered and sexualised hierarchies (McRobbie 2015; LaFrombois 2016). Grassroots arts-based social enterprise projects led by white, university-educated community workers and activists in Detroit can reinforce uneven race and class hierarchies (LaFrambois 2016). Similarly, Parker (2017), Isoke (2013), and Cahaus (2019) investigate the intersectional implications of community economic development initiatives that offload already devalued social reproduction and care work on to grassroots organisations led by racialized working-class BAME women, Latinx and Indigenous women and LGBTQI+ community members.

Furthermore, feminist critics interrogate the ways that market-oriented social enterprise regimes can exclude politicized community projects confronting deeply gendered, racialized and classed austerity policies (Catungal and Leslie 2009; Bassel and Emejulu 2018). For Bannerji (2001:201), contemporary community development projects often follow a “multicultural inclusion model” of political, economic and moral regulation that disciplines the conduct of “othered” categories including visible minority, ethnic and immigrant. Within this context, even politicized initiatives can inadvertently feed into superficial encounters with diversity that naturalize aestheticized understanding of difference (see also Catungal and Leslie, 2009).

Moreover, because this sector tends to be led by white women, social enterprise raises difficult questions about uneven power relations along the lines of gender, race and class. Socialized to be nice and non-confrontational, white women often downplay women of colour’s experiences and engage in collaborative projects without assessing intersectional power dynamics (Syed and Ali 2011; Bonds 2019). As a result, instead of assessing and contesting intersectional structural inequalities, social enterprise strategies can reproduce what Ahmed refers to as performative allyship (Ahmed 2006).

***Spaces for Feminist Commoning?***

Feminist diverse economies researchers, however, 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) defined capitalocentrism as an analytic stance that posits capitalism as all consuming, omnipresent and coherent. For diverse economies researchers, including Gibson-Graham, McNeil, Healy and Dombrowski, 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 (Gibson-Graham et. al 2013; Community Economies Research Institute 2019) uncover and amplify the myriad possibilities within heterogenous and contradictory social enterprise initiatives. With this approach, they “search the world again for things again that are already there” (Dombrowski forthcoming), including “the actual initiatives, ideas and techniques” (Larner 2014: 191) involved in sustaining such projects. Emphasizing 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 Larner 2014 and Roelvink 2016). This analytic approach has important political consequences because it illuminates a non-capitalist presence in “locations where only a capitalist potential has been identified” (St. Martin 2009: 494).

As Huron 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” (Huron 2018, 155) 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 (Huron 2017; Fedirici 2018). In her research on Limited Equity Cooperative (LEC) housing models in Washington DC, Huron mobilizes commons-theorists to understand the work that goes into creating and sustaining affordable and accessible urban commons. In her work, she 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 Huron describes as “stuff -- food, water, housing -- in order to live.” (Huron 2018: 155). She also engages with activists striving to “reclaim the commons” who charge that community organizations entangled in mainstream neoliberal planning regimes simply cannot sustain radical activism.

Huron uncovers how LEC’s connected to mainstream planning institutions can also forge pathways towards building collectivist housing spaces. Through these acts, community members from various backgrounds forge a “common life” (Healy 2018) that decentres competitive, individualistic, and extractive logics. Huron also suggests that the practical labour that go into practicing and sustaining commoning spaces are far from apolitical. Rather, these feminist acts of social reproduction generate more-than-capitalist alternatives. Learning from these worlds “already being built around us right now, out of necessity” (Huron 2018) amplifies and prefigures hopeful strategies for forging a post-capitalist world and further challenging capitalist “claims to life, on many fronts” (Huron 2018: 177).

Both diverse economies and Marxist feminist scholars including activist and theorist Silvia Federici (2012) call for research on feminist commoning that unsettles colonial gender and race hierarchies (see also Dombroski, Healy and McKinnon 2019). Feminist commoning involves strategies to provide non-commodified and collective modes of social reproduction and care work. Emphasizing mutuality, sharing and reciprocity, these practices foster horizontal power structures and intimate connections (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003; Harcourt 2019). Involving arts practice, food and feminist activism, these sensual practices also “re-enchant the world” (Federici 2018) in a time of increasing isolation, anxiety and competition.

For some time now, intersectional and anti-colonial feminist scholars have both researched and practiced commoning in order to carve out spaces for historically-excluded women of colour and working-class activists and community workers (Combahee River Collective 1983). Citing the work of Saidiya Hartmann, Da Costa demonstrates how lower caste women working in India’s entrepreneurial and competitive arts sector find ways to “steal away” (Da Costa 2017: 242) in order to create spaces of communal learning, solidarity, and pleasure. For Da Costa such acts reveal everyday feminist strategies of refusing and re-working mainstream community economic development policies in order to foster solidarity and care. Da Costa’s attention to heterogeneity and agentic potential echoes feminist theorists of colour who do not have the privilege of being able “to ignore multiplicity in the same way white women might” (Dombrowski forthcoming; see also, Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981). Such an approach also sheds light on how women of colour activists and community workers are continually re-imagining and re-working normative policies to make space for “caring, impassioned, affective, volatile and socially unfettered subjects whose motivations are often otherworldly” (Isoke 2013:4).

Participatory action research with social enterprise organisations can also offer nuanced insights into anti-racist and feminist acts of commoning within such projects. Embracing what Richa Nagar (2012: 2) refers to as “multi-directional pedagogy,” participatory methods encourage people from marginalized social locations to collaboratively shape research questions and to analyse findings (Torre and Fine 2006). Such methods provide opportunities to learn from what Aziz Choudry (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.” Furthermore, with these methods, participants can connect their knowledge of everyday life with broader political-economic dynamics such as exclusionary systems of city building and express a commitment to a feminist ethics of care (Cahill 2007; Cahill, Sultana and Pain 2007; 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). Currently, in the UK, pressures to produce fast-turn around projects in order to make and measure impact can result in instrumental, extractive and colonial power dynamics and rough-shod ethics (Pain et. al 2016).At the same time, the exclusions and tensions that can arise in these processes can challenge researchers and participants to re-think the purpose and politics of knowledge production and community-engaged scholarship (Larner 2014; Nagar 2014; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018). Furthermore, agitations and ideological divides can present opportunities for research participants and researchers to reflect on and critique their own material circumstances, discuss strategies for change, and forge solidarities across communities with reflexive, intersectional feminist research and praxis.

In the next sections, I add nuance to debates about the pitfalls and potential of feminist community development within hybrid public-private social enterprise projects. Through my focus on the social enterprise strategies that I learned about while engaging in interviews and participatory research at KPC, I show how neoliberal community economic development regimes can restrict feminist commoning strategies. However, I also discuss the ways that KPC staff and volunteers foster collectivity, pleasure and re-enchantment within neoliberal capitalist enclosures. And I show how these activities have catalysed solidarities across sites and scales.

**KPC at Social Enterprise: Contradictions**

In 2014, I arrived in Glasgow as a post-doctoral researcher interested in arts-led community development and activism. At that time, urban researcher Laura Jane Nolan and some artists and community development practitioners whom I met mentioned the work of KPC. As a grassroots-led community centre, KPC approaches social enterprise with a collectivist and communitarian stance. While attending arts events at KPC, I learned about some of the feminist social enterprise organisations that it has helped to initiate, including a catering collective run by a group of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. A few years ago, KPC supported the 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 with catering collective member, June 2017).

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, the everyday work of (Federici 2017). 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 woman 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 company at KPC 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 with catering collective member, July 2017). She also claimed that volunteers working with the collective would take three busses and travel up to two hours across the Greater Glasgow Area to participate in projects and cooking workshops, opportunities to socialize and stave off social isolation (interview with a catering collective member, July 2017).

However, the interviews with the women also signalled the ways that market-oriented technologies of neoliberal social enterprise governance can restrict commoning practices 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. They also strived to follow a horizontal worker cooperative approach where each member shares all the tasks: from “producing and delivering food, to attending book-keeping and marketing workshops”(interview with collective member, July 2017). Moreover, in order 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 market-oriented community development context, the caterers have found it difficult to forge solidarities with similar grassroots organisations striving to practice cooperative ethics. One 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 corporatized community planning initiatives that mirror private sector values normalize precarious work, what McRobbie (2018: 30) refers to as the social enterprise sector’s “pathologies of precarity.” In order to effectively run a small business that also provides care work and social safety nets, 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, and delivering food all over the city…and I have three kids…there is so much to balance in this exhausting work,” (interview with a collective member, June 2017) one of the caterers stated.

Furthermore, interviews with the catering collective revealed how social enterprise schemes that espouse positivity and “joy” (Ahmed 2017) anchored in and reproducing white hetero-patriarchal systems of power render asylum-seeking and refugee women as “killjoys.” As an example, because some of the women had first-hand experience surviving UK detention centres, the collective initially aimed to engage in food-based projects that addressed this trauma. However, they soon realized that current funding and training models provide minimal resources and offer little support for structurally-excluded communities drawing attention to racist and xenophobic detention centre and border policy violence. One woman also reflected on how the collective must report on their progress in private-sector and think tank-influenced auditing schemes that value more “positive success stories”(interview with a collective member, June 2017), not “negative” stories about trauma and struggle. “We have been told that stories about trauma, about loneliness, about the long hours that go into this work are too negative…you can’t sell food and run a business if you appear to be negative” (interview with collective member, June 2017) she stated with a frustrated tone.

In a similar vein, interviews with the women caterers also signalled the ways that social enterprise models can reproduce particularly depoliticized white feminism that marketizes easy-to-consume notions of diversity while ignoring structural inequalities. 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 with catering collective member, July 2017) on their web site 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 with collective member, June 2017).

She also described how the collective’s advertising materials featuring women in Hijab and North African women preparing food are popular with Scottish funders and third sector groups because they reproduce a popular myth that the country is “not racist and more progressive than the rest of the UK” (interview with collective member, June 2017). For her, “white, middle-class professional women” in social enterprise leadership roles (interview with collective member, June 2017) who simply cannot understand the experiences of racialized low-income migrant and refugee women currently dominate the sector’s funding, mentoring and training roles. As a result, white women in leadership roles materially benefit from circulating celebratory stories of diversity without engaging in the difficult work of contesting deeply racialized structural inequalities.

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 with community planner, July 2017). Echoing 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 BAME women and refugee women, in social enterprise marketing materials create “feel good” stories for private sector organisations pursuing corporate social responsibility goals. However, these interventions “paint over” the brutal violence of austerity cuts, the privatization of community spaces, and the loss of affordable housing to public-private regeneration schemes in Glasgow (interview with community planner, July 2017).

As I reflect on the collective’s critiques, I also reflect on the ways that university research regimes encourage depoliticized white feminism. Weary of extractive university researchers, the racialized BAME caterers held me to account and asked that I engage in materially useful research exchange in the form of grant writing that they can use for funding applications. However, the impact workshops that I attended as part of my scholarly training encouraged me to centre myself in my research journey, including taking selfies with research participants, writing catchy social media posts, and demonstrating my individual research leadership in my analysis of collectively-produced projects. This market-oriented and audit culture-led orientation towards research left little room for difficult and reflexive conversations about intersectional inequalities, white supremacy and extractive dynamics.

**Proliferating Solidarities at KPC**

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. In order to learn more about social enterprise projects at KPC, I co-organised and co-facilitated *Make a Place* 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 guy activists” (interview with workshop participant, October 2017) who tended to take over community events. In response, KPC planned the two-hour workshop for women-identifying volunteers and staff and activists and artists participating in the centre’s projects to discuss strategies for supporting feminist community organising.

In group discussions the fifteen women who participated in *Make a Place* disclosed that they worked in a range of employment sectors including community development, the retail and service industry, the arts, and precarious gig economy and care work. A few women also disclosed that they were unemployed and living on benefits. Because five of the women were recent migrants from Syria, Sarah Shaarawi, an Egyptian-Scottish play write 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 ten-minute introductory talk that introduced feminist concepts of solidarities and commoning that cited Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy’s *Take Back the Economy:An Ethical Guide For Transforming Our Communities* (2013), Sylvia Federici and Audre Lorde. Shaarawi then followed by reading 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. All of the participants then broke into three groups of five and we discussed questions including: 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?

[Insert image 1. Will provide image if accepted and revisions completed -- it reveals author’s name]

[Insert image 2 – this centre exists photo]

In workshop discussions, a woman stated “KPC has always been a place for feminist labour activists, for anarchists, it’s our home” (Workshop notes, 2017). And the lively conversations uncovered how the centre originated out of Glaswegian women’s struggle for feminist commoning, spaces of care and social reproduction. From 1976 to 1996, the aging building was home to a range of recreation programs for moms and toddlers. Then, 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 2014). At that time, Glasgow city council mandated £23 million in cuts to local community services after a re-named “Glasgow City” become a newly created single tier local authority thanks to the Local Government Act of 1994 (Nolan 2014). The economic implications for re-drawing these local boundaries were detrimental for the newly established Glasgow City Council, as some of the removed areas included wealthy suburbs that previously generated important tax revenue (Nolan 2014).

In response to the lively, politicized, and persistent occupation that was supported by seasoned anti-road construction anarchist collectives, city council agreed to rent the space to Scotland in Europe, a local voluntary organisation, for a “peppercorn rent” or one pound a year (Nolan, 2014). At this time, a few of the activists hoped 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.

In 2009, when Glasgow City council faced another round of fiscal crisis, it cancelled concessionary rents for grassroots organisations throughout the city and raised KPC’s rent from one pound to six thousand pounds a year (Nolan, 2014). In order to generate this revenue, the community centre implemented 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.

Instead of reproducing a competitive and individualising neoliberal ethos, KPC leverages market-oriented social enterprise to practice feminist commoning. The centre’s staff re-work funding from organisations including the Climate Challenge Fund, a Scottish charity that promotes sustainability, resilience, and entrepreneurialism to engage in social reproduction and care work in the pay-what-you-want KP community café. For this project, KPC 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. The centre’s staff also invite activist collectives and artists from across Glasgow to program social justice-oriented arts events and gatherings alongside and directly after the Thursday night community meal. Over the past three years, these gatherings have included 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 , migrants, 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 communities that 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”(Make a Place workshop notes, 2017). “Because of these meals I have made friends and have social supports in a city where I only knew a few people,” she explained.

In these discussions, I also reflected on my experiences attending the meals and how these encounters in commoning, multi-sensory and sensual 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 and visiting celebrity chefs that the centre coaxed into cooking for the dinners via social media created all kinds of inventive concoctions -- beet root lasagne, West African fusion burritos and Eritrean meals co-created with Eritrean volunteers are some memorable examples. These meals also sparked some great banter with strangers on rainy winter nights. I also reflected on how, 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, artists renting studio space in the centre, 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 activism.

At the same time, KPC staff and I were careful not to romanticize the communities that evolve in the centre (Joseph, 2002). Rather, in contrast to corporatized social enterprise strategies that can gloss over structural inequalities and avoid difficult discussions about intersectional power relations, KPC staff and volunteers encouraged participants to discuss tensions and frustrations at *Make a Place*. In response, women working with a collective of women-identifying, trans, and non-binary refugee and asylum-seeking 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 “for refugees and asylum seekers living on five pounds a day, often less” (Workshop participants, October 2017). She and other BAME workshop participants also raised their frustrations about the “white middle-class university educated women,” including university researchers like myself, who tended to lead KPC’s programs. For her, third sector and community development leadership in Glasgow reproduces familiar classed and racialized hierarchies for women of colour activists, community workers, and volunteers. Meanwhile, another woman expressed anger and disappointment 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 working-class men who made these comments had probably not had the “access or privilege to learn about trans politics and non-binary pronouns” (Make a place 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” (Make a place notes, 2017).

Committed to learning from agitations and vulnerabilities and building collectively (Nagar 2019), 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 racialized cis man continue to address uncomfortable racialized 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 they practiced 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 goals 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 a KPC staff member. Over the past two years, the centre has also offered free and reduced-rate meeting and office space for 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). Furthermore, KPC staff have provided space for Alternative Pride, an alternative to events featuring corporations, banks and the police. The centre also 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 2017) are deliberate steps to negotiate the differences in embodied social privilege that accompany race, class, gender, language, and citizenship status.

These small 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 Driscoll Derickson 2015), the women continue to forge affinities and alliances with networks of grassroots organisations, artists and activists that spark further interventions.

 In the summer of 2018, some young women working with KPC projects joined up with activists from across the city, including the Living Rent Campaign (a Glasgow-based housing activist collective) and Afghani refugee hunger strikers to protest Serco (Horne 2017). At that time, the housing provider announced that it planned to illegally evict 330 men, women and children asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected by the Home Office. Serco is a global private sector conglomerate engaged in various public-private partnerships with UK hospitals, universities, police forces, and council housing associations. Serco’s decision that summer signalled the violent implications of the privatization of housing: in 2012 the Tory government denied local authorities the right to provide housing for asylum seekers, a policy move that critics claim was “rigged in favour of private companies” (Horne 2017). After activists connected with each other across the city, 500 people gathered in Glasgow city centre demanding that asylum-seekers can keep their homes. For weeks, these protests brought public attention to the violence of UK border policies and how they are interconnected with austerity, privatization and policing strategies.

Since then, activists have continued to fight Serco. However, in November 2019, they lost the appeal and Serco was granted permission to evict asylum seekers, a deeply worrying precedent for asylum accommodation across the UK. But activists and organisations working with KPC and groups across the city continue to post information about home stay and emergency shelters for families facing immediate homelessness as the cold winter weather encroached. Indeed, as I edited the final draft of this paper, Boris Johnson and the conservative government was elected into office. In response, on social media, KPC volunteers and activists connected to the centre posted lists of social centres and grassroots organisations supporting racialized communities, LGBTQ+ and disabled people, refugees and asylum seekers who will bear the brunt of further austerity cuts and hostile environment policies.

**Conclusion**

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

My participatory research with KPC engages with and advances these lines of inquiry. Here I show how social enterprise training and mentoring schemes can entrench intersectional inequalities for feminist community development organisations. My reflections on the *Make a Place* workshop, however, reveal the potential for social enterprise groups to re-work neoliberal community economic development in order to make space for feminist commoning. As KPC implements a range of public-private initiatives in order to survive, staff continually seek out ways to practice the centre’s grassroots feminist ethics shaped by the 1996 occupation. These activities demonstrate how, even though entrepreneurial social enterprise models can reproduce exclusion, these dynamics do not fully determine the feminist interventions that can co-evolve within, between and against these initiatives. Rather, the acts of commoning taking place at KPC reveal the potential for community development practitioners, artists, activists and residents to unsettle dominant social enterprise models and foster spaces of being in-common. Moreover, as BAME volunteers and participants critique intersectional inequalities and KPC staff respond by encouraging difficult, reflexive, and intersectional conversations and make material changes in their daily operations, they foster solidarities across difference. Even before they respond, KPC staff and volunteers demonstrate how they are open to hear the perspectives of BAME 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 researcher, I am cautious not celebrate other white activists for doing the bare minimum (brown, 2017). And there is still a long way to go towards unsettling the white feminism of community development work and university research that I am implicated in. But, these small acts of consciousness-raising offer lines of flight towards forging solidarities across difference.

To conclude, the migrant women’s catering collective’ experiences signal the structural marginality that market-oriented social enterprise initiatives can reproduce. Their stories illuminate how business-friendly community development models that value depoliticized diversity can hinder already under-resourced refugee women, especially women negotiating the trauma of the UK’s violent detention centre system. At the same time, feminist community organisers, activists, volunteers and community members sharing the KPC space are continually finding ways to craft spaces for commoning. In these lively and caring spaces of re-enchantment, people are pushing back at isolation, privatization, and violent border policies.

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