UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Emergent Practices of a Solidarity Economy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

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2023

The dissertation of Esther Choi is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2023

EPIGRAPH

The market economy story has spread like wildfire,
with uneven results for human well-being
and devastation for the natural world.
But it is just a story we have told ourselves
and we are free to tell another,
to reclaim the old one.

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Real wealth is not the possession of property
but the recognition that our deepest need, as human beings,
is to keep developing our natural and acquired powers
to relate to other human beings.

Grace Lee Boggs

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am here because of my dad, who loved clay bird figurines and cars and dreamed of more possibilities, my mom, who never stops worrying about my needs, and my sister, who first taught me how to write and question everything and brought Noah into my life. Barley, thank you for existing.

Thank you to my dissertation committee for their feedback and patience and support through my winding process. Thank you to my advisor Yến Lê Espiritu for supporting me through many different iterations of my research and for the work she does to unsettle U.S. militarism and create new spaces for critical refugee scholarship, my co-advisor Lilly Irani for modeling creative ways to organize in tandem with research, for ideating with me, and for supporting me with a GSR for Just Transitions Initiative. Thank you to Jin-Kyung Lee for inviting me in to meet scholars in Korea and for affirming what I have to share. Thank you to Shelley Streeby and Curtis Marez for all your feedback and support.

Thank you to Anand Jahi, Tori Kuper, Eli Feghali, Nati Linares, and Kelly Baker for all you've taught me about solidarity economy and trusting me with your insights. Thank you to Emily Kawano for teaching me so much and for all the work you have done to create opportunities for convergence and collaboration. Thank you to everyone who shared their insights with me through interviews and feedback, including Penn Loh, Julia Ho, Salena Burch, Yoni Blumberg, Cassia Herron, Francisco Pérez, Ivy Brashear, Martin Richards, Shavaun Evans, Sona Desai, Derrick Robinson, Adriana Barraza, Ashley Miller, Andrew Delmonte, Chris Tittle, Zen Trenholm, Abdiel López, Diana Zheng, Andrea Gaspar, Leila Tamari, Sachie Hayakawa, Ariel Brooks, Jeff Olson, Naveen Agrawal, David Jette, and Ben Gordon.

Thank you to everyone involved with Mutual Aid UCSD for the time we had to practice the world we want together. Thank you to Mario Ceballos from POC Fungi Community for sharing your love of fungi and demonstrating the possibilities of autonomous economies in practice. Thank you Ramel Wallace for helping me to understand what I have to say and for showing me this work takes deep roots. Thank you to xayn naz for letting me share space at Brown Building and for your example.

Thank you Stephanie Barreto-Lastra, Sheila Garcia Rivera, Nikita Patel, Jenny Cruz, Carolina Ramirez and the rest of our CNL family, along with our mentors Hector Soto and Zera Priestess for sharing their organizing journeys with me.

And thank you to my friends and family who fill my life with love and joy and constant learning and help me to stay rooted in what matters to me. I'll thank you in a different format.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Emergent Practices of a Solidarity Economy

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California San Diego, 2022

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My dissertation explores emergent practices of a solidarity economy in the U.S. context, through the lens of Ethnic Studies, a field that was established through struggles led by students of color for a university education that was relevant to their lives. Cheryl Harris theorizes "whiteness as property" to understand how whiteness has been legally constructed as a racial identity determining access to freedom and ownership, under settler colonialism,

slavery, and institutionalized racial discrimination, and has evolved into a form of valuable property in itself, which continues to be protected under the guise of race neutrality and refusal of reparations. I understand whiteness as property as an organizing logic that people and institutions perpetuate when they impose scarcity and hierarchy upon access to resources and refuse to repair relationships of extraction and exploitation. I understand "solidarity economy" to be a practice to build relationships of understanding and care in order to collectivize our resources to meet collective needs, against the deliberate ways in which we are atomized and controlled through scarcity and hierarchy, rooted in colonial and capitalist exploitation.

The discourse of a U.S. solidarity economy often centers examples such as worker-owned cooperatives, community land trusts, and other structures that largely rely on access to capital and institutional status as the "alternatives" to be networked toward a post-capitalist economy. This can obscure and extract from emergent practices of a solidarity economy, forged by those systematically excluded from access to capital and institutional status. Considering how solidarity economy has become a movement space to imagine a future beyond capitalism, there is a need for more transparency around the particular sets of privileges and professionalized resources that shape the articulation of a solidarity economy movement—a task that many people are confronting in practice. In this vein, I reflect on my own ways of engaging with solidarity economy, in relation to the academic industry in which I am positioned as a graduate student worker. This leads back to the question: "What am I practicing?"

Introduction:

Solidarity Economy as Emergence

In college, I majored in Economics, which turned out to be a pseudo-science of capitalism's inevitability, based on false assumptions that humans are purely self-interested individuals, making perfectly rational decisions to optimize their own welfare under conditions of scarcity. We were kept busy crunching arbitrary equations that impounded into our minds that any kind of intervention in the "free market" would result in "deadweight loss." My education in Economics became a source of dark humor when I graduated in 2010, as the U.S. government bailed out banks and mortgage companies that were "too big to fail."

Economy is treated as a self-evident category, with experts who are trusted with forecasting its mystical forces, yet the entire discipline has had less of an explanatory relationship with our lived realities than our horoscopes. The "size" of this phantasmic presence is often measured on a national level as GDP, or the monetary value of final goods and services, never mind that these macroeconomic indicators are historically specific constructs that emerged in the 1930s in continuity with eugenicist population science.[1] In light of capitalism's obvious failures, it is an exercise in futility to confront capitalism on the terms of its own abstractions.[2]

There are many different lineages through which people have practiced and envisioned economy on their own terms. The "solidarity economy" framework has reached U.S.

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[1] In *The Economization of Life*, Michelle Murphy theorizes the GDP as a "phantasmagram," or "practices that are enriched with affect, propagate imaginaries, lure feeling, and hence have supernatural effects in surplus of their rational preceps…" (24).

[2] "You could have made $20 million per year since Jesus was born and still not make the profits Shell did last year." - Sophia Kianni on Twitter (@sophiakianni) on February 8, 2023 Kianni describes herself as the "youngest UN advisor." I appreciate the wisdom of younger generations who understand that the ridiculous and arbitrary scale of economic exploitation can sometimes only be met with equally ridiculous and arbitrary responses.

organizers through spaces of transnational convergence, such as the World Social Forums, which have helped to network alternative infrastructures being forged through mass movements such as Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement) in Brazil[3] and the Mondragon Corporation in the Basque Country of Spain.[4] The U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) was brought together during the first U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta, GA, in 2007 to provide a network infrastructure for people across different geographies and fields to work toward a U.S. solidarity economy movement.[5]

My dissertation explores emergent practices of a solidarity economy in the U.S. context, through the lens of Ethnic Studies, a field that was established through struggles led by students of color for a university education that was relevant to their lives. Solidarity economy is constituted by two words whose meanings have been sites of struggle. As a synthesis of these two concepts,[6] I understand "solidarity economy" to be a practice to build relationships of understanding and care in order to collectivize our resources to meet collective needs, against the deliberate ways in which we are atomized and controlled through scarcity and hierarchy, rooted in colonial and capitalist exploitation.

As an Ethnic Studies Ph.D. student, my studies have focused on the systematic processes that have undermined the possibilities for solidarity in the context of life in the U.S. Cheryl Harris theorizes "whiteness as property" to understand how whiteness has been legally

[3] https://mst.org.br/
[4] https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/about-us/
[5] USSEN defines solidarity economy as an "alternative development framework" based on principles of "solidarity, mutualism, and cooperation; equity in all dimensions; the primacy of social welfare over profits and the unfettered rule of the market; sustainability; social and economic democracy; and pluralism." It serves as the U.S. representative for the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (RIPESS). https://ussen.org/
[6] I understand "solidarity" as a practice to build relationships of understanding and care in order to meet collective needs, against the ways in which we are atomized by social, political, and economic systems. I understand "economy" to mean the management of collective resources to meet collective needs.

constructed as a racial identity determining access to freedom and ownership, through settler colonialism, slavery, and institutionalized racial discrimination, and has evolved to become a form of valuable property in itself, protected by the guise of race neutrality and refusal of reparations. [7] I understand whiteness as property as an organizing logic that people and institutions perpetuate when they impose scarcity and hierarchy upon access to resources and refuse to repair relationships of extraction and exploitation. In the U.S., the ideology of "personal responsibility" has been deployed throughout different moments of history as backlash against the demands for the redistribution of resources.[8]

With compounding crises that pierce through new categories of people who were once protected, the solidarity economy framework continues to grow in resonance, seeding new organizations, funding strategies, public sector initiatives, and becoming more closely integrated with nationwide mobilizations for economic justice. This is a time to pay attention to the ways in which the logic of whiteness as property continues to shape not only how we presently engage with economy but also how we recognize economic crises and imagine a future beyond capitalism. The emergent discourse of a U.S. solidarity economy has centered on examples such as worker-owned cooperatives, community land trusts, and other structures that largely rely on access to capital and institutional status as the "alternatives" to be networked toward a solidarity economy, obscuring emergent solidarity economy practices forged by those who are systematically excluded from those spaces. As such, there is a need for more transparency around the particular purposes, privileges, and professionalized resources that shape how people are engaging with solidarity economy as a "movement

[7] Cheryl I. Harris. "Whiteness as Property." A foundational text of Critical Race Theory that was written in the context of affirmative action struggles during the 1990's
[8] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2014).

space."[9] As people do the work to define the meanings, boundaries, and practices of a solidarity economy, they are also actively contending with these contradictions in practice.

My process of understanding and writing about the solidarity economy did not sit well with the academic format, as the solidarity economy is an emergent, collective, and non-linear process. Adrienne maree brown understands "emergent strategy" as "how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for."[10] This includes a practice of noticing emergence—"the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies."[11] What I can share is not a discrete intervention within a static lineage but an emergent process that is collective—what I'm noticing and shaping, others are noticing and shaping, too—and non-linear, as solidarity economies have always existed and there is no one lineage.

In this vein, my chapters mirror my process of understanding solidarity economy, organized by three conceptual themes: framework, collaboration, and practice. The first chapter begins with a focus on framework, which I see as the interplay between critique and convergence. I give an overview of Ethnic Studies scholarship that foregrounds "whiteness as property," as a way to understand the patterns and possibilities that are emerging in the convergences around a solidarity economy framework, since the creation of the U.S.

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[9] Lauren Hudson defines "movement space" as "a sense of belonging to a cohesive ideology or set of principles, even as tactics themselves are debated. Lauren Hudson, "New York City: Struggles over the narrative of Solidarity Economy, *Geoforum* 127 (December 2021): 326-334, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.04.003.
[10] adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (AK Press, 2017).
[11] Ibid., 3. Brown interprets the concept of emergence drawing upon her organizing experiences and relationship with mentor Grace Lee Boggs, who was not only theorizing but actively practicing processes for collective transformation in the deindustrialized spaces of Detroit. Boggs drew upon Marxist concept of " dialectical humanism," which brown translates for her audience as "the cycle of collective transformation of beliefs that occurs as we gather new information and experiences" (p. 28), She also traces Boggs' own theoretical development from the work of Margaret Wheatley on leadership which emphasized "critical connections over critical mass" (3).

Solidarity Economy Network in 2007.

The second chapter focuses on collaboration, drawing upon my experience conducting collaborative case studies research with New Economy Coalition (NEC) beginning in June 2020, as NEC made a strategic shift from a "new economy" to a "solidarity economy framework." As I was trying to carry out my dissertation research in ways that could meet organizing needs, I also came to understand how our collaboration was informed by intersecting experiences since the financial crisis, and our ways of strategically navigating institutional resources to support a solidarity economy movement.

The third chapter is about how researching the solidarity economy necessarily brings me back to the question: what am I practicing? As crises destabilize our faith in the institutional roles and hierarchies that structure our lives, practice is how I am unlearning academic professionalization and the ways that I have come to embody the very harms I have been seeking to challenge. It's a practice of trusting myself again, against the pressure to erase my own messy, embodied presence throughout this process. It's a practice of experimenting with alternative ways of understanding the world and being present for emergent connections.

My perspectives are particular to being a Korean born and raised in Los Angeles, on occupied Tongva land. My parents grew up in poverty in a newly divided Korea, following a violent war in which the U.S. military massacred Koreans organizing for self-determination. My dad's side of the family, growing up in the U.S. military camptown of Paju, migrated to Los Angeles in the early 1980s, along with my mom. My parents hustled to survive, working at restaurants, gas stations, factories, and moonlighting as janitors. They saved money through the Korean practice of rotating credit circles, which allowed our family to eventually buy a

two bedroom home in La Crescenta and open our own auto shop in Koreatown. I experienced the collapse of that security over my years in high school. When I was accepted to Columbia, an institution that brought me into the heart of privilege, as a token financial aid recipient with a full ride, I had to question how my own quest to fulfill my needs for safety, dignity, and belonging were invested in systems of exclusion.

The centrality of what we are practicing has been passed down to me in many forms, including Indigenous methodologies that center relationship and accountability in how we understand the world,[12] as well as frameworks for transformative justice, abolition, mutual aid, emergent strategy, and generative somatics. I am rooted in the teachings of my ancestors, who knew that to survive, they had to collective. My dissertation traces my inalienable process of learning about and engaging with the emergent practices of a solidarity economy, within an ecosystem of many interventions to realize a future beyond capitalism. Like mycelium, these practices are being networked in emergent and decentralized ways, toward the remediation of capitalist destruction and birthing of new worlds.

[12] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2015);
Glen Coulthard, "Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism," *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 79-83;
Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures: the journal for thematic dialogue* 9 (December 2007).

Chapter 1:

Critique and Convergence toward a Solidarity Economy Framework

Introduction

In January 2001, amidst growing protests against the globalization of capitalism, the first World Social Forum (WSF) was held in January 2001, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to be simultaneous with the World Economic Forum.[13] By the third consecutive year in Porto Alegre, the WSF was attended by over 100,000 people from 156 countries, with 20,000 delegates representing 717 organizations.[14] Amongst many different movements and projects that converged at the WSF, under the message, "Another World Is Possible," a central theme was the idea of a global solidarity economy movement, constituted by a network of place-based alternatives to corporate-driven globalization.[15] Activists at the WSF were able to connect with examples of these alternatives in practice, including the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement) in Brazil.[16]

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[13] Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes the World Social Forum as a "counter-hegemonic globalization," building upon multiple convergences including the 1994 Zapatista uprising, the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle and subsequent mobilizations against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (New York: Zed Books, 2006).

[14] https://againstthecurrent.org/atc103/p1070/

[15] Ethan Miller historicizes the term "solidarity economy" in different national contexts: "'Solidarity economy' was used as an economic organizing concept as early as 1937, when Felipe Alaiz advocated for the construction of an economía solidária between worker collectives in urban and rural areas during the Spanish Civil War… European concepts of *économie solidaire* emerged from a long tradition of "social economy" activism and policy oriented toward addressing social and economic exclusion through "third sector" alternatives to conventional market and state-centered institutions… In Colombia, economía solidária emerged out of the country's cooperative movement and understood as a concept that could place cooperativismo (cooperativism) into a broader, and more political, context of a vision for building a different economy. In Chile, the concept was developed more broadly and theoretically by economist Luis Razeto as a cross-cutting "sector" of the economy consisting of diverse enterprises that share a common "economic rationality" of cooperation and solidarity. The task of those seeking economic transformation, said Razeto, should be to connect and strengthen these already-existing alternatives" (26-27). Ethan Miller, "Solidarity Economy: Key Concepts and Issues," in Emily Kawano, Thomas Neal Masterson, and Jonathan Teller-Elsberg, eds., *Solidarity Economy I: Building Alternatives for People and Planet* (Amherst: Center for Popular Economics, 2010).

[16] https://www.mstbrazil.org/content/what-mst

Amongst many global, national and regional convergences that followed the WSF, the first U.S. Social Forum (USSF) took place in 2007, hosted by Project South in Atlanta, GA, with the intention of providing "spaces to build relationships, learn from each other's experiences, share our analysis of the problems our communities face, and begin to vision and strategize how to reclaim our world."[17] In preparation for this gathering, a group of people—including various heterodox economists—organized the first national convergence to build a U.S. solidarity economy framework, which led to the creation of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network in 2007.

The solidarity economy has continued to evolve as a framework for economic justice in the U.S. context, through different local, national, and international convergences. It has also intersected with growing decentralized movements for economic justice, especially since the financial crisis of 2008 and rise of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the fall of 2011. Within these spaces of convergence have been internal struggles around the need to address the colonial, racial, and patriarchal foundations of capitalism and how the erasure of these intersections limit anti-capitalist critique.

In this chapter, I bring together Ethnic Studies and solidarity economy as intersecting frameworks. I approach *framework* as the work of critique and convergence. Ethnic Studies was founded in 1968 at San Francisco State University, as the result of a five month-long strike led by the Black Student Union and a coalition of other student groups known as the

[17] USSF's call for participation begins, "The US Social Forum is more than a conference, more than a networking bonanza, more than a reaction to war and repression. The USSF is the next most important step in our struggle. This moment demands that we build a powerful movement that disrupts and transforms this country. We must declare what we want our world to look like and begin planning the path to get there." In Jenna Allard, Carl Davidson, and Julie Matthaei, eds. *Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet: Papers and reports from the U.S. Social Forum 2007.* US Solidarity Economy Network. Chicago: ChangeMaker Publications.

Third World Liberation Front.[18] The field of Ethnic Studies has multiplied into many different efforts to remediate universities, as institutions that not only gatekeep knowledge within segregated white communities, but also create a professionalized industry around the validation of truth for the preservation of whiteness as property. Harris understands that whiteness has evolved into a form of property as a result of the ways in which it was socially and legally constructed in order to protect this property interest:

> Whiteness has functioned as self-identity in the domain of the intrinsic, personal, and psychological; as reputation in the interstices between internal and external identity; and, as property in the extrinsic, public, and legal realms. According whiteness actual legal status converted an aspect of identity into an external object of property, moving whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest.[19]

While the ways in which whiteness structures access to resources has become more sublimated since the passage of anti-discrimination laws, Harris argues that whiteness as property has retained "its core characteristic—the legal legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination."[20]

The existence of a U.S. solidarity economy movement is indebted to the transnational connections that allowed U.S.-based organizers and economists to witness mass movements of sustained resistance to capitalism. At the same time, solidarity economy as a "movement space"[21] in the U.S. context continues to reflect modes of exclusion, which are shaped by the

[18] The strike for ethnic studies demanded "equal access to public higher education, more senior faculty of color and a new curriculum that would embrace the history and culture of all people including Ethnic minorities." https://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/xchange/ethnic-studies-k-12/historical-timeline-for-ethnic-studies/
[19] Harris, "Whiteness as Property, 1725.
[20] Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1715.
[21] Lauren Hudson defines "movement space" as "a sense of belonging to a cohesive ideology or set of principles, even as tactics themselves are debated." Lauren Hudson, "New York City: Struggles over the narrative of Solidarity Economy, *Geoforum* 127 (December 2021): 326-334, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.04.003.

predominance of the U.S. academic industry and non-profit organizations. As a result, there is a tendency to privilege formal institutions that depend on access to capital as the infrastructure of a solidarity economy movement, in ways that reproduce whiteness as property in our imaginations of a future beyond capitalism. Many people engaging with the solidarity economy framework in the U.S. context are working to remediate these challenges, in practice.

Whiteness as property

The Possessive Individual

I begin with an understanding of how ownership is centrally a racialized ideal of subjectivity in the U.S., guiding participation in an economy that has been founded upon slavery and settler colonialism. Western social contract theory has based conceptions of freedom and personhood on the assumption that man is a "possessive individual," or "the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them."[22] These ideas were adopted as the philosophical foundation of the U.S. Constitution precisely because they affirmed the right of settlers to eliminate Indigenous people through genocide and removal, and deny alternative practices of collective use and ownership that came into conflict with systems of individual proprietorship.[23] Conceptions of freedom at the founding of the United States were also explicitly defined against the institution of slavery, where freedom was a function of "mastery over human property."[24] Stephanie Smallwood demonstrates that slavery

[22] C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
[23] Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford University Press, 1996).
[24] Stephanie Smallwood, University of Washington, "Slavery, Race and the Origins of American Freedom," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwLci-NTpqo&t=2437s.

was also upheld in large part by "the law of the market," which made "fellow human beings see it as their primary interest to own as commodities the escaped captives, rather than to connect with them as social subjects."[25]

In spite of narratives of racial progress in the U.S., changing abstractions of law and economy have largely evaded demands for reparations, or the return of wealth accumulated through slavery and colonial dispossession. The abolition of slavery, while formally recognizing Black freedom and personhood, created what Saidiya Hartman calls the "burdened individuality of freedom," in which black bondage persisted through a "mixed-labor system in which contract was the vehicle of servitude and accountability was inseparable from peonage."[26] Rather than restoring their capacity for self-ownership, Hartman argues that emancipation instead made the newly freed "responsible" for their state of dispossession—where "to be responsible was to be blameworthy."[27] With the rise of Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, this nascent articulation of Black freedom was subject to a new legal regime of debt and criminalization aimed at securing Black dispossession, while undermining "interracial political alliances aimed at toppling the white elite."[28] These shifts were also mediated by U.S. imperial conquest and exploitation, including the importation of Chinese indentured labor to the Americas.[29]

Settler colonialism has continued not only through the genocide and displacement of

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[25] Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 62.
[26] Saidiya Harman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126.
[27] Ibid., 125.
[28] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).
Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 34.
[29] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015).

Indigenous people but also through their incorporation into logics of possessive individualism, in ways that attempt to undermine Indigenous relationships to ecology. Robin Wall Kimmerer reflects on how the Potawatomi were promised ownership of their land by accepting citizenship, yet once their land became private property, they were dispossessed of their land through financial means:

> In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us…Whether it was their homeland or the new land forced upon them, land held in common gave people strength; it gave them something to fight for. And so—in the eyes of the federal government—that belief was a threat. [30]

The protection of whiteness as property is thus not only about the expropriation of land but the destruction of relationships to land that defy the logics of private property.

Immigration, citizenship, and naturalization laws have also served as key sites in which to define whiteness as a privileged identity and set of property rights. Examining the ways in which Filipinos and Puerto Ricans were incorporated as U.S. national to extract their land and labor while excluding them from the rights of citizenship, including voting and owning property, Yến Lê Espiritu theorizes “differential inclusion” as "the process whereby a group of people is deemed integral to the nation’s economy, culture, identity, and power—but integral only or precisely because of their designated subordinate standing.”[31] Nationality and national origin, which are taken for granted as demographic categories, emerged as racialized categories with the 1924 Immigration Act. Ngai demonstrates how the 1924 Immigration Act quotas “differentiated Europeans according to nationality and ranked them in a hierarchy of

[30] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2015), 17.
[31] Yen Espiritu, Home Bound, 47 Yen Espiritu

desirability," while also "construct[ing] a white American race, in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness that made them distinct from those deemed not to be white."[32] Asians were racially constructed as a shared category that was "ineligible to citizenship," and Mexicans were not subject to quota but were racialized as "illegal aliens" through deportation policies and the creation of the Border patrol.

Predatory Inclusion

The New Deal era is idealized as a period of social democratic policies that redistributed wealth to a broad middle class, but the benefits that accrued to white people were conditioned upon the exclusion and exploitation of communities of color. With the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934, the government played a direct role in organizing the building and purchasing of housing through taxation, transportation, and housing policy, while creating national lending standards for fixed rate, long-term and fully amortizing mortgages that equated foreclosure risk with race.[33] Over the next decades, federal and state economic policies continued to grow what George Lipsitz terms the "possessive investment in whiteness" by investing in public infrastructures in segregated white communities and targeting communities of color for urban renewal projects and environmentally hazardous constructions.[34] Furthermore, the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act excluded farm workers and domestic workers while protecting professions that were exclusive to white people as a result of institutionalized racial discrimination.

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[32] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 70.
[33] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017.)
[34] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

Only months after the government outlawed housing discrimination on a federal level through the Fair Housing Act of 1968, it passed the Housing and Urban Development Act, which massively expanded and empowered the private real estate industry to play a central role in the provision of low-income and public housing. The simultaneity of these two Housing Acts was not incidental but reflective of a larger shift toward what Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor calls "predatory inclusion," in which the public sector incentivized and guaranteed racially discriminatory and predatory practices in the private sector as soon as discrimination was outlawed in the public sector.[35] The "pseudoscience" of determining real estate values shifted from explicitly racialized hierarchies of biological and cultural difference to the financialized construction of Black neighborhoods as "subprime," as a way to sustain racial discrimination and prey upon Black communities as targets for debt and foreclosure. Following the formula that sought to frame emancipated Black people as unfit for freedom, the disastrous fallout of these publicly enabled forms of private discrimination would be called upon to question the efficacy of anti-discrimination laws and bolster the ideal of homeownership as a cultural right of whites.

Ownership Society

Enmeshed with the discourse of national security in the aftermath of 9/11, George W. Bush's "Ownership Society" discourse rhetorically emphasized "minority homeownership" as an unfulfilled aspect of the American Dream, while also building in the need for tax cuts and the privatization of social security and retirement assets. [36] The reasons for inequalities in

[35] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).
[36] "Fact Sheet: America's Ownership Society: Expanding Opportunities," Office of the Press Secretary (August 9, 2004), https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040809-9.html.

homeownership were not attributed to the legacies of racial discrimination in housing, but rather, due to a lack of "personal responsibility and the values necessary for strong families."[37] In October 2002, the White House announced the "Blueprint for the American Dream," a new set of public-private partnerships[38] that would be rolled out across "government, real estate and mortgage finance industry, affordable housing groups and advocacy organizations."[39] These public-private housing schemes were supported by extensive marketing campaigns, which targeted lower-income "minorities." In the following years, the government triumphantly celebrated the rapid rise in minority homeownership—"the first time, the majority of minority Americans own their own homes."[40]

These increases, however, were largely based on predatory mortgage products that were designed to unravel and push new homeowners into foreclosure in the following years.[41] Leading up to and through the 2008 financial crisis moment, millions of new homeowners would lose their homes to foreclosure, further decimating the wealth of Black households in

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[37] George W. Bush, "National Homeownership Month, 2002," Office of the Press Secretary (June 4, 2002), https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020604-23.html.
See Vanesa Estrada Correa, "Blueprint for the American Dream? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Presidential Remarks on Minority Homeownership," *Social Justice* 40, No. 3 (133), Special Issue: Foreclosure Crisis in the United States (2013): 16-27.

[38] Blueprint for the American Dream Partnership included "President George W. Bush; HUD Secretary Mel Martinez; The Enterprise Foundation; Fannie Mae; Federal Home Loan Banks; Freddie Mac; Habitat for Humanity International; Local Initiatives Support Corporation; Mortgage Bankers Association of America; National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals; National Association of Home Builders; National Association of Mortgage Brokers; National Association of Real Estate Brokers; National Association of Realtors; National Credit Union Administration; Neighborhood Housing Services of America; Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation; Sears, Roebuck and Co." https://archives.hud.gov/initiatives/blueprint/blueprint.pdf

[39] George W. Bush, "Remarks at the White House Conference on Minority Homeownership: Blueprint for the American Dream," Office of the Press Secretary (October 15, 2002), https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021015-7.html

[40] By the first half of 2004, the government was widely proclaiming the success of its homeownership program, proclaiming that the "US homeownership rate reached a record 69.2 percent." https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/achievement/chap7.html#:~:text=The%20US%20homeownership%20rate%20reached,73.4%20million%2C%20the%20most%20ever.

[41] Martinez, p. 39 This included the "hybrid Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM) product," enacted in 2002 to incentivize low income families by "combining a low fixed rate in the early years with a rate that later adjusts with the market" (39), in *Blueprint for the American Dream,* Housing and Urban Development

particular, as the nation celebrated the fulfillment of racial equality, symbolized by the election of the first Black president, Barack Obama. Despite all the rhetoric of the Ownership Society, there was no recourse or protection for new homeowners. Instead, the government doled out hundreds of billions of dollars to the very banks and corporations that had orchestrated the crisis, claiming that these private actors were "too big to fail."

Neoliberalism?

In spite of the ways in which categories of racialized disposability have organized economic dispossession, theories of "neoliberalism" narrate a sudden crisis of "liberal democratic states" since around the 1970's. Wendy Brown theorizes neoliberalism as "a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life."[42] David Harvey argues that neoliberalism emerged as a "political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites,"[43] emerging during the 1970s as a niche body of ideas by a small group of global elites that named themselves Mont Pèlerin society.[44] In Harvey's analysis, white supremacy and colonial exploitation are rendered unproblematic structures of economy while anti-racism and queer liberation are framed as distractions from the "collective discipline required for political action."[45]

Across these instances, the investment in whiteness as property has continued to submerge understandings of how the U.S. economy has always functioned primarily through

[42] Wendy Brown, *Undoing Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Princeton University Press: 2015), 30.
[43] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
Jean Comeroff and John Comeroff, eds., Millennial Capitalism and the Culture ofNeoliberalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
[44] Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 13.
[45] Ibid., 41.

the predatory exploitation of racialized communities. The commodification and expropriation of basic necessities through structures of debt and criminalization are not new phenomena but the very basis of a society in which freedom was defined as "mastery over human property."[46] The rise of mass incarceration and the War on Drugs built upon law and order rhetoric that was "first mobilized in the late 1950s as Southern governors and law enforcement officials attempted to generate and mobilize white opposition to the Civil Rights Movement,"[47] thereby sustaining a racial caste system for Black people in which "discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education was perfectly legal, and where they could be denied the right to vote."[48]

Just as the "burdened individuality of freedom" framed emancipated Black people as unfit for freedom, and the fallout of "predatory inclusion" was used as evidence of the failures of anti-discrimination laws, the financial crisis was attributed to the failures of "minority homeownership." Only now, the crisis has generalized to those who were supposed to be protected. In *Cruel Optimism,* Lauren Berlant asks why people continue to have a faith—a "cruel optimism"—in fantasies of "upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy" as well as "meritocracy" when the neoliberal restructuring of the world renders these ideals increasingly precarious. Though Berlant does not name whiteness, it pervades the work in her articulation of cruel optimism, as "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."[49] Since 2011, much of the foreclosed housing stock has been repurchased by institutional investors such as Blackstone

[46] Stephanie Smallwood in University of Washington, "Slavery, Race and the Origins of American Freedom," Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwLci-NTpqo&t=2437s.
[47] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 40.
[48] Ibid., 56.
[49] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

and transferred into permanent rental properties, leading to new forms of financialized extraction such as "single family rental securitization," which is presented as a "secure" financial derivative for wealthy investors, since rents are guaranteed to rise. The public sector has become an insurance fund and public relations manager for the speculative and predatory practices of private equity, in ways that are spiraling beyond our comprehension.

U.S. Solidarity Economy Framework

I first learned about the Center for Popular Economics (CPE), a non-profit collective of political economists which was founded in Amherst, MA in 1979, from the popular economics trainings that they would hold during the Occupy Wall Street assemblies in New York City in 2011.[50] While I was seeking examples of research on alternative economies as a Ph.D. student, I came across the work of CPE again, which led me to the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, and in particular, the work of Emily Kawano.[51] I reached out to interview Kawano and learned about her experiences of becoming involved with CPE while she was an Economics Ph.D. student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She learned about the social and solidarity economy while living in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she founded a popular economics program with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Returning to the U.S., Kawano served as the Director of the Center for Popular Economics (CPE) between 2004 and 2013. She recalled how during CPE's strategic planning process in 2006, they recognized that their materials were strong in critiquing capitalism but limited in helping people to envision the alternatives in concrete terms.[52] Their conversations around needing a more affirmative

[50] https://www.popularеconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/CPE-fall-newsletter-2011.pdf
[51] This article was a shorter synopsis of Kawano's "Crisis and Opportunity: The Emerging Solidarity Economy Movement" (2009) published as part of an edited collection following the first U.S. Solidarity Economy Forum in 2009.

strategy of economic justice led them to ultimately adopt a solidarity economy framework.

As a recovering economics major, I resonated with much of Kawano's scholarship on solidarity economy, particularly how it intervenes in dominant claims of Economics, as a discipline, that "markets are self-correcting, that the economy will thrive through deregulation and that this model can deliver prosperity, a healthy planet and a healthy society."[53] Kawano argues that economics is not a science, but a "story," based on the protagonist of homo economicus, "a rational, calculating, self interested fellow who seeks the greatest payoff for the least amount of effort or cost," while disregarding the wealth of evidence showing that humans actually act through solidarity.[54]

U.S. Social Forum

Leading up to the 2007 U.S. Social Forum (USSF), the Center for Popular Economics brought economists and people involved in different economic justice organizations to plan a series of workshops focused on the solidarity economy, at a time when there was not much understanding of this term in the U.S. The various solidarity economy panels and caucuses at USSF were edited into a volume by Jenna Allard, Carl Davidson, and Julie Matthaei, *Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet.* The introduction offers a particular diagnosis of the crisis of neoliberal capitalism and an articulation of solidarity economy as a changeable framework for economic transformation. The acknowledgments give insight into the particular forms of labor and access that made this convergence possible. Many of the authors received their Ph.D. or were Ph.D. students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where Center for Popular Economics was based, along with other

[53] Emily Kawano, "Crisis and Opportunity: The Emerging Solidarity Economy Movement," 11.
[54] 14-15

hybrid spaces of academic research and organizing, including Guramylay: Growing the Green Economy based in Wellesley College, Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO), and the Center for Community and Labor Research.

In "Another Economy is Possible!: Using the U.S. Social Forum to Create the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network," Julie Matthaei and Jenna Allard reflect on the process that the committee took to decide what to include in the panels, which involved negotiations around the meaning of solidarity economy and its relationship to capitalism. While there was broad agreement about featuring interventions such as "worker co-ops, and other economic alternatives such as community currencies, land-trusts, and community-supported agriculture," they explain that there was also initial disagreement about whether to include "more economically mainstream" practices.[55] They note how one member in particular, who was "working for community economic development in Chicago through the support of 'high road' local, community-based corporations, convinced the group that we should be 'system neutral' in our language, rather than explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-corporate."[56] Thus in the end, the planning group chose not to identify with an explicit anti-capitalist framework for the solidarity economy, realigning themselves with a "big tent" framework that included reforming capitalism:

> where an individual or group's participation was not determined by being perfectly aligned with progressive values (i.e. anti-classist, -racist, -sexist, -nationalist, -homophobic, and sustainable/ecological) – indeed, we realized that few were. Rather, we included groups and institutions that we saw as qualitatively transformative in their values and practices in at least one of these dimensions, as well as open, at least in principle, to striving to extend their commitment to economic justice to its other dimensions.[57]

[55] Julie Matthaei and Jenna Allard, "Another Economy is Possible!: Using the U.S. Social Forum to Create the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network," *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, 4.*
[56] Ibid., 4
[57] Ibid., 5

This decision realigned meaning of solidarity economy with reformist movements and denied the ways in which the anti-oppression lens they reduced to "progressive values" was inseparable from economic justice.

The editors offer a "loose definition" of "solidarity economy initiatives" as "practices and institutions on all levels and in all sectors of the economy that embody certain values and priorities: cooperation, sustainability, equality, democracy, justice, diversity, and local control."[58] They position their own attempt at definition in contrast to the universalizing grammars of economic theory, and frame it as instead an effort "to subvert neoliberal capitalism's theoretically and oftentimes physically violent colonization of economic space."[59] Recognizing that their process of documenting this convergence can become a "taxonomy of the solidarity economy," the editors frame their perspectives as something that "can and should be rethought and rearranged as other, new minds write and think about these practices."[60]

U.S. Solidarity Economy Network

At the close of the second caucus, which was open to participants who had attended one or two workshops from the solidarity economy track, there was a "unanimous vote" to form a permanent U.S. Solidarity Economy Network.[61] The caucus notes include a set of "charges to the solidarity economy network working group," which include the suggestion to

[58] Allard et al., *Solidarity Economy,* 6. They also include the definition of solidarity economy provided by Alliance 21, which convened the Workgroup on the Solidarity Socioeconomy at the World Social Forum, as "globally, the most commonly used definition": "Solidarity economy designates all production, distribution and consumption activities that contribute to the democratization of the economy based on citizen commitments both at a local and global level."
[59] Allard et al., *Solidarity Economy,* 9.
[60] Allard et al., *Solidarity Economy*, 9
[61] Allard et al., 390

move the yearly conference to different geographical areas to engage local grassroots activism in different communities and make the materials accessible. There is also a charge to "Create structures that break down natural hierarchies; avoid being 'pale, male, and stale.'"[62]

For the first few years of its existence, U.S. Solidarity Economy Network was anchored by Emily who was able to do this coordinating work as the Director for the Center for Popular Economics. But for most of its existence, USSEN has operated as a volunteer network. It has also served as the U.S. representative of the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (RIPESS), which was first founded during the first gathering of "solidarity economy" aligned efforts from different countries in Lima, Peru.[63] Kawano described the "World Café" process that they undertook in preparation for the RIPESS gathering in 2013 in Manila, Philippines, which took two years and involved a period of open comment, after which representatives met at the Conference to formalize their continental definitions, in relationship with other social economy and solidarity economy networks.[64] She shared that while the process was "very imperfect," it was important to have this international process to "provide the bare bones common foundation of a definition."[65] Kawano recalled that the most important thing to come out of this process was a clear agreement within RIPESS that solidarity economy was a "post-capitalist" movement.

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[62] Although it is not acknowledged explicitly, the editors and majority of the contributors are white and affiliated with academic institutions.

[63] RIPESS describes itself as "a global network of continental networks committed to the promotion of Social Solidarity Economy. The member networks themselves (Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania) bring together national and sectorial networks, thus ensuring strong territorial anchoring." https://www.ripess.org/about-ripess/?lang=en (accessed 2/17/22)

[64] Interview with Emily Kawano, December 16, 2020. While the social and solidarity economy may overlap, the RIPESS Global Vision document, which reflects on the World Café process, differentiates the solidarity economy as having a "systemic, transformative, post-capitalist agenda, in contrast to the social economy, which it explains is "commonly understood as a 'third sector' of the economy, complementing the 'first sector" (private/profit-oriented) and the 'second sector' (public/planned)." RIPESS Global Vision, p. 10 https://www.ripess.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RIPESS_Vision-Global_EN.pdf

[65] Personal interview with Emily Kawano, December 16, 2020.

Resist and Build

In 2020, USSEN coordinated a set of "Resist and Build" gatherings. According to Kawano, one of goals of this process was to come to a collective understanding of whether or not solidarity economy was a post-capitalist framework, which brought up conflicts with certain organizations who felt that capitalism was too hard to define or divisive to bring up with their members.[66] As part of this effort, Kawano and Matthaei published an article, "System Change: A Basic Primer to the Solidarity Economy," which focuses on distinguishing between capitalist and post-capitalist economic systems, and situating solidarity economy as a "post-capitalist framework," which they explain, "holds that no matter how we 'tame' or 'humanize' capitalism, its fundamental logic precludes living in harmony with each other and nature."[67] Although they understand "post-capitalist" to mean "after capitalism," their articulation of a solidarity economy continues to center upon "SE institutions" that exist within capitalism, including "cooperatives (worker-owned, consumer, producer), public banks, community land trusts, alternative currencies, and time banks."

The term post-capitalism is also deeply intertwined with the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham, who in *A Post-Capitalist Politics,* argue for the need to become different subjects engaged in "diverse" economic practices, against the assumed hegemony of capitalism. While they identify gender and queerness as parallel critiques to unsettle hegemonic notions of the economy at the level of subjectivity, they excise how race and academic hierarchies are very explicitly shaping their research process, as they attempt to experiment with the economic subjectivities of their research subjects while maneuvering around the relations of power they

[66] Personal interview with Emily Kawano, November 16, 2020.
[67] Emily Kawano and Julie Matthaei, "System Change: A Basic Primer to the Solidarity Economy," *NPQ,* July 8, 2020, https://nonprofitquarterly.org/system-change-a-basic-primer-to-the-solidarity-economy/.

inhabit as white academics—a process that they see as "eroticized by inequality."[68] Considering J.K. Gibson-Graham's work is most widely cited in relation to post-capitalism, there is a need to challenge how whiteness and other subjective and exclusionary identities are universalized in spaces of academic theory and the imagination of economic alternatives.

Kawano explained how this post-capitalist framework became relevant in her "day job, which is Wellspring Cooperative—building a network of mutually supportive coops in Springfield."[69] This cooperative network is "based in part on the purchasing power of area anchor institutions — the colleges, universities, and hospitals — that purchase more than $1.5 billion worth of goods and services a year."[70] She shared, "Wellspring was founded with a very intentional commitment that, if worker coops are all that, then we have to make sure that they're relevant in struggling communities and not only in the more affluent and more white communities."[71] In the early years of USSEN, Emily also experienced more pushback when they would attempt to address the need for equity in spaces of cooperative organizing. She explained that their commitment to a post-capitalist approach was reflected in their decision to focus on worker-owned cooperatives rather than also including small businesses. She explained that the post-capitalist distinction ultimately came down to the question: "What is the structure? Is there something baked in that ensures that there's collective and democratic

[68] J.K. Gibson Graham write: "We began to see the 'inequality' between academic and community researchers as constitutive of our work, rather than as a hindrance or detraction. The relationship between academic and community member was eroticized by inequality, in other words, by the way 'they' invested our peculiar status and formal knowledge with power, and this is in part what made our conversations work. A seductive form of power drew them to us and our project, even as it prompted them to mock, berate, or belittle the university and those working within it. We realized that, far from attempting to achieve a pristine interaction untainted by power, our project needed to mobilize and direct power, and to make sure that it was used to foster rather than kill what we hoped to elicit—passionate participation in the project" (134).
[69] Personal interview with Emily Kawano, November 16, 2020.
[70] https://wellspringcoop.org/
[71] Personal interview with Emily Kawano, November 16, 2020.

decision-making in control and ownership?"[72] Reflecting on Kawano's insights, I am understanding how these theoretical abstractions of solidarity economy have been an important way to maintain an intersectional approach, within cooperative organizing spaces that are evading questions of equity, or to communicate with mainstream economists and others who struggle to fathom the existence of a world that is not organized by profit maximization.

As new generations are coming into solidarity economy work, after the financial crisis has radically changed the terms of the conversation, we are able to build upon this work of remediation, while contending with continued contradictions of a solidarity economy framework, in relation to our different forms of intervention. At the time I interviewed Francisco Pérez [73] in 2020, he was carrying on the work of directing the Center for Popular Economics and doing his Economics Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, which he described as "one of four or five heterodox programs in the U.S.—everywhere else, they give you the old religion that free markets are best. Capitalism is wonderful. There is no other way of doing things." He shared:

> Economics is the most conservative and the most ideologically policed of all the social sciences. Because it's the closest one to policy and power. I always joke with people: there's no Council of Sociological Advisers or Council of Anthropological Advisers, but there is a Council of Economic Advisors. language of economics is the language of power.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Bio shared with me on 3/16/23: "Francisco Pérez (@Platanomics) is a solidarity economy activist, educator and researcher. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Utah, and a Senior Economist at the Center for Economic Democracy. He is the former Director of the Center for Popular Economics, a nonprofit collective of political economists whose programs and publications demystify the economy and put useful economic tools in the hands of people fighting for social and economic justice. Francisco has worked on social and economic development projects in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the US and Venezuela. He has a PhD in economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, an MPA from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs and BA from Harvard University."

He shared that his main goal was not to make an intervention within Economics but to bring that knowledge and critique back to communities of color:

> I think [arguing with economists] is futile. I'm mainly interested in talking to other communities of color about economics. What does it mean for us to own and control our own work and workplaces; for us to own and control our homes and land; for us to own and control our money and investments; and for us to own and control our governments?

Pérez spoke to his understanding of economy as being greatly shaped by making sense of the disparities he witnessed growing up as a Dominican, receiving the "golden ticket" to attend Harvard, where he was in conversation with Aaron Tanaka, who is now the Director of the Center for Economic Democracy, about what alternatives to capitalism could look like. He also spoke to attending the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil as a transformative moment to witness those alternatives brought together, including participatory budgeting, worker-owned cooperatives, and the Landless Workers Movement.

For Pérez, it was not so important the terms that people were using, whether solidarity economy or economic democracy, as these terms did not have any "intrinsic meaning," and he was "more interested in what people think they mean." Pérez recognized that it was a small world of people doing work around solidarity economy, similar to how neoliberalism was pushed forward by small gatherings such as Mont Pèlerin Society: "We're all kind of loosely connected personally and professionally… And my hope is that at some point will be big enough that we don't all know each other." He joked that with many friends in the movement, and with his partner Nati Linares, who was working at New Economy Coalition at the time, solidarity economy had become a "family business," as they were building out various

workshops on economics and solidarity economy for activists.[74]

Reflecting on solidarity economy and worker cooperative organizing in New York City, Lauren Hudson argues that solidarity economy becomes a "comparably 'feminine' framework" in that it is "malleable and local which makes it a difficult platform to organize behind," as well as constituted by labor "performed in feminized space, like domestic work, cooperative childcare, housecleaning, and cooperative caretaking within the home."[75] As solidarity economy organizers in New York City tried to work with the city's worker cooperative programs, they experienced how worker cooperatives were privileged as "normative" examples of solidarity economy, in ways that attempt to lay claim on the narrative of the movement while excluding organizers from resources "unless they mold their work into an 'apolitical 'platform."[76] Hudson writes, "Trying to marry collectivity and individualism leaves us with a portrayal of cooperatives as sites of shared entrepreneurship, rather than places where political education occurs and our definitions of 'economy 'are reconfigured."[77]

In 2022, a group of solidarity economy practitioners released "solidarity economy principles," in which they define solidarity economy as:

> an organizing framework for those who wish to create a systemic commitment to and practice of interdependence and collective liberation in the economic

[74] These workshops have evolved into the recently released: "Economics 4 Emancipation," which is "a seven-module introductory curriculum with interactive and participatory workshops. It offers a deep critical dive into the current political economic system, exploration of alternative economic systems, and dynamic tools to dream and build the economy that centers care, relationship, and liberation." https://economics4emancipation.net/
[75] Hudson, "NYC: Struggles over the Narrative of SE."
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid. The depoliciticing impact of an entrepreneurial framework relates to Lilly Irani's discussion of "entrepreneurial citizenship," in the context of design and innovation development projects in India, whose function is "to subsume hope and dissatisfaction, redirecting potential political contestation into economic productivity and experiment," within "a process of recognition inflected by caste, gender, regional identity, and class" (22). Lilly Irani, *Chasing Innovation: Making Entrepreneurial Subjects in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

> activities that meet our material needs. Solidarity economy rests on our shared values: cooperation, democracy, social and racial justice, environmental sustainability, and mutualism. Interdependence and respect are central.
>
> Solidarity economies are *transformative* — they redistribute power and resources to those who have been most harmed by white supremacy, settler colonialism, patriarchy, ableism, and capitalism — and meet an immediate material need for a community…
>
> Solidarity economies emerge from *movements* and integrate the three common strategies for social change: personal transformation, building alternative institutions, and challenging dominant institutions.[78]

They also clarify that solidarity economy models[79] that focus on achieving "scale" are "often fetishized and divorced from their movement context and movement building goals," such that it is important to pay attention to: "who is involved, who gets to define and control the initiative, whether decision-making is democratic and accountable, and whether they are embedded in and accountable to a broader SE network or movement."

This set of principles has been operationalized into efforts such as New Economy Coalition's Black Solidarity Economy Fund. In these attempts to build theory around practice, there is a clear effort to remediate the institutions that we are navigating that are still deeply structured by and dependent on whiteness as property, and create more accountability across different organizing spaces, many of which are non-profits and cooperatives. How can we make the purpose of theorizing solidarity economy clear and specific to the purposes at hand, rather than conflating the work of institutional remediation with a movement that is led by those most impacted by capitalist exploitation?

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[78] https://solidarityeconomyprinciples.org/what-do-we-mean-by-solidarity-economy/

[79] They list as "common solidarity economy tools": "Low-income credit unions, housing cooperatives, community land trusts, food and consumer cooperatives, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, worker and producer cooperatives, fair trade networks, community gardens, susus, buying clubs, barter networks, timebanks, and even complementary currencies and open source software."

Cooperation Jackson

Alongside these broader convergences are theories of solidarity economy being forged in tandem with place-based struggles for Black self-determination. Cooperation Jackson emerged out of disaster relief efforts and people's assemblies in response to "organized abandonment"[80] in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They have developed extensive documentation and theory of their work, including *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi,* published in 2017 and *Jackson Rising Redux: Lessons on Building the Future in the Present,*[81] published in 2023. They have also inspired many other local models, such as Cooperation Richmond, Cooperation Buffalo, and Cooperation Humboldt. Along with their strategies to cultivate progressive political power through people's assemblies, they have integrated these strategies with efforts to build a solidarity economy, "anchored by a network of cooperatives and other types of worker-owned and democratically self-managed enterprises."[82]

Although they do not attempt to abstract a broader solidarity economy theory beyond their own context, their struggles on the frontlines of economic devastation are central to understanding the purpose of theorizing a shared solidarity economy movement. Cooperation Jackson's theory of solidarity economy is rooted in an analysis of Black liberation and the different scales at which resources must be organized for collective needs. They approach

[80] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning," in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California, 2008).
[81] "The Jackson People's Assembly is the product of the Mississippi Disaster Relief Coalition, which was spearheaded by MXGM in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina's devastation of Gulf Coast communities in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas. Between 2006 and 2008, this coalition expanded and transformed itself into the Jackson People's Assembly" (102), in Kali Akuno and Matt Meyer, eds. *Jackson Rising Redux: Lessons on Building the Future in the Present* (Oakland: PM Press, 2023).
[82] https://cooperationjackson.org/intro

solidarity economy as a transitional strategy toward a broader national and international movement for eco-socialism, which they describe as "a classless socioeconomic system in which humans live in balance with nature," where "exchange value would be subordinated to use value by organizing production primarily to meet social needs and the requirements of environmental protection and ecological regeneration."[83] The objectives of working toward collective ownership over the means of production are contingent, in their analysis, on the transformation of social relations "from below, not from above, that workers and communities have to drive the social transformation process through their self-organization and self-management, not be subjected to it."[84]

They make evident that building these practices is a matter of survival for the Black working class, which is constructed as a "surplus population" within the U.S. capitalist system, confronting a "genocidal threat":

> When the capitalist system can't expand and absorb it must preserve itself by shifting toward "correction and contraction"—excluding and, if necessary, disposing of all the surpluses that cannot be absorbed or consumed at a profit. We are now clearly in an era of correction and contraction that will have genocidal consequences for the surplus populations of the world if left unaddressed.[85]

These genocidal consequences are evident in the systematic defunding of Jackson's public infrastructures, leaving them without access to clean water, and the overtly white supremacist processes of disenfranchisement, what Cooperation Jackson describes as a "new and

[83] Kali Akuno and Sacajawea "Saki" Hall, "Building Economic Democracy to Construct Ecosocialism from Below" in Akuno and Meyer, eds., *Jackson Rising Redux*, 1.
[84] Kali Akuno, "Build and Fight: The Program and Strategy of Cooperation Jackson," in Akuno and Meyer, eds., *Jackson Rising Redux*, 17.
[85] Ibid., 19.

improved Jim Crow apartheid.[86] The theory that they are sharing out of this work of creating alternatives on the frontlines should be centered in the meaning and purpose of a broader solidarity economy framework.

This work of redistributing resources across a U.S. solidarity economy network is being organized through efforts including New Economy Coalition's "Black Solidarity Economy Fund," which has since 2020, "democratically distributed $450,000 to Black-led solidarity economy organizing." They write, "We will prioritize the Black-led NEC members as a continued intentional act of reparations at a time when we must acknowledge both how nonprofit organizations benefit from structural racism and racial capitalism, and the role we should play in dismantling it."[87] Considering the fund is shaped by particular limitations such as prioritizing NEC members in their regranting, they are figuring out how to more transparently share the process through which the regranting process is happening. The next chapter will explore conversations and a collaboration with people who were working for New Economy Coalition, during a period in which they were shifting to a solidarity economy framework in 2020.

[86] Hadas Thier reports, "Nearly all levels of local governance in Jackson are now filled by Black people—from the county clerk to the judges to the tax collector to most of the city council. But even though Mississippi has the highest percentage of Black residents of any state, not a single statewide office has been held by a Black person since Reconstruction ended over 130 years ago."
https://cooperationjackson.org/blog/watersystembrokenbydesign
According to Cooperation Jackson, House Bill 1020 "will expand the district to include all of the majority white districts in the city of Jackson, and enable them to exercise a degree of self rule, that would include creating as separate police force in this district, a separate court system, the elimination of voting and political rights for Black people in this district, and will divert critical tax dollars away from the Black controlled municipality and communities in need." https://cooperationjackson.org/

[87] https://neweconomy.net/blacksolidarityeconomyfund/

Chapter 2:

Emergent Collaborations Beyond the Place of Institutions

New Economy Coalition (NEC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that organizes a coalition of over 200 member organizations, which are "a cross section of nonprofits, mission-driven businesses, grassroots community organizations, and sectoral associations."[88] In 2020, NEC introduced a strategic shift away from identifying with a "new economy" movement, to redefine the coalition as a "membership-based network representing the solidarity economy movement in the United States."[89] They explained in their strategic plan, which was circulated with their coalition members for feedback:

> The solidarity economy is a global movement to build a just and sustainable economy where we prioritize people and the planet over endless profit and growth. Growing out of social movements in Latin America and the Global South, the solidarity economy provides real alternatives to capitalism, where communities govern themselves through participatory democracy, cooperative and public ownership, and a culture of solidarity and respect for the earth.[90]

This broad definition serves an educational purpose for a broader audience that might be learning about this term for the first time, while also acknowledging the global movement that NEC seeks to build upon.

At the end of 2019, I reached out to NEC to partner with them on participatory research about the solidarity economy movement,[91] and they agreed because they were seeking research to inform their strategic shift toward supporting "regional solidarity economy ecosystems." In June 2020, I began to collaborate with various NEC staff and board

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[88] https://neweconomy.net/about/#mission-vision
[89] https://neweconomy.net/about/
[90] "What is the solidarity economy?," New Economy Coalition, accessed July 7, 2022, https://neweconomy.net/solidarity-economy/.
[91] This research was for a Berkeley Human Rights Center Fellowship, which paid me $5000 to work full-time with a human rights organization for 6-8 weeks, but my process took a year.

members on a research project to collect case studies, which ultimately focused on regional solidarity economy ecosystems in Buffalo, NY; St. Louis, MO; Louisville and Eastern Kentucky, and San Diego, CA.[92] I shared the results of this research with NEC's members during their membership meeting in July 2021.

Over the second half of 2020, I also interviewed five individuals—Eli Feghali, Kelly Baker, Anand Jahi, Nati Linares, and Tori Kuper—who were all on the staff of New Economy Coalition at the time.[93] I asked them about the journeys that had led them to solidarity economy work with NEC, and their responses helped me to understand how they have strategically navigated the non-profit as an institution in order align its purpose with a broader solidarity economy movement. There were many different intersections across our journeys toward a solidarity economy movement, which included shared experiences of graduating from college and beginning our careers around the 2008 financial crisis and exploring different modes of organizing that intersected with the emergence of Occupy Wall Street. This chapter reflects on the insights that NEC staff and board members, along with organizers based in the four case study regions, shared with me, as well as how my own context shapes my interpretations. I also reflect on the process of conducting the case studies research on regional solidarity economy ecosystems.

In my process of collaborating with NEC, solidarity economy offered us a shared language through which we attempted to bring together our different resources to overcome the limited capacities and normative practices of our institutions, in relation to a broader movement ecosystem and in the midst of multiple intersecting crises. At the same time, our

[92] Final report included in the Appendix.
[93] Anand, Kelly, and Nati no longer work for NEC.

collaboration was shaped by the academic and non-profit infrastructures in which we were practicing this work, in ways that can privilege formal institutions and capital as the infrastructure of a solidarity economy movement. As we attempt to align the work we are doing within professionalized institutions with a solidarity economy framework, how do we implement the values and practices of a solidarity economy within the modes of accountability that guide our work? These issues are actively being engaged and transformed, in practice, by a growing network of people working to build a solidarity economy movement.

New Economics Institute

As part of their shift in 2020, NEC included an organizational history that traces a process of internal change, from their origin as "New Economics Institute," which was founded in 2012 as a think tank, "on the heels of the Great Recession, in response to growing national interest in solidarity economy practices, values, and strategies for systemic change."[94] They explain that the framework of "new economics" was "popularized by leaders at what had previously been the E.F. Schumacher Society,"[95] which was founded in 1980 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts to preserve the works of their namesake. Schumaker was an influential "German-born British economist," whose "critique of Western economies and his proposals for human-scale, decentralized, and appropriate technologies" became influential in the 1970s.[96] Interestingly, Schumacher did not describe his theory as a "new economics" but rather, as a theory of "Buddhist economics" that he had learned while working as economic consultant in Burma.

In 2013, New Economics Institute reframed its role around building a national

[94] "Our History," New Economy Coalition, https://neweconomy.net/about/#history (accessed March 1, 2023).
[95] Ibid.
[96] https://centerforneweconomics.org/envision/legacy/ernst-friedrich-schumacher/

coalition for a "new economy" movement, thus becoming New Economy Coalition.[97] According to an article published in *The Guardian* in 2014, the President and CEO of NEC, Bob Massie, who is described as the power broker of "three groundbreaking coalitions that have helped shape the sustainability agenda," was building a coalition of progressive movements around the "common aim of environmental and social justice, rather than trying to reach consensus on the strategy of how to get there."[98] Massie is quoted, explaining, "If you build the outcome you want, then different groups can attach to it in their own ways." This approach reflects what adrienne maree brown describes as "a good half century of individualistic linear organizing (led by charismatic individuals or budget-building institutions), which intends to reform or revolutionize society, but falls back into modeling the oppressive tendencies against which we claim to be pushing."[99] *The Guardian* notes the internal tensions that are brewing within the organization, between "those working to change the system from within existing capital and corporate structures, as well as those on the outside including Navajo and Black activists" as well as between "environmental elders" and "young post-Occupy activists." It goes on to state, "What is clear is the NEC is already showing some signs of strain with environmental campaigners worrying that the post-Occupy youth, who dominate the NEC staff, are hijacking the coalition with their fixation on social justice… Will he be able to herd the cats or will the cats end up herding him?"

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[97] NEI merged with the New Economy Network and renaming itself New Economy Coalition (NEC), while the local work of the E.F. Schumacher Society would be carried on by the newly named Schumacher Center for New Economics. The Schumacher Center's mission, according to its website, is "to envision the elements of a just and regenerative global economy"; "apply these elements in its home region of the Berkshires in western Massachusetts"; and "to share the results more broadly, thus encouraging replication." https://centerforneweconomics.org/about/

[98] Jo Confino, "Driving social and environmental justice into the heart of the US economy," *Guardian*, July 8, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/jul/08/bob-massie-social-justice-environment-us-new-economy-coalition.

[99] adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 8.

After Massie resigned as Executive Director in 2014, due to these conflicts, staff, board and members engaged in a process of internal organizing to reshape the organization. In their history, they explain that as a result: "In 2016, we began to shift from being a largely white, upper class organization to one whose staff and board are majority people of color, and significantly more geographically and socioeconomically diverse."[100] As part of this shift, NEC's articulation of a new economy movement came to focus on a movement led by and for "frontline communities," who have "long experimented with different ways of building community economies as a means of survival" and thus have "deep and valuable experience imagining and creating alternatives."[101]

New Economy Coalition

Those I interviewed agreed that the organization had changed as a result of intentional hiring decisions, which brought in more people of color and more alignment around anti-capitalist values. Here I go over some of the moments that they shared with me about their journeys, which demonstrate how their own life experiences, theories of change, and ways of navigating institutionalized spaces ultimately contributed to remediating NEC's possibilities toward a solidarity economy movement. The interviews were almost three years ago, so in the footnotes I have included their more updated bios:

Eli Feghali[102] was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and migrated to the U.S. with his parents

[100] https://neweconomy.net/about/ (accessed March 1, 2023).
[101] https://neweconomy.net/ (accessed December 1, 2019).
The term "frontline communities" is rooted in the environmental justice movement to name working class and racialized communities most directly impacted by environmental harms and the growing effects of climate change. https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html
[102] All quotes in chapter from personal interview with Eli Feghali, November 11, 2020.
Bio: "Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Eli Feghali immigrated to the United States with his parents to escape the civil war. For the past eight years at NEC, Eli has directed its communications programs, served on the staff leadership team, and co-edited a book project called Beautiful Solutions. Before joining NEC, Eli organized in

to escape civil war, learning early on about "the capacity of things to fall apart." In college, he became a student organizer and afterward began working for different non-profits, but questioned the limitations of non-profits when the work "started to feel like a job and not like a revolutionary vocation." The emergence of the Occupy movement in Boston gave Eli the opportunity to take part in "direct democracy in the streets for the first time." While this was a liberating experience, he also questioned the movement's strategies, as they would be chanting "Another World is Possible": "And I remember loving that chant, but after a while, feeling critical of it, like, "What do we mean?" He remembers reading Gar Alperovitz's *America Beyond Capitalism*, which gave an "overview of different efforts of economic democracy in the US," and he began to connect what he was learning about alternative models such as cooperatives to the collective organizing that continued even after Occupy encampments were dismantled. He would join his partner Rachel as staff of NEC when it was still New Economics Institute, helping to create the internal shifts toward NEC.

Anand Jahi[103] first came into organizing work when he was recruited in high school to a youth organizing group in Boston. After college, he began working for a non-profit in Kensington, a predominantly Black and Latino neighborhood of Philadelphia facing deindustrialization and disinvestment. Anand explained that while the organization had

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Tennessee for the migrant justice movement, then on the streets of Boston during the Occupy Wall Street uprising. It was on those streets where he first chanted 'another world is possible,' and was introduced to cooperatives and the solidarity economy. Through NEC and Beautiful Solutions, Eli works to tell the story of what another world could look like — and how we get there. Eli is also Co-Chair of the Board of YES! Magazine. He lives with his life partner Rachel in Cambridge, MA." https://neweconomy.net/about/#our-team

[103] All quotes in chapter from personal interview with Anand Jahi, August 12, 2020.
Bio: "Anand Jahi is a consultant with over 20 years of experience in social movement work. Before moving into full-time consulting, Anand had experience serving as a member of a base building organization, an advocate, an educator, a mentor, an organizer, an executive leader, and a board member. As a consultant, Anand focuses on supporting nonprofits, values-driven businesses, and other social justice-oriented groups develop strategies to build and leverage economic power for social good and community empowerment." https://www.nwamakaagbo.com/services

achieved "powerful organizing victories that improved things within the school system," he felt that the root causes were beyond the scope of the organization's work, as "young people were pushed out of the school system because they were living in really dire poverty." This recognition led Anand to become "more curious about economic justice, a deeper type of transformation that would address some of those root causes better than this more traditional-style organizing." When Anand joined NEC in 2014, he saw there was a "concerted effort among staff and some board members to push the organization in a more radical direction and more explicitly focused on poor communities and communities of color," and suggested that part of the reason he was hired full-time was due to his experiences as "a Black man with a history of grassroots organizing," which would not have been the case a year earlier. Anand emphasized solidarity economy in the sense of a "dual power" analysis, where solidarity economy institutions must be built in tandem with frontlines resistance work.[104]

Tori Kuper[105] graduated from college around the start of the financial crisis and remembers how "all the industries that were supposed to take care of you or be very stable" had collapsed. While traditional forms of entrepreneurship did not feel accessible, she started

[104] Kali Akuno describes dual power as: "building autonomous power outside of the realm of the state (i.e., the government) in the form of people's assemblies and engaging electoral politics on a limited scale with the expressed intent of building radical voting blocs and electing candidates drawn from the ranks of the assemblies." Kali Akuno, "The Jackson-Kush Plan: The Struggle for Black" in Akuno and Meyers, *Jackson Rising Redux*, 104.

[105] All quotes from in chapter from personal interview with Tori Kuper, December 16, 2020.
Bio: "Tori was born and raised in a working class Rust Belt community. As a second generation Holocaust survivor, she has committed her life to building resilient communities grounded in mutual aid, collective determination, and empathy. As a mother, she is committed to building a world that she is proud to pass on to her son. She comes to the solidarity economy movement from the co-op sector, where she has been involved in stewarding and building various housing co-ops, worker co-ops, and co-op loan funds over the last decade. She is honored to serve the movement locally and nationally through boards of PUSH Buffalo and the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives. Since 2016, Tori has been at NEC weaving relationships, aggregating resources, and figuring out practical ways to make our wildest dreams logistically feasible. She copes with the current state of the world through panic baking, stress gardening, and listening to paranormal podcasts."
https://neweconomy.net/about/#our-team

to learn about an "accessible pathway to ownership and collective ownership" in the cooperative sector. She was living in NASCO cooperative housing,[106] where she founded Breadhive,[107] a worker-owned bakery. She shared, "When you're a coop-er, you take ownership. So it's not just fighting against the bad, it's building the good. It's a different mindset: if you see something that isn't working, transform it in a way that does." She co-founded Cooperation Buffalo to help make cooperatives more accessible for more people. It was not until joining NEC that she learned the "academic frameworks" of "solidarity economy" and "just transition," which described what they were already doing in Buffalo: "We don't call it these things, but this is really baked into who we are as a people." She also understood solidarity economy as a broader ecosystem that was necessary, against the "impossible mandate" that cooperatives had to function sustainably and equitably within a capitalist system.

Kelly Baker[108] graduated from university in the midst of the financial crisis, with a vague idea of working in business, but ended up finding on Craigslist an "anarchist vegan collective house made up of activists, all these people who care about feminism, racial justice, the things I care about." She reflected on how the activities of the collective naturally

[106] https://www.nasco.coop/
[107] https://www.breadhive.com/
[108] All quotes from personal interview with Kelly Baker, September 23, 2020.
Bio: "I'm a nonprofit consultant with over a decade of fundraising, facilitation, and nonprofit management experience. I specialize in supporting small teams and grassroots organizations to be more effective, sustainable, and values-aligned. Before launching my consulting practice, I was the Co-Director of the New Economy Coalition, working alongside a team of brilliant colleagues to support the solidarity economy movement in the United States. At NEC, I led efforts to transition to a 4 day work week, implemented a sabbatical policy, and supported the shift from a top-down leadership model to collective governance. I bring the lessons from these experiences (both the wins and the mistakes!) to my consulting practice. I live in my hometown of Boston, but my clients are located all over the U.S. The common thread between my clients is that they are committed to building strong, inclusive movements and to building healthy, people-centered work cultures." https://www.kellybakerconsulting.com/about

overlapped with different organizing efforts in Boston, where she grew up, including becoming a regular meeting space during the Occupy Boston movement. Kelly reflected on how this period allowed her to truly understand that "the personal is political," as they sought to live out their political values at home. She shared, "We felt like we were prefiguring what the next system could look like, but on an individual or community scale." When she joined NEC in a development role, she gained a language and framework for what she had already begun to live out in practice. At the same time, she questioned the capacity of "professional activism" as a path toward more revolutionary change: "How do we really grapple with the fact that so many of us come from academia, whether by training or profession, that so much of what we do and talk about is rooted in theory but not practice? How do we really meaningfully integrate the people in our movement who are coming from the practice and want to learn the theory?"

Nati Linares[109] worked across various roles in the music industry and became a "renegade publicist" with the goal of building power through representation for Black and brown artists. She also created ISLA, an arts collective in her hometown of Staten Island, where Eric Garner was killed in 2014 by a police officer: "I lived in that neighborhood and I saw what an unorganized community looks like. We had no response. And from there I was just doing local organizing. I put on a cultural festival in Staten Island as a way just to get

[109] All quotes in chapter from personal interview with Nati Linares, December 16, 2020
Natalia "Nati" Linares (@conrazon on Twitter, @naticonrazon on IG) is a cultural and communications organizer who comes to the solidarity economy movement after a decade of witnessing inequities while working in the music and media industry. She grew up on the island of Shaolin, also known as Staten Island, New York City—close to both the world's largest garbage dump and the oldest continuously inhabited free Black community in the United States. Linares is the child of Cuban and Colombian immigrants who landed in Queens in the late 1960s, benefited from low-cost public college, and raised her with a love of learning, exploration, and music. She tells the stories of people resisting capitalism and building new systems, especially those creating a culture of revolution.

people outside of their bubbles, building with one another, but I didn't necessarily see myself as an activist." She also had a formative experience collaborating with Sol Collective, founded by a mentor Estella Sanchez, which created a collaborative record label for artists in 2015[110] and a network of different BIPOC venues in California. Through this process of personal and collective reflection, she was building an analysis of "how power works within the culture industry," while also in conversation with her long-time friend and partner, Francisco Pérez, who helped contextualize these experiences in relation to his work as an economist. In her communications work, she would help NEC to recenter the role of culture and artists as a force of the solidarity economy movement.

Various staff members shared that one of the most impactful aspects of their work was holding space for people to gather across geographies and sectors to understand themselves as part of a shared movement— "the space for us to see each other, to learn from each other, to have a shared identity"[111] where they might otherwise "feel kind of lonely, like… I'm the only person in my city that's doing this."[112] The first CommonBound took place in Buffalo in 2016, which Tori was brought on to coordinate, due to her work with Cooperation Buffalo:

> I think CommonBound coming to Buffalo put us on a national radar that we were never looking to achieve and made us realize that in this kind of silo, we were building really innovative shit/stuff/things… It put us in relationship with inspiring people, inspiring leaders and inspiring models that could advance our work more rapidly or more strategically. And it also put us on a national platform that made it a lot easier to get funding and support and media and just general understanding, on both the national level and the local level.

Kelly shared that the significance of NEC's work was in "fostering collaboration through relationships," seeing over time how different people were able to meet and collaborate, but

[110] "About Us," Sol Collective, http://www.solcollective.org/about-us/ (accessed July 6, 2022).
[111] Personal Interview with Eli Feghali, November 11, 2020.
[112] Personal Interview with Anand Jahi, August 12, 2020.

that in her development role, it was difficult to quantify the value of this work: “When you can't see the actual, direct impact of your work, it can be very easy to assume you're not having an impact. But I do believe that it's there and it's that special intangible thing that happens when you put people in a room together.”

According to Anand, an important part of the staff recognizing their anti-capitalist values was through the lens of NEC’s social media. When I brought this up, Nati responded, “I was definitely projecting what I wanted us to be... It really was an aspiration.” This messaging work on Instagram was also how I first found out about and connected to NEC and could gauge a sense of our shared investments in the solidarity economy, when the organization was still officially using the language of “new economy.”

As New Economy Coalition staff were converging around their collective anti-capitalist values with each new hire, there was a growing confusion around the organization’s identity, in relation to capitalism. Kelly shared, “Are we defined by the staff’s political outlook, which is explicitly leftist? Or are we defined by our broad tent[113] membership? When people are looking at the list of our members, they might see some radical leftist groups, and they are also going to see some really middle of the road folks who think that we can reform capitalism.” According to Eli, “new economy” was an “empty signifier,” and their rationale for sticking to it at first was that it allowed NEC into spaces that would otherwise consider the organization to be “too left,” allowing them to better serve as a “legitimizing force for the

[113] “Big tent” or “broad tent” was referenced by various NEC staff members to describe its past culture. It was also the term that organizers of the solidarity economy track at the 2007 U.S. Social Forum used to describe their parameters for inclusion: “Our planning group ended up evolving a “big tent” conception of economic alternatives and the solidarity economy in the U.S., where an individual or group’s participation was not determined by being perfectly aligned with progressive values (i.e. anti-classist, -racist, -sexist, -nationalist, -homophobic, and sustainable/ecological) – indeed, we realized that few were” (Allard and Matthaei 5).

overall movement and field nationally." Against this compromise, NEC staff and board were confronting how this idea of a "big tent" membership and approach as a strategic necessity was constraining their sense of possibility and collective understanding of their work.[114]

As they became aware of their shared anti-capitalist values, NEC staff were also questioning how these values were reflected in the structure of their work. In 2018, the staff intervened to "shift our internal staff structure and policies to be more in line with our external values, including transitioning from a traditional hierarchical non-profit to a four-person co-directorship."[115] According to Kelly:

> We thought we had leaders already on staff who could assume this role and learn on the job and support each other. We pitched a co-directorship model to the board – we were like, "Please don't hire another executive director who's going to come in and make twice as much as all the rest of us." We thought, combined, we kind of rounded out what you want NEC to have as leadership body.

They were successful in their proposal to have four staff members, Kelly, Eli, Anand, and Shavaun Evans, serve as Co-Directors, bringing together their experience of managing different aspects of NEC's work, spanning development, communications, organizing, and coordinating membership. The co-directorship was intended to be an interim structure to cultivate the existing leadership on staff, within a longer process of working toward a worker self-directed non-profit model. This model, developed by Sustainable Economies Law Center, also an NEC member, refers to "a nonprofit organization in which all workers have the power to influence the programs in which they work, the conditions of their workplace, their own

[114] INCITE's anthology, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, was a formative text to growing consciousness of how the "non-profit industrial complex" has atomized collective organizing into institutionalized funding structures that privilege reformist orientations and reproduce exclusions along lines of race, class, gender and other identities. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007).
[115] https://neweconomy.net/about/#history (accessed March 1, 2023).

career paths, and the direction of the organization as a whole."[116]

Shift to solidarity economy

In 2018, as NEC began to understand their intervention as a "post-capitalist project on the political left,"[117] they began a process of collective staff study to build a shared political analysis of different economic frameworks and theories of change. According to Kelly:

> We did a series where we rotated who would pick the readings and facilitate conversation around it. We did some deep dives into the history of capitalism, the history of socialism and communism, capitalism as it relates to racism, capitalism as it relates to sexism, etc. Then we turned our lens to the solidarity economy itself, in the U.S. context, the global context. As we did that, we started pulling from those readings and those discussions to build out our principles and our values.

Through this process, NEC staff ultimately aligned internally around a solidarity economy framework to reflect their collective values and visions. According to Eli, their identification with a solidarity economy movement was a way to clarify internally, as an organization, "the boundaries of the economic transformation that we were building" as well as to build connections with a "broader international movement—a lineage and a history that we feel like we're a part of and that we want to honor and learn from. We felt like new economy was actually severing that connection for us."

Non-profit industrial complex

At the time of our collaboration, NEC was still predominantly funded by private foundations, which support public charities through grantmaking and are also exempt from

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[116] "Worker Self-Directed Nonprofits," Sustainable Economies Law Center, https://www.theselc.org/worker_selfdirected_nonprofits (accessed July 6, 2022).
Over the course of 2020, NEC transitioned to become a "worker self-directed nonprofit," which they describe as "a governance structure that melds aspects of worker cooperativism into the 501(c)(3) structure"—for NEC, this consists of "a General Circle (consisting of 5 elected staff members and 2 member-elected board members), that holds key governance power" and "semi-autonomous "Circles" and member working groups, each of which have their own governance charters."

[117] https://neweconomy.net/about/#history (accessed March 1, 2023).

taxation. Anand reflected on the "irony" of being an "anti-capitalist organization that's focused on community wealth" yet remaining "totally reliant on major foundations, whose endowments are tied up in the stock market," with an 80/20 split between foundations and individuals. Ruth Wilson Gilmore aptly describes foundations as "repositories of twice-stolen wealth—(a) profit sheltered from (b) taxes,"[118] and argues that the continuous growth of foundation assets must be understood as an agent of—rather than solution to—poverty, racialized inequalities, and other structural elements of capitalism. While Anand had come to NEC in order to learn more about how alternative economic structures could lead to more impactful organizing, he was finding his work constrained by the same non-profit structures that prevented the urgency and flexibility necessary to engage with social movements. This disconnect became particularly evident in light of the Black Lives Matter uprisings in response to the police murder of George Floyd during the summer of 2020, which was the time in which Anand was helping me with the regional solidarity economy ecosystems research.

Significantly, NEC's relationships with major funders were brokered early in its history, when the coalition was explicitly taking a systems-neutral approach. Kelly explained how Massie, as an older white man who had run for Massachusetts governor, was able to tap into his institutional capital and networks in order to secure their biggest source of funding to date, NoVo Foundation, which is led by Peter and Jennifer Buffet and funds "new and inclusive economies" work.[119] Kelly explained:

> I don't think I could have gotten a meeting with that foundation without a prior relationship established by someone with class privilege and experience navigating that world. To be candid, it's been more of a struggle to get other

[118] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "In the Shadow of the Shadow State," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, 46.
[119] https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/fdo-grantmaker-profile?key=BUFF015 (accessed March 1, 2023).

> major sources of funding without a well-connected white man in the leadership role.

As they shifted toward a more explicit anti-capitalist, solidarity economy framework in 2020, Kelly observed how the shift was making it easier to find funding because NEC's "big tent" approach had actually been alienating both those who would find their work too radical as well as those who might not think NEC's work was radical enough. According to Kelly, this shift was due in part to how the philanthropy world was also being transformed from the inside out, especially by people from marginalized identities who were taking on the harms while working within these institutions to transform them toward greater alignment with a systems-change perspective.

Working in overlapping local and national organizing spaces, Tori was able to witness how the connections to a national platform made it easier to get funding and media coverage of their efforts in Buffalo, but that it was also leading to the professionalization of organizing spaces in ways that exacerbated existing inequities in their work:

> We're historically a poor city and so a lot of scarcity dynamics and mindsets started coming into play… there was suddenly more of a "have and have-nots" of movement work, and different levels of access. And I think once the money started playing into it, it really highlighted the role of race, class, background, based on who was asking for what from the pot and who felt entitled to ask and who did not, and who were the decision makers.

Tori shared that it was too early to understand the tradeoffs of institutionalization—whether the resources garnered by these professionalized routes ultimately made their work more impactful or not.

Nati acknowledged that even as staff of NEC were becoming more diverse, they were also repeating patterns of the non-profit industry that privilege formal educations in ways that limit their capacity to represent frontline communities: "Even on the website, we all have the

colleges that we went to. We're still kind of playing that game." College education is often a minimum requirement of non-profit work that is supposed to be addressing conditions lived by people kept out of non-profit jobs. There was also a large turnover in staff in 2020, with three of the four co-directors leaving the organization. Kelly reminded me that, along with staff moving onto new opportunities, the high turnover was shaped by burnout, due to the challenges of sustaining a collective structure within the non-profit sector with limited resources. Nati also left the organization and mentioned the need for more support, especially as a parent, to also be able to live solidarity economy.

In these ways, NEC staff members were openly questioning the relationship between a solidarity economy movement and the institutional structures through which they were working, as well as the impact of NEC on place-based movements. This seems to be a broader question for movement work that is taking place in non-profits as well as academic institutions: how do we continue to acknowledge and remediate the exclusions that are reproduced within institutions, especially when claiming to represent a solidarity economy movement that is led by frontline communities?

Learning from connection

The possibility to have these conversations with people working at NEC reminded me of how transformation is taking place on an interpersonal level, through a willingness to learn and practice new ways of working together, with an analysis of how organizational structures. I was reminded of the importance of sharing our analyses and to hold the complexities of the journeys that other people take to realize the work that they do. I did not have nor want the level of access to NEC to speak to the inner logics shaping the organization or the efficacy of their strategies. What I noticed was partial and subjective. I see many shared threads across

our experiences, even as we were rooted in very different histories. Many of us, including those I interviewed and other staff members of NEC at the time, graduated from college in the Northeast, in the midst of a financial crisis. We learned to navigate institutions to achieve our goals, and were striving to organize around the inequalities and harms we understood from our lived experiences of race, gender, and class, as well as the ways we became educated about systemic oppressions beyond our own experiences, in the context of unending crises.

Graduating from college in the midst of a recession, I first explored the idea of public interest law but became disillusioned with law as a mode of social change. In September 2011, I began a 10-month tenant organizing apprentice, run by an affordable housing coalition, with nine other young people, each of us working for a different affordable housing non-profit in New York City.[120] I was partnered with Asian Americans for Equality, a community development corporation that proudly identified with its history of grassroots struggles in Chinatown in the 1970s, but in reality, had no organizing infrastructure.[121]

Over the course of the apprentice, I continued to meet with the other apprentices once a week, where we would learn about community organizing and work through difficult questions with one another about the work we were doing at our respective organizations, the

[120] https://anhd.org/project/center-community-leadership-ccl

[121] "For Asian Americans for Equality, it all began in the streets of Chinatown in 1974. Moved to action by a developer who refused to hire Asian workers for the massive Confucius Plaza construction project, local activists raised their voices, staged months of protests and finally prevailed." https://www.aafe.org/who-we-are/our-history (accessed March 1, 2023).
Even though I was hired as an apprentice to learn from an existing organizing infrastructure, I was left to create tenants' rights work while AAFE was keeping its own tenants from collectivizing. Rather I learned that non-profit work was attending a lot of coalition meetings where people would tell each other they were doing things they were not doing because our organizations had become extremely hierarchical organizations where organizing work could not happen. I spent a lot of time walking through Queens, talking to people at the park, at churches, at businesses, about their housing conditions, sometimes running tenants' rights workshops, but had limited resources to offer. Though I wish it had been more directly communicated, I realize in retrospect that my supervisor had figured out that we, as the phantom Community Building and Organizing Department, were being paid to keep up AAFE's appearances so we should just do whatever we thought would be useful to our own work.

institutional structures we were up against, and how this related to our larger visions for social change and our personal journeys. At the same time, we were building beautiful friendships which have continued to deeply inform how I understand the world. We were mentored by Zera Priestess, who was organizing Black women and mothers in the Bronx through Sistas on the Rise, and Hector Soto, who passed on insights from organizing with El Comité against urban renewal.[122] While Zera and Hector had found ways to bring us together through non-profit resources, they were teaching us in plain terms that the revolution would not be funded, and how much healing and remediation work was needed.

Over the course of this same year, I became involved in a grassroots organizing campaign, when Danny Chen, a teenager from Chinatown, allegedly committed suicide, after being subject to constant racist hazing by his white peers in the army.[123] I was young and ambitious and poured my life into this organizing work, but I was growing increasingly uncomfortable and confused about the justice we were fighting for, and the punitive systems we were upholding in our search for justice. After we led a march with hundreds of people and politicians demanding justice, the *New York Times* released a story almost immediately afterward that eight people had been charged for Danny's death. It felt like a victory at the time, but over the course of that year, I would learn how much it would take out of us all of us

[122] "El Comité was not formed with a revolutionary ethos or political ideology, like say, the New York chapter of the Young Lords. Some members were slightly older, first or second generation Puerto Ricans, Vietnam veterans, unemployed laborers, factory workers, etc. Others had young families, while most had virtually no experience with community organizing and only limited experience with radical politics. Muzio, however, attributes a somewhat latent political consciousness to some of the founding members as a consequence of the radical social milieu of the era and the familial ties of some members of El Comité to the Nationalist Party's movement for independence in Puerto Rico." https://nacla.org/el-comite-new-york-puerto-rico (accessed March 1, 2023).

[123] I had first become involved with OCA-NY, a grassroots organization that was mostly made up of elders from Chinatown, when my Ethnic Studies adjunct professor, Liz OuYang, brought me into their campaign to organize against the deportation of a community member after they had served a prison sentence.

to keep fighting for justice that could only amount to retribution.[124]

In September 2011, Occupy Wall Street began in a "private-public" park in New York City called Zucotti Park. In retrospect I realize how, like several people I spoke to in New Economy Coalition, Occupy Wall Street shaped my own journey of organizing in and out of institutions. I was feeling a growing sense of despair as I learned more about the scale and complexity of the systems we were in, and how our work seemed designed to keep us from the collective action we needed to take. Visiting the encampment and workshops, often with the other tenant organizing apprentices, many of whom had grown up in New York, we were curious and hopeful but also collectively disillusioned by the space, which often felt very white and disconnected from the organizing work that had been happening in communities of color. In retrospect, I'm remembering how significant it was, for me and for many people of my generation, to witness a space where people were self-organizing, without a non-profit or political party, and practicing consensus decision-making, collectively serving food to masses of people, and hosting free libraries, medicine and skill shares, and popular education workshops.[125]

The following year, I moved to South Korea and had a chance to stay with an encampment of activists in Jeju, protesting the construction of a military base that is, in reality, controlled by the U.S. We would sit in front of the entrances of the base to stop the construction, until we were pulled away by police, seven or eight times a day. I realized the

[124] "When we insist that law recognize the value of victims' lives, we are essentially demanding that lawbreakers receive harsher prison sentences, which validates and substantiates the power of the criminal justice system to determine whose lives are socially valuable and whose are less so. Lisa Marie Cacho, Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected. NYU Press, 2012, p. 61.
[125] This was actually where I first heard about the Center for Popular Economics, where solidarity economy researchers and educators such as Maliha Safri would hold popular economics workshops.

different world that was being created through the infrastructure of this movement, as I stayed in the communal housing for visitors and we were fed in a communal kitchen, which became a space of socializing and organizing. Every day, activists transported food from the kitchen to the sites of mobilization around the base, both to feed the protesters and use the practice of sharing food as a form of protest and obstruction. Every night, activists came together in front of the base to reflect, sing and dance, and the dancing often extended into the day, as a way of interacting with (and hassling) the police. Before it was blasted, activists fought to protect the stretch of volcanic rock that villagers named "Gureombi," due to the spiritual importance it holds in Gangjeong.[126] In 2012, anti-base activists plastered the walls of the base construction site with large murals, recreating the view of the sea that existed before the land was expropriated. People from Gangjeong are pictured smiling and interacting with the sea and land that was once freely theirs, creating a haunting reminder of the life that military bases destroy. The anti-base movement in Gangjeong also focused on solidarity work with other anti-base movements across the world, from Hawaii to Guam to Puerto Rico.[127] In the process, villagers were developing their analysis of global militarism and environmental activists were developing their analysis of imperialism.[128]

Regional Solidarity Economy Ecosystems Research with NEC

I first reached out to New Economy Coalition in December of 2019 to partner with

[126] As a form of protest, activists continued to perform various spiritual rituals upon the rock, before it was blocked off and eventually destroyed to lay the foundations of the base. Shining Lake, "Gureombi Remembrance Day," *Gangjeong Village Story*.
[127] Activists in Gangjeong organized a group called "Inter-Island Solidarity for Peace" with other anti-base movements in Okinawa and Taiwan, as a way to recognize the need for collaborative efforts to maintain peace in East Asia, since isolated action by any one location will simply move the destruction to another. *Save Jeju Now,* "Okinawa visit for 'Inter-Island Solidarity for Peace'" (May 27, 2014).
[128] My desire to better understand the context of militarism in order to be a resource for movements against military destruction was what first led me into a Ph.D. program.

them for participatory research, at a time that NEC was also looking for research to inform their strategic shift to support the development of "regional solidarity economy ecosystems." The idea of supporting "regional solidarity economy ecosystems" had been articulated during a staff retreat, reflecting their sense of alignment around the role they wanted to play as an organization.[129] Their vision statement reads:

> We envision a world where our lives are no longer dominated or determined by capitalism nor any other extractive system. We envision a world in which everyone has what they need, where people have collective agency and self-determination.
>
> To get there, we must be interconnected and powerful together. In our vision, global economic transformation is built and led by regional solidarity economy ecosystems.

In NEC's strategic plan, they defined a "solidarity economy ecosystem" as:

> an environment in which all of the things a community needs—like housing, schools, farms and food production, local governance structures, art and culture, healthcare and healing, transportation, and the resources needed to build that infrastructure—are controlled and governed by the people, led by those most marginalized by our current economy, and anchored by strong community roots.

In the research process, we were struggling to figure out what "regions" and "ecosystems" meant in practice. Regions were defined broadly in NEC's strategic plan: "ecologically by land, climate, or watershed, politically through borders and voting boundaries, economically by markets and shared material conditions, or culturally, by our traditions, ethnicities, and migration pathways." The examples we discussed in practice were different cities, where NEC staff, board, and members were seeing the growth of a regional solidarity economy ecosystems. We summarized the research questions as follows:

- How are regional solidarity economy ecosystems in the U.S. seeded and developed?

[129] Personal interview with Anand Jahi, August 12, 2020.

- What support do regional SE ecosystems need? What are their shared challenges and opportunities?
- How can regional SE interventions be networked and scaled toward a broader U.S. movement?

Based on Tori's recommendation, as someone who is also doing infrastructural work in her local context of Buffalo, we decided to identify an "anchor organization" in each region, based on the insights of NEC staff and members, who could provide an overarching understanding of different regions they work with or are based in. We began the case studies with two cities where NEC already had strong relationships. I began interviews with Andrew Delmonte from PUSH Buffalo, which hosted NEC's 2016 CommonBound conference, and Julia Ho and Salena Burch from Solidarity Economy St. Louis, which hosted the 2018 CommonBound. As they were already very involved with NEC coalitional work and the work happening in their respective cities, the process of interviewing them shaped how I was understanding a "solidarity economy ecosystem" in practice. Working with NEC staff also helped to connect me with different people in their network, who advised me in different ways. I also had initial conversations with potential anchor organizations—LA Coop Lab in Los Angeles, Center for Economic Democracy in Boston, and Sustainable Economies Law Center in the Bay Area, but learned these areas already had existing research and organizers expressed concerns about recreating labor. I also interviewed staff of Democracy at Work Institute and the Center for Cultural Innovation, around their experiences working on a national level while supporting and networking place-based efforts.

I also consulted examples of participatory research on different place-based solidarity economies. This includes Solidarity Economy Initiative's "Solidarity Rising in

Massachusetts: How Solidarity Economy Movement is Emerging in Lower-Income Communities of Color,"[130] Penn Loh and Julian Agyeman's "Urban food sharing and the emerging Boston food solidarity economy," a report produced in tandem with Highlander Center's "Solidarity Economies in the South" gathering in September 2019,[131] Lauren Hudson's "New York City: Struggles over the narrative of the Solidarity Economy, and The Solidarity Economy Mapping Project, which aims to "increase the visibility of individual solidarity economy practices and of the solidarity economy as a whole."[132] As I was researching for my dissertation, I was also brought into collective research and education efforts, including Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard's report, "Solidarity Not Charity: Grantmaking in the Solidarity Economy,"[133] advocates for prioritizing BIPOC-led efforts toward community ownership and democratic governance in arts grantmaking, as a way to repair the harms and inequities shaping our present cultural economy.

NEC staff expressed that they wanted more insight into regional work happening in rural or Southeast part of the U.S., and they connected me with Shavaun Evans, who had recently left her role as NEC Co-Director. Shavaun shared her insights on the solidarity economy ecosystem of Louisville, emphasizing the leadership of Black women in cooperative development, including a childcare cooperative she helped create called Play Cousins

[130] Loh P, Jimenez S (2017) Solidarity rising in massachusetts: how soli- darity economy movement is emerging in lower income commu- nities of color. Solidarity Economy Initiative Report. Center for Economic Democracy, Boston

[131] https://highlandercenter.org/our-impact/solidarity-economy-in-the-south/ a "collective of organizers and academics who promote, connect, and support New York City's solidarity economy," which initially formed out of USSEN's 2009 Forum, and their website includes a map and database of organizations they consider to be part of the solidarity economy

[132] https://solidarityeconomy.us/

[133] Commissioned by Grantmakers in the Arts

Collective.[134] She also connected me to Cassia Herron, who is the founder of the Louisville Association for Community Economics (LACE).

San Diego was the fourth and last case study. Before the collaboration with NEC, I had interviewed Mario Ceballos who co-created POC Fungi Community, and Virgen Barnet who co-created Come Through, a network for BIPOC creatives. I also added additional interviews with Sona Desai from San Diego Food System Alliance, Derrick Robinson from Center for Policy Initiatives, and Ashley Miller from Catalyst, a funder network.

To write the case studies, I drew upon interviews of anchor organizations, survey responses by a set of key organizations identified by the anchor organization, reports and other materials by community-based organizations in the region,[135] and economic and demographic data from U.S. Census, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and other sources. I then integrated more existing research, produced by community-based organizations from each region, which were either part of or allied with the set of key organizations. The reports provided important context on key issues such as environmental racism, food inequity, and disinvestment in each region, which clearly echoed and supplemented the knowledge shared in interviews and surveys. The case studies highlight the unique conditions of development, opportunities and challenges, and areas of needed support for a solidarity economy movement, according to the responses of regional organizers.

We then shared this draft report with all involved partners for feedback and in June

[134] Play Cousins Collective is "an African American Family Collective building villages around our children through family and children's programming and resource sharing. Families create and lead programs (rooted in Ancestral methods of healing and resilience) to serve their unique needs, heal generational traumas and build a network that insulates them from systemic oppression and racism." https://playcousinscollective.wildapricot.org

[135] The reports provided important context on key issues such as environmental racism, food inequity, and disinvestment in each region, which clearly echoed and supplemented the knowledge shared in interviews and surveys.

2021, held a "cross-regional meeting" with different organizers involved in the research. Following the cross-regional meeting, I further revised the report to incorporate the various forms of feedback, which were shared directly on the draft or during the meeting. I also significantly revised the Kentucky case study because two of the people on the call were based in rural regions of Eastern Kentucky and wanted to see more of the rural organizing reflected, since a central part of their work was to bridge Louisville's Black communities affected by food apartheid and predominantly white, rural communities impacted by coal mining and working toward shifts in regenerative agriculture. I then presented the report at NEC's member meeting in July 2021, highlighting different examples from each of the four case study regions, according to NEC's four key strategies.[136] The full report is included in this dissertation as the Appendix.

Challenges

I moved into this collaboration because I experienced in practice how non-profit organizations often did not have capacity to do research, and realized as a graduate student, I have access to some of these resources, even though my capacities are different than someone with access to job security and funding to carry out their research. Solidarity economy served as an implicit shared purpose that guided my collaboration with NEC staff, beyond our institutional roles. At the same time, the collaboration began with a funding opportunity. Even though the grant I received to begin this project was small ($5000), I needed those funds to be able to dedicate this time to community research because of my own precarious income. While we learn to frame our projects in the language that appeals to funders across academic

[136] In the end, NEC paid me $1500 to do additional work to help coordinate the regional conversation and present the research at the member meeting.

and organizational spaces, even as a strategic and temporary measure, how does beginning the partnership in the language of funding shape our imaginations of the work and ways of relating to one another? I'm reflecting on how easily I can internalize and reproduce the grammar of institutions, in ways that can keep me from a more critical reflection of what I am involved with, in practice.

In the process of collaboration with NEC, the role of place as an analytic began within a language of taxonomy. In the process of applying for the grant, NEC provided the following language for our project: "to define and build a taxonomy of the growth stages of a solidarity economy ecosystem so that we can 1) identify where a community is at on the scale of ecosystem growth and development, and 2) provide tailored resources and support depending on where a community is at in its stage of economic development." Though we did not actually carry the language of "taxonomy" into the actual project, I realize how we were already orienting toward the research in a colonial language, possibly as a result of language we had normalized for funding purposes. Julia Ho (who is also NEC Board Co-Chair) and Salena Burch of Solidarity Economy St. Louis also reminded me of how seeking "metrics" for solidarity economy development would reproduce a capitalist approach, where economy is an abstraction that can be measured and managed by external forces, according to external information about its value. These modes of intervention reverse the process of emergence through which a solidarity economy movement is idealized. This also runs the risk of extracting time and resources away from local contexts toward the institutional infrastructure of NEC.

Penn Loh,[137] who works with Solidarity Economy Initiative, gave me helpful advice that challenged how I was approaching "solidarity economy ecosystems":

> I think the idea of an SE ecosystem goes beyond how funders see the landscape (which they usually see as made up of discrete nonprofits, other funders, and policy makers). I think that SE is still so emergent that what we really want to find at this point is where the practices, desires, and vehicles are happening and being sparked and how these processes are happening. The groups that you are surveying are definitely part of that, but not the whole picture.

Penn was pushing back against the delineation of the ecosystem emphasizing formalized efforts that are recognizable to funders, which I was beginning to replicate, and the emergent "practices, desires, and vehicles" that make possible a broader solidarity economy ecosystem. Speaking to the work of Solidarity Economy Initiative (SEI) in Massachusetts, Penn Loh and Boone Shear emphasize the possibilities of solidarity economy taking place in SEI's practices of ongoing care work and collective learning, against the tendency to overemphasize "growing or building cooperative or alternative economic institutions" as the solidarity economy itself. In response to the ways in which solidarity economy can reflect "One World World" developmentalist perspectives, Loh and Shear write, "How particular values are being actualized and the extent to which subjective and relational transformations are taking place cannot be evaluated in the abstract, but has to be understood, negotiated, and practiced in concrete circumstances where multiple and entangled political projects and histories are encountered."[138]

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[137] Penn Loh is Senior Lecturer and Director of the Master of Public Policy Program and Community Practice at Tufts University's Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning. He partners with various community base building organizations in the Solidarity Economy Initiative, Right to the City Alliance, and Center for Economic Democracy. https://facultyprofiles.tufts.edu/penn-loh

[138] Penn Loh and Boone Shear, "Fight and Build: Solidarity Economy as Ontological Politics," *Sustainability* Science 17 (2022): 1207–1221, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01165-41218.

For this research to be aligned with its values in theory, there was much more work that needed to be done to understand and care for the different relationships and obligations that were being called upon, including what it meant to define a "solidarity economy ecosystem" or "region" in relation to the occupation of Indigenous land. Glen Coulthard writes, as a member of the Dene Nation:

> Place is a way of knowing, experiencing, and relating with the world – and these ways of knowing often guide forms of resistance to power relations that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place. This, I would argue, is precisely the understanding of land and/or place that not only anchors many Indigenous peoples' critique of colonial relations of force and command, but also our visions of what a truly post-colonial relationship of peaceful co-existence might look like."[139]

While many of these relationships of care were present in the specific regions, the way that we approached the research, with limited capacity, did not allow for those connections to be meaningfully addressed as part of the research.

Because the scope of the research went way beyond the summer fellowship, I did not have a realistic scope or set of expectations, and struggled to balance that in relation to my own teaching and dissertation work. NEC staff were running on limited capacity, as they were taking on more work to meet the needs of their member organizations in a time of crisis, as well as working through internal strategic and structural work. Three staff members, including three of the four co-directors, left over the course of the time I was there, and no new people were hired over that period. I realized that while we were describing the research as community-based participatory research, I was not able to realize a community-owned project as most of the decisions ended up being made by me, with the guidance of NEC staff. In Los

[139] Glen Coulthard, "Place Against Empire," 79-80.

Angeles, I spoke to someone who disagreed with the approach of the project to identify regional organizations to survey rather than to directly connect with each one. She expressed the sense that I was taking a "shortcut" by trying to understand the region through an anchor organization. While she declined to serve as an anchor, she graciously offered feedback that I was really grateful for, as it led to a generative conflict and important intervention in what I was doing. I agreed with her feedback and that I should not be making unfair requests for anchor organizations, based on my limited capacity.

Possibilities

In spite of the limitations, this research was made possible by many people who contributed their time, in and beyond any paid roles, to share their journeys and ideate about new ways of working together toward gathering collective knowledge and resources.

I wrote in my notes in August 7, 2020:

> The feeling of working on this project is a sense of collective investment in building knowledge about a phenomenon we know is important but is very much abstract and not entirely defined. It has felt like the main way in which the work takes place is on a very personal level - an alignment of relationships between people with shared beliefs about the change that needs to happen in the world, more than an organizational or profit-driven imperative.

Collaboration is something that I've fallen out of practice with as a graduate student, where we each focus on our individual projects, and I learned an incredible amount from engaging with NEC and the ways that they facilitate spaces of collaboration and ideation, and are grappling with questions of accountability, governance, popular education, and coalition building, in order to align with an anti-capitalist vision.

As the case studies show, the work that we highlighted as part of a solidarity economy was already being seeded and networked across different place-based contexts. In the case of

St. Louis, MO, much of the organizing that was constituting a solidarity economy movement was rooted in relationships that were catalyzed around Black Lives Matter organizing, in response to the murder of Mike Brown in Ferguson, MO in 2014. This also brought attention to the ways in which the local economy of Ferguson was centrally structured upon the predation Black residents through fines and other vehicles of debt.[140] Solidarity Economy St. Louis, which served as an anchor organization, is led by Julia Ho, who formerly worked as lead organizer for Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment during the Ferguson Uprisings, Salena Burch, a St. Louis artist and organizer, and Umeme Houston, a textile artist and founder of Sewcial Impact. They have been intentional about departing from the traditional non-profit model, which in St. Louis has been dominated by white-led philanthropy, and focusing instead on long-term collaborations based on shared values.[141] In response to COVID, SE STL and its members were able to quickly create a resilient mutual aid network in a moment of crisis. SE STL organizers shared that mutual aid has been significant to coalition building across a broad range of organizations and causes, and also highlights the skills and resources that each group brings in new ways. STL Mutual Aid facilitates both a "financial solidarity" (or peer-to-peer giving) model as well as a general mutual aid fund, which in just over 1 year, redistributed $870,000+ to over 1000+ community members. They have also organized mutual aid pods and facilitated workshops on mutual aid for groups nationally.

In the case of Louisville, Black-led organizing for food justice was further amplified by the Black Lives Matter movement. The West End of Louisville experiences conditions of

[140] Taylor, 154.
[141] Interview with Julia Ho and Salena Burch.

food apartheid, where many residents "live more than half a mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle."[142] When the City initiated plans for a $30 million Wal-Mart on the former site of the Phillip Morris plant, a group of residents organized to hold Wal-Mart to certain demands such as hiring from the community, and filed a lawsuit demanding that the corporation at least meet the city's land use codes. Instead, Wal-Mart dropped its plans to construct the store in late 2016. Cassia and other activists saw how this struggle greatly divided and disheartened the community, with the mayor blaming activists for the loss of jobs, and realized the need to "take control over the basic needs that we have while we're also demonstrating what is feasible in the system."[143] Together, they read Jessica Gordon Nembhard's *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought*, which highlights a submerged history of African American cooperativism, as a way to begin planning for Louisville Community Grocery in 2017.

In the aftermath of Breonna Taylor's murder in Louisville, KY in March 2020, the community mobilized to successfully ban no-knock warrants at the local level. The uprisings in the summer of 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, helped to catalyze an awakening around the need for community ownership and carved out space for new leaders, particularly Black women who had already been doing this work. In the process of forming LCG, the NEC CommonBound conference introduced LCG organizers to people around the country doing cooperative development and gave them insight into the "whole ecosystem needed for the grocery to be successful," including intermediaries such as local foundations and CDFIs.[144] Cassia reflected that while the terminology of the solidarity economy may be

[142] https://loufoodcoop.com/our-community-louisville/
[143] Interview with Cassia Herron
[144] Ibid.

new to their region, it is more about shifting priorities around work that has been ongoing. Cassia also shared the challenges of organizers being absorbed into development roles.

Solidarity economy as a framework and shared movement identity allowed me to collaborate with a broader network of people in different parts of the U.S. It also led me to question the separation between academic and organizational research, even as we may have a shared purpose, and the need for more coordination across these spaces to better balance resources we have available for theory and practice. As I am finishing my Ph.D. program in the midst of growing waves of academic worker strikes, a time where more people working within the university are realizing their shared identity and interests as workers and turning their research skills back upon the exploitation they are facing, how can different sets of resources be brought together for shared needs, in ways that are more accountable and sustainable?

Conclusion

Through emergent collaborations, people are figuring out how to redistribute resources to frontline communities, due to the realities of racial segregation and global inequality that prevent a solidarity economy from being realized through the aggregation of local interventions. While important internal work is happening to make their efforts more democratic and transparent, the fact that this work is happening a non-profit coalition requires continued questioning around claims to represent a broader solidarity economy movement and how this may limit the possibilities of decentralized participation, beyond professionalized spaces.

My question of how whiteness as property is reproduced in the solidarity economy movement is not about the racial identities of those involved in the solidarity economy

movement, although race is a visceral way to observe how patterns of exclusion shaping access to resources become systemic. My question is about how our work becomes invested in and structured by capitalist institutions that make abundant resources scarce and hierarchical. I am still in a process of healing, as someone who has succeeded by winning competitions, to understand and care for a world in crisis, and how to undermine exclusionary and extractive structures, especially the ones in which I have invested my own success. As the vulnerabilities and illusions of our institutions become apparent, what are our specific reasons for organizing our futures within them? What are creative and collaborative practices to make solidarity possible?

In the next chapter, I return to my own process, to connect what I have learned about solidarity economy to the context of my own work as a Ph.D. student and what I was learning to practice again.

Chapter 3

Remembering to Practice Solidarity

Introduction

I learn by following my own curiosity, making unexpected connections across new sources of information and lived experiences, and having space to articulate and add complexity to my understanding through dialogue with others. I learn when I am trying to understand and solve a problem in the world, and that sense of responsibility and urgency sustains my attention through the learning process. I remember Ethnic Studies classes being one of the few I was excited to attend in college because of these reasons. When I took my first Asian American studies class in college in 2008, I became connected to a lineage of resistance within the university.[145]

Ethnic Studies has become institutionalized as departments and programs in many universities, as a result of the concerted struggles of communities of color, demanding an education that is relevant to their lives. The field of Ethnic Studies has continued to shed light on how systems of power are organized through categories of social difference, which include the discourses that rationalize ongoing structures of colonialism and white supremacy. Within the environment of scarcity cultivated by corporate universities, however, the academic industry of Ethnic Studies has become deeply enmeshed with the white supremacist structures that it critiques. Jodi Melamed argues that backlash against Ethnic Studies and other civil rights interventions restored the function of the university "to manag[ing] minoritized

[145] While majoring in Economics and taking Columbia's core curriculum, which surveyed the "Masterpieces of Western" art, literature, music, and philosophy, my first Asian American studies class "Asian American Psychology of Race," gave me the opportunity to analyze my own lived experiences as a child of Korean immigrants, in relation to theories of race, psychology, and histories of imperialism and migration.

difference—to run difference through its machinery of validation, certification, and legibility to generate forms that augmented, enhanced, and developed hegemony rather than disrupted it."[146] The academic industry that has emerged around commodifying theories of violence and domination has worked in tandem with the embodied and interpersonal forms of domination that have become normative within academic spaces, where critiques are welcome so long as they are wholly disembodied. I wanted to understand how power worked and learn to speak against it in its own language, but in the process, I was becoming what I was practicing – a language of domination that was dominating my own capacity to even understand myself.

Over these nine years as a Ph.D. student, I realized I was leaving behind my own body, its permeability to constant change through new connections. In order to finish this dissertation, I had to come back to my body to make sense of what I understand. To come back to questions of what we embody is to realize the limitations of what becomes institutionalized by an academic industry as knowledge, and how much more practice and healing is needed for learning to take place. In "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Audre Lorde writes, "I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices."[147] This essay which is arguably what Lorde is most cited for, was actually a speech she gave at an academic conference for white feminists, in which she was tokenized on the only panel where "the input of Black feminists and lesbians is

[146] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy,* 31.
[147] Audre Lorde, The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Crossing Press, 2007), 101.

represented."[148] We are professionalized to assimilate our encounters with difference through the rituals and grammars of normative academic practices, the very terms meant to exclude us. We are trained to capture the signs of life and freedom that escape the university's drive toward universality, forcing them back into colonial and racist legacies of taxonomizing knowledge about human difference.

Audre Lorde recognized the economy she was being pulled into, and the constant self-reflection it took to traverse these spaces overflowing with resources and opportunities while holding onto the difficult task of speaking truth against the visceral forms of domination and exclusion meant to gatekeep those resources. She spoke directly to the attendees:

> Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that *survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.[149]

I realized that these were texts I read years before starting graduate school, which had transformed my own capacity to understand and describe the world, but I had forgotten to consult these works as part of the lineage of my understanding.

Practice

One field of study that has helped give me language to connect the growing chasm between what I was learning to say and what I was learning to embody is the field of generative somatics (gs). In "What is Politicized Somatics?", gs practitioners explain:

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[148] 110
[149] Audre Lorde, "Master's Tools," 112.

> Somatics is a path, a methodology, and a change theory, by which we can embody transformation, individually and collectively. Embodied transformation is foundational change that shows in our actions, ways of being, relating, and perceiving. It is transformation that sustains over time. Somatics pragmatically supports us to align our values and actions. It helps us to develop depth and the capacity to feel ourselves, each other, and life around us. Somatics builds in us the ability to act from strategy and empathy, and teaches us to be able to assess conditions and "what is" clearly. Somatics is a practice-able theory of change that can move us toward individual, community, and collective liberation.[150]

In contrast to the way in which mental health discourse, including the increasing institutionalization of somatics, often individualizes experiences of trauma and healing, generative somatics recognizes that a large part of what shapes us and what we need to heal is systemic:

> Social context in the U.S. is based on domination, histories of colonization, slavery, and manifest destiny, and institutions and norms that destroy the earth while systematically oppressing some groups and privileging others. Individualism is held as paramount and interdependence underrated. There are a strong ongoing set of contradictions between the national narrative of freedom and democracy, and the ongoing institutions of war, oppression, and corporatization. We live in an increasingly commodified capitalist system, where profit is the fundamental measure of success, not happiness, not collective wellbeing, not the sustainability of life. All of this touches us, affects us and strangely enough "shapes" us all the way down to our bodies (not to mention our worldview and actions).[151]

Generative somatics understands the need for the simultaneous and intentional transformation of "our internal and external worlds," as, "Who we are as we organize and build movement, and how we develop ourselves individually and collectively deeply affects our relations, creativity, how we can assess our conditions and opportunities and what visions and strategies we imagine."[152]

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[150] https://generativesomatics.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Copy-of-What-is-a-politicized-somatics.pdf
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

Revisiting the course of my studies through the lens of practice helps me to understand, more clearly, the larger context of what I have learned about solidarity economy in relation to Ethnic Studies. Along with practicing ways to pay attention to my body and recentering around what matters to me, I have been healing my relationship to learning through practices of teaching, creative writing, mutual aid, and staying present for emergent connections. My own process also intersected with many others navigating academic institutions, which became more evident with the graduate student strike in September 2022. Until then, the many different experiences of alienation and exploitation we were experiencing as graduate students were spoken about quietly, even though these conditions deeply shape the work we can do. Hierarchies silence necessary feedback. I hope that making my own process evident will speak to those who may feel isolated in their ways of surviving academic institutions or feel they are losing sight of the important and powerful truths they have to offer.

Teaching

As a Ph.D. student, I am doing this work as an employee of the University of California, the largest employer in the state of California who profits from the exploitation of graduate student labor. While trying to do this research, I have been supporting myself through a collection of teaching and research assistantships and part-time lecturer positions. Teaching is the part of this process where we have to really start asking questions about the economy we are in, and the conditions of work that make learning possible. Although graduate students take on the majority of the teaching labor within the academic industry,

most of us are never taught how to teach.[153] Rather, going from students to teachers is a process of ascending a professionalized hierarchy, where we gain power over the learning labor of others, as a result of working within a university that seeks to maximize profits while minimizing the costs of labor. As an Ethnic Studies teaching assistant, we were incorporated into assembly lines to do most of the direct teaching and grading labor for sections of classes, while one lecturer was assigned to classes of up to 400-500 students. Ethnic Studies teaching assistants are charged with the additional labor of remediating racial harm within the university, which we would often take on because Ethnic Studies classes are a rare chance for students to question and theorize structures of power, within universities where education is increasingly driven by the necessities of industry.

Teaching has been a process that I have had to learn and practice in tandem with my own process of healing my relationship to learning. We are conditioned through the education system to complete individualized work under punitive conditions and wonder why people find it challenging to collaborate around shared visions and engage with conflict and practice accountability. As I was learning to teach, I had to confront the punitive structures that had shaped my educational experiences, as I realized I was unwilling to perpetuate things for others that I knew had not helped me to learn. In my graduate Ethnic Studies coursework, we had to sit for three hours theoretically discussing violence against different racialized bodies, when we were not given the tools to understand how that was impacting us at the level of our bodies and how we were able to relate to and care for one another. Learning to teach also became more possible once I stopped feeling like my future security was tied to a competitive

[153] It was somewhat helpful to take an elective Intro to College Teaching Class, which gave me some tools and a community to practice teaching with, in spite of many issues that are maybe related to the refusal to ask hard questions about the larger economy in which our teaching is taking place.

and opaque job market that attempts to standardize and create hierarchies out of our relationship to knowledge. Bell hooks writes:

> Part of the luxury and privilege of the role of teacher/professor today is the absence of any requirement that we be self-actualized. Not surprisingly, professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are the most threatened by the demand on the part of students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization.[154]

I have heard so many people empowered to teach within universities speak about their students in infantilizing and demeaning ways, about students' unwillingness to learn, which seem to be more a reflection of their own refusal to learn to teach, or at least to relate to students as people, not forced laborers.

I got it wrong a lot of times, often because I was trying to minimize my underpaid labor and not putting in the care that was needed to teach. But I'm learning to practice again the transformative potentials of Ethnic Studies, those early moments of recognition that changed my own life as an Ethnic Studies student. My classes are often structured around group projects that are responsive to present issues. I emphasize the process of collaboration itself as part of the work we are doing in class, guiding them through a process to discuss how they will collaborate, bringing together their unique sets of skills and insights, and how they will hold one another accountable. But I realize there's a contradiction of asking students to take on creative and collaborative work, within a structure of education that normalizes artificial scarcity, forced labor and individualizes risk and reward. I'm still figuring out how to abdicate control to make creativity and engagement more possible in the classroom. I make it clear that asking for creativity means I don't get to determine the value of those

[154] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 17.

contributions through grades. I make it clear that any deadlines and requirements are negotiable if they are dealing with life conditions that make those things difficult because I have no desire to make them fail classes so that they have to buy more classes.[155]

I realized I also had to be vulnerable with them about my own relationship to learning. Bell hooks writes:

> Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators."[156]

Sharing about my learning experiences has allowed different students to feel comfortable enough to speak to me about what they need in order to be able to learn, and to find different ways of engaging the material that are more meaningful to them. The last Ethnic Studies elective class that I taught, "Race Space and Segregation," was when I realized that through practice, I was finally starting to get teaching right. It showed up in how we were able to be together, how invested students were in their projects even though they knew the class was a very easy A. One student expressed how the class had "motivated me to not be scared or shy to share my personal experiences, as a young, first-gen, immigrant, DACA Latina from Logan Heights." She wrote, "I don't share my experiences too often, nor did I ever think they'd be useful or a part of such as a huge debate as environmental racism, but this course definitely

[155] While teaching classes on zoom, with my own laptop and in my own apartment, we would work together to calculate the total amount that they had paid for this class, in relation to how much I was being paid to teach the class, which was less than 10% of the total tuition. It was to make evident the industry that was determining the economy of relationships between us, as an important part of how we were able to learn and to think concretely about alternative structures for our collective learning and teaching work.3

[156] Ibid., 21.

taught me to speak up and share." Another student shared: "You made us connect with the topics personally and empathically, positioning us as potential action takers and change starters, which transformed me, as it probably did for many other students."

I realize that this might be considered taking on too much emotional labor, but in turn, I minimize the policing and bureaucratic labor I am supposed to perform in order to maximize the university's profits. I am learning to trust that students are navigating complex needs and crises and can participate according to what they need. In my experiences, students have been increasingly engaged, insightful, creative, and collaborative as they feel less controlled. But I struggle to keep navigating these potentials for transformative teaching in an institution where students are going into debt paying money to real estate companies for an experience that happens between people.

Creative writing

Methods are forms of permission that we give ourselves, within a community of practice. As I was questioning how my relationship to truth was becoming standardized at the level of my writing, in ways that were limiting my own capacity to understand myself, spaces of creative writing reminded me of the multiplicity of ways we reach toward a form for our truths for the sake of sharing our understanding.

I took an undergraduate memoir class during my second year of grad school, at a time when I was dissociating from the despair of accumulating an overwhelming amount of theory that seemed to expose any possible solution as part of the problem. I ended up applying for VONA, the first writing workshop for writers of color in the U.S.[157] I crowdfunded the workshop costs, which ended up being a rare instance in which I was asking for what I needed

[157] https://www.vonavoices.org/

from my community and a chance to witness how I was supported in ways I did not realize, by friends and also by people I didn't know well, who expressed that they valued my writing. I learned the format of a braided essay as a non-linear way to bring together multiple threads of experience and information through which we make meaning. This was how I was able to finally process my father's suicide when I was 17 years old. Looking back, I realize that what I wrote about my family was also a story about work and exhaustion as an organizing structure of my Korean family's way of trying to make life, under U.S. capitalism:

> After so many years spent plumbing the underbellies of automobiles, all that car oil set right into the ridges of my dad's fingertips, making it look as if his prints had forever just been taken. When my sister and I were younger, he would come home every evening dressed in a dusky blue uniform, with patches that read "EXCEL Lube & Tune" above one breast pocket and "Kevin" on the other. It seemed that a cloud of exhaust trailed him at all times, and when we would greet him at the door, as we were taught to greet all elders upon their arrival, he would pull us into his atmosphere with a hug. He was allergic to everything, forever tottering on the brink of a sneeze, large nostrils hastily plugged with bits of tissue, while his heavily congested snores became the nightly soundtrack of our home. A life as a mechanic had worked its way into his every pore.

In 2018, I took a poetry workshop with Winter Tangerine in New York. I had never written anything I could confidently call poetry, but found myself in a community of practice with poets. It was a humbling experience to witness poets at work, the way words seemed to flow out of them so freely in the moment, to create new ways of grasping transformative recognitions. In the process, I was reflecting on how much I was struggling to give myself that freedom, trapped in my own need to explain myself. The workshop teacher told me about how they would often write what they needed to explain on the side, and how it could also be built into the form through footnotes. Yet somehow in my dissertation process, my writing became the footnotes, a constant explanation of what I did not yet understand, while keeping

all that I knew to be true in word documents that would become graveyards.

Poetry was what I explored when I found myself coming up against the limitations of critique, to learn new ways to heal and transform harm because it was necessary for the survival of myself and those I loved. In the summer of 2018, I read an essay by Sadia Hassan, "Silence is a Lonely Country," in which she writes: "The truth is that we cannot always testify for fear that we will lead them back to the body, that we will be found out. I have not always struggled with speaking, but these days it feels as if a tight gauze has been placed on the mouth of humanity as a darkness descends."[158] Reading this piece broke open so much grief that I had been repressing. I had been losing sight of the value of my own small life, as I learned so much about what was wrong and felt I had no answer to the devastation. But Hassan ends with a reason to speak again:

> How can we witness what has torn through our parents, what has left their bodies a border beyond reprieve and say *forgiveness*, as if forgiveness is a thing we give or receive and not a thing that happens upon the body quick as a clap of thunder. A thing which finds you, crouched in the forest of your one lonely life and stuns you with its tenderness.

As I allow my emotions to surface more easily, I understand that my capacity to move through grief is actually a central part of how I learn and share understanding, in ways that move toward the joy and healing that sustains the work of living.

Emergent connections and presence

In *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (And the Next),* Dean Spade writes, "Mutual aid is a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions, not just through symbolic acts or putting pressure on their representatives in government but by actually building new social

[158] https://longreads.com/2018/07/13/silence-is-a-lonely-country-a-prayer-in-twelve-parts/

relations that are more survivable."[159] The spread of mutual aid efforts in response to COVID has brought light to the historical function of non-profits as displacing and demobilizing "the threat posed by mass mutual aid work in anti-racist, anti-colonial and feminist movements in the 1960s and '70s" by "legitimizing unjust systems and hiding the reality that real change comes from movements made of millions of ordinary people, not small groups of paid professionals."[160]

Over the course of the first year of the quarantine due to COVID, I helped create a mutual aid network at U.C. San Diego and also interviewed various people within unceded Kumeyaay territory known as San Diego, CA, who helped me to understand the solidarity economy in new ways. In spite of dominant narratives of crises that attempt to impose a sudden temporality, crises are not unknowable and unpredictable events but the moments in which individualizing narratives of suffering grate against the fact of our interconnected survival, an ancient repetition of shared recognition that life moves together much more than our scientific explanations or dominant histories have recognized. Interviews were a practice of sharing understanding, as term "solidarity economy" was new to most everyone I was in dialogue with, and focusing my attention to be present for another person's journey, as they synthesized their own experiences to reach their own recognitions. I am learning from people all around me, who are analyzing the imbalances within an ecosystem and bringing people together in unique ways toward what they collectively care about.

I first found out about POC Fungi Community when one of their medicinal mushroom tinctures was included along with my vegetables for my "Blessings Bag," a community-

[159] Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (And The Next)* (Verso, 2019), 9.
[160] Dean Spade, Mutual Aid, 113.

supported agriculture share from Garden Unidos. This was a moment I was beginning my process of interviewing people around solidarity economy work, and so I reached out for an interview. Mario Ceballos shared with me about how POC Fungi Community was a way to bring unexpected people into more radical goals and to recenter the healing powers of mushrooms, rooted in the traditions of Indigenous people and people of color. They shared:

> I take this community's emergence as an accumulation of many events, many peoples, intentions and dreams, and many conversations that have been had throughout the years, in different circles, in different contexts. It was a way to encapsulate so much without being bogged down by linear time or by any system of understanding that includes capitalist systems.

They described mushrooms as anti-capitalist, embodying a mutual aid network, and how this paralleled organizing work, where particular people are relied on and burnt out, and the need for systems of reciprocity in our communities, especially with the work to create alternatives to carceral, policing, domestic violence and healthcare systems.

I ended up going to my first Tianguis de la Raza shortly after our conversation, a community-owned and run marketplace that takes place outside of Centro Cultural de la Raza. Vendors are not just paying for a service but taking part in running the market, including the set-up and clean-up, and participating in collective decision-making. This space has allowed many people from the community to source their different skills and resources while also incubating many new projects. There, I also got to meet Cris Juarez who had, in February 2020, shared her experience with me of creating Pixca, a farm cooperative. When the Tijuana River floods in December 2019 closed down their food production, Pixca temporarily transitioned to growing flowers, an effort that would become Inecui, a flower cooperative.[161] I saw how Cris was doing so much of the infrastructural work to make it possible for others to

[161] https://pixca.org/floralfamilia-inecui/ (accessed March 23, 2023).

own their labor as well, including with Tianguis de la Raza and Foodshed.

While I had come into our conversation with the term "solidarity economy," Mario continued to reiterate the importance of the first building the relationships, before the formal structures, to sustain the work of transformation. They acknowledged the multiplicity of terms and lineages to resist and build alternatives to capitalism, acknowledging how the Zapatista uprising and involvement in the Brown Berets had shaped their own path to this work. They also shared about their efforts to reclaim huitlachoche and educate the community around its uses,[162] against the ways in which it was becoming appropriated and commodified:

> Huitlachoche is a hard word to say and it doesn't sound really appealing. So the way it's referred to here, it's called corn smut or a plague or a fungus. That also doesn't sound appealing so they're changing the name for marketing purposes to "corn truffle" or "corn caviar." For me, that's a perfect example of colonization: commodification of our ways, rebranding it and reselling it. I never tried it in until late last year… I'd heard about it but it's not something you find. Specialty markets, organic markets, you can maybe once in a while, find it but they're going to be charging you like $20 a pound for it.

I saw the commodification of huitlachoche as an apt metaphor for the contradictions that are emerging around the solidarity economy, where formal structures are privileged as a point of entry, while further obscuring the alternatives that are harder to categorize and control, or to speak in their own language.

I first met xayn naz through collective meetings we were having with various mutual aid efforts in San Diego, including We All We Got, which operated out of Brown Building. It was a different experience to be reconnecting after being in shared spaces, where the

[162] Mario's reflection on huitlacoche came full circle when I got to see the unveiling of the documentary during the Indigenous Food Sovereignty event at Centro Cultural in December 2022. As we shared food, watched documentaries created by the community, including their work on huitlacoche, and heard the insights from people reclaiming their Indigenous knowledge to care for land and people, it felt like witnessing a clear manifestation of solidarity economy, the evolution of many intersecting organizing journeys and collaborations, at a point where people were reclaiming the fullness of their own creative contributions.

interview became an opportunity to get to know each other better and make our investments and our strategies more explicit. With this last interview, I finally realized I could approach the research "consent" process in a way that made more sense to both of us. We talked about how the academic consent process becomes a way to protect the liability of the university rather than being based in relationship, and xayn reframed consent as a question of: "Does this feel good to you?"

After having a conversation, where I explained more about my research and my own process of trying to understand solidarity economy and the work I wanted to do, I began the interview with the question, "What are you trying to figure out about the work you want to do?" Xayn spoke to how that was a difficult process, as a creative person, but coming into the role of figuring out how to work on the distribution side of the arts economy:

> I'm thinking about the practice of what it means to be a distributor, what it means to license work for people, what it means to work with artists and creatives to put something together that's away from the normal model of signing a contract with all of these terms that dictate what you can and can do. It's better to just come to an agreement, straight out, with you and the artists, like, "Hey, this is what I can offer you. Tell me what you need."

They were brought into doing work with the Brown Building through their relationships and their mutual aid work. After becoming director of Brown Building, they intended to keep it as a community space for Black and brown trans people, without non-profit status because it would change the kind of work they would have to prioritize and their ability "to directly put things in people's hands," while they were also trying to survive: "Everyone has their own shit going on so it's also just preserving ourselves, our will and desire to be here." After they became director of Brown Building, they began to host Open Studios to offer free coworking space and art supplies to the community. A lot of the ongoing mutual aid work was falling to

xayn, and this was one way to also invite more people into the space, for their mutual benefit. They were also hosting shows centering queer and trans artists in order to raise rent for their space. I was reminded of how Black and brown trans people have been at the forefront of creating alternative possibilities, against the deeply embodied ways in which we internalize domination.

Looking back on our interview recording, I saw how the interview itself became an emergent process. Toward the end of our conversation, someone walks into the Brown Building and our attention turns toward the presence off screen. The person explains they are there to paint a banner for an anti-police rally with Black Panther Party SD. Xayn says, "We love that here!" and starts helping them to set up. More people walk in, and we are introducing ourselves and explaining the work we are there to do, before I stop the recording. As we painted together, we were reflecting on how therapeutic it was. It was a reminder of the different ways that we can work together.

These are just two examples of the many emergent connections that are teaching me about the intentional work that it takes to cultivate shared spaces, where people can practice creativity and reciprocity in new ways that redefine how our work is valued. Beyond serving as "sources," every connection in the research process has helped me understand how deeply we are intertwined. Beyond answers, they have reminded me of the questions I need to ask again, in order to sustain my joy and be present for the work of collective transformation.

Strike

When the pandemic interrupted the graduate student wildcat strike that began in 2019, a few of us got together to figure out how we could meet the emergency needs of students, staff and contingent faculty at UCSD. It began with a form that asked: 1) what do you need?

2) what can you offer? 3) how do you want to organize?

Looking back on a community update from May 18, 2020, I'm realizing how we were always being intentional about our effort as a remediation of the university:

> We now have 14 organizers and are excited to be welcoming more each week! It took us a while to work out processes of horizontal decision making and distributing labor. Now we operate as four committees: forms (intake), basic needs, financial needs, social needs, outreach. As busy students, we knew that we needed to reflect our values of accessibility and empathy in our organizing practices, and we are seeing how this continues to build our capacity and made this work sustainable. If you're interested in joining our organizing team, please get in touch!
>
> Our ultimate goal is not only to help meet immediate needs, but also build relationships of solidarity and care within the space of the university. We maintain ourselves as an autonomous effort for that purpose, but we stand in solidarity with many groups fighting to make the university representative of our needs, including COLA, UC-AFT ASCME, Teamsters Local 2010, and UCSD Student Coops. As undergrads and grads from different departments—mostly Black, Indigenous, People of Color—within a university that atomizes us as customers and workers, we are creating solid relationships to make the road as we go! We hope you can join us in whatever capacity.

When people would join, they would often apologize that they didn't know how to do mutual aid organizing and we would reiterate that we were all practicing. Dean Spade writes, "Working and living inside hierarchies deskills us for dealing with conflict. We are taught to either dominate others and be numb to the impact of our domination on them, or submit with a smile and be numb to our own experiences of domination in order to get by."[163] We also worked through ways we could avoid reproducing the dynamics of charity, which was challenging in practice. We convened spaces where people who had been using the funds could reshape our decision-making process around how funds were distributed and compensate people for that work. I also saw how mutuality was being realized, as people who

[163] Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid*, 145.

had joined us when they needed aid also stayed on as organizers.

Doing mutual aid work within the context of a university was a practice of understanding the amount of remediation that is needed to make the work of learning and teaching possible. Adrienne maree brown writes, "In a non-linear process, everything is part of the learning, every step. That includes constructive criticism, it is part of the feedback loop—experiment, gather feedback, experiment again. This is how we learn."[164] The academic worker strike at the University of California, which began in November 2022, brought to light that the University of California is not only the largest employer in the state but also the largest landlord. Tracy Rosenthal, the cofounder of LA Tenants Union, put it succinctly, "If McDonald's is a retail company that sells hamburgers, the UC is a real estate company and hospital administrator that sells degrees."[165] The administrative infrastructure of UAW, however, was isolating rank-and-file workers from one another while pushing forward a contract that fell far short of what we were fighting for.

Returning to a campus that I had been avoiding for the last year, where it had felt difficult to trust myself and feel mutual recognition, it was humbling to remember that solidarity is what we know how to practice whenever we have a chance to remember our collective interests. As many of us who were part of Mutual Aid UCSD had graduated or were about to graduate, and people were reaching out about questions such as how to create a strike fund, we realized the need to pass on resources around building shared commitments and decision-making processes. I'm grateful for the chance to reconnect with people I had fallen out of touch with and connect with new people, who are continuing to do mutual aid work on

[164] Adrienne amree brown, emergent strategy, 106
[165] Tracy Rosenthal, UC Strike to Win!, Zoom, December 11, 2022

campus, in new and exciting ways.

January 15, 2023 Fungi Walk on Kumiai Land with POC Fungi Community and Yaquis of Southern California Earthkeepers

I was nervous before the event, unsure of what I needed to be prepared for, but as I joined the group, I felt a growing ease, with the shared intention to take it slow, to share presence with one another and the land. We moved together through the park, without a definitive goal, dispersing and converging as different conversations caught and then subsided. I reconnected with a former student of mine, from the first year I was an Ethnic Studies teaching assistant, who was now working to bridge her work in psychology and plant medicines. Another person told me they had learned about solidarity economy during a class with Julie Matthaei, from U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, a decade ago. She remembered how Julie had invited the whole class to her housing cooperative for dinner.

The tone was set for us to not forage, and instead to be present to learn and to let what we found return to the earth. We spent time with mushrooms, touched them, passed them around, took bites and scents, listened to the percussion of their caps, observed their reactions to oxidization, and hypothesized about how they came to be in their particular shapes. I reflected on how in my own research process, I had been driven by an impulse to accumulate more than I could integrate, and how this overaccumulation that outran my capacity for relationship was at the root of the guilt I had felt – the possibility that I had been extractive, without being able to return the value I had received. Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, "We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn—we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live… Plants know how to make food and medicine from light and water, and

then they give it away."[166] Even with all the mistakes I made as I was learning to research while navigating the academic institution, I am learning that accountability is not a set of transactions but presence with the needs of a larger ecosystem of needs, where everything we learn and receive can be returned and made regenerative.

The fungi walk was scheduled after many days of pouring rain. Rooted in a shared mycelial network, these fantastic, erotic, and unknowably complex organisms we know as mushrooms had found the right moment to become visible, once again, pushing up from the earth to spread their spores and find new ground.

Conclusion

To make solidarity possible in our work is a deeply complicated and emotional undertaking, within hierarchical institutions that prevent us from sharing understanding of what we need and what we can offer. So many of us come to Ethnic Studies to learn and respond to what our communities need, but within the academic industry, white supremacy works at the level of our bodies to perpetuate a ceaseless demand for our labor, while posing our embodiment as a problem to be mitigated. My research on solidarity economy was a process of understanding what was possible, beyond critique, and inviting myself back into the possibilities that I was trying to understand.

Throughout my time as a graduate student, I had wanted to take a dance class but could never seem to make the time. As I was finishing my dissertation, I felt the energies that had so long been contained within my body needing to find new forms. I took my first Beginner's Contemporary Dance class at D&A Dance Studio,[167] where we learned to move

[166] Robin Wall Kimmerer, p. 9
[167] https://www.instagram.com/da_studiotj/?hl=en

freely on our own paths, without getting in each other's ways. The last time that we went through the choreography, the teacher said, "Think: tender and care." So, we practiced

Conclusion

Everything is evidence when we take the time to understand the journey. My work is rooted in a lifetime of questioning the structures and norms in place that keep us from understanding how deeply we are connected. As someone who was writing a dissertation about the solidarity economy, the greatest gift was to be able to share what I was studying with so many people I have encountered in my daily life, coming from so many different beliefs and life experiences and forms of work, and realize the insightful questions and connections that this topic brings up for them. I realize that solidarity economy is a way to understand the connections across our different forms of work and our ways of meeting our needs, and how these things can be structured differently. It is a question we are in the process of understanding collectively.

In the process of researching solidarity economy, I began to perpetuate definitions that didn't feel true to me, such as the idea that it was simply to "network alternative practices such as worker owned cooperatives, community land trusts…." Privileging formal institutions as the basis of a solidarity economy movement risks further extracting from and simultaneously erasing the informal and unrecognized practices through which people marginalized by capitalism have long survived economic exploitation and dispossession. Such a model recenters whiteness as property not only in the way that we are presently organizing in response to economic crises but also in ways that lay claim on our collective imagination of a future beyond capitalism. The definitions I was internalizing through repetition were shaping my own ways of seeing, in ways that were keeping me from remaining open to the collective ideation and alternative practices that were emerging all around me.

It has been difficult to express what I have learned while separating it from how I have been healing as a person, alongside many others, to try to understand the extent of the crises we face and to return to practices of care. I realized that my critique of whiteness as property required facing how it has shaped my own ways of engaging with the world. The rituals of academic abstraction became an investment in whiteness as property at the level of my mind. I was learning to force everything I knew through a sieve of mastery, a process of separation, control, abstraction, and extraction in order to claim a form of individual property, while erasing my own embodied presence. The academic industry attempts to impose a hierarchy of value upon how we understand the world, and those hierarchies need to be dismantled within ourselves so we can practice exchanging knowledges and skills toward more balance within an ecosystem of vastly unmet needs and siloed resources. I had to stop putting my own limitations under erasure in order to maintain the reproduction of institutionalized expertise. I had to work through a lifetime of social anxieties that made me feel like my embodiment was a problem to be controlled and mitigated. I also see how people working within different organizations to sustain a solidarity economy movement are staying connected and practicing emergence, toward a solidarity economy framework that is participatory and open to change, rather than breaking off its cache into individualized commodities.

I hope that what I can offer is not a proprietary claim upon knowledge about the solidarity economy but an inalienable reflection of my own process. This learning was not contained to "my research" but interwoven with my life. I learned through my needs for food, medicine, and joy, to love and care for myself and know that I am valuable simply because I'm alive. This knowledge allows me to stay present and connected to a larger ecosystem, where many of us are having to practice human solidarity again. Some people are just

beginning to ask themselves what they need to survive. Some may adhere to a theory of anti-capitalism and are unlearning how they embody competition and domination. Some may be practicing collaboration within structures they do not have ownership over. Some may have always had to create alternatives and are finding new ways to sustain that work and rest. Some may be realizing the limitations of their own protection within capitalist structures and seeking more collective structures out of necessity. Across these different routes, we are each in a very different process because of the different forms of hierarchy and exclusion that we've invested in and been harmed by.

If the word economy emphasizes the management of needs and resources within an ecosystem, what does the word ecology, which emphasizes understanding the many different relationships that exist within an ecosystem, offer as a conceptual shift? Beginning with an understanding of the relationships that are possible, given the different needs and resources at hand, moves away from privileging a theoretical abstraction or access to capital as the infrastructure of a solidarity economy, to pay attention to the expansive network of emergence in which we can practice solidarity.

In generative somatics, our last class focused on a practice of embodying completion, feeling that sense of completion in our bodies before turning away from what is difficult to release, and to walk toward what matters to us. I am a commitment to the freedom of my body, moving toward collective transformation.

APPENDIX

Case Studies of Regional Solidarity Economy Ecosystems in the U.S.

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Special thanks to all the people and organizations who made this research possible, through their feedback, interviews, survey responses, and ongoing work to realize a solidarity economy.

Preface: This research project began in June 2020, as a partnership between Esther Choi, an Ethnic Studies Ph.D. Candidate at U.C. San Diego, and New Economy Coalition. The goal of this research was to inform NEC's strategic shift toward supporting regional solidarity economy ecosystems, as well as Esther's dissertation project on race, property, and the U.S. solidarity economy movement. The research was designed around a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method, which seeks to equitably involve community members, organizations and researchers as partners, who each contribute their expertise and share in the decision-making and ownership of the project.

Rather than offering conclusions about regional solidarity economy ecosystems, we hope that the insights from this project can provide starting points for new connections, questions, and conversations that build our collective understanding of how place-based solidarity economy ecosystems can be networked and strengthened toward system change.

I. Introduction

The global pandemic has exacerbated the precarious conditions of the U.S. capitalist economy and highlighted the urgent need for alternative systems. The solidarity economy (SE) is a global framework to connect and build alternatives to capitalism, based on shared values that include solidarity, social equity, sustainability, participatory democracy, and pluralism,[168] toward an economy in which people and planet are valued over profits. The SE framework has brought together a wide range of institutional and grassroots efforts—such as worker-owned cooperatives, community land trusts, urban farms, and mutual aid networks—into growing collaborations. While the term "solidarity economy" was first articulated in the late 1980's by Luis Razeto in Chile and Jean-Louis Laville in France, SE practices have always

[168] RIPESS / U.S. Solidarity Economy Network definition

existed as modes of collective survival in the face of capitalist exploitation, especially by frontline communities most marginalized and dispossessed by these systems.

New Economy Coalition (NEC) is a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) coalition of over 200 members, which has evolved since its founding in 2012 toward a solidarity economy vision that centers the leadership of frontline communities. In 2020, NEC articulated a strategic shift toward supporting *regional solidarity economy ecosystems,* facilitating relationship-building and the exchange of knowledge and resources across place-based movements. By a *solidarity economy ecosystem*, NEC imagines "an environment in which all of the things a community needs—like housing, schools, farms and food production, local governance structures, art and culture, healthcare and healing, transportation, and the resources needed to build that infrastructure—are controlled and governed by the people, led by those most marginalized by our current economy, and anchored by strong community roots." Regions are defined broadly—"ecologically by land, climate, or watershed, politically through borders and voting boundaries, economically by markets and shared material conditions, or culturally, by our traditions, ethnicities, and migration pathways."[169]

For the purposes of this research, we collected case studies that centered around U.S. metropolitan areas. After consulting NEC member organizations, staff, and organizers in different regions of the U.S., we eventually narrowed down to the following four case studies: Buffalo, NY (city), St. Louis, MO (city and county), Louisville and the larger state ecosystem of Kentucky, and San Diego, CA (county). These case studies demonstrate how the elements of regional solidarity economy ecosystems are being pulled together at city, county, and state levels, with exciting opportunities to network, scale, and exchange resources across regions.

Existing research on regional solidarity economy ecosystems

A growing body of U.S. solidarity economy research has been led by community-based organizations working to realize the solidarity economy. NEC and partners created "Pathways to a People's Economy" in 2020, an online policy toolkit that explores solidarity economy interventions in housing, work, finance, and climate. Examples of place-based solidarity economy research includes Solidarity Economy Initiative's "Solidarity Rising in Massachusetts: How Solidarity Economy Movement is Emerging in Lower-Income Communities of Color," Highlander Center's report on the Solidarity Economy in the South, and SolidarityNYC's map and database of solidarity economy institutions in New York City. There is also sector-based research, such as Democracy at Work Institute's annual Worker Cooperative State of the Sector report and a 2021 report on "Economic Recovery and Employee Ownership," written in collaboration with the National League of Cities. Examples of arts-focused SE research include "Solidarity Not Charity: Grantmaking in the Solidarity Economy," a report by Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard and commissioned by Grantmakers in the Arts, which advocates for centering arts and culture within the solidarity economy movement, as well as prioritizing BIPOC-led efforts toward community ownership and democratic governance in grantmaking, as a way to repair the harms and inequities

[169] NEC 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

shaping our present cultural economy. Aligned interventions include Center for Cultural Innovation's Ambitio*US* initiative, which supports the "development of burgeoning alternative economies and fresh social contracts in ways that artists and cultural communities can achieve financial freedom," with grantees that include SE organizations such as East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative, Boston Ujima Project, and NEC.

The U.S. solidarity economy has generally been underexplored in academic research, but efforts have grown since the late 2000's. U.S. Solidarity Economy Network emerged out of the U.S. Social Forum in 2007, inspired by the World Social Forum movements that began in Porto Alegre Brazil, and it has brought together academics and practitioners to articulate a U.S. theory and practice for SE development. Community Economies Research Network is an international network of primarily academics whose work is in conversation with the work of J.K Gibson-Graham and "community economies." The Solidarity Economy Mapping Project was led by folks across the two networks—Emily Kawano, Marianna Pavlovskaya, Maliha Safri, Craig Borowiak, and Stephen Healy—to "increase the visibility of individual solidarity economy practices and of the solidarity economy as a whole." They have also collectively published related articles, such as "Navigating the Fault Lines: Race and Class in Philadelphia's Solidarity Economy," which argues that racial and class divides persist in the solidarity economy movement but are constructively negotiated in ways that make SE a "strategic site for seeking economic justice through racial justice." Other examples of solidarity economy research include Lauren Hudson's "New York City: Struggles over the narrative of the Solidarity Economy," and Penn Loh and Julian Agyeman's "Urban food sharing and the emerging Boston food solidarity economy." Stacey Sutton's "Cooperative cities: Municipal support for worker cooperatives in the United States" focuses on how local governments can enable cooperative ecosystems, in conversation with her work on solidarity economies.[170]

In both academic and organizational spaces, research on U.S. solidarity economies has largely focused on case studies of individual cities or regions, and there is a need for more comparative and cross-regional research that can shed light on how place-based interventions are interacting with broader movements for system change. This research project aims to explore the following key questions:

- How are regional solidarity economy ecosystems in the U.S. seeded and developed?
- What support do regional SE ecosystems need? What are their shared challenges and opportunities?
- How can regional SE interventions be networked and scaled toward a broader U.S. movement?

II. Methodology

[170] Stacey A. Sutton (2019), "Cooperative cities: Municipal support for worker cooperatives in the United States," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 41:8, 1081-1102, DOI: 10.1080/07352166.2019.1584531
Also see Democracy at Work Institute's new report on https://institute.coop/resources/economic-recovery-and-employee-ownership

This project reflects a commitment to engaging research in ways that build capacity for place-based organizing. The project was designed around a **community-based participatory research (CBPR)** method, which seeks to equitably involve community members, community-based organizations and researchers as partners, who each contribute their expertise and share in the decision-making and ownership of the project. The goal of CBPR is to integrate the knowledge that is gained with community-based interventions for policy or social change that directly benefit participants and their communities.[171]

The following methodological questions guided the design of this project:

Iterative process: How do we continuously revise the research process in response to the particular needs and concerns expressed by participants, rather than reproducing practices that are not mutually useful?

Place-based knowledge: How do we understand the deeper, often informal, relationships that shape place-based interventions? How do participants identify their efforts, and is the solidarity economy framework useful to them? What research has already been done by community-based researchers, and how has it been integrated in practice?

Reciprocity: How will this research be used and disseminated? What are the practices of reciprocity that allow activists and organizers to be involved in the research sustainably, in place of practices that extract and commodify community-based knowledge? How can the research process facilitate cross-regional relationships and capacity building, as well as opportunities for collective strategizing?

Metrics: What are metrics to gauge the development of regional solidarity economy ecosystems? What are the limitations of these metrics? [This was ultimately not pursued.]

III. Case Studies

The next section explores the four case study regions in more depth, in the order that I conducted the interviews, highlighting the unique conditions of development, opportunities and challenges, and areas of needed support. I indicate the specific neighborhoods and communities that were emphasized in each region. These summaries do not intend to be an authoritative account of any region but, rather, an ongoing conversation that engages various sources of place-based knowledge, which include:

- Interviews of anchor organizations
- Survey responses by key organizations
- Community-based organization reports and websites
- Economic/demographic data from U.S. Census, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and other sources

[171] For more info on CBPR, see "Community-Based Participatory Research: A Strategy for Building Healthy Communities and Promoting Health through Policy Change," https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/building-healthy-communities-and-promoting-health-through-policy-change

a) Case Study: Buffalo, NY

Anchor: Andrew Delmonte, Director of Cooperative Development, PUSH Buffalo/Cooperation Buffalo

Key organizations surveyed:

- PUSH Buffalo/Cooperation Buffalo
- Nickel City Housing Cooperative
- BreadHive Worker Cooperative
- Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP)
- Buffalo Mutual Aid Network
- Frontline Arts Buffalo
- African Heritage Food Cooperative

Regional Context

As a Rust Belt City that continues to experience the economic and environmental impacts of deindustrialization, the City of Buffalo[172] serves as a central example of the innovative, place-based resistance and mutual support that people forge in response to processes of organized abandonment and displacement. Connected to Canada by the Peace Bridge, Buffalo is highly impacted by environmental issues such as air pollution and brownfields, which have long been concentrated in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in Buffalo's West Side. This case study will focus on the City while paying particular attention to the interventions being led by frontline communities in Buffalo's West Side.

Buffalo is on the land of the Seneca Nation of the Haudenosaunee/Six Nations Confederacy.[173]

Solidarity Economy Framework

According to Andrew Delmonte of PUSH Buffalo, Buffalo organizers have identified the various pieces that are needed for a solidarity economy and are actively building them out. A formative period of solidarity economy development was between 2013, when Buffalo hosted Business Alliance for Local Living Economies' annual conference, and 2016, when it hosted New Economy Coalition's CommonBound Conference. While the work has been happening, the term "solidarity economy" is not widely understood in Buffalo, and may have been too inaccessible or politically divisive in the past. As the community comes to understand and identify with this framework—to the extent that they find it useful—there can be more intentional efforts to use this language and create a solidarity economy network.

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[172] City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York, 2019: Population: 256,480 (47.1% White, 36.5% Black, .5% American Indian, 5.9% Asian); MHI: $37,354; Poverty: 30.1%; BA+: 27.6% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019)
Buffalo-Cheektowaga MSA, GDP 2019: $73,754,236,000 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019)

[173] http://www.buffalo.edu/baldycenter/about/land-acknowledgement.html

Buffalo Cooperatives

The history of cooperative development is not linear but has grown in waves, in response to economic crises. In the 1930s, economic cooperation became a central survival strategy for Black communities in Buffalo, in the midst of the Great Depression. This was followed by the "New Wave" cooperatives of the 1960's and 1970's, rooted in counterculture, environmentalism, and the anti-war movement, including "Lexington Co-Op, North Buffalo Food Co-op, Greenfield St. Restaurant (a food co-op), and Yeast West Bakery, a worker cooperative."[174] This wave was almost exclusively white, reflecting issues of racial segregation in Buffalo.[175]

A third wave of cooperatives has formed over the last ten years, alongside Occupy Wall Street and growing conditions of economic precarity. BreadHive, founded in 2014, was the first worker cooperative in Buffalo since the 1980's. In addition to providing artisan sourdough bread, BreadHive sees itself as "a vehicle to create meaningful employment by giving workers control and equity."[176] BreadHive was incubated by Tori Kuper, Allison Ewing, and Emily Stewart during their time at Nickel City Housing Cooperative,[177] which has sparked many other cooperative efforts. Nickel City seeks to fix up vacant properties and provide affordable housing, while creating a space for members to educate one another around activism.[178]

Since its founding in 2019, Cooperation Buffalo, a member of Seed Commons Community Wealth Cooperative, has been critical to providing technical support for new cooperatives as well as a collective political identity aligned with just transition principles.[179] It is housed by PUSH's "new economy" department, also created in 2019. Cooperation Buffalo hosted the second year of its cooperative academy in 2020 and has seen a shift in participation toward a majority BIPOC and women represented.

Movement Building

Local First / Buffalo First

Around 2008-2009, Andrew, along with Harper Bishop, organized around the Local First / Buffalo First movement to support small businesses, facing harmful economic policies that privileged large corporations. While appealing to small business was an effective mobilizing strategy, especially within a more conservative environment, they began to experience disillusionment with small business as the model for economic intervention. This organizing also centered white communities who were being impacted by multinational corporations, and there had to be more work done to recognize and center frontline communities.[180]

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[174] Kristin Ksiazek and Annabel Bacon, "Combatting Inequality through Employee Ownership," ILR Buffalo Co-Lab, 2020.

[175] Interview with Andrew Delmonte

[176] BreadHive survey response

[177] Ksiazek and Bacon 2020

[178] Nickel City Housing Cooperative survey response

[179] https://www.cooperationbuffalo.org/our-principles

[180] Interview with Andrew Delmonte

Green Development Zone

PUSH began its efforts to build a Green Development Zone in 2005 when organizers went door to door in Buffalo's West Side to understand what people wanted to change in their neighborhood. Two of the major concerns were high utility bills and vacant properties, and PUSH mobilized a successful organizing campaign to compel government action. They also began land-banking properties within a strategic 25 square block area that was "chosen because of its high concentration of vacant properties, the relatively low cost of these lots and homes, existing assets such as the Massachusetts Avenue Project and the Boys and Girls Club, and the proximity of gentrifying forces."[181] PUSH's Green Development Zone has grown to include affordable housing, new arts and culture initiatives, and a weatherization and retrofitting program.

Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP), which works with low-income people on Buffalo's East and West sides, had already laid some of the groundwork for the Green Development Zone, reclaiming 13 vacant lots in the area for an urban farm. MAP is also involved in "advocating for the adoption of the Good Food Purchasing Program, advocating for land and water access for community growers, providing jobs, leadership training and a path to future employment for youth, increasing healthy food access through a Mobile Market, promoting transparency and sustainable practices by urban farms and growers.[182]

Fruit Belt Community Land Trust

Another key organizing success has been in response to the displacement of Black and low-income residents in the neighborhood of Fruit Belt, where 42% live in poverty and 53% are rent burdened.[183] The development of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus development has brought thousands of daily commuters and rising rents. Initially organizing around the issue of getting residential parking permits, Fruit Belt residents sustained their momentum in order to achieve a City moratorium on the sale of city owned lots. Strategic visioning sessions over the next years led to the incorporation of Fruit Belt Community Land Trust in 2017, the first and only CLT in Buffalo. In 2018, the City of Buffalo agreed to transfer more than 50 vacant lots to the land trust, and the CLT also received $800,000 from New York state to develop affordable housing.[184] They are being intentional about how to incorporate elements of the solidarity economy into the mixed use building. One of the tenants will be African Heritage Food Coop, whose vision is "to create a world where inner city 'neighborhoods' can become Communities. Where NO ONE goes without HEALTHY AFFORDABLE food options. Most

[181] Skye Hart and Sam Magavern, "PUSH Buffalo's Green Development Zone: A Model for New Economy Community Development," Partnership for the Public Good, June 2017.

[182] Massachusetts Avenue Project survey response

[183] Sidney Malia Waite, "Fruit Belt Community Land Trust Factsheet," Highroad Fellowship Reports, July 2019.

[184] https://buffalonews.com/news/local/buffalos-fruit-belt-neighborhood-gets-an-800-000-boost/article_7a16ee7d-0aae-5ed1-bca4-d88b4bec28dc.html

importantly a world in which we can create Ownership and employment opportunities IN and FOR the COMMUNITY!"[185]

Public Programs and Policy

Andrew reflects that organizers have had to be creative about how they build economic justice into other policy issues, such as NYSERDA (state's clean energy program) and water equity policies. Another policy win was participatory budgeting in 2015-2016, which allowed Clean Air Coalition of Western NY to facilitate a participatory process to allocate $150,000 from the Common Council's discretionary fund.[186] This was in partnership with the national non-profit, Participatory Budgeting Project.

In New York State, worker cooperative corporations have a special classification that allows worker-owners to retain control of the business through Class A shares, while selling Class B shares to non-worker investors. This allowed BreadHive to help fund the business by selling over 60 Class B shares in BreadHive to primarily Buffalo residents, who receive a 3% return every year.[187] On a city level, Tori worked with Cooperation Buffalo to write a Worker Cooperative Resolution, which was passed by the Buffalo Common Council in 2014, but the mayor was not interested in moving it forward.

India Walton, who is the Executive Director of Fruit Belt CLT and PUSH Board Member, recently won the Democratic Primary in Buffalo's mayoral race, beating four-term incumbent, Byron Brown. Her platform includes the implementation of participatory budgeting, a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, and a public bank, demonstrating how grassroots solidarity economy organizing can work in tandem with interventions into local government. Her campaign was announced during a segment of the Laura Flanders Show, called "Making Buffalo Our City."

Access to Capital

The City advertises that under Mayor Byron Brown, there has been $6.7 billion in new economic investment since 2012, which it claims will create 12,000 new jobs. These investments privilege large corporations, including the Northland Corridor Redevelopment Project and Solar City/Tesla project. Altogether there has been nearly a billion dollars in city and state funding to subsidize Tesla's factory. Another major project is the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, which has received $250 million in outside funding. While there is a lack of support from public officials for solidarity economy infrastructures, community organizing has been able to win important concessions, such as vacant lots for the Green Development Zone and Fruit Belt Community Land Trust.

[185] African Heritage Food Cooperative survey response

[186] https://www.cacwny.org/campaigns/participatory-budgeting/

[187] Ksiazek and Bacon 2020

While the top-down development strategies of the "Buffalo Renaissance" co-opt the language of community revitalization and green job creation, community organizers and frontline communities are creating their own narratives and infrastructures of community development. Efforts such as the Green Development Zone and Fruit Belt Community Land Trust are promising blueprints for what a "solidarity economy ecosystem" can look like, integrating affordable housing, worker and consumer cooperatives, local farms and food system interventions, frontline arts interventions, and other elements that enable collective ownership and decision making.

In the case of PUSH, there was a long period of unpaid, grassroots organizing that went into their successful organizing campaigns, which helped to attract significant national foundation funding.[188] The large share of funding from national foundations can also be a source of precarity as these foundations may in the future focus on other geographies. PUSH has also grown into the role of a land bank, "actively purchasing and redeveloping housing and vacant lots in the West Side neighborhood of Buffalo, providing affordable and energy efficient/renewable energy-powered homes and green infrastructure to frontline communities."[189]

Local foundations in Buffalo have not been very responsive to the work that PUSH and other aligned organizations are doing, however, and organizers have found the need to translate their work for local funders in terms of charity, direct services, and small business support.

Crisis Response

Since the 2008 financial crisis and "Buffalo Renaissance," Andrew notes that organizing has evolved from the "cautionary activism around protecting small businesses to trying to be more comprehensive about solutions, as things get worse."[190] In response to COVID, Buffalo Mutual Aid Network was established to organize and fund volunteer work to provide food, medicine, and cleaning supplies, and also facilitate direct peer-to-peer cash aid.[191] They recognize that crises "further exasperate the needs of the most vulnerable among us and that the people themselves are in the best position to identify what their needs are."[192] They continue to be volunteer run and the technology is facilitated in part by volunteers from Code for Buffalo.
They also helped convene ANCHOR, a coalition of service-based organizations to meet emergency needs.

Regional Coalitions and Networks

[188] Interview with Andrew Delmonte
[189] PUSH Buffalo survey response
[190] Interview with Andrew Delmonte
[191] https://buffalomutualaid.org/
[192] Buffalo Mutual Aid Network survey response

Crossroads Coalition is the network most aligned with the framework of SE, bringing together 12 groups led by and serving communities of color and low-income communities in the arts, around Movement Generation's "Just Transition" framework. The organizations range across food justice, cooperative development, and racial justice organizing, together constituting a growing solidarity economy ecosystem.

Frontline Arts Buffalo is a "collaboration among artists, arts administrators, engaged citizens, justice advocates, and policy researchers" to "support frontline arts and cultural organizations in Buffalo in our transition from conditions of precarity to viability."[193] Cooperation Buffalo is part of the Seed Commons network of non-extractive loan funds, and has seeded a range of cooperatives in Buffalo.

While Buffalo is regionally categorized with the Northeast, its economic history aligns more squarely with the experiences of other Rust Belt cities such as Detroit. Cooperation Buffalo has been in touch with Detroit Community Wealth Fund, both part of the Seed Commons network, and NEC could provide resources such as small grants to facilitate meetings and exchanges to build these connections.

Local:
- ANCHOR
- Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition
- Coalition for Economic Justice
- Crossroads Coalition
- Our City Buffalo Coalition
- Good Food Buffalo Coalition
- Greater Buffalo Urban Growers
- Seeding Resilience
- Food for the Spirit/ Buffalo Food Equity Network
- Open Buffalo
- Partnership for the Public Good
- PUSH Buffalo/Cooperation Buffalo
- Buffalo Water Equity Taskforce

State:
- Center for Good Food Purchasing
- Clean Air Coalition of Western New York
- Black Farmers United NYS
- Lead Free New York
- NY Renews
- NYS Equity Agenda Coalition
- WNY Environmental Alliance

Regional

[193] Frontline Arts Buffalo survey response

- Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG)
- Northeast Organic Farming Association-NY (NOFANY)
- Northeast Farmers of Color

National
- Climate Justice Alliance
- Food Chain Workers Alliance
- HEAL Food Alliance
- National Mutual Aid Connections
- National Food Systems Network
- New Economy Coalition
- NASCO
- Peoples' Action
- Seed Commons
- US Federation of Worker Cooperatives

Needed Support
- Best models for doing this work so they don't have to reinvent locally
- Local networks in Buffalo for developing solidarity economy interventions
- Support around leveraging national funding; connections with larger grant-writers
- Community members willing to volunteer time and potentially eventually come on as a member-owner of a permanent organization.
- Professional / leadership development
- Coordination around connecting with the people and regions they identify would be helpful
- Expanding network of frontline art institutions and artists locally; connecting with other coalitions across the nation who have achieved a solidarity economy.
- Connections to government officials for policy interventions

b) Case Study: St. Louis, MO

Anchor: Julia Ho, Founder, and Salena Burch, Project Coordinator, Solidarity Economy St. Louis

Key organizations surveyed:
- A Red Circle
- Action St. Louis
- ArtHOUSE STL
- Franciscan Sisters of Mary
- Solidarity Economy St. Louis
- Spark for the Arts, dba MARSH
- WEPOWER

Regional Context

This case study will explore St. Louis City and County, which are independent from one another.[194] I focus on frontline interventions on the North side of St. Louis City and County, an area that was designated as a Promise Zone in 2015.[195] In response to environmental racism, food inequity, and related issues of racial segregation, frontline communities have led the creation of new infrastructures for healthy food systems, economic development, education, and more.

St. Louis is on the unceded lands of the Osage, Miami, Kickapoo, and Sioux Nations. The state of Missouri does not have federally recognized tribes.

Solidarity Economy Framework

Organizations taking up the solidarity economy framework are relatively new in St. Louis, in line with the range of organizations surveyed, most of whom were established within the last 6 years. These organizations are mostly based at the intersections of racial justice organizing, youth organizing, and food justice spaces.

A major force in articulating the solidarity economy framework in this region is Solidarity Economy St. Louis (SE STL). Founded in 2014, SE STL works to connect and build a collective vision for a growing network of organizations and also provides support through mini-grants and stipends, mentorships, and other resources for new solidarity economy projects. SE STL was founded by Julia Ho, who formerly worked as lead organizer for Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment during the Ferguson Uprisings and also serves as NEC Board Co-Chair. Joined by Salena Burch, a St. Louis artist and organizer, and Umeme Houston, a textile artist and founder of Sewcial Impact, the SE STL team has been intentional about departing from the traditional non-profit model, which in St. Louis has been dominated by white-led philanthropy, and focusing instead on long-term collaborations based on shared values.[196] SE STL is "one of the few multi-racial, cross-class organizations in the area that centers the leadership and needs of Black people."[197]

In 2016, the North American Social Solidarity Economy Forum took place in Detroit,[198] which provided a model for SE STL to understand how this work could be done. In 2018, SE STL hosted CommonBound 2018 in St. Louis, which included tours led by A Red Circle and United People Market, two key organizations for racial equity and food justice in North County. The events of CommonBound helped to seed and strengthen solidarity economy relationships in the region, with follow-up meetings such as the CommonBound Block Party.

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[194] City of St. Louis, 2019: Population: 308,174 (46.5% White, 46.4% Black, .3% AI, 3.4% Asian, .1% PI); MHI 2019: $43,896; Poverty: 21.8%, BA+: 36.3% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019)
St. Louis County: Population: 996,919; MHI: 67,420; Poverty: 9.7%, BA+: 43.6% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019); GDP 2019: $81,797,794,000 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2019)

[195] St. Louis Promise Zone (North St. Louis City and North St. Louis County): Population: 189,120; Poverty: 30% (STL Promise Zone)

[196] Interview with Julia Ho and Salena Burch

[197] Solidarity Economy St. Louis survey response

[198] http://www.ripess.org/north-american-social-solidarity-economy-forum-detroit-april-8-10-2016/?lang=en

Movement Building

St. Louis is one of the most segregated regions in the U.S., due in large part to histories and continued processes of institutionalized and private housing discrimination. Ferguson, which became the site of mass uprisings in response to the murder of Mike Brown, is shaped by a recent history of white flight, going from "about 25 percent black to 67 percent black in a 20-year period."[199] The Ferguson Uprisings brought attention to the everyday reality of police violence in North County, as well as the systematic ways in which Black residents have been targeted with onerous fines, as a means of balancing city budgets.

Racial segregation is also intertwined with extreme environmental and health disparities. Research from Washington University School of Law shows that Black children in the City are 2.4 times more likely than white children to test positive for lead and make 10 times more emergency room visits for asthma.[200] While institutionalized efforts such as the Ferguson Commission have brought more attention to issues of racial equity, the mandates of the Ferguson Commission have remained largely unfulfilled.[201]

Against the limitations of institutionalized responses, communities on the ground have been organizing their own solutions to build community ownership and Black, Indigenous, and immigrant economic power. Action St. Louis emerged as a coalition in response to the Ferguson Uprisings and has become a permanent, Black-led organization that works on closing jails, defunding the police, and getting policies and elected leaders to support Black communities. Their strategies include canvassing Black neighborhoods around divesting from carceral systems and investing into Black communities.[202] WEPOWER, which has been around for about 3 years, takes a place-based approach to building and activating political and economic power in majority Black and Latinx neighborhoods impacted by decades of disinvestment and segregation.[203] They do this by catalyzing community organizing towards policy and systems change in economic and education systems as well as by supporting cohorts of Black and Latinx entrepreneurs to grow businesses, cooperatives, raise capital, and integrate community participation and ownership.[204]

Food justice has also been a critical space for movement building. A Red Circle has focused on teaching community members about the connections between food, economy, and policy, and their programs include a healthy community market and garden, virtual parent cafes and tutoring, and a food and justice fellowship. MARSH is a cooperative ecosystem that includes

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[199] Cambria et al., "Segregation in St. Louis: Dismantling the Divide," Washington University in St. Louis, 2018.

[200] Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, "Environmental Racism in St. Louis," Washington University School of Law, 2019.

[201] https://forwardthroughferguson.org/

[202] Action St. Louis survey response

[203] WEPOWER survey response

[204] Comments by Yoni Blumberg, Director of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Initiatives, WEPOWER

a consumer coop, worker-owned kitchen, and producer coop. They shared, "By creating a locally owned, managed, and governed food system, we hope to explore the complex intersection of fair labor, food justice, human agency, democratic principles, and sustainability and test models for post-capitalist economies and social organization."[205] Their practices include "subsidizing memberships so no one is excluded, conducting a biweekly outdoor sliding scale market to make the food we procure and grow more accessible, collecting donations from members for donated mutual aid grocery bundles, growing food in our own large garden to eliminate capital expenditures for groceries and kitchen ingredients, placing no limitations on potential worker-owners (no drug tests, background checks, etc.) and having an ADA-approved space." ArtHouse is another organizing space and artists' housing cooperative on the North side of St. Louis, emerging out of the Ferguson Uprisings, which seeks to live out alternatives to capitalism and intersecting systems of oppression through neighborhood-based connections and work.[206] They also host "programming for neighborhood children, community mental health support, celebrations of music, dance, and storytelling on our backyard stage, a visiting artist/activist program, and a Food Share/Community Lunch hosted six times a month."[207]

Public Programs and Policy

Public policy in St. Louis has greatly reinforced segregation and inequality. The City of St. Louis has been increasingly redeveloped and gentrified, attracting white residents along with corporate investments, as Black and low-income residents are displaced. Through the present day, public money, including the very funds meant to incentivize development in low-income neighborhoods, have been directed toward affluent white neighborhoods. For example, "84% of TIFs granted between 2000 and 2014 in the City of St. Louis went to neighborhoods in the increasingly lucrative central corridor and downtown, places that are home to relatively little of the city's African American population."[208] Meanwhile there has been "little policy at the state or local level to stabilize housing or otherwise invest in North St. Louis County."[209] Similarly, resources for St. Louis Public Schools are directed toward affluent white neighborhoods while SLPS has closed or defunded schools in low-income Black communities. This is due in large part to underfunding by Missouri state government, which provides less funding to high-poverty districts than its low-poverty ones.[210]

WEPOWER facilitates Elevate ESTL, a campaign that demands a community benefits agreement, a first source hiring program, and workforce development fund, and "Better Budgets, Better Schools" to hold SLPS to community-driven policy demands. They

[205] MARSH survey response

[206] ArtHouse survey response

[207] https://www.foodspark.org/ideabank/arthousestl

[208] Cambria et al. 2018

[209] Ibid.

[210] Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic 2019

encourage entrepreneurs to commit to locating in and hiring from focus neighborhoods, and provide popular education and policy support through a racial equity lens.[211]

The Close the Workhouse campaign is led by Action STL, The Bail Project, and Arch City Defenders to close the local jail. The organizing included conversations around reinvesting the $16 million into other areas through participatory budgeting, which could be a potential opportunity for more solidarity economy solutions. Though the campaign succeeded in achieving a legislative resolution, action has been stalled due to COVID.

Local organizing has also translated to recent electoral victories, including electing movement-aligned candidates such as Cori Bush to the House of Representatives and Tishaura Jones as the new Mayor of St. Louis City. Both Congresswoman Bush and Mayor Jones are the first Black women to ever hold their respective offices, and both have begun to collaborate with solidarity economy aligned groups and back aligned policies.[212]

Participatory Budgeting

There have been a few participatory budgeting rounds in the St. Louis region. In 2014, Participatory Budgeting Project helped to coordinate a series of rounds for different Wards of St. Louis. Another effort was funded by a 5 year, $4.7 million grant from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to be decided upon by residents of the St. Louis Promise Zone. St. Louis received the Promise Zone designation in 2015, encompassing Northern regions of the City and County with "high unemployment, high crime and mortality rates; significant numbers of vacant lots and abandoned buildings; and homelessness."

Another participatory budgeting process was created in 2020 with $7 million in federal CARES Act funding for community healthcare services in St. Louis County, targeting 17 zip codes in North County and 1 in Southeast County.[213] Presently, Mayor Jones is leading a community-driven budgeting process for allocating more than $500 million in federal stimulus funds.

Access to capital

In general, St. Louis does not have the access to the foundation support that other regions have. SE STL has been able to access some national funding with the help of NEC. Another challenge has been that solidarity economy organizing in St. Louis is led by young women of color, which is often not well received in institutionalized non-profit and foundation spaces, though more people want to support Black and Indigenous initiatives since Ferguson.

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[211] WEPOWER survey response

[212] Comments from Yoni Blumberg

[213] https://stlouiscountymo.gov/test/county-executive1/county-executive-press-releases/participatory-budget-process-for-targeted-zip-codes/

On the other hand, the lack of foundation support has allowed solidarity economy organizing to remain largely at the grassroots level, grounded in racial justice organizing and the Black artist community in St. Louis.[214] SE STL is sustained by membership dues, individual donors, and foundations, and 2020 was the first year that they were able to be financially sustainable, with funding committed for several years from local funders aligned with their food justice, community gardening initiatives, and youth organizing work. They have received strong support from faith-based funders in St. Louis, including Franciscan Sisters of Mary, Deaconess Foundation, and Incarnate Word Foundation. Franciscan Sisters of Mary is intentionally shifting toward working with frontline organizations rather than more traditional nonprofit organizations in order to help address the historical funding disparities for frontline communities, and sees its role in the solidarity economy as funding and growing local leadership and organizational capacity.[215] They have also shifted their regional focus from national to regional initiatives, focusing on St. Louis food justice and Midwest environmental justice work, informed by Climate Justice Alliance's Just Transition framework.

A recent initiative is the St. Louis Regional Racial Healing + Justice Fund, which aims to "invest in healing community trauma and changing the conditions that reinforce systemic racism."[216] It was established by Deaconess Foundation, Forward Through Ferguson, and Missouri Foundation for Health, with the thought leadership of InPower Institute, and seeks to follow a community designed process, with investment overseen by a Community Governance Board of Black and people of color community members of St. Louis. They report having $1.4 million committed to this effort, including a matching grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

According to Yoni Blumberg, Director of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Initiatives, WEPOWER is launching a $1M pilot investment fund, with plans for a larger follow-on fund, entirely focused on Black and Latinx entrepreneurs creating living wage jobs and building community wealth. The fund is set up to share half of net proceeds with the community to be democratically managed / reinvested and to recycle the other half of net proceeds into additional investments in other Black and Latinx entrepreneurs. The fund also includes a Founder's Commitment to Community with an emphasis on investing in people (paying living wages) and place (locating in and/or hiring from disinvested neighborhoods that have experienced / are still experiencing systemic disinvestment) as well as incorporating environmental sustainability. The fund is already more than half way capitalized, with investments from both local and national organizations and individuals.

Crisis Response

SE STL and its members were central to creating STL Mutual Aid, in response to COVID, and it was the foundation of shared values and relationships as the basis of their organizing that enabled them to quickly create a resilient network in a moment of crisis. Mutual aid has

[214] Interview with Julia Ho and Salena Burch

[215] Franciscan Sisters of Mary survey response

[216] https://forwardthroughferguson.org/healingjustice/

been significant to coalition building across a broad range of organizations and causes, and also highlights the skills and resources that each group brings in new ways. MARSH, for example, has played an active role in food supply and distribution throughout the COVID crisis, seeing it as an opportunity to build the "foundation for a relational economy" that will outlast this particular crisis.[217] Mutual Aid STL facilitates both a "financial solidarity" (or peer-to-peer giving) model as well as a general mutual aid fund, which have together redistributed $870,000+ to over 1000+ community members. They have also organized mutual aid pods and facilitated workshops on mutual aid for groups nationally.

SE STL is planning to implement a Black and Indigenous cooperative fellowship. They have experienced how many of their BIPOC members might not use SE terminology but come with an understanding of how to practice it, versus those who might understand the solidarity economy on a theoretical level but struggle with staying engaged when the work is about longer-term relationship building. They want to support BIPOC to navigate these institutional infrastructures while remaining grounded in their own traditions.

Regional Coalitions and Networks

Starting in 2017, St. Louis started engaging more programming and workshops with cities such as Jackson, Detroit, Chicago, and Minneapolis. They want to build out a regional network for the Midwest but have had limited capacity to establish consistent communication. The Midwest is generally underfunded, but there are important lessons to learn from their different strengths and resources.[218] Julia and Salena shared the following examples:

- Chicago has a strong cooperative environment and legal infrastructure for SE, immigrant run coops
- Detroit has a strong community of Black artists and underground organizing around food systems interventions and reclaiming vacant land, environmental organizing tied to the Flint water crisis.
- Twin Cities have a strong presence of Black women leading solidarity economy work, immigrant communities, community wealth building strategies

Local:
- Solidarity Economy St. Louis
- Metropolitan Congregations United
- HomeGrown STL
- St. Louis Equity in Entrepreneurship Collective
- Redefining K12 in STL Post Covid-19 Campaign
- Ready by 5 Coalition (early childhood education)
- Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis

State:

[217] MARSH survey response

[218] Interview with Julia Ho and Salena Burch

- Kids Win Missouri
- Missouri Coalition for Activity and Nutrition
- MOVE (Missouri Organizing and Voter Engagement Collaborative)

Regional
- Midwest Environmental Justice Network

National
- Seed Commons
- Climate Justice Alliance
- New Economy Coalition
- HUMANs (Humans United for Mutual Aid Networks)
- Movement 4 Black Lives

Needed Support (survey responses)
- NEC might invest resources into hiring a regional organizer for the Midwest who can take on coordination for regional collaboration.
- Could use support from NEC / NEC members on advocating for cooperative development (both for public funds & favorable policies)
- Funding and other resources for healing and conflict resolution
- More capital investment (going beyond grants)
- Connections to technical assistance providers (on the popular education side, managing investment funds, running community investment processes, etc.); especially around how BIPOC can navigate the non-profit / funding / legal infrastructures.
- More opportunities to learn from Black cooperatives around the country.
- Support integrating education around solidarity economy practices into (existing) technical assistance for Black and Latinx businesses
- Any kind of gathering (!) but particularly local think tanks and working groups.
- Formal collaboration between environmental and food justice organizers fighting extractive projects in their neighborhoods and those looking to support new economy projects in St. Louis.

c) Case Study: Kentucky

Anchor: Cassia Herron, President, Louisville Association for Cooperative Economics / Louisville Community Grocery

Key organizations interviewed:
Ivy Brashear, Appalachian Transition Director, Mountain Association
Martin Richards, Executive Director, Community Farm Alliance

Key organizations surveyed:
- Black Soil: Our Better Nature
- Community Farm Alliance
- Delivery Co-op

- Kentuckians for the Commonwealth
- Mountain Association
- Russell: A Place of Promise

Regional Context:

This case study demonstrates the strength of solidarity economy interventions that are intentionally bridging urban and rural economies, in ways that meet intersecting needs around racial justice, food equity, community-led economic development, and climate justice. It will focus on organizing in the Louisville metro area,[219] specifically the West End, as well as agricultural and climate justice interventions happening in Eastern Kentucky. In Louisville's West End, Black communities who have been subject to long histories of housing segregation, environmental racism, and food apartheid are leading efforts to build community-owned infrastructures, particularly around food justice, in ways that are deeply intertwined with solidarity economy interventions in agriculture and energy across rural Kentucky and Appalachia.

Kentucky occupies primarily Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw and Osage land. There are no federally recognized tribes.

Solidarity Economy Framework:

Cassia Herron is President of Louisville Association for Community Economics (LACE), an organization that was created to support the development of Louisville Community Grocery (LCG). Cassia reflected that while the terminology of the solidarity economy may be new to the Louisville region, it is more about shifting priorities around work that has been ongoing. The NEC CommonBound conference introduced LCG organizers to people around the country doing cooperative development and gave them insight into the "whole ecosystem needed for the grocery to be successful," including intermediaries such as local foundations and CDFIs.[220]

Ivy Brashear is the Appalachian Transition Director at Mountain Association. Hailing from Viper in Eastern Kentucky, Ivy reflected on how solidarity economy work is deeply present throughout this region, though people might not use this language. Living in the midst of an extractive industry that does not meet human needs, people have had to cooperate and support one another to survive. Ivy emphasized the importance of narrative work in changing economic conditions in Kentucky and Appalachia, as a way to meet people where they are and engage through shared values such as family, community, and honest work. Her work is

[219] The City of Louisville was merged with Jefferson County in 2003 and is under the jurisdiction of Louisville Metro Government.
Louisville/Jefferson County 2019: Population: 767,419 (71.6% White; 21.7% Black, .2% American Indian; 2.9% Asian); MHI: 56,586; Poverty: 14.2%; BA+: 33.4% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019); GDP: $56,433,773,000 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019)
Louisville West CCD 2019: Population: 60,770 (20.8% White; 75.3% Black; .2% American Indian, .2% Asian); MHI: $25,170; Poverty 40.1%; BA+: 8.3% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019)

[220] Interview with Cassia Herron

partly informed by her graduate research on representations of central Appalachia, which have been shaped by the coal industry, and how these narratives inform the subjectivity of people from this region and the work they do or feel they deserve.

Martin Richards is from Brea, Kentucky and Executive Director of Community Farm Alliance. He does not believe "solidarity economy" as a framework resonates with Kentuckians involved in farm organizing. Just Transition seems to resonate more strongly in Appalachia due to the interventions being organized around the coal industry. In this moment of crisis, what seems to resonate most, in Martin's experiences, is the idea of "resilient" economies. But more than the terminology, what is most important is the place-based context through which people understand how their work and consumption practices are related to questions of sustainability and economic justice.

Movement Building

Kentucky agriculture and food equity

Food justice is a key issue that bridges urban and rural solidarity economy efforts. In rural Kentucky, access to food is determined by the inequitable ownership of land, as a result of landholding families who have parceled out the land to heirs and a coal industry that exerts outsized ownership and control over land and mineral rights. White supremacy has also structured the ownership of land, as Black people have been dispossessed of their land or segregated into coal towns. Those without land often face food insecurity, even living in an agricultural region.

State-wide networks such as Community Farm Alliance (CFA) are organizing cooperation among rural and urban areas to support family-scale agriculture. They support farmers, and farmers of color, with funding and technical support around cooperative development, value-chain development, and leadership development. They also serve the roles of community organizing and policy interventions.[221] Community Farm Alliance emerged to meet the needs of farm workers, within a state that represses union activity. The Burley Coop was a very large bureaucratic coop that served as an intermediary between farmers and the tobacco industry, helping to negotiate tobacco quotas for farmers, but wasn't regarded as democratically run or representative of the farmers' interests.

CFA's organic farm cooperative began as a group of 12 organic farmers, seeking to be run democratically. Part of their work evolved toward addressing racial food inequities, which led them to focus on creating farmers' markets in the predominantly Black neighborhoods of Louisville's West End. But considering CFA was a predominantly white organization, they had to learn what it meant to engage these efforts in ways that enabled community ownership. Cassia's involvement as a CFA organizer was critical to realizing efforts that engaged and centered Black communities and further cultivated Black leadership.

[221] Community Farm Alliance survey response

State-wide, there is a need for more efforts to contend with how white supremacy and segregation shape the economy, including the ownership of wealth and land. Ivy reflected on how Kentucky is represented as a white space, in ways that underemphasize the urgency of challenging how white supremacy shapes the landscape, history, and economy. In poor, rural communities, there is a need to address the harms caused by white supremacy in ways that white communities, who have also experienced economic exploitation and abandonment, can understand.

Food justice in Louisville

Louisville has always been highly segregated, but over the last decade, the issue of racial inequalities has been more transparently addressed, with food equity serving as an initiator to these conversations. However, elected leaders and funders tend to respond with charity models, not trusting communities of color to take ownership of their own futures. Despite Mayor Fischer running on a platform to address food inequities, the community has seen their struggles and narratives co-opted by city government while resources are directed elsewhere in ways that worsen the problem. While organizers continue to exert pressure on his administration, they are also preparing to get community members into office.

The West End of Louisville experiences conditions of food apartheid, where many residents "live more than half a mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle."[222] When the City initiated plans for a $30 million Wal-Mart on the former site of the Phillip Morris plant, a group of residents organized to hold Wal-Mart to certain demands such as hiring from the community, and filed a lawsuit demanding that the corporation at least meet the city's land use codes. Instead, Wal-Mart dropped its plans to construct the store in late 2016.

Cassia and other activists saw how this struggle greatly divided and disheartened the community, with Mayor Fischer blaming activists for the loss of jobs, and realized the need to "take control over the basic needs that we have while we're also demonstrating what is feasible in the system."[223] They read *Collective Courage*[224] together to learn about different examples of cooperative economics around the country, which led to the idea for Louisville Community Grocery. They began their organizing for LCG in neighborhoods where the CSA, New Roots, had already charted its Fresh Stop Markets.

A community grocery store is a way for Black residents, within Kentucky's segregated landscape, to be in relationship with immigrant and refugee populations, who are finding alternative means of accessing their traditional foods, as well as with rural, agricultural communities. Cassia shared, "What I've seen, in probably the last decade or so, is much more willingness to talk and to communicate across lines of difference: geography, race, socioeconomic status… How do we start creating new things based on those relationships and what we know about each other?" They want to grow supportive relationships between small

[222] https://loufoodcoop.com/our-community-louisville/

[223] Interview with Cassia Herron

[224] Jessica Gordon Nembhard, Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice, University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014.

BIPOC-owned farms and cooperative groceries. Such relationships have already been established through farmers' market organizing and other informal collaborations but can be strengthened as an infrastructure.

Cooperative Interventions

The leadership of Black women has been key to centering racial equity in any food and economic justice organizing in Louisville and the larger state of Kentucky.[225] In addition to the leadership of Louisville Community Grocery, Black Market is a project, led by Shauntrice Martinto, to build a healthy grocery store in the West End. Along with food justice efforts, Play Cousins Collective and Mzizi Homeschool Coop were created by Black women, as a way to "weave a quilt of interconnectedness with extended kin, by practicing Ancestral methods of healing and resilience." Cassia emphasized the need to support Black women leadership in the solidarity economy, as they have the "expertise to lead groups of people in ways that support us and support our communities and support everyone else."[226]

Across Kentucky state, other initiatives include Black Soil: Our Better Nature, whose mission is to reconnect Black Kentuckians to their heritage and legacy in agriculture. They have engaged grassroots methods of structural incorporation and inclusion for Black farmers in Kentucky, who have been marginalized from the agricultural system, fostering a "micro-distribution/local food system" that is based on "self-sufficiency, collective responsibility and cooperative economics."[227] Delivery Co-op is a first-of-its kind employee and restaurant-owned food delivery platform that began in Lexington, KY., which collectivizes local restaurants and drivers as equitable owners of the platform.[228]

Public Programs and Policy

Louisville became an epicenter of racial justice organizing, in response Breonna Taylor's murder by police. In the immediate aftermath, the community mobilized to successfully ban no-knock warrants at the local level. The police raid that led to Breonna Taylor's murder was later revealed to be tied to the City's efforts to clear out the block where Taylor's ex-boyfriend and associates frequented, as part of the multi-million dollar Vision Russell development plan.[229] This demonstrates how gentrification exacerbates conditions for police violence against Black communities. Other city supported initiatives suggest a different approach to community development that aims for investment without displacement.[230] The uprisings for Breonna Taylor helped to catalyze an awakening around the need for community

[225] Interviews with Shavaun Evans and Cassia Herron

[226] Interview with Cassia Herron

[227] Black Soil: Our Better Nature survey response

[228] Members pay $25/month and restaurants pay $100/month. From Delivery Co-op survey response

[229] https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/crime/2020/07/05/lawyers-breonna-taylor-case-connected-gentrification-plan/5381352002/

[230] Russell: A Place of Promise survey response

ownership and carved out space for new leaders to carry the narrative and influence how investment is happening and decisions are being made

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is a grassroots community organizing group, made up of multiple chapters throughout Kentucky. They work on a "broad range of coalitions focused on New Energy & Just Transition, Economic Justice, Racial Justice, and Voting Rights." They also organize around the "Empower Kentucky" plan, which seeks to lower emissions and develop a diversified energy portfolio.[231] Organizers are working to implement more aspects of community ownership and control over the emergent new energy economy, following the example of agricultural reform. Considering that energy policy work can be disconnected from the everyday language and reality of residents, Cassia suggests the need for local officials to support project-based initiatives that enable local community organizers, leaders and entrepreneurs to articulate the stakes that community members have in these issues.

Community Farm Alliance and partners are also in the process of reviving Kentucky Food Policy Network.[232] On a state level, CFA organized farmers to create a blueprint for the Tobacco Settlement Act, which distributed 3.5 billion to different states depending on their level of harm from the tobacco industry and the funds were split for public health and agricultural diversification. While this organizing allowed farmers to gain control over important resources, the plan failed to address issues of racial equity, considering black farmers who had been pushed out of farm ownership, or otherwise chosen to sell, did not benefit. When people could sell off their tobacco quotas, the benefits also went to landowners over tenant farmers. This history led CFA and Black Soil to create the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund, which began as a COVID relief fund but is now moving toward an "evergreen" fund supporting direct capitalization for Kentucky black farmers.

Ivy reflected how in their efforts around Just Transition from coal, they try to be respectful of the coal industry in their language, recognizing that it is a significant part of people's lives and sense of heritage. Similarly, Martin spoke about how the tobacco industry was not only an industry but an important part of cultural heritage, and when the laws around tobacco were passed, there was a sense of losing cultural identity and resistance to FDA regulation over tobacco as a controlled substance.

Louisville policy interventions

Cassia shared that her work as board chair of CFA and KFTC was central to shaping her approach to organizing, development of her personal theory of change. The relationships she gained statewide and across the country through organizing around Kentucky's agricultural and energy transitions were critical to the cooperative work of LACE and LCG.

The Center for Health Equity, located in the Department of Public Health and Wellness, has been a strong ally for health and racial equity issues, pushing the local government to adopt

[231] http://www.empowerkentucky.org/peoples-plan/

[232] https://cfaky.org/programs/kentucky-food-policy-network/

more progressive policies. They have published an array of research on how structural racial inequalities are causing extreme health disparities for Black communities, concentrated in the West End, such as high infant mortality and high rates of asthma for Black children.[233] In a 2020 report they emphasize the need for "community-ownership of resources by Black residents and other people of color that meet their health and wellness needs."[234] They outline common themes identified by the community around the need for investment in "youth development programs, vacant property rehabilitation and guaranteed housing, addressing food deserts, offering non-carceral responses to substance use and mental health, and reallocating efforts from expensive economic development projects that do not benefit the health and wellness of residents." The Center for Health Equity also facilitated the "Our Money, Our Voice" participatory budgeting initiative in 2019, allocating $100,000 each to two Council Districts, with funds from capital infrastructure funds, Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness, and Humana Foundation.[235]

Russell: A Place of Promise participated in the Shared Equity in Economic Development (SEED) Fellowship to develop a worker ownership initiative. According to Zen Trenholm of Democracy at Work Institute, "While originally focused on transitioning existing businesses to worker ownership in the Russell and Smoketown communities, it was clear that there was a need for additional services and resources to support local entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, and small businesses to grow and scale."[236]

Access to Capital

Food equity and community economic development have been aligned funding areas for solidarity economy work. Though funding continues to be the biggest challenge for many organizations, the solidarity economy framework has been helpful in guiding conversations with local funders in ways that meet their needs rather than being dictated by funders' agendas. Community Foundation of Louisville consulted LACE and other Black-led non-profits to construct a plan for funding community organizations. Another recent win was when the James Graham Brown Foundation, a large foundation, brought together a group of funders to hear LACE's pitch. While organizers don't explicitly use the language of reparations, they are working toward reparative solutions and realize the need for the community to create and own the institutions where reparative funds can be invested.

LACE and LCG finished a pro forma and business plan, and the current budget to fund LACE's operations and build the grocery stands at $8-9M. While less than a quarter of the investment comes from community shares and loans, they have been seeking philanthropic and public funds to shore up the capital stack. They await a decision from Louisville Metro Government on a bid response to an RFP for a $3.5M bond allocation for a community grocery (funds LACE thought were allocated in the city budget for its project). They are also

[233] Center for Health Equity 2017

[234] Center for Health Equity 2020

[235] https://louisvilleky.gov/government/center-health-equity/our-money-our-voice

[236] Comments from Zen Trenholm, Democracy at Work Institute

working to receive state funding for agricultural diversification from tobacco. LACE was awarded technical assistance from The Reinvestment Fund, who administers the Healthy Food Financing Initiative on behalf of USDA Rural Development to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas. They have also received funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. National funders generally want evidence of local funding relationships in order to make an investment.

Those leading the effort for LCG have shifted from organizing to development roles. The organizing work, which has been delegated to their first employee, is focused on selling equity shares to the community, which Cassia says is the most exciting but also most challenging part of their work, especially with COVID restrictions around community engagement. Another goal of organizing is to build out a process to identify skill sets that community members can bring to make the grocery successful, whether during development or after opening. To gain community support, organizers often appeal to the language such as "for us by us," community control and leadership for Black communities, and the community has been receptive to understanding how this development can model interventions into other issues such as housing and schools.

Mountain Association is a CDFI focused on Eastern Kentucky, which offers loans, business support, energy assistance, and engages in policy reform. Mountain Association has focused on providing capital support for food equity work in rural Kentucky, such as building supermarkets in communities without access, and are involved in coalitional work for a Just Transition in Appalachia.

Crisis Response

In Eastern Kentucky, Ivy reflected that there is a sense that people are really beginning to question a different way to do things beyond the dominance of extractive industries and to network their community assets. Coalitions such as What's Next EKY?! are bringing people together from different counties, which is out of the ordinary, to start building these networks. A lot of this work is happening around community arts and theater initiatives, which can also be tied to economic initiatives around tourism.[237]

In Louisville, a collective made up of "BLM Louisville, Hip Hop Cares, Women of the Well, Justice Before Peace, community leaders from Black and South Louisville neighborhoods and organizations"[238] began Louisville Mutual Aid. They were engaged in mutual aid prior to this moment but have organized around COVID relief and an eviction prevention fund, within a city where 44% of renters making under 35K were paying more than half of their income in rent.[239]

[237] Interview with Ivy Brashear

[238] https://www.gofundme.com/f/louisville-mutual-aid-a-new-world-is-possible

[239] https://greaterlouisvilleproject.org/housing-justice/

Change Today Change Tomorrow, which is a partner of Louisville Community Grocery, hosts an initiative called #FeedThe West, which allows people to request or donate groceries and volunteer in the West End. This effort is also led by Shauntrice Martin, founder of Black Market.

Regional Coalitions and Networks

While Louisville residents are often segregated from the rest of Kentucky, a strong solidarity economy ecosystem would need to bridge urban areas with the agricultural economies of rural Kentucky. There are many small farms in Kentucky due to the tobacco profits program, which in a sense "democratized" the agricultural sector, and solidarity economy work could help to maintain that fabric while shifting activities that farmers are engaged in, maintaining their autonomy but also shifting toward community-owned infrastructures.

A future vision might include building a regional solidarity economy network, with local intermediaries to support cooperative development. NEC might help support coordination of regional collaborations, since grassroots organizations, many without staff, are limited in capacity.

Highlander Center has been organizing research and gatherings around solidarity economies in the South, which may be the start of a regional network, but LCG has not yet been connected wit these resources. The tri-state area of Louisville, KY, Indianapolis, IN and Cincinnati, OH also presents key connections for a regional solidarity economy.

Local:
- Louisville Association for Community Economics
- local churches
- NAACP chapters
- What's Next EKY?!
- Path Forward
- Louisville Fund Work Group (Community Foundation)
- Build Back Better (local government post-pandemic planning)

State:
- KFTC chapters
- Kentucky Food Policy Network
- Kentucky Voices for Health
- Kentucky Together
- Kentucky Solar Energy Alliance

Regional:
- Alliance for Appalachia (working on RECLAIM Act and Black lung issues)
- Central Appalachian Network
- Appalachian Funders Network
- Mountain Association Partnership (for Just Transition)

National:
- Climate Justice Alliance
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalitions
- National Family Farm Coalition
- New Economy Coalition
- Chorus Foundation Grantees (Eastern KY is 1 of 4 anchor communities)
- Voting Rights Campaign
- Shared Equity in Economic Development Fellowship (Democracy at Work Institute and National League of Cities)
- CLASP
- Cities United
- Living Cities
- Transform Finance

Needed Support:
- sharing place-based stories with national peers and funders
- grant funding / capital for solidarity economy work
- connections with policy makers toward equitable industry for Black farmers
- resources and connections for policy / popular education in rural areas.
- support for statewide network of local, regional, and statewide groups working to advance a Just Transition
- peer-to-peer learning; connections to organizational leaders doing aligned work around the country
- facilitation for traditional community development and social services to shift toward ownership and asset-based models

d) Case Study: San Diego, CA

Anchors: Mario Ceballos, POC Fungi Community / Tianguis de la Raza

Key organizations interviewed/surveyed:
- Derrick Robinson, Center for Policy Initiatives
- Sona Desai, San Diego Food System Alliance
- Ashley Miller, Catalyst of San Diego and Imperial Counties

Regional Context:

San Diego is separated from Baja by the U.S.-Mexico border, and meets Orange and Riverside counties to the North and Imperial County to the East.[240] The county is highly

[240] City of San Diego 2019: Population: 1,409,573 (65.1% white, 6.4% Black, .5% AI, 16.7% Asian, .4%PI, 5.6% PI, 5.3% 2 or more); MHI: $79.673; Poverty: 12.8%; BA+: 45.9% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey,

segregated, with BIPOC neighborhoods in Southeast San Diego subject to historical disinvestment and displacement, while Northern suburbs are largely affluent and white. San Diego also has one of the highest costs of living, and statistics based on federal poverty levels greatly undercount the level of economic insecurity faced by poor residents. This case study will emphasize food and racial justice work happening in City Heights and the Southeastern neighborhoods of the City of San Diego, which constitutes a Promise Zone. It also considers San Diego in relation to the larger economy of Southern California and the U.S.-Mexico border region.

The County occupies the unceded territories of the Kumeyaay, the Luiseño, the Cupeño and the Cahuilla, and contains the largest number of Native American reservations of any U.S. county.[241]

Solidarity Economy Framework:

In comparison to the three previous case studies, "solidarity economy" terminology is least present in San Diego, and Southern California at large; however the Just Transition Alliance, which coined the term "just transition" as a way to theoretically frame their organizing strategy, is based in San Diego, and they are a co-founder of Climate Justice Alliance. San Diego's organizing is also strongly rooted in transnational frameworks, including solidarity organizing with the Zapatistas and Anakbayan, while some non-profits are aligning with "equitable economies" or "community wealth building" language, and efforts to build cooperative structures are growing rapidly, especially in BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities.

San Diego has a strong ecosystem of food justice work that is aligning with a solidarity economy approach. San Diego Food System Alliance is a cross-sectoral network that aims to "promote collaboration, influence policy, and catalyze transformation in the food system."[242] In January 2021, they published a report, "Exploring Community Wealth Building in San Diego County's Food System," to articulate alternative economic models for food equity and policy recommendations such as agricultural land trusts.[243] The report describes key barriers to community wealth building in San Diego, including lack of education and awareness, limited local wrap-around business planning, assistance, and infrastructure, and a lack of San Diego case studies. While there are state-wide community wealth building organizations, the report notes that San Diego remains relatively disconnected from this infrastructure, with an

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2019)
San Diego Promise Zone (areas of City: East Village and Barrio Logan east to Encanto and Emerald Hills): Population: 77,000, Unemployment: 15.61 percent, Poverty: 39.06 percent (https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/sdpromisezone)
County of San Diego 2019: Population: 3,316,073 (70.7% white, 5% Black, .7% American Indian, 11.9% Asian, .4% Native Hawaiian /PI, 6% Other, 5.2% 2 or more races; 33.7% Hispanic); MHI 2019: $78,980; Poverty: 11.6%, BA+: 38.8% (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2019); GDP 2019: $253,117,792,000 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019)

[241] CAO

[242] Catalyst survey response

[243] Scott Sawyer and Tida Infahsaeng, "Exploring Community Wealth Building in San Diego County's Food System, San Diego Food System Alliance," January 2021.

"absence of dedicated local/regional organization that coordinates and supports development of models."

In spite of the lack of infrastructure, there are growing efforts to collectivize capital and sustain community ownership across the large small business sector and network of local farms. San Diego's craft beer industry is seeing new businesses such as Southern California's first tribally owned and operated brewery, Rincon Reservation Road. Organizations such as SDFSA, Center for Policy Initiatives (CPI) and Catalyst, a community of funders, are increasingly considering community ownership and participatory decision-making models. Come Through SD organizes networking events for BIPOC creatives, organizers, and entrepreneurs, and they have expressed interest in moving toward a cooperative model. The solidarity economy framework would help to network and grow these emergent efforts and articulate their collective possibilities for system change.

In terms of formal institutions, Ocean Beach People's Organic Market is the only retail food cooperative. Modern Times is a successful independent brewery and ESOP. San Diego Community Land Trust was founded in 2006. However none of these institutions are explicitly identified with a solidarity economy movement. There is also a network of student-run cooperatively managed non-profits at UC San Diego, established during the 1970s, including Che Cafe, Groundwork Books, a vegan Food Coop, and a General Store.

Movement Building

Racial Justice

Wealth and health inequalities in San Diego are intertwined with racial segregation, immigration policy, and militarism. San Diego contains the largest concentration of U.S. military in the world.[244] City Heights is one of the largest sites of refugee resettlement in the U.S., where non-profits such as United Women of East Africa provide health and social services led by women from the community.

Black Lives Matter uprisings have helped to network Black community resistance, especially in City Heights and Southeastern San Diego. March for Black Womxn San Diego also facilitates a mutual aid fund, Black Womxn Deserve, and grassroots efforts such as Umoja are mobilizing community members to cultivate community gardens and provide resources and self-defense training for their communities. Brown Building is a queer community space that hosts various organizing efforts and now serves as the headquarters for the large mutual aid effort, We All We Got, convened in response to COVID.

Other hubs of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous arts and organizing are Centro Cultural de la Raza and WorldBeat Cultural Center, established in the 1970s in two reclaimed water towers in Balboa Park. Centro serves as an organizing space for grassroots collectives including Otay Mesa Detention Resistance and Enero Zapatista, and recently created La Tiendita to sell direct

[244] Chief Administrative Office [CAO], "San Diego County Profile and Economic Indicators"

trade items from local and Indigenous artisans. They are also in the process of creating a composting center and cafe.

Centro also hosts Tianguis de la Raza, a community marketplace that began in 2019 for primarily Latinx makers and artists. The vendors collectively own and manage the Tianguis, centering abolitionist principles and horizontal governance. Mario Ceballos, co-founder of Tianguis de la Raza and POC Fungi Community, said, "Our theories come from Indigenous practice. it's really about LAND BACK, and looking for strategies around how to do that." The collective has been intentional about not using institutionalized means such as non-profit status, but they are looking for ways to make their efforts sustainable, considering strategies such as community land trusts in order to build a permanent space for the Tianguis and generate income for their members.[245] POC Fungi Community creates education around BIPOC-centered fungi traditions and mutual aid. They plan to do work around reclaiming Huitlachoche seeing it as a larger symbol for how colonization commodifies ancestral practices.

Another major hub of organizing is Barrio Logan, a historic Chicanx neighborhood. When the City decided to build Coronado Bridge through this neighborhood, residents mobilized to build a community park under the bridge, with murals depicting Chicanx and Indigenous resistance. The area has cultivated many Latinx-owned businesses, such as Brujitx del Barrio, galleries, and community markets, though the neighborhood faces rampant processes of gentrification. Mujeres Market is another recently created community marketplace centering Latinx women artisans.

Food Justice

San Diego County has the highest number of farms and producers in California, and most farms are small operations.[246] Yet many residents face food insecurity, particularly in BIPOC communities in Southeast San Diego. A key institution is Project New Village, which was created by and for Southeast San Diego residents to work toward food security and self-determination. They host urban agricultural cooperatives and provide free food and run a People's Produce Night Market through their Mount Hope Community Garden. Their "Good Food District" development plan centers urban agriculture as the source of neighborhood revitalization and engages community members, restaurants, and retail in this vision.

San Diego Food System Alliance is working to identify and network "community wealth building" strategies for the food system, such as cooperatives, land trusts, equitable food oriented developments, community gardens, regenerative agriculture, and employee ownership. A major question is how these strategies can support Indigenous stewardship. SDFSA reports, "The Pauma and Pala both operate significant land in citrus and avocados and Pala raises cattle. Pauma Tribal Farms has integrated practices such as compost application, hedgerow installation, no-till, and a transition from row crops to trees to sequester carbon."

[245] Interview with Mario Ceballos

[246] CAO

Pauma Tribal Farms leases part of its land to Solidarity Farm,[247] a cooperative family farm that has been instrumental to creating Foodshed Small Farm Distro. Foodshed is a producer cooperative of small BIPOC farms in San Diego, which "aggregate products first from BIPOC producers and then prioritizes distribution to the Pauma Band and then outward to wholesale and retail customers." The Foodshed mobile market brings this produce to areas of Southeast San Diego with food insecurity, and has accessed grants to help support their sliding scale pricing and prioritization of food justice education. New Roots Community Farm, which provides growing spaces for 85 refugee families in City Heights, is one of the California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities program sites and also part of Foodshed.[248]

Pixca is a cooperative half-acre farm in the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden whose "main goal is to provide meaningful work for our members."[249] They are also part of Foodshed and a core organizer of Tianguis de la Raza. They use a horizontal decision making process to organize their work, center equity in their distribution, and use sustainable growing practices.

Public Programs and Policy

San Diego was designated a Promise Zone in 2016, "characterized by high unemployment, low educational attainment, insufficient access to healthy foods, concentrated poverty, rising crime, and the least affordable housing in the nation."[250]

Center for Policy Initiatives has been the primary organization pushing progressive policy interventions and manages various coalitions, including Community Budget Alliance. CBA releases policy recommendations and has become more focused on efforts to defund the police with the energy brought by the uprisings, though the city council ended up increasing the police budget in 2020 by $24 million. They are pushing the city to "redirect ineffectively allocated police funds, such as the Street Gang Unit ($10.4 million), Gang Intervention Unit ($6.4 million), and Overtime ($38.1 million) budgets, to invest in alternatives to policing."

CPI's Community Schools campaign is building practices of participatory democratic decision making into local schools to move toward greater racial equity. While CPI is having more conversations around building community ownership and alternative economic models, they are working in coalition with other non-profits who may have their own agendas and funder priorities. In Community Schools they aim to practice those forms of participatory decision making that understands schools as part of the larger community and economy, but it is a slow process.[251]

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[247] https://www.solidarityfarmsd.com/

[248] https://www.buildinghealthycommunities.org/city-heights/

[249] Pixca Farm survey response

[250] https://www.sdoppzones.com/abut-promise-zones

[251] Derrick Robinson interview

San Diego Food System Alliance created San Diego County Food Vision 2030, based on the results of a community-based research process, to propose policy interventions to transform the food system and ensure greater access and equity over the next 10 years. SDFSA also highlights the need for an agricultural land trust and stronger state and county policies to preserve agricultural land. For example, the California's Williamson Act Program "empowers municipalities to designate agricultural preserves (of at least 100 acres) and enter into 10-year contracts with landowners" and the County of San Diego's Purchase of Conservation Easement has "conserved 2,400 acres of land in agriculture (33 mostly citrus and avocado farms) via perpetual easements since 2013."[252]

In terms of local government, the City Council has recently gained an 8-1 Democrat advantage and elected a Democratic mayor, Todd Gloria, to replace the Republican incumbent. The County Board of Supervisors flipped to a Democrat majority in November 2020, which organizers expect will be helpful to policies for environment, public health, and housing. A key political ally for San Diego solidarity economy organizing is Lorena Gonzalez, state assembly member who proposed AB-5, which sought to reclassify a broad range of independent contractors as employees, entitled to greater protections. CA Prop 22 has exempted various gig economy companies such as Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash from these provisions. There is also strong support at the City and County level to establish a public bank in San Diego, following the passage of the California Public Banking Act (AB 857).[253]

Access to Capital

Key foundations include Jacobs Center, which was formative to the development of SD Community Land Trust, and San Diego Foundation, which created a COVID response fund that distributed $56 million to community-based non-profits, including the mutual aid fund, We All We Got. San Diego's philanthropic institutions have a growing interest in "inclusive/equitable economies" and racial equity, particularly in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020.

Catalyst is a philanthropy serving organization working to activate funders around a vision of "equitable, collaborative, and impactful social change ecosystem," encouraging "community-generated solutions, rather than funder-led solutions."[254] Their 2020 annual conference held in partnership with the EDC focused on how to build an "equitable economy" (worth noting that "solidarity economy" was considered but did not resonate at the time.) They host the Social Equity Collaborative Fund, which has funded racial and economic justice projects such as Asian Solidarity Collective, Pillars of the Community, United Taxi Workers of San Diego, and Solidarity Farm, and recent cycles have focused on supporting Black women-led organizations and climate justice.[255] They are also an innovation lab for the national ImPower Initiative, which seeks to develop an impact investing ecosystem in San Diego.

[252] Sawyer and Infahsaeng 2021

[253] Conversation with Jeff Olson, Public Bank SD

[254] Catalyst survey response

[255] Catalyst survey response

There have not been any recent participatory budget processes but CPI leads in advocating for participatory budgeting. The City Council established an Office of Race and Equity in late 2020, with a designated $3 million community equity fund, and CPI is advocating for a participatory budgeting process for these funds.

Crisis Response

The financial crisis of 2008 greatly exacerbated housing insecurity and homelessness in San Diego. The city has one of the highest housing cost burdens in the nation: prior to the pandemic, over half were considered rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on housing.

Otay Mesa Detention Resistance continues to lead efforts to abolish detention centers in San Diego, organizing protests and arts interventions, paying commissary fees, and arranging pick-ups for releases. In 2018, the Central American refugee crisis sparked widespread organizing and mutual aid efforts. Centro helped to collect donations from the San Diego community, shuttling them to the refugee encampments in Tijuana. Casa Arcoiris was created to house LGBTQ+ migrants in Tijuana - and has continued this work long after the crisis has left the news cycle. They are interested in solidarity economy models to sustain their work, including ideas around buying land for a ranch, but they are not there yet in terms of funding capacity.[256]

In response to COVID, many different mutual aid efforts formed to provide emergency food and housing assistance, and BIPOC-focused mutual aid efforts have convened to exchange best practices and resources and build a collective political identity. The largest effort is We All We Got, which has been led by a group of organizers representing key racial justice efforts in San Diego, including Black Lives Matter SD, Asian Solidarity Collective, the DeDe McClure Bail Fund, and Showing Up for Racial Justice, and is fiscally sponsored by CPI. New mutual aid networks include House of Resilience, supporting trans women to access housing. Queer Black Housing is on a mission to "buy the block" through the funds they have raised through donations.

Regional Coalitions and Networks

San Diego's economy is closely intertwined with neighboring regions of Southern California—including San Diego, OC, LA, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties—as well as Tijuana, considering many people live and work across the border. San Diego is underrepresented in national economic justice coalitions and cooperative networks. Organizations such as SDFSA and Catalyst express a desire to be more integrated into national level coalition building.

Local

[256] Interview with Andrea Gaspar, Casa Arcoiris

- San Diego Hunger Coalition
- Carbon Farming Task Force
- U.S. Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership
- San Diego Leaders
- Tianguis de la Raza
- Come Through SD
- San Diego Tenants Union
- Center for Policy Initiatives Coalitions:
- Community Budget Alliance
- Community Schools
- Invest in San Diego Families
- Raise Up San Diego
- A Community Coalition for Responsible Development

State:
- California Food and Farming Network
- Philanthropy California
- Building Healthy Communities (California)

National:
- United Philanthropy Forum
- Council on Foundations
- Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy
- HEAL Food Alliance
- Johns Hopkins Food Policy Network
- Climate Action Campaign
- Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees
- Partnership for Working Families (We Make This City - CPI)
- Center for Popular Democracy (CPI)
- Economic Analysis and Research Network
- Good Food Purchasing Program
- HUD Promise Zone

Needed support
- technical assistance
- connections to funders
- statewide or national network of solidarity economy organizers to connect and learn from on an ongoing basis
- development/infrastructure support for growing local solidarity economy
- connection with a values aligned organization serving in a similar space to us (like other philanthropy serving organizations), particularly those at a similar or more advanced stage of work than us

IV. Comparative Assessment

This section summarizes key themes that emerged across the four case studies, in relation to NEC's four core strategies, and highlights examples of these strategies in practice, as well as areas of needed support.

i. Tell the story of our freedom: Resource and invest in storytelling, storytellers, and the narrative infrastructure of the solidarity economy movement

Though the solidarity economy is clearly growing in each region, SE terminology is not widely used in any region, and St. Louis is the only region with an official SE network. In San Diego, the Just Transition Alliance coined the term "just transition" as a way to theoretically frame their organizing strategy, and co-founded Climate Justice Alliance. Various non-profits, coalitions, and funders in Buffalo, St. Louis, and Kentucky have aligned with the "Just Transition" framework.

An important aspect of strengthening the narrative infrastructure of the U.S. solidarity economy movement is better understanding how place-based ecosystems are shaped by transnational movements. Organizers are making connections to models and movements such as participatory budgeting and the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, the Zapatista movement, the Mondragon Corporation, Quebec's cooperative ecosystem, and the World Social Forum.

Considering the unique histories, frontline communities, and organizing relationships shaping each ecosystem, storytelling is an important way to highlight the multiplicity of paths toward the realization of solidarity economy principles, without prescribing solutions. There are strong examples of arts-based interventions in each case study, which could be resourced to do this narrative work.

Challenges / Need for support:

- Sharing regional stories with national organizations, networks, funders
- Connections to international SE models
- Paid opportunities for artists to support SE work
- Strategies for avoiding co-optation of SE work by capital-driven development
    - E.g. "Buffalo Renaissance" co-opts the language of green jobs and community revitalization in plans that displace residents and lower quality of life; Louisville Metro government has co-opted the food justice narrative without material support.
- Ownership of frontline community narratives, against federal and state programs and large funders who characterize frontline communities as zones of poverty
    - E.g. Programs such as Promise Zones, California's Building Healthy Communities, St. Louis Forward Through Ferguson provide helpful resources but may distort SE narratives through lens of charity.

Examples of how regions are doing this work: **More examples in table*

- Buffalo: *The Laura Flanders Show* produced a segment called "Making Buffalo Our City," featuring grassroots activists in Buffalo who are creating solidarity economy

interventions in response to conditions of deindustrialization and capital-driven redevelopment. The segment also highlighted India Walton's mayoral campaign.

- St. Louis: SE STL draws from a strong community of Black artists, with members that include ArtHouse STL (an artist housing cooperatives) and MARSH, a cooperative ecosystem linking a consumer food co-op with a workers' owned kitchen cooperative and a producer co-op/network. SE STL has facilitated projects such as the "Humans of Solidarity Economy St. Louis" zine and a Pop-Up Art Shop, and the network has also played a critical role in shaping the Racial Healing + Justice Fund. This is a great example of how grassroots SE organizers are reclaiming resources and narratives about frontline communities from large foundation and government programs.
- Kentucky: As part of Appalachia, organizers in Eastern Kentucky are attuned to the importance of communities reclaiming the power of their narratives, against the disempowering stereotypes perpetuated by exploitative industries such as coal and tobacco. They also recognize the importance of engaging people through shared values and place-based frameworks for economic change, rather than imposing solidarity economy language. Community Farm Alliance's "Breaking Beans: The Appalachian Food Story Project" seeks to "tell the story of how local food and farming in Eastern Kentucky can contribute to a bright future in the mountains" and Mountain Association works with local and national media to disseminate more complex and accurate "Stories of Appalachia," against dominant stereotypes. In Louisville, organizers collectively read Collective Courage, as they shifted from fighting Wal-Mart to building their own grocery store, demonstrating how existing archives and histories of solidarity economy can help to inspire future interventions.
- San Diego: Centro Cultural de la Raza has served as a movement space for Latinx communities and other communities of color in San Diego, centered around culture and arts organizing. They host events such as Enero Zapatista (month-long commemoration and border run), Tianguis de la Raza, and a collective shop called La Tiendita, featuring the arts, crafts, and medicines by local and Indigenous artisans and artists.

ii. Contest for power: Leverage policy, elections, and political parties to grow the solidarity economy; attack extractive competitors; and intervene in movement moments.

Each region is shaped by deep racial segregation and related conditions of food apartheid and environmental and health inequities. In each case, the interventions led by frontline communities (e.g. Buffalo's West Side, North St. Louis, Louisville's West End and rural Kentucky and Appalachia, Southeast San Diego) around issues of environmental and food justice in particular, have driven the formation of regional solidarity economy ecosystems. Periods of social and economic crises have garnered more public support and financial resources for solidarity economy solutions--the uprisings in response to police killings have reenergized coalition building and funding for Black-led racial justice organizing, and the economic crises from 2008 to COVID have greatly renewed efforts around mutual aid, direct action around issues such as foreclosures and evictions, and worker-owned cooperatives.

Challenges / Need for support:

- Need for partnerships around policy interventions across local, state, and national levels, and sharing models for legislation such as worker cooperative resolutions
    - E.g. How can Community Farm Alliance's interventions into Kentucky's Tobacco Resettlement Act serve as a model for small farm organizing in other regions, while also building upon their lessons learned around the need for greater racial equity?
- Support and facilitation around bridging resistance-based interventions with solidarity economy work
- Getting solidarity economy aligned leaders elected and holding them accountable to their platforms
    - E.g. Louisville organizers are struggling against mayor's unfulfilled food equity platform, and seeking to get SE aligned folks elected. What can they learn from India Walton's campaign in Buffalo and Tishaura Jones' campaign in St. Louis?

Examples of how regions are doing this work: **More examples in table*

- Buffalo: Fruit Belt residents first mobilized around the issue of residential parking permits and sustained this momentum to achieve a City moratorium on the sale of city owned lots, leading to the formation of Buffalo's first and only CLT in 2017. India Walton, ED of Fruit Belt CLT, recently won the Democrat primary for the Buffalo mayoral campaign.
- St. Louis: Organizing around the Ferguson uprisings served as a foundation for new organizations such as Action St. Louis and WEPOWER, and these relationships have helped to sustain ongoing collaborations bridging solidarity economy and resistance focused work, including the Campaign to Close the Workhouse, STL Mutual Aid, and St. Louis Racial Justice + Healing fund. Tishaura Jones became St. Louis's first Black woman mayor in April 2021 and is implementing solidarity economy aligned policies.
- Kentucky: After a disheartening fight against the construction of a Walmart in Louisville's West End, residents organized to create their own solutions to food apartheid by building Louisville Community Grocery. These efforts for food justice are interdependent with organizing against police brutality and gentrification in the West End, and the uprisings in response to Breonna Taylor's killing led to a successful campaign to ban no-knock warrants and made space for more Black women leaders, who are shaping solidarity economy interventions in Louisville.
- San Diego: Center for Policy Initiatives hosts a Community Schools coalition to build participatory decision-making and equitable resource allocation in local schools. They also host Community Budget Alliance to educate and organize the community around "People's Budget" recommendations and pressure elected officials to move funds from policing toward community infrastructure and social services.

iii. Control the capital: Consolidate and grow the economic scale and power of the solidarity economy by raising, organizing, and redistributing land and capital

Across regions, there was a general sense that local funders are not informed about or responsive to solidarity economy projects. There are key national and faith-based foundations, who are already aligned with SE or Just Transition frameworks, but reliance on national

sources may detract from the grassroots nature of place-based ecosystems and can also be precarious, as funders can easily move funding to other geographic regions. Crises moments have brought more financial support for SE initiatives but leave questions around the sustainability of funding. There are growing efforts to build infrastructures for community-based capital, as we see with Louisville Community Grocery and Buffalo's BreadHive cooperative. There is also growing interest around purchasing or acquiring vacant lots and setting up community land trusts, as well as anchor strategies, such as the Good Food Purchasing Program, and much room to exchange these strategies across regions.

Challenges / Need for support:

- Need for organizing and educating local funders around the SE framework.
    - E.g. San Diego's Catalyst is a philanthropy-serving organization that organizes funders around trust-based and equity-focused philanthropy but is not explicitly connected to SE networks. How can philanthropy-serving orgs become conduits for educating funders around the solidarity economy movement?
- Tools to build community ownership of economic development programs
    - E.g. Community Benefit Agreements, development without displacement plans, and participatory budgeting initiatives.
- Spaces for people to connect and share effective models, regulatory strategies, and lessons learned around capital focused projects; summary of existing landscape of capital-focused SE projects, to make the work more accessible and seed similar projects across the country
    - E.g. Zebras Unite's Inclusive Capital Collective
    - What can Buffalo's Good Food Purchasing Program learn from San Diego's Good Food District, and vice versa?
- Shared strategies for creating community-owned spaces
    - E.g. What lessons can Buffalo's Green Development Zone share with St. Louis, where more than 90% of the "exceptionally-large inventory of vacant properties are located in majority-black neighborhoods"[257]

Examples of how regions are doing this work: **More examples in table*

- Buffalo: PUSH began land-banking properties within a 25 square block area of Buffalo's West Side, chosen for the high concentration of vacant properties and the existing interventions of Massachusetts Avenue Project. This led to the development of the Green Development Zone, which now includes affordable housing, new arts and culture initiatives, and a weatherization and retrofitting program.
- St. Louis: WEPOWER Elevate/Elevar is a "6-month entrepreneurship development program for Black & Latinx entrepreneurs. Through the Accelerator, we support founders with curriculum, connections, community, and access to capital through grants. We also support founders with interest-free loans in partnership with Kiva and a founder-focused investment fund."

[257] IEC

- Kentucky: On a state level, Community Farm Alliance organized farmers to create a blueprint for the Tobacco Settlement Act for the distribution of $3.5 billion to different states depending on their level of harm from the tobacco industry. While this organizing led to wins for small farmers, it excluded Black farmers who had been pushed out of farm ownership, and benefited landowners over tenant farmers. This history led CFA and Black Soil to create the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund, which began as a COVID relief fund but is now moving toward an "evergreen" fund supporting direct capitalization for Black farmers.
- San Diego: Foodshed is a producer cooperative of small BIPOC farms in San Diego, which "aggregate products first from BIPOC producers and then prioritizes distribution to the Pauma Band and then outward to wholesale and retail customers."

iv. Train the People: Organize and provide communities with the political education, training, and leadership development they need to effectively build, grow, and sustain local solidarity economies

In each region, anchor organizations shared that there is a lack of models and case studies locally for the solidarity economy interventions they are trying to achieve. Another area of concern for many grassroots efforts is whether or not to institutionalize as non-profits, or how to manage that transition, especially as leaders find themselves transitioning from organizing to development roles. A major limitation, reflected in this research process, is incorporating the contributions and insights of SE interventions that are not formalized as organizations or businesses and may not be connected through existing SE or non-profit networks. How can efforts around SE education, training and leadership development prioritize the redistribution of resources toward informal efforts, particularly those concentrated in BIPOC communities, as integral components of the U.S. solidarity economy movement?

Challenges / Need for support

- Shared curriculum and educational tools for community engagement around solidarity economy, tailored to frontline communities
    - E.g. Cooperation Buffalo has a Cooperative Academy, while St. Louis is planning to create a Black and Indigenous Cooperative Fellowship. How can cooperative development curricula be collected and shared across regions?
- More cross-regional peer-to-peer learning spaces / coordinating "sister cities" with shared experiences (e.g. Detroit and Buffalo). NEC could provide staff to coordinate regions or funds to facilitate regional meetings (e.g. Midwest, South, Rustbelt, New England)
- Facilitating solidarity economy education for traditional social services and economic development organizations.
- Technical support and leadership support for working class and BIPOC communities, especially in informal spaces, to navigate legal and institutional infrastructures while remaining grounded in their own traditions.
    - Some regions, such as Buffalo, already have access to local cooperative development resources as well as connections to national networks such as Seed Commons, while other regions such as Louisville and San Diego are seeking these resources and connections.

Examples of how regions are doing this work: **More examples in table*

- Buffalo: Crossroads Coalition facilitated solidarity economy related research by coalition member Partnership for the Public Good, which is an excellent model for how place-based researchers can help resource local solidarity economy efforts. Another Crossroads Coalition member, Cooperation Buffalo, is going into the third year of its Cooperative Academy, "an intensive 13-week training program that helps teams of cooperative entrepreneurs develop worker-owned cooperative businesses."
- St. Louis: SE STL and its members were central to creating STL Mutual Aid, in response to COVID, and it was the foundation of shared values and relationships as the basis of their organizing that enabled them to quickly create a resilient network in a moment of crisis. Mutual aid has been significant to coalition building across a broad range of organizations and causes, and also highlights the skills and resources that each group brings in new ways.
- Kentucky: The NEC CommonBound conference introduced organizers of Louisville Community Grocery to people around the country doing cooperative development and gave them insight into the larger ecosystem needed for LCG to be successful. Because they did not have their own cooperative development resources, they had to create their own and formed Louisville Association for Community Economics, a 501c3 arm for community education and cooperative development.
- San Diego: Catalyst created a Social Equity Collaborative to help inform and train funders around these issues and also participates in ImPower Initiative to build an impact investing ecosystem.

[END OF DRAFT]

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