**Peter North, Vicky Nowak, Alan Southern, and Matt Thompson,** “Generative Anger: From Social Enterprise to Antagonistic Economies”

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**Bio:** Peter North. Professor of alternative economies in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Liverpool. His recent research focuses on social and solidarity economies as tools for constructing and rethinking alternative geographies of money, entrepreneurship, and livelihoods. His latest book, coedited with Molly Scott Cato, is entitled *Towards Just and Sustainable Economies: The Social and Solidarity Economy North and South* (Policy Press, 2018).

**Email:** [P.J.North@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:P.J.North@liverpool.ac.uk)

**Postal mail:**

Peter North (Corresponding Author),

Department of Geography and Planning

Roxby Building

University of Liverpool

Liverpool, L69 7ZT

UK

**Phone:** ++44 151 794 2849

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**Bio:** Vicky Nowak. Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University. She recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Liverpool, where she drew on the work of Karl Polanyi to take a critical approach to understanding entrepreneurship in Liverpool. This informs her current research interests surrounding social and sustainable enterprise, microbusiness, self-employment, and inclusive growth. Before academia she worked in the public and nonprofit sectors in research and policy roles and was a trade-union activist.

**Email:** [**v.nowak@mmu.ac.uk**](mailto:v.nowak@mmu.ac.uk)

**Postal mail:**

Vicky Nowak

Business School

Manchester Metropolitan University

Oxford Road

Manchester

M15 6BH

**Phone:** ++44 161 247 3383

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**Bio:** Alan Southern. Senior lecturer in the Management School and the Heseltine Institute at the University of Liverpool. He leads research on the social economy for the Heseltine Institute with a particular interest in how we can democratize economic decision making. His work argues for greater levels of collectivity in the economy, a wider recognition of social organizations, and the value of the public sector working alongside an ethical private sector.

**Email:** [**Alan.Southern@liverpool.ac.uk**](mailto:Alan.Southern@liverpool.ac.uk)

**Postal mail:**

Alan Southern

Management School and Heseltine Institute

Chatham Building

Chatham Street

University of Liverpool,

L69 7ZH

**Phone:** +44151 795 2556

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**Bio:** Matt Thompson. Leverhulme Trust Early Career Research Fellow at the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice, and Place at the University of Liverpool, where he is researching municipalism, the emerging global urban movement, and its intersections with economic democracy. His Ph.D. research on Liverpool’s history of collective alternatives to public housing is soon to be published as an open-access book by Liverpool University Press.

**Email:** [Matthew.thompson@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Matthew.thompson@liverpool.ac.uk)

**Postal mail:**

Matthew Thompson

Heseltine Institute for Public Policy and Practice

University of Liverpool

1-7 Abercromby Square

L69 7WY

**Phone:** ++44 785 316 6531

Generative Anger: From Social Enterprise to Antagonistic Economies

Peter North, Vicky Nowak, Alan Southern, and Matt Thompson

This essay offers conceptual development for thinking diverse economies in terms of their relationship to antagonism. Rather than seeing antagonism as unhelpfully fueling capitalocentric thinking, the essay argues that antagonism can usefully recognize and engage with problematic forms of power and domination. Building on calls for a closer engagement of community-economies thinking with wider anticapitalist praxis, the essay explores how social and solidarity economy (SSE) practices sometimes reproduce, sometimes challenge, and sometimes build alternatives to forms of power that attempt to shape, obstruct, and obliterate attempts to create better worlds. The essay develops conceptualizations of social enterprise, the social economy, and solidarity economies before offering the novel concept of the antagonistic economy, arguably a site from which angry opposition to constraining power relations can generate a more productive politics of possibility. The conception of the antagonistic economy is developed by discussion of taking back labor through recovered factories and land through community land trusts.

Key Words: Antagonistic Economy, Community Land Trusts, Diverse Economies, Recovered Factories, Social Enterprise

In this essay we offer a conceptual development of diverse-economies thinking that refuses to see antagonism as inevitably and unhelpfully fueling capitalocentric thinking by closing down possibilities and restricting our ability to conceptualize how we might live in common. The essay argues in favor of a perspective that recognizes the need to engage with and challenge problematic forms of power and domination. We respond to Miller’s (2015) call for a closer engagement of community-economies thinking with wider anticapitalist praxis, taking a normative stand against problematic capitalist practices. We want to avoid suggestions that we live in a liberal world of pure possibility, a world without constraint in which diverse practices are called into existence through imagination and performative speech acts that can then be made more concrete if people work at them, without too much attention being paid to counterwinds. Can we not, Miller (2015, 366) asks, combine critique with experiment, rage with hope, thus avoiding caricatures of diverse-economies practices as a “naïve, voluntarist reformism that sits comfortably alongside diversity and lifestyle choice” by actively undermining capitalist practices as well as creating alternatives? Should we not embrace antagonism toward capitalist practices, seeing them as outside of what we hope to build, without falling into the trap of contrasting a pure “politics of denunciation” with a generative “politics of possibility” that does not critique exploitative practices? Focused in the right direction, we argue, *anger* about injustice, exploitation, and the climate crisis and *antagonism* toward discourses and practices of domination can be a generative, positive force for change that need not always constrain creativity and fuel capitalocentric thinking by ceding power to the capitalist “monster.” Through a discussion of social and solidarity economies, we identify and contrast practices that reproduce and practices that challenge normative capitalistic conceptions about how economic life *should* be organized. We illustrate our argument with a discussion of taking back work and land.

Antagonism in Diverse-Economies Thinking

J. K. Gibson-Graham’s (2006a, 2006b) community-economies approach argues that we need to identify places where our interdependence—our living together on a finite planet while recognizing the rights of future generations and nonhuman others—can be discussed, recognized, acted upon, and developed. Through ethical engagements, they argue, we can come together to develop our understanding of what we need to survive “well” and how we should produce what we need, distribute surpluses, and maintain that which we hold in common—communities, ecosystems, systems of mutuality (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010). But *how* “we” might live together in any particular setting cannot be identified in advance, in the abstract (Gibson-Graham 2005, 121). Instead, we should refuse to know too much, should think and act like beginners, and should use a combination of weak theory and thick descriptions of the diversity of actually existing performative practices and visions for a better world, in order to understand ways forward in specific, concrete places (Gibson-Graham 2014, 2008).

Patriarchal, colonial, feudal, slave, and capitalist practices that promote commodification, enclosure, environmental destruction, colonial violence, and exploitative core-periphery relations are acknowledged, but how they work against our ability to recognize our interdependence is not the focus of diverse-economies thinking. Gibson-Graham argue that knowing that there *are* constraints on our ability to recognize and develop our capacity to live together well does not help overcome those constraints, as it is one thing to know a problem exists and another to surmount it. Gibson-Graham (2006a, xxv) consequently argue that our time is better spent seeing these issues as “challenges, problems, barriers, issues to be grappled with” rather than intractable barriers. Power relations exist, but there are also other stories to be told, alternatives to be nurtured. We are fans of this approach.

In an important intervention, Ethan Miller (2013, 2015) argued that while community-economies research seeks to identify, construct, and defend spaces in which to discuss how we can build better worlds—suggesting action research as a tool for facilitating such discussions (see Cameron and Gibson, 2005)—the normative content of these discussions is not and should not be specified in advance. Such, it is argued, would be an attempt to know too much too soon and would inappropriately impose a reading from above that could too easily fall into totalizing, paranoid, capitalocentric metanarrative thinking. Who “we” are, who is “in” and who is “out,” what are and are not appropriate ethical practices, and what processes and institutions might enact them are left to local actors to decide through ethical negotiation. A number of coordinates around which these ethical negotiations can take place were identified in “Take Back the Economy” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013), but overall there is a resistance to specifying what sort of utopia—and with what content—diverse-economies scholars prefer. Consequently, while diverse-economies scholarship normatively does not want to settle for only a recognition that exploitative practices exist while pointing to and focusing on more progressive elements of a diverse economy, deciding what are or are not exploitative practices and overtly challenging their existence is less of a focus. This can be problematic for those who want to identify spaces in which the focus is less on how we can recognize our interdependence but rather how we can develop explicitly anticapitalist sets of economic practices.

In contrast with community-economies thinking, Miller (2010) has argued that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) advances a broadly accepted normative ethical focus through which statements about how we might live well *are* made and in which constraining power is recognized and challenged. He did, however, row back from this optimistic approach in a 2013 paper in which he expressed concerns about the extent to which the SSE sector as a whole lacked sufficient coherence, depth, and shared values to be thought of as a site in which strongly articulated and robust practices of resistance can be generated. Rather, he argued that the SSE acts as an “empty signifier” connecting a diverse range of actors with lightly held shared values focused around the need to “do good” and address “social justice” using “business values,” broadly conceived. The SSE sector does not have a strongly identified and shared theory of change beyond that, and there is no agreement about the extent to which the sector aims to humanize or confront capitalist practices and promote social justice or system change.

Starting from where we are—that is, in Liverpool, UK, the Global North—and in line with the analytical path suggested by Miller (2013), we wish to make a stand. We *do* want to make normative statements about the society we want to see. While community-economies scholars do not see coming together to build better worlds as a totally open process, we wish to inject into the debate a more Gramscian conception of the “war of maneuver” or a Polanyian “countermovement” to the destructive capacity of a capitalism that attempts to reduce all relations to the profit nexus but does not succeed in doing that (see Polanyi [1944] 1980). We therefore take seriously the specifically *capitalist* forms of power that can constrain, but do not determine, the possibilities toward which we and those we work with are engaged. This, we argue, is a broadly Gramscian approach to praxis rather than a description of diversity (see Gramsci 1971). Actors promoting market-based capitalist solutions aim to commodify spaces characterized by networks of reciprocity and institutions of redistribution in order to develop new opportunities to make profit, while those in favor of community economies defend these spaces against marketization. This conflictual dynamic is, we argue, underplayed in diverse-economies research.

Thinking through Social and Solidarity Economies

Taking this discussion forward, we want to think a little more about those elements of the SSE that reproduce constraining power, or those elements that are aligned discursively with capitalist tropes and those that challenge them. We build on Miller’s (2010, 528–31) understanding of the SSE as a politically orientated ethical project (contrasted with the community economy as a site of open, ever-contested, never-closed negotiation) by questioning the extent that diverse-economies research should focus on the identification of spaces in which “we” are *all* included and can develop ways to live together “in community” (Miller 2013, 521). Miller (2013) argues, and we agree, that some SSE actors conceptualize those who reproduce rather than challenge exploitative power relations as being “outside” the shared SSE community. We see the SSE as a diverse space rather than an empty signifier.

We seek to identify—to read for—the specifically antagonistic nature of SSE discourses and practices that challenge capitalist practices and that can be counterpoised to those discourses and practices that help constitute capitalist practices. We point to ways in which SSE discourses and practices both challenge and also reinforce and reproduce patriarchal and racialized practices of power where we are. Some elements of the SSE do, we argue, reproduce capitalist tropes (recall, for example, tropes such as “private good, public bad,” “costs must be kept down,” “people should work hard”) while other elements can be seen as part of a Gramscian or Polanyian countermovement. To progress this line of thinking, we offer a fourfold conceptualization of the SSE sector, as follows:

1. (Neoliberal?) Social Enterprise.Social entrepreneurs combine business skills, values and organizational methods with a social agenda to create value. Amassing wealth is *not* the prime agenda, but since the early 1980s, at least in more neoliberal North Atlantic economies, elite (but contested) ideological claims have contrasted a supposedly “efficient” private sector (that has “get up and go”) with a “lazy,” “bloated,” inefficient public sector subject to producer capture (Peck 1995). Consequently, as an antidote to what was called sclerotic, bureaucratic state provision, social entrepreneurs, cast as special, heroic figures with superior business, social, and organizational skills, run social enterprises that are lauded as ways to provide better services at a cheaper cost in a responsive manner that the centralized state could never reproduce. The hagiographic, boosterist conception of social enterprise holds that social entrepreneurs use “business skills” to identify opportunities to do “good” or to meet unmet needs in ways that the state, the voluntary sector, communities, and individuals cannot. Social-enterprise skills can be taught, and reproducible and scalable toolkits and techniques (such as microfinance) can be rolled out in a grand heroic discourse of consensual, harmonious social change through technical processes of modernistic development (Dey and Steyaert 2010).
2. The (Inclusive?) “Social Economy.” This approach looks to promote social justice and ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism by providing work for those unable to get it. Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs), Intermediate Labour Markets (ILMs), and customized training and guaranteed interview schemes aim to ensure that individuals that are some way from being able to compete in the labor market can be helped to get “good” jobs by means of an extended period of sheltered employment through which they learn the skills necessary to gain and hold down employment. Incubators and sheltered workspaces help prospective entrepreneurs to set up small businesses rather than leaving it to the market or to heroic entrepreneurs. Community businesses, mutuals, development trusts, and other nonprofit associations help revive areas of concentrated deprivation. Universities and hospitals are seen as community anchors, keeping wealth local.
3. The “Solidarity” Economy—Another World Is Possible? Here, the question is less “How can we individually include those that the profit-driven economy ignores?” (the social-economy approach) than “How can we live in inclusive ways, with dignity, together with social justice, safeguarding the needs of the environment and future generations, given that millions currently cannot do so?” (Barkin and Lemus 2014). How can we “thrive” and “flourish” as human beings? This might mean valuing forms of employment that are never likely to be economically profitable given capitalist metrics and definitions of success—that is, in terms of surplus value retained by the capitalist. Rather, for the solidarity economy, “success” is the number of individuals, families, and communities enabled to live well, collectively, while enabling future generations, other species, and nonhuman nature to do the same. Solidarity economy cooperatives and worker-owned firms do not aim to be *included* in a capitalist economy but provide *alternatives* to wage slavery (Azzellini 2017; Singer 2007). Argentine *piqueteros* collectively manage welfare payments to create community-owned cooperatives, schools, and kitchens. These activities are prefiguring common—not individual—alternatives. They are “hope movements” (Coraggio 2017; Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012).
4. The (Anticapitalist?) “Antagonistic” Economy. Here, activists *overtly* *challenge* the pathologies of neoliberal capitalism, feudalism, and modern-day slavery. They make challenges, going beyond building alternatives. For example, if the solidarity economy builds worker-owned cooperatives, antagonistic practices promote occupations of capitalist factories to prevent their owners moving production to lower-wage countries; they establish new forms of money that put need above profitability; or they take land out of speculation through community land trusts (CLTs), squatting, or land occupations. Exploitative capitalists living in luxury while their workers struggle on minimum wages and insecure contracts are *excluded* from monopolizing the fruits of their employees’ production if they refuse to see themselves as part of a wider interdependent community. Activists create alternative currencies to challenge bankers’ monopolies on money issuance, from which interest can be charged, meaning workers do not have to sell their labor in a disadvantageous exchange relationship to reproduce themselves. The monopoly of property owners to charge rents and of property developers to own and dispose of land for their own private benefit is fought by people who argue that the right to shelter comes first.

To develop our conceptualization of antagonistic economies, we focus on the contrast between, on one hand, the well-known critique of the “heroic” social entrepreneur who (perhaps unwittingly) reproduces capitalist tropes of domination and, on the other, the specifically antagonistic anticapitalist practices of “taking back” two of Polanyi’s three fictitious factors of capital: labor (by occupying factories and reappropriating production) and land (through community land trusts and reappropriating social reproduction—i.e., housing and community assets).

Reappropriating exchange through alternative currencies is discussed extensively elsewhere (North 2007). We focus here less on where “inclusive” SSE practices such as WISEs—which really “do good” (e.g., by helping people get decent work) but do not consciously challenge capital—merge into “solidaristic” practices such as Brazilian solidarity-economy enterprises (da Costa 2017). Instead, providing valued, dignified, perhaps anticapitalist work is our focus, rather than moving people into the capitalist market. We do this as a thought piece, in a “weak” theoretical manner, bringing together our research on alternative forms of enterprise and land and housing ownership without attempting to know or claim too much.

Social Enterprise: A Tool for Neoliberalism?

The discourse of the “heroic” social entrepreneur is a subset of the genus of the “heroic” entrepreneur (Ogbor 2000) that, for neoliberals, every capitalist market needs to drive innovation (Cunningham and Lischeron 1991). These “heroes” recognize and “relentlessly” seek new opportunities to build social value through a continuous engagement with innovation, taking action without accepting resource limitations. They are the leaders, better than the rest of us (Peredo and McLean 2006). They have an “innate sixth sense” that means they can identify opportunities that others miss, and they possess the values, needs, and attitudes that drive them to work hard to build a successful social enterprise (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie 2003). Well-established business schools often funded by successful social entrepreneurs tell the “foundational” heroic stories of a new discipline (Dey and Steyaert 2010). We all hitch a ride with these “creative, extraordinary people.” We “need” these wealth creators.

Given the hegemonic nature of neoliberal ideology, the “terms of the debate” and what is seen as “common sense” are set by what Nicholls (2010, 618–20) calls “paradigm-building actors,” such as governments, grant-making bodies, foundations, fellowship networks (such as the Skoll Foundation and Ashoka), and social-enterprise support agencies. These narratives, it is argued, force social enterprise down a path set by paradigm-building actors in a process of reflexive isomorphism (Nicholls 2010; Nicholls and Teasdale 2017), such that, over time, organizations that previously claimed to be “not for profit” have increasingly performed entrepreneurially, as though they are “for profit.” Critics of the hagiographic approach argue that this has enabled the state to justify the destruction of what they claimed were dependency-generating comprehensive forms of welfare in favor of an ideology of personal freedom and responsibility (Dey and Steyaert 2016). Scholars taking this approach have built on Foucault’s (1991) conceptualization of “governmentality,” which suggests that techniques of social control and management are exercised by the creation of discursive concepts and ways of thinking about how the “ideal” citizen *should* act—ways that are then carried out by autonomous, responsible, and prudent social actors. Thus, social entrepreneurs sometimes reproduce neoliberal nostrums about how services *should* be organized and delivered in ways that combine social value with efficiency in a mixed economy comprising a smaller state and larger private and third sectors. Social entrepreneurs should be “business-like” (Dey and Teasdale 2016), acting professionally within the “rules of the game” in competition with others for resources. Work Integration Social Enterprises and Intermediate Labor Markets aim to show those who are not yet disciplined into wage slavery the importance of turning up on time, responding to directions from managers, and working efficiently enough such that their labor is profitable. In the UK, this was the agenda of New Labour (Nicholls and Teasdale 2017), although with the election of the coalition in 2010 and the subsequent austerity, the “Big Society” saw the abolition of funding streams that had supported social enterprise and the reliance on “heroic” social entrepreneurs to fill the gaps when the state withdrew (North 2011). This, critics claim, puts unconscious limits on conceptions of what the role of social enterprise is, through a political process that amplifies mainstream conceptions of social enterprise, thus creating and reproducing docile bodies that perform within the limits placed on them as neoliberal subjects (Dey and Steyaert 2016). Thus, concepts of “enterprise,” “entrepreneurialism,” and of the heroic social entrepreneur can constrain the critical and counterhegemonic potential of social enterprise.

The dark side of social entrepreneurship must be recognized. We have found through our engagement with social enterprise in Liverpool that many social entrepreneurs—or, quite often, former third-sector workers forced to become entrepreneurial in the face of austerity—increasingly *do*, perhaps in underexamined ways, perform and reproduce neoliberal tropes around the need for hardheaded calculative rationalism in making business decisions or in deciding what business ideas or livelihood strategies might or might not be viable. Some social entrepreneurs *do* see opportunities for profit making under an ethical cover, employing their workers in exploitative conditions, and these might actually be closer in their ethos to “for-profit” businesses. Others are dependent on government grants, delivering a cheaper, some might say inferior, service than that provided directly by a welfare state. Our discussions with trade unionists have revealed an antipathy to neoliberalizing elements of social-enterprise discourse, seeing it as complicit in privatization and outsourcing. We can thus clearly see how capitalist power can limit conceptions of what social enterprises can and, more importantly, *should* do, and diverse-economies research needs to be more aware of these pressures.

Antagonistic SSE Practices

Moving on from individual “heroic” social entrepreneurs bringing their business skills to bear on solving social problems from above, we now develop our conception of antagonistic practices: first taking back work, then land.

Taking Back Work?

In revolutionary situations workers have often evicted their bosses and taken over and run their factories themselves: examples include the Russian and Spanish Revolutions, Italy’s 1919–20 Red Years (Ness and Azzellini 2011), and Solidarity’s struggles for self-management in socialist Poland (Barker 1986; Potel 1982). Likewise, the capitalist crisis of the 1970s–80s led to a plethora of factory occupations, around two hundred in the UK alone (Coates 2003; Sherry 2010, 119–28). Some of these occupations gave birth to “phoenix cooperatives,” through which worker-owners aimed to maintain production, while the alternative production movement helped workers in threatened factories diversify away from military production to more peaceable products (Wainwright and Elliott 1982). Both inspired the development of a newly radical cooperative sector in the UK (Cornforth 1983; Tuckman 2011), which was supported by cooperative development agencies in many UK cities (Mackintosh and Wainwright 1987). Contemporary Brazil (da Costa 2017; Singer 2007), Venezuela (Azzellini 2017), Uruguay (Rieiro 2015), and Argentina (Sitrin 2012) have a long tradition of workers recovering and running bankrupt factories, a practice which entrepreneurialism scholar Pascal Dey (2016) regards as a form of destituent entrepreneurship that disobeys the rules of enterprise and prefigures a postcapitalist reality. More recently, struggles in the context of the Eurozone crisis, particularly in southern Europe, have led to the establishment of a number of factories recovered and run by workers, such as Officine Zero in Rome, Vio.Me in Thessaloniki, and Fralib in Marseilles (Azzellini 2018). Here the economy really is “taken back,” through antagonistic, anticapitalist practices.

When assessing the extent to which factory occupations and phoenix cooperatives are a useful technique as part of an antagonistic countermovement to capital, the evidence is mixed. On one hand, capitalist crisis opens up questions about the nature of work in a capitalist society, while the practices of factory occupations provide a space for progressing these discussions in concrete ways. Occupying a factory, especially one surrounded by walls and thus can be secured, enables workers to defend the factory against police attacks while keeping warm and fed and deciding how to move forward. Antagonism toward an exploitative former employer can be the motor to enable the new worker-owners to engage in the hard work of building something new. On the other hand, studies in the 1980s suggested that defensive phoenix cooperatives established in declining industries out of occupations in crisis conditions struggle with a shortage of capital and deficient demand for their products (Cornforth 1983). The workers sometimes lack commercial expertise and, unsupported, find it difficult to manage their way out of these difficulties. This suggests that technical constraints such as the ability to produce a quality product for which there is demand, access to finance to develop a product, and the ability to read balance sheets and ascertain levels of profitability—that is, the ability to understand the extent of “surplus” of some kind that can be used to support the livelihoods of the worker-owners—matters. It is necessary to distinguish between otherwise profitable but badly or exploitatively managed enterprises with a “boss problem” and those which do not or struggle to produce a surplus (see Sitrin 2012).

This suggests that we need to reflect more on when an enterprise *can* be commoned and also if more antagonistic tactics are necessary when an employer does not wish to engage in ethical discussions about production and the sharing of surplus. Here, we might draw on the lessons of class struggle in UK car factories in the 1970s when workers forcibly won a voice in decisions about production, pay, and conditions through militant trade-union struggle. They encountered resistance on one hand from reluctant employers who did not want to share decision making and on the other from trade unionists who thought workers’ involvement in such decisions was a dangerous accommodation with capitalism (Mullins 2016; Hayter and Harvey 1993).

Without antagonistic relationships, it *is* possible to recover companies if the employer walks away, perhaps facilitating a worker buyout, or if the state confirms that the former workers are now the new owners. Here the task may be commoning the space of a defunct factory to develop new livelihood opportunities for the worker-owners by identifying new ways to reuse the redundant machinery and factory space. Involving the former workers *and* the wider community suggests this can becomes a struggle not just over *autogestion*—worker self-management—but also over more expansive processes of “territorial autogestion” or the “right to the city,” articulated by Lefebvre (2003), and thus it becomes more a battle about citizen control of territory than just commoning or democratizing the factory itself. Here, dark and constraining forces need to be borne in mind in order to understand the relationship between this recovered/autonomous space and the wider community or neighborhood. Can new ways of living together be developed without the recovered factory and the wider community being characterized as an ungovernable and criminal example of dual power upon which the state cannot enforce its will, especially given that—particularly in Argentina—the participation of the community in the factory is seen both as a tool for commoning *and* a way of protecting the commons from police attack? Dual power, taken too far, is something that cannot endure for long and is an issue that Latin American theorists have interrogated extensively (Zibechi 2012), but it is conceptually underdeveloped in diverse-economies thinking. It is instructive to recall that struggles over the claimed “right of managers to manage,” especially in UK car plants, was a constitutive element of Thatcherism. The recovery of Argentina’s economy meant that former *employers* later sought to “take back” or “recover” *their* enterprises from new worker-owners, supported by the right-wing Macri government, which had committed to defending the sanctity of private property (Ruggeri 2016).

Taking Back Land

Where initiatives for “taking back work” and “taking back money” are characterized as movements for the reappropriation of *production* and *exchange*, respectively (DeFilippis 2004), community land trusts (CLTs) are likewise part of a broader movement of collaborative and cooperative ownership of land and housing for the reappropriation of *social reproduction*. Subaltern groups contest inner-city deprivation, long-term urban decline, market failure, and public mismanagement and neglect in contexts of capital flight and abandonment, on one hand, and gentrification and increasing inequalities, on the other. In London (Bunce 2016), Boston and New York (Engelsman, Rowe, and Southern 2016), and Liverpool (Thompson 2020), these groups have taken land out of the realm of exchange and financial speculation and have reappropriated it as urban commons through a variety of mechanisms, from land and housing occupations to CLTs and democratically governed and community-owned affordable housing (Engelsman, Rowe, and Southern 2016).

CLT activism can be seen as variably reactive (defensive) or proactive (antagonistic) toward neoliberal conceptions of the city. In London, for instance, some groups have sought a more partnership-based approach, working with private developers and the state to ensure that there is some component of community-owned affordable housing in new developments (Bunce 2015). Others have sought to mobilize the CLT model as a more antagonistic alternative to attempts by the local state to redevelop council housing estates for financial gain and for what some frame as state-led gentrification—notably in the controversial redevelopment of ex-council estates in London’s Elephant and Castle (DeFilippis and North 2004; North 2003).

In the UK, a more antagonistic stance toward “taking back” land builds on the CLT movement’s historical roots in English traditions of commoning and struggles against enclosure (Conaty et al. 2003), while in the United States the CLT model emerged through civil rights activism in the 1960s to promote black asset ownership (Meehan 2014). Perhaps the most antagonistic deployment of the CLT model is in contemporary Jackson, Mississippi, where predominantly African American activists working for the city’s radical anticapitalist SSE project, Cooperation Jackson, are struggling to defend—along what they call the Fortification Line—inner-city black neighborhoods from encroaching state-led gentrification (Akuno and Nangwaya 2017). Cooperation Jackson activists see these processes of gentrification as part of a deliberate capitalist and white-supremacist strategy enacted through state and market actors to quash the rising movement that seeks to transform Jackson into what former Mayor Chokwe Lumumba envisioned as “the most radical city on the planet.” Cooperation Jackson’s CLT is seen as the “anchor” or “cornerstone” of a vision in which worker-owned co-ops and incubation spaces for emerging fourth-industrial-revolution digital-fabrication industries, community-owned eco-energy generation, urban farming, and cooperative housing are seen as tools for the potential socialization of the means of production and democratization of society. To progress this nascent strategy, the CLT has acquired forty parcels of land on and behind the Fortification Line as a means not only of defending the existing, mostly very poor black population from (largely white) gentrification forces (and thereby advancing the chances of future electoral victories for such radical policy programs) but also of antagonistically transforming these neighborhoods into cooperatively owned spaces for hosting a thriving SSE rooted in principles of economic democracy, eco-socialism, and emancipation from racialized colonial capitalism.

An antagonistic stance also imbues two distinctive CLT campaigns in Liverpool in which activist residents successfully used direct action to fight against the state-led demolition of several streets of terraced housing deemed “obsolete” and ready for revalorization through the government’s Housing Market Renewal program (Thompson 2020). Campaigns for the Granby Four Streets and Homebaked CLTs, in two disinvested inner-city neighborhoods in south and north Liverpool, respectively, emerged out of long-term and vociferous campaigning against demolition by the few remaining local residents and their allies (most residents already having been compulsorily evicted by the state and its regeneration partners). This involved street protests, barricading roads against bulldozers, and painting houses that had been tinned up and were awaiting demolition with antivandal paint in order to dissuade council workers from entering, an ironic gesture against the “civic vandalism” the activists saw being perpetrated in the name of regeneration.

These campaigns against demolition in Liverpool grew into sustained projects for utilizing the CLT model as a vehicle for democratic, community-led, and do-it-together forms of neighborhood regeneration, winning significant financial and cultural support from arts organizations (e.g., Granby won the Turner Prize in 2015). These campaigns point toward more hopeful and convivial ways of living and working together while managing local life in neglected urban contexts—ways that draw on and in so doing develop the capabilities and assets of local residents.

Affordable housing is just one of many important aspects involved in taking back the land in both Granby and Homebaked: both seek to transform not just the built environment but also the local economy by supporting community-owned incubation spaces for social enterprises and worker-owned co-ops, including Homebaked Bakery and Kitty’s Launderette. But while oppositional tactics in both Granby and Anfield are now lauded as outstanding examples of social entrepreneurship by local heroes, the initially antagonistic sociopolitical practices that gave rise to and fueled this activism should be recognized. Unlike CLT projects that work purely within the housing system, Liverpool’s CLTs’ initially “alternative-oppositional” (as opposed to “alternative-additional”) housing practices were closer in spirit to more explicitly antagonistic approaches such as squatting and occupation (Hodkinson 2012).

Discussion: On the Antagonistic Nature of the SSE

How you see the SSE depends on where you are looking from. We are writing this in a radical city with a history of class struggle in which people fight back (see Taffe and Mulhearn 1988; Frost and North 2016). Liverpudlians have had to engage with austerity, right-wing governments that ignore cities like ours, and Brexit. People are hungry, use food banks, struggle to pay their bills, and are often forced into mind-numbing exploitative work on zero-hour contracts. The wasted lives this entails makes us angry, and we want to do something about it rather than (just) organize against that which dominates us. We start therefore more from anarchism than from Althusser, from conflict more than capacity building. Reappropriating the means of production, exchange, and social reproduction can provide access to greater resources for the fight back, for the project of constructing ecologically just economies built on conceptions of how we want to live sustainably with dignity and justice. Antagonistic practices enable social and solidarity economies to actively *challenge*, rather than be complicit in, unjust elements of market economies. Generative anger about what is wrong and antagonism toward those that perpetuate it can, we argue, help us move from forms of anger directed against systems of domination that can nevertheless reinforce those systems toward building on this anger to generate prefigurative alternatives that go from thinking about what “could be” to developing transformative tools for change.

Apart from an a priori assumption that theoretically and abstractly preidentified structural forces (e.g., competition, neoliberalization, profitability) always determine what happens, it *is* legitimate to recognize that discourses like “private sector good, public sector bad” will have an effect on what people believe is possible, on what ethical discussions they are or are not willing to engage in, and on their shared values. We do not think this is a totalizing, exclusionary form of moralizing on the part of self-righteous vanguardist activists. We argue that understanding who shares our values, who does not, and who can be convinced can be seen as “potentially powerful tools of political articulation” (Miller 2013, 529)—without this descending, however, into modernist, perhaps Leninist, hubris. John Holloway’s (2002) call for combining the scream *against* with developing our power *to* is cast in a similar light.

We recognize practices of capitalist power but *put capitalism in its place*, as but *one* form of power that shapes but does not *determine* what happens. In this way we share the community-economies understanding of overdetermination, but that is not to say that we see *all* forms of power, generative as well as restrictive, as equal. No diverse-economies scholars want to settle for forms of diversity in which capitalist relations—let alone feudal or slave—continue. We all want to fightthe baleful effects of neoliberal conceptions of market logic that crush human freedom, but we also need to recognize when neoliberal formulations—in the neoliberal heartlands of the global north, where we at least are based—can frame people’s conceptions of what is and is not sensible or possible, which takes us to Gramsci and Polanyi. Actors wanting to fight exploitative relations in other parts of the world will find their own paths: we all fight from where we are.

We do not want to overdo our critique of social enterprise as inevitably and always a tool for neoliberal governmentality. Many social entrepreneurs often work very locally as unsung grassroots heroes who support their local communities by setting up community businesses, rejecting comparisons with the heroic myth. Parkinson and Howorth (2008, 297) found that the social entrepreneurs they spoke to were more likely to use words like “community,” “social,” “funding,” and “volunteering” rather than “market,” “opportunity,” “profit,” “risk,” “trading,” and “performance”—if they used such words at all. These social entrepreneurs can take being “business-like” seriously without thinking of themselves as “businesses,” given that it is possible to be “enterprising” and “creative” without self-identifying as an “entrepreneur”—they may go as far as finding that term offensive. The discourse of “being in charge” can be driven by professional pride rather than acceptance of neoliberal fantasies of the autonomous calculative individual (Cohen and Musson 2000). Social entrepreneurs’ values are shaped by their local context and their everyday practices, which are not fixed and can thus change (Parkinson, Howorth, and Southern 2017). They should be studied ethnographically (Mauksch et al. 2017), and they cannot be understood in a static or essentialist manner (Dey and Stayaert 2016). These locally rooted social entrepreneurs are not unproblematically constituted by neoliberal ideologies.

Social entrepreneurs make trade-offs, prioritizing financial pressures over meeting needs for their own sake or balancing the benefits of “autonomy” with pressures to respond to agendas set by funders in different ways. Social entrepreneurs are fully aware of and combat mission drift (Cornforth 2014). They are adept at “playing the game,” translating discourses from above into a language they find more appropriate through “tactical mimicry” and, as a result, achieving favorable outcomes (Dey and Teasdale 2016). Social entrepreneurs focus on delivering better services to clients in ways that *they* think appropriate, not according to what funders say (Cohen and Musson 2000). Often, local officials and social entrepreneurs collaboratively develop alternative visions of what is in the public good, visions that do not conform to neoliberal agendas of how things *should* be—businesslike, growth focused, stressing financial viability, having a capacity for job creation, and the like (Teasdale and Dey 2019).

More radical social entrepreneurs rethink what entrepreneurship means, in noncapitalocentric ways (Dey and Teasdale 2016; Verduijn et al. 2014), through everyday prosaic microresistances. While they might not overtly challenge dominant scripts about how social enterprise should be performed, they reinterpret these scripts so that they meet funding criteria and perform outwardly as well as social entrepreneurs who reproduce enterprise discourses, but they do so in ways that progress their *own* agendas. They challenge austerity, developing local responses to it, and focus on looking after their communities and each other (Nowak 2018). Rather than being uncritical, they retain a skeptical attitude toward dominant ideologies: they critique neoliberal discourses (e.g., modernist development), value care for others (i.e., interdependence), and engage with elements of enterprise agendas on their own terms when they think these elements make sense (e.g., they agree that it’s good to be “well organized” and “business-like” and not to waste resources; Dey and Steyaert 2016). In this context they look to develop their capacity for self-management, by which they mean how to run a business democratically and how to identify new ways to meet unmet needs in solidaristic ways. They reject a narrow focus on “entrepreneurialism” as wealth creation in favor of dreams about what could be and efforts to create new worlds through processes of discovery, change, and value creation. Their social entrepreneurship contributes to emancipation, disrupting the status quo, their place in the social order, and even the social order itself.

In some contexts, entrepreneuring can be resistance and emancipation (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen 2009), not governmentality. Calás, Smircich, and Bourne (2009) see *all* forms of entrepreneuring—that is, the practices that entrepreneurs undertake—as ontologically open. In line with diverse-economies thinking, they do not make an a priori assumption that entrepreneurs, let alone social entrepreneurs, reproduce market capitalism, but they argue that entrepreneurs advance a range of social-change strategies leading to a variety of outcomes. Taking a feminist social-constructivist approach, they use standpoint theory to examine the extent to which any given set of entrepreneurial practices challenges patriarchal practices, creating spaces in which subjectivities are constructed that advance the status of women. Social enterprises thus develop “practices of freedom” that resist discourses of social entrepreneurs as heroic leaders (Dey and Steyaert 2016); as hybrid organizations with multiple drivers, they also attend to conflicting financial, market, and commercial pressures (Doherty, Haugh, and Lyon 2014). This is all in line with diverse-economies thinking and suggests that the extent that totalizing capitalocentric discourses of all-constraining power and domination inevitably constrain radical conceptions of social enterprise can be overstated. It could also provide a palliative to the problems that workers have encountered when they take back an enterprise but lack the skills to run it. We can do more thinking about conceptions of entrepreneurship that support autogestion rather than neoliberalism.

Conclusion

Our fourfold typology perhaps works better as a spectrum than as a categorization of distinct parts. On one hand, “heroic” social enterprise can and often does reproduce neoliberal tropes, while WISEs and ILMs can end up as tools for the new production of disciplined wage slaves rather than of cooperators. The solidarity economy shows that another world is possible, while antagonistic economies fight for that world. This would suggest a cleavage on our spectrum somewhere between the social and the solidarity economy. On the other hand, some social entrepreneurs do have well-developed conceptions of the need for something better, and they fight for it in their everyday practices; meanwhile, “solidarity” can also mean “inclusion” in society as it is rather than changing it.

This suggests that we cannot simply assume that these disparate SSE initiatives can be easily welded into a *distinctly* antagonistic Gramscian “war of maneuver” or Polanyian “countermovement.” We should continue to be skeptical about modernist, Leninist conceptions of building one big millennial movement (Dean 2012); instead, we should favor starting from where we are with what we have to hand, perhaps “being a Zapatista wherever you are” (Chatterton 2017). This means being open to the generative possibilities of unlikely struggles in unexpected places, including through social entrepreneurship. But it also means, we argue, that getting angry about the blighted lives we see all around us does not make us the unwitting agents of capitalism. It means we must distinguish between those practices that reinforce capitalist practices—which should be challenged—and those that seek to confront and transform them.

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