

**Queer Solidarity & Soup Kitchen Stalinists – Politics and
Containment in the Solidarity Economy**

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the ‘solidarity economy’ – a non-market alternative economy based on social principles, acknowledging and politicizing the labour that builds it. Through the lens of feminist economic anthropology, I argue solidarity economies are premised on kinship practices - the circulation of care and commodities, ethical-political containment of a community with shared projective narratives of the future, aiming towards the usurping of market economics. I conduct ethnographic fieldwork and interviews on a trading and gifting group, and a soup kitchen in Melbourne during the COVID-19 crisis. Rough Trade Melbourne – a Facebook group with over twelve-thousand participants, promoting ‘lifestyle anarchist’ principles, is a space of care and ethical consumption for the LGBTIQ community. Community Union Kitchen Melbourne is a soup kitchen in the center of the CBD, that is a front for a local Marxist-Leninist party, containing both young student volunteers as a political cadre and providing mutual aid for the public. Comparing these two sites, I consider how participants become unequally embedded in solidarity economies as products of politics and organization.

1. Introduction

Interviewing one of my informants, Mac about the effects of COVID-19 on the topic of the Rough Trade facebook group, after the past seven interviews of unabashed positivity, they presented me with some gritty realism. They were in the middle of recalling their experiences of queerphobia, having cut contact with their biological family. Their raspy voice from years of smoking cigarettes telegraphed their cynicism about their situation. “The no money rule works within the guidelines of Rough Trade, but we know there’s money behind the scenes. For instance, when it comes to the doctors, landlords, the state doesn’t take goodwill as payment.”. At the same time, I couldn’t help but feel they were playing it up a bit, “I expect it to be less productive space but a better solidarity place in the coming months. I know people in the coronavirus solidarity groups are from lots of other class and financial backgrounds, and I know that *I do* feel more hesitant to reach out to them.” The last few words didn’t seem as confident. They quickly explained themselves:

“This is the real misanthropy coming out here but... maybe you shouldn’t have had three kids in the global climate apocalypse. The people on the lower rungs have already been making heaps of sacrifices. I’m not going to be like fuck them and steal their toilet paper [laughs]. But I’m going to be like, No. [I’m] going to watch out for the community that *I built*. We built this before it became a personal problem. Like we saw the problems of hyper consumerism, before [the fact] our great uncle or aunt might die. We didn’t wait for it to threaten us.”

Mac's definition of the boundaries of Rough Trade or RT, as I refer to it in shorthand, spoke to a hostility towards the state and mainstream society. They the dots from a culture that inculcated hate, through rampant queerphobia they had experienced, to exploitation, environmental destruction and now the uncertainty of the coronavirus crisis. Mac was knowingly bitter, understanding how defensive they needed to be to protect their community. The community that Rough Trade provided for, became a central point in Mac's political expression against hegemonic values. For this Facebook-based community that my participants came from, which was overwhelmingly LGBTIQ, Mac would take the effort to trade, give away and facilitate other trades. Yet as I will show for most participants, RT was just an "alternative to Facebook marketplace" that had a "community feel", but was contiguous with middle-class consumerism.

When the Melbourne lockdown hit, even with dedicated volunteer like Mac, the activity at Rough Trade did not survive. Tracking the Facebook page and conducting follow up interviews, I found my research participants had almost completely stopped using it, most being satiated by their access to a roof over their head, and a temporarily boosted welfare system. Ben, a "platformist anarchist" was convinced I should do fieldwork among the new Community Union Kitchen, or CUK. It was sold to me as being full of quirky characters, something meaningful, enjoyable, and on top of that, an excuse to leave the house during the lockdown. Rough Trade attracted people because of its free and ethical second-hand consumption, but also its social proximity to grassroots activism. On the other hand, CUK distinguished between the "charity work" or

“mutual aid” it provided, and real politics – embodied by the new Australian Communist Party that had established the kitchen and recruited there. The people ranged from racist conspiracy theorists, Aboriginal sovereignty activists, international students, Afghan refugees, Fijian Indian engineers and Chinese seniors. The volunteers who served at the stalls, cooked and drove supplies and volunteers into the city were usually students or young workers, diverse in gender and ethnicity. They represented a wide array of political positions – from the Stalinist party members to Maoists and anarchists. There were even Liberal party members, evangelical Christians and people who just wanted to do charity. My engagement with Rough Trade coincided with the end of a long Victorian lockdown, enabling protracted fieldwork and interviews.

Fieldwork with CUK brought me into contact with an organising method and analysis I had yet to experience firsthand: modern Marxism-Leninism. That is, the synthesis of Marxism and Leninism, by Stalin, that has been the official ideology of socialist states around the world, including the Soviet Union. Members of CUK or the communist party referred to themselves as ‘Tankies’ – a neologism that originally referred to support for the use of military force on Hungary and Czechoslovakia, now came to describe authoritarian Leftists more generally or ‘MLs’ and their socialist tendency as ‘ML’. While being MLs meant being drawn ironically to the soviet aesthetic, Marxism-Leninism’s highly theorised literature, history and praxis, advised the creating of various vernacular, anachronistic forms that was unique to the ‘material conditions’ of a place. What this meant was often their unflinching anti-imperialist stance in which ‘authoritarian’,

socialist, and/or Global South nationalist countries would be supported against the destabilising imperialist interests of their nation in the Global North. This came with support of taboo political figures and movements, and played into their hard-line commitment to “serve the people”. In comparison to Rough Trade’s handle on facilitating traumatised, immobile or socially anxious people by limiting interaction, Community Union Kitchen took the opposite approach. Rather than fearing unethical consumption, creeping hierarchies or the stereotype of leftist authoritarianism, they embraced socialist discipline, order and officious capability.

Economies I argue, are distinguished by politics. While this may be obvious in describing large-scale economies (socialist, capitalist or feudal), the same is true for alternative economies that encompass various intersecting communities and shared subjectivities as in my field sites. My data analysis builds on classical economic anthropology of Mauss and Polanyi – combining later feminist contributions by the Gens collective and Graeber (Mauss 1925; Polanyi 1977; Bear et al. 2015; Graeber 2001). I argue that anthropology should understand the distinction between economies primarily through politics, a question of the social production of people rather than reifying abstractions like capital (See Cleaver 1979; Gibson-Graham 1996; Graeber 2012). The intersection between social reproduction and politics is explored through two core terms. The first - ‘solidarity economy’ which are defined as alternative economies that provide social reproduction, social and material care towards political transformation, often predominantly through non-market means. Such economic arrangements

creates 'containment', social encompassment – where subjects develop shared ethical-political narratives and create kin attachments, allowing these collective projects to persist over time despite conflict and defeat (Lazar 2017, p. 171). In doing so, I make contributions to these terms - to show that the solidarity economy explicitly politicises care work and social reproduction, and explore the social and political dynamics of containment.

This study demonstrates how political ideology and the resultant organisational strategy effects containment for these solidarity economies. That is, examining how these politically-motivated economic formations attract, retain and strengthen their membership, create shared goals and values. I compare Rough Trade's lifestyle anarchism for the LGBTIQ community and Community Union Kitchen's eclectic Marxist-Leninist mutual aid – how the former facilitates thin relationships, minimal engagement and commitment while the latter creates two tiers of containment - a stratum of loosely engaged lumpen peoples and a pool of working and middle-class student and potential activists for their party, where a central activists display dedicated organisation, thick kinship relations and studious intellectual investment.

The literature section of this essay begins by introducing the role of economic anthropology in this thesis, which I show to be historical opposition to neoclassical economics. Moving from classical approaches through Polanyi, to argue for the grassroot approach of the Gens collective, a theoretical approach set in contrast to the reifying of structures and abstractions (Bear et al. 2015).

This I demonstrate through the ethnography of Karen Ho, tracing vast financial crises to a nexus of short-term profiteering, hypercompetitive ethics and practices on Wall Street (Ho 2009). This approach accords with Graeber's revival of Maussian economic anthropology, that decentres commerce and exchange. From this theoretical perspective, I look to ethnographies of alternative economies literatures – exploring the relationship alternative economies have to the market. This I explore in 'freecycling' by delving into the promotion of an ethical middle-class consumer lifestyle, while the recycling in Giles' ethnography of the subversive 'abject economy' of dumpster diving reveals the dependence on capital (Aptekar 2016; Giles 2014, 2018a, 2018b).

I then pursue the various political and identity literatures that relate to the economies of RT and CUK. I build the relation Rough Trade has to the strategies and trends of contemporary anarchism – particularly through prefigurative politics (Graeber 2002; 2014; Price 2009; Gordon 2009 Lou 2019, p. 250). I also explore queer online communities and economies, examining how it also relates to the LGBTIQ's use of self-care (McMaster 2014). Finally, I examine the notions of class that have expanded from traditional definitions to emphasise social reproduction, as an explicitly reflexive political identification in response to the neoliberal movement away from class. The next section examines ethnographic studies of modern Marxist-Leninist organisations, exploring how they fight against, perpetuate and themselves are transformed – to overcome hegemonic values and privilege (Shah 2019). I argue such forms of traditional political

organising stands in contrast to the implicit feminist politics of social reproduction in response to crisis (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021).

2. Methodology and Field Site

I conducted participant observation and ethnographic interviews on members of two Melbourne-based solidarity economies. The first was on the gifting, trading and 'Freecycling' group 'Rough Trade Melbourne'. 'Freecycling' that is, a neologism and name of a popular website platform, combining recycling, and free, in the sense of giving away things for free. From which all but one of my participants were queer or nonbinary people, a majority being 'trans' and all but one being 'white'. These terms being emic terms used in these communities referring to transgender people, and people who have the predominant appearance of European ancestry. Comprising roughly twelve-thousand people, is active around the Northern suburbs of Melbourne. This area is known for its progressive politics, 'greenies' – as in environmentalists, multicultural and LGBTIQ communities. LGBTIQ being the acronym that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. I had 8 ethnographic interviews spanning between 30-60 minutes, building upon my long-term engagement with the group and prior interactions with interviewees. Interviews were formatted by a question-response model. Topics of particular interest were given extra emphasis, and would improvise further questions on specific topics depending on the person. These interviews also doubled as participant observation as each

interview was also established as a trade on the internet, and in the interviews either in person or over the phone which constituted the trade. These participants were recruited through the group's method of making requests, by which requests, trades and offers are made through posts on the Rough Trade group. Participants were respondents to my Facebook posts, meeting them in several convenient public places such as libraries and parks, or through phone interviews. While the group is located on Facebook, and trades usually occur in private homes or in public places, I chose to meet only in the public places, due to travel time, finding a medium between my location and theirs, and attendant ethics and safety regulations.

Furthermore, the final three interviews were conducted over the phone due to either time and convenience's sake, or the reticence to meet in person during pre-lockdown. This may have affected the data significantly, as phone interviews, while limiting access to observing bodily comportment, were helpful in creating longer, relatively unrestricted interviews. This reflects observations that the phone-interview as an ethnographic method, while sacrificing visual and sensorial data, may allow easier disclosure of sensitive information (Novick 2008). On the other hand, in-person interviews presented me with cosmetic and stylistic traits, revealed struggles with accessibility, and other details about participants that revealed identity class dimensions and were helpful in creating useful conversation, etching out fuller profiles of informants and building rapport. I also conducted a number of follow up interviews in late 2020 and early 2021, after contacting my participants via Facebook messenger again, all of whom

besides one agreeing to another interview which spanned between one to half an hour. These interviews were also conducted over the phone due to the Victorian COVID lockdown. I found these interviews had a much more relaxed, frank feeling to them. This was in part due to the fact it was a second interview, but owed much to the malaise that people felt during the Victorian COVID lockdown (see Cziesler et al. 2021).

Posts are made on the Facebook group to begin the trade process. The Facebook post is usually one of three things: an item for trade, giveaway and/or a request for a specific item. The item for trade will be shown in a couple of photos taken from a phone, briefly explaining anything interesting about its history or use. They mention what suburb they are in, and what they would like in return - sometimes specifying 'NTN' - no trade necessary. Otherwise, they will request something specific and offer any number of things they can trade in return - the usual request being soy milk or homemade foods or plants, the former of which appeared to be vying for their place as the group's de facto currency. As such, I found Facebook facilitated, but did not particularly change interactions. I found that my interview subjects belonged to various marginalised groups – all being queer, some growing up under the poverty line, or had moved from rural Australia, were migrants or had disabilities. This, combined with the age of participants, which I specified to be only between 20-30, and all participants but one were white, and all but one were queer. These traits lead me to consider the vulnerability and the importance of writing about this group.

The second field site is the Community Union Kitchen, a street kitchen, also referred to as CUK street kitchen or just CUK. It is a community organisation, and something of a front for the Marxist-Leninist Australian Communist Party, abbreviated to ACP. The kitchen was staffed by a remarkably diverse mixture of people, and volunteer groups were regularly overwhelmingly ethnically diverse. The age group and class was relatively uniform, participants were predominantly young people between ages 20-30, coming from the working class, but often were in the position of attending university as students, and were upwardly mobile. Class identity was a point of contention, particularly as it related to legitimacy in a Marxist party adjacent organisation and culture. The political landscape was also diverse, and reflected a mixture of different political tendencies, mainly Marxists, anarchists and social democrats. There was also diversity in gender and sexuality - with several transgender and nonbinary people attending, and men were only slightly overrepresented.

The Facebook roster and organising group comprised over 200 people, and participants every week varied from 8 to a dozen people, but many more assisted including family, and other organisations often dropped off bulk food or clothes or assisted with distribution after the kitchen. Data was collected from interviews and fieldwork, along with information provided on websites and social media from CUK and its parent organisation, the Australian Communist Party. Ethnography began with CUK and the ethnographic fieldwork that snowballed from these interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork, including participant

observation over several weeks. I interviewed key members during soup kitchen times, often during the shift.

The membership at the kitchen, was not a monoculture of Marxist-Leninists. Those with dissenting opinions or political tendencies I decided to interview outside of regular hours at local cafes or libraries, so they would not feel constrained or rude if critiquing the organisation. In fact, my interviews with CUK members who professed orthodox Marxism-Leninism were interviewed at the kitchen - Peter and Earl, while the anarchist and Maoist respectively, Nicolette and Alice, I interviewed outside. The five ethnographic interviews I conducted were between 30 minutes to 90 minutes on average, and three were conducted over a number of sessions. Two interviews, in fact lasted over two hours. Fieldwork through participant observation took place in extended periods as a volunteer, providing an emic understanding of the solidarity economy, to experience the affective and phenomenological components of the organisation, and to provide a culturally embedded interpretation of data provided in interviews.

My interview participants were chosen for representing key roles in the running of the kitchen, key demographics and a diversity of political affiliations. I did not recruit interviewees from the largely middle-aged homeless demographic who patronised the kitchen. This was due to the already extensive data that was extracted from the volunteers alone, which came to influence the specific research question. This was also in effect due to my middle-class socialisation,

which meant that I avoided developing questions for their group until the data became sufficient for this thesis. This question emphasised the political edge of the solidarity economy of CUK with its cultivation of politics amongst its volunteers, which came about due to the explicit links to a self-described revolutionary political party. The kitchen had a hands-off approach to the beneficiaries of the kitchen, and though they created independent social circles which benefited from CUK, they were not counted as CUK 'membership'. The vast majority of proselytisation, political conversations and propaganda, though limited in scope, was directed towards the volunteers.

As a part of the broader arc of anthropology and social science, this ethnography was also an attempt at a simultaneous practice of solidarity in response to crisis. Engaging with RT and CUK was an attempt at understanding local alternative approaches to providing aid in crisis. Avoiding what Graeber deems 'uncritical enthusiasm', which he sees ending in 'naive relativism utterly blind to power', nor an utterly cynical world with no alternative (cited in Frost 2020, p. 146). I attempted to move away from 'capitalocentrism', in which all descriptions of economic practices are referenced in relation to capital, propagating and naturalising capitalism, even in critique (Gibson-Graham 1996). Instead, I advocate ethnographies of alternative economies against the contemporary cultural epistemology of 'capitalist realism' (Fisher 2009). Anthropologists, rather than critiquing neoliberal hegemony for moral trespasses, should recognise normative capitalism as an ideological projection that has invisibilised certain facts and forms of labour to represent itself as a coherent whole.

Anthropologists should emphasise alternatives in order to ‘... tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility’ (Fisher 2009, p. 16, 81). It is not adequate to simply do ethnography of capital, but to find embryonic alternatives in the here and now, as is the business of my interlocutors.

I follow Kawano who suggests finding opportunities for expansion and research on solidarity economies in contexts of crisis, such as those of COVID and the ongoing neoliberal destruction of the welfare state (Kawano 2010). This is exemplified in scholarship of the Greek and other Euro humanitarian and debt crises around solidarity economies, who document alternative economic practice in the dire situations of fiscal and moral contraction (Cabot 2016; 2020; Muehlebach 2012; Rakopoulos 2014; Rozakou 2016a; 2016b; Theodossopoulos 2016; 2020). This maps onto a larger movement in understanding the rapidly growing inequality after neoliberal reforms and the GFC (Pusey 2003; Hudson 2017; Graeber 2013). Another important perspective was brought to my attention by Rough Trader Mac, who had a strong desire to be recorded and written about. During the interviews, Mac showed an active interest, seeing ethnography as an opportunity for representation; fearing queer erasure, remarking to me that ‘if the data isn’t there, we don’t get counted’. Being a nonbinary, trans and/or queer people, my interview participants were possibly more willing to be interviewed.

Mac also was interested in learning the theory that informed alternative economic practices, and particularly in how RT and themselves were being theorised. Rather than represent to Mac the ethnography specifically on the topic of solidarity economies, I introduced the evocative work of Mary Douglas, whose use of affect and meaning, and structural binaries in creating social stratification, and fit into Mac's narrative about their social marginality. While my other Rough Trade interviews touched on various political, theoretical or celebrity characters, which allowed for a deeper understanding of political and cultural positions of participants, CUK interviews and fieldwork used famous communists or political positions as cornerstones for various political positions, and required in-depth reading to familiarise myself.

Central figures in the CUK political discourse were Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Trotsky, as well as a number of ideologies and events, such as Leftcoms, council communists, and familiarising myself with the various histories of communist parties. This meant reading canonical essays to Marxism-Leninism, including those written by Lenin, Mao and Stalin. These texts also had a degree of social and symbolic capital attached to them, and constituted part of my socialisation in CUK. While I could not share the same sympathy for Stalin, I paid homage to their Marxism in other ways. Instead of nuances of history or explicit ideology, I followed Podgornik-Jakil and Ben's line on the anthropology of activism, centring '...material conditions, in which activists and their subjects find themselves in and the kind of agency they are able to develop within these conditions' (Podgornik-Jakil and Ben 2021, p. 297). At the same time, I neither infantilised their politics,

and actively engaged in their ways of thinking, while intentionally ignoring claims that may have crossed into historical revisionism. Instead, I paid attention to ways that the party members would use such techniques of accountability to adapt to changing conditions and prevent bureaucracy or despotism. Such techniques as ‘self-critique’ which was often referenced, or a talking through of an “analysis” versus a “praxis” I compared to ethnographic reflexivity.

3. Literature Section

This literature section begins with an establishing of the solidarity economy within the alternative economy literature centring the circulation care and commodities, that is politicised towards social transformation against capital. I invoke economic anthropology, especially the feminist-inspired discourses of ‘care’ as a theoretical buoy, and connect the solidarity economies literature to the various histories, identity and political groups that comprise my field site. The literature section is divided between two major sections of the ethnography’s leading themes – solidarity economies and containment. I first introduce solidarity economies, broadly engaging alternative economies literatures that it derives from. I then emphasise the specifically ethnographic literature of the solidarity economy, situating it as a part of economic anthropology, exploring ethnographies of theoretical importance and similarity to its study as a political phenomenon. I then look to establish containment as a contribution to subjectivation and kinship. I then parse through various ethnographies of various communities and discourses that is described in both of

my field sites, political and identity. I first describe those relating to Rough Trade - anarchism, LGBTIQ community, and self-care. I then discuss Community Union Kitchen, discussing class and Marxism-Leninism.

Situating Solidarity Economies

Spiralling inequality and ongoing political instability as a status quo, means urgency to understand and advocate for alternatives to liberal market economic practices (Allard, J, Davidson, C & Matthaei, J 2008; Chatterton & Pickerill 2010; Gregory 2012; Kawano 2020, Masterson & Teller-Elsberg 2009; Giles 2018; Graeber 2014). The interconnected alternative economy literatures, often through the lens of economic anthropology and to a lesser extent, consumer studies, development studies and economic sociology, have presented these alternatives. What is notable about the alternative economy literature is its vastness, and striking variety, such that discussing more than a few of these literatures exceeds the capacity of this thesis. These economies are set with different prefix gift (economy), social, domestic moral (DME), abject, sharing, human, and community are easily mistakable, and each term often crosses over in the alternative economy literatures (see Moulaert & Ailenei 2005, Frost 2020, D'Amato et al 2017; Yan 1996; Yang 2002; Giles 2016; Gregory 2012; Theodossopoulos 2013; Aptekar 2016; Graeber 2012; Graham 2007).

The social and solidarity economy (SSE), which overlaps with a number of these other terms, is a literature with wide purchase in not only academic social sciences, but in developmental studies and the NGO and IGO sectors, including a United Nations taskforce and dedicated academic journals. For scholars like Kawano, these terms that comprise SSE mean very different things - with 'social economy' – emphasising social enterprises and co-operatives reflects an apolitical tendency that is an 'important and supportive part of capitalism', whereas the 'solidarity economy' is socialistic and 'transformative' in orientation, pushing a 'a systemic, transformative, post-capitalist agenda' (Dash 2014; Utting et al. 2014, 2015; Kawano 2013, 2020; Fonteneau 2010). By contrast, definitions of the social economies represent a more symbiotic relationship to capital, i.e. corporate charities, microfinance initiatives and other formations that 'complement the existing social order' (Miller 2010, p. 26; Papadaki & Kalogeraki 2018, p. 38). The term also has much affinity with community economies, with greater emphasis on politics (see Gibson-Graham 2007).

The solidarity economy is the type of alternative economy defined by primacy of social reproduction and kinship practices – such as the circulation of gifts, goods and care. By kinship practices, I refer to the reproductive labours - emotional, physical and social that produce a 'collegiality and mutual care', and 'mutuality of being' that is associated with family or friends (Leivestad 2021, p. 7; Sahlins 2013). Such economic arrangements, furthermore, are explicitly politicised towards social transformation. This has been demonstrated in ethnography of the European austerity and humanitarian crises, in their grassroots responses -

informal institutions including street kitchens, free shops, co-operatives, free clinics and anti-middleman societies (Cabot 2016; Muehlebach 2012; Rozakou 2016a; Theodossopoulos 2016, 2019; Rakopoulos 2013, 2016; Papadaki & Kalogeraki 2018; Borowiak et al. 2018, pp. 580-581). Popular languages refers to mutual aid organisations, community organisations and charities, or 'solidarity initiatives', while I use 'solidarity economy' in reference to its specific political character (Theodossopoulos 2016; Rozakou 2016a).

Economic Anthropology – Substantivism to the Gens

Given the predominance of ethnography in the study of solidarity economies, it is important to locate the anthropological debates and studies that have been applied to economies in the past, and how anthropologists believe it should be executed today. Anthropologists write against the neoclassical notion of the economy described through structure and principles abstract numbers and flows of capital, the economy can be understood as a social phenomenon that centres the circulation of material objects - from provisioning, exchange, and gifting of resources, be it for profit or care (Mauss 1925; Graeber 2014; Sahlins 1972). It was the seminal anthropological works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries of Malinowski, Boas and Mauss that challenged market society, and troubled the notion of the universal utility-maximising individual (see Boas 1896; Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1925). Mauss' essay on 'The Gift', argues that human sociality is predicated on the gift, comparing various systems of reciprocity in Melanesia, Polynesia and North America (Mauss 1925). Mauss' essay continues to be a central argument on the cultural specificity of the 'economic' – including systems

that emphasised honour, prestige and social status rather than economic capital, and where maximisation occurs, it is found to be only one among many values and objectives in society (Polanyi 1944; Hann 2018; Graeber 2001).

Classical economic anthropology had little to say about the society it originated in. However, economic thinkers in Polanyi and Marx applied the insights gained from anthropological literature to understand the capitalist market system.

Polanyi's 'substantivist' economic anthropology came to be established as the dominant paradigm – understanding the economy to be about the provisioning of goods under material and social conditions, as opposed to the abstract 'formalism' of neoclassical economics assuming scarcity and optimisation (Polanyi 1944, 1977). Polanyi argued that most societies from hunter-gatherer, through feudalism until the beginning of capitalism lacked this concept of the 'economy', because it was 'embedded' in the social whole (Polanyi 1944; Gemici 2008). Meanwhile, the Marxist tradition produced theories about class, commodity, alienation and exploitation under capitalism. Subsequent anthropological scholarship has expanded on his theories to make seminal contributions to class consciousness, ideology, colonialism and gender, in the domain of anthropology (see Engels 1902; Thompson 1963; Leslie White 1959; Mintz 1985). Despite the success of these schools of Marxism, such anthropological approaches were critiqued not only by changing trends towards post-colonialism and postmodernism, but recently in economic anthropology, for failing to address several themes - the subjectivities, ethics, and 'projective fictions' that create economies (Bear et al. 2015; Ho 2008; Zaloom 2018).

There has been a renewed interest in the economy in anthropology, not as something not taken for granted, but constituted by daily practices, ethics and dispositions. This is exemplified by the 'Gens' approach, a feminist analysis of capitalism by Ho, Tsing, Bear and Yanagisako, understanding the 'economy' not as a set of rules or measured by numbers, but in 'unstable, contingent networks of capitalism' characterised by 'contingency', 'fragility' and 'heterogeneity' (Bear et al. 2015). The Gens approach is feminist insofar as it reflects on the marginalisation of social reproduction, relating to the uneven distribution and exploitation of reproductive labour and care (Chatzidakis et al 2021; Federici 1975). Echoing a vast array of heterodox economic scholarship, that has also looked to 'challenge the boundedness of the domain of "the economic"' and unsettle 'capitalocentrism' through the emphasis of economic plurality and heterogeneity (Bear et al. 2015, Borowiak et al. 2018, pp. 581; Gibson-Graham 1996; 2014, p. S149). Instead of presupposing a coherent capitalism of 'totalising frames', we must recognise its 'unstable, contingent networks', made of 'messiness and hard work' (Bear et al. 2015). While systemic and structural approaches are of value in higher strata, the ethnographic field should not presuppose the ubiquity of capital and should under how each context of subjectivities and ethics comes to assemble macroeconomic systems.

Karen Ho's *Liquidated*, a financial ethnography of Wall Street shows how global financial capital and its crises, percolate from education systems to the workplace and the ethics of its workers (Ho 2009). Following Bourdieu, Ho

explores bankers' ideologies and dispositions, who are convinced risk and meritocracy are inbuilt in "natural" market cycles and economics laws' (Ho 2009, p. 11-12). Ho rejects a finance capital that is '...separated and decontextualized from concrete lived realities' and vast 'flows', 'networks' and 'markets', that have obfuscated the already mercurial world of money (Ho 2009, p. 32). Instead, she follows Polanyi in recognising markets are embedded in 'social networks, relations, and institutions' and '... located and formed at the intersections of values, practices, and institutions.' (Ho 2009, p. 238). Ultimately, these methods demonstrate the value of a feminist anthropology analysing global capitalism from the ground up.

The Gens approach hence applies ethics, habitus, contingency and heterogeneity to understanding capitalism. However, a general theory of the economy is still required, one that does not perpetuate capitalocentrism, and applicable in diverse economic contexts. One such theory is found in the tradition of economic anthropology through Polanyi and Mauss, who both emphasise human sociality, and recognise the commonalities that 'Western' and 'native', market and alternative economies share – placing greater importance in distinction through political and organisational elements (Graeber 2001; 2011b; 2014; Rakopoulos 2013; Muehlebach 2012). Graeber contributes to an argument made by Mauss, and later by Sahlins, that human sociality is made up of three overlapping principles - exchange, hierarchy and communism (Mauss 1925; Graeber 2014; Sahlins 1972). Graeber argues that feudalism, capitalism and socialism all comprise a mix of these principles (Graeber 2014, p. 68). What sets the

alternative or solidarity economies apart from the market is their relationship to a particular political ideology, be it capitalist Laos, the supply focused USSR economy, or big-man prestige of Trobriand coral gardens.

Alternative Economies - Freecycling, Consumerism and Abject Economies

Here I describe various ethnographic studies of alternative economies, showing their similarities and differences to the solidarity economies I study. While the solidarity economy seeks some form of nonmarket social transformation, all manner of alternative economies have a continued relationship with the market and state. Advancing the study of such social transformation through solidarity economies requires understanding the tension between consumerism and transformative practices (Eden 2017). An instructive text in this regard is Aptekar's ethnography of "Freecycling", the Internet-based giveaway recycling site (Aptekar 2016). Aptekar critiques 'Freecyclers' by their lack of commitment to transformative practices, promoting 'green-washed convenience... driven by decluttering imperatives' and 'conscious consumption' (Aptekar 2016, p. 267, p. 279). Aptekar finds that "Freecycle" agrees with the political status quo explicitly through its single-issue commitment to recycling, sidestepping questions of social transformation and activism (Aptekar 2016).

This type of lifestyle politics complements the market which asserts its role as mediator of relations between the self, nation, community and identity (see Patino 2008). In fact, Aptekar locates the "Freecycle" internet site in the 'sharing economy', another node in the alternative economies literature which is

distinctive for being technologically efficient, its internet legibility and permeability to hypercapitalism, including services like Uber, Lyft and Didi (Frost 2016; Martin 2016, p. 149-150). Furthermore, given its class exclusivity among the middle-class, the group reflects depoliticisation (see Wood 2016; Flinders & Wood 2014; Dean 2009). Such alternative economies exemplify the mirage of progressive politics that solidarity economies exist on a spectrum with.

However, it is unproductive to simply denounce economies that incorporate market practices as consumerism. This is a problem within consumer studies literature, which has been critiqued for encouraging a view of alternative economic practices as forms of consumption, such as 'collaborative consumption' or 'prosumption' (Albinson and Perera 2012; Liu et al. 2020; Belk 2014; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen 2016; Eden 2017). Graeber argues the use of the term 'consumption' is a cultural earmark of modernism, that presupposes the distinction between the workplace and home created by capitalism, and we should not simply discard the anti-consumerist critique (Graeber 2011a, p. 489). Rather than reflecting the diversity of people's actual priorities, consumerism is reified and overemphasised in identity formation; this represents a neoliberal shift in social science (Appadurai 1986, Graeber 2011a, p. 490-491). Alternative economies instead should be understood to reflect a bricolage of consumerist and transformative social traits.

Acknowledging the traits of consumerism in alternative economies entails understanding its relationship with the surpluses of a market economy. Giles'

ethnography of the 'abject economy' speaks to an essential, co-constitutive relation between the formal economy and the alternative economy, but also in the manner it transforms its participants' subjectivities (Giles 2014; 2018a; 2018b; see Kristeva 1982). Giles demonstrates that creating waste – to promote artificial scarcity, maintains commodity value and commodity value mobilises production, such that 'production of waste is production of wealth', vice versa (Giles 2018b, p. 217-218). Additionally, through ethnography of 'Freeganism', dumpster diving, squatting and urban scavenging in Melbourne, Giles finds subjects who engage in the boundary transgression of the dumpster create an abject subjectivity with an attendant aura of menace and dirt to the rest of society (Giles 2018b, p. 207, 231). The 'abject economy' thus describes a significant aspect of solidarity economies, as commodity's use value is resurrected even after entering their 'afterlife' (Giles 2014, p. 100). Giles finds the importance of such economies are multiple: 'not simply that they exist in symbiotic or parasitic tension with dominant economies' but their recovery of use values sustains communities (Giles 2018, pp. 220, 226). The dumpster divers show how alternative economies, inextricable from the wider settler-colonial market economy create ethical subjectivities, and resistant subcultures.

Solidarity economies are almost exclusively small-scale experiments and operations, often framed as the crucible for new economic forms based on moral and social principles (see Miller 2010; Kawano 2020). Despite complicity in the economic systems they oppose, the ethnographies of Aptekar, Giles and others demonstrate alternative economies contributing to a 'counter-hegemonic search

for the already-existing alternatives overlooked by anticapitalist critique’ and resisting the ‘tendency’ for ‘capitalism to both create needs and discover new uses for things’ through their auxiliary relations to the market (Giles 2015; 2018a; 2018b, p. 220; McIntyre 1997, p. 43). Unlike the large capitalist or socialist systems, solidarity economies are unconcerned with mathematised, macroeconomic issues of demand or supply (see Kornai 1979; Mirowski 1989; Leeds 2016). Instead, their scale demonstrated that ‘...the economy is embedded in kinship and other social relations’ (Gregory 2012, p. 380). Solidarity economies are both radical experiments and immanent negotiations with the conditions of the present.

Solidarity Economies and Crisis

The anthropological literature on solidarity economies has benefited from the social response to the European austerity crises of recent years (Cabot 2016; Muehlebach 2012; Rozakou 2016b; Theodossopoulos 2019; Rakopoulos 2013). The scholarship on the collective responses to crisis has featured participants’ emic concerns – which questioned the entanglement and complicity in forms of resistance, and political efficacy (Theodossopoulos, 2016; Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021). Neoliberalism is inextricably tied to contemporary solidarity economies, at the same time forging new communities and political demands that challenge this hegemony. Muehlebach, for instance, studies volunteering and its connection to an insidious ‘neoliberal morality’ in post-Fordist Italy, noting its contrast to Mauss’ 20th century characterisation of the ‘French welfare state as a giant modern version of the potlatch’, where ‘society was

rediscovering the joy of public giving by rehabilitating the long-forgotten ethos of gifting...' against a 'tradesman morality' (Muehlebach 2012, p. vii). Other scholars have instead connected this shift towards care and volunteering as a product of spontaneous, implicitly feminist politics.

Kouki and Chatzidakis' study of solidarity economies in the Greek crisis shows austerity programs most catastrophically effect the 'spheres of production, reproduction, and care' the traditional domain for women under capitalist gender roles, crisis brings gender inequality into sharp relief (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021; p. 880). This follows the broader trend under neoliberalism where detraditionalization and the changing pattern of women's labour position is paired with class stratification (see McDowell 2008). In response to these conditions, solidarity economies create ethics and practices blurring the '...boundaries between familial and civic responsibilities, the public and the private', particularly in sharing caring responsibilities (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021; p. 887). Kouki and Chatzidakis find such movements emphasise care and social reproduction without being explicitly feminist, representing 'reorientation away from traditional forms of protest politics and oppositional activism', decentering narratives of 'heroic masculinity, and more into the everyday and the banal', into what is deemed 'feminist solidarities' (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021, p. 892-893). Such projects reflect a desire beyond the politics of the commons or popular feminism (Kasir & Carbonella 2008; Baxter 2002; Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021). They instead emphasise unpaid domestic labour, echoing the autonomist feminist argument that reproductive labour and traditional

women's labour should be valued and compensated for (Federici 1975; Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021, p. 892-893). The centring of care and social reproduction within social movement and hence solidarity economies, can be understood through this implicit feminism.

A valuing and exploitation of care and reproductive labour are not mutually exclusive, however. It is likely that regimes of 'Neoliberal morality' go hand in hand with a strengthening of politics around social reproduction. Certainly, Mauss' romantic vision of the state is brought into sharp relief in confronting the present reality of post-Fordist economic practices and 'Neoliberal solidarities' facilitating the state's moral and fiscal recidivism (Muehlebach 2012; McNamara 2021a). This argument is reminiscent of E.P Thompson's work on the 'moral economy' (Thompson 1971). Thompson argues that the proletariat's feels historically entitled to rebellion under conditions of famine such was only prefaced on the acceptance of the superiority of the feudal aristocracy-cum-capitalist class (Thompson 1971; Carrier 2018). To reiterate, an insight that Kouki and Chatzidakis share with feminist scholarship and EP Thompson, is an awareness and problematising of a state, patriarchy and or feudal order's dependence on those it presides over.

This argument is expanded upon in contemporary scholarship around the Greek austerity crisis. Again, prominent in these studies is the nexus between 'new forms of collective action, community and social health emerging in moments of somatic and social need' and 'crisis, neoliberalism and austerity' (Cabot 2016, pp.

153, 162-163). Ethnographic data features this binary, and the reflexive identification of this contradiction by its participants (Cabot 2016, p. 152; Rozakou 2016a, 2016b; Theodossopoulos 2016). Likewise, Rozakou's solidarity initiative participants connect '... food, protest and solidarity', to the austere state (Rozakou 2016a, p. 185; Theodossopoulos 2019, p.173). Such reflexivity, it is argued, reflects a political shift from demands to the state towards mutual aid, in response to the failures of parliamentary political organisation against austerity (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021, pp. 878, 884).

For politically motivated groups that wanted to seize power and/or parliament, this is an unsatisfying answer. In Theodossopoulos' ethnographic fieldwork, members of the KKE - the Greek Communist Party were dismissive, arguing that these solidarity economies 'exonerate the state', preferring traditional political agitation through party building, electoralism and Leninist revolution (Theodossopoulos 2016, p. 167). This critique follows from Marx and Engels' classic argument that '...philanthropic charity (of the bourgeois-socialist variety) facilitates and reproduces existing capitalist hierarchies', a critique repeated by Luxemburg, Lenin, Wilde and even Zizek (Theodossopoulos 2016, p. 167-169; Theodossopoulos 2020, p. 140). The riposte made by volunteers was that the KKE effectively argued that the poor should starve in order to fuel social change, and given that communism was far away, it excused inaction in the face of poverty (Theodossopoulos 2016; p. 176). Nonetheless, KKE members agreed that without the power to make systemic change, one should still do all that is "humanly possible" to help others (Theodossopoulos 2016; p. 181).

Theodossopoulos explores the emic debate in political usefulness of solidarity economies that arose consistently during fieldwork (Theodossopoulos 2020). One perspective, related to the revolutionaries, is uncompromising and sees all attempts at solidarity or charity as legitimising the austerity status quo, while the other side argues for '...strategic compromise as an essential part of protracted resistance' (Theodossopoulos 2020, p. 134). The solidarity economy is not a quandary about transformative potential and perpetuation of the status quo, but these issues structure a collective with an ethical-political imperative (Lazar 2017). Solidarity economies may empower communities while possibly depoliticising the crisis, and make headway in other cultural spheres in the wake of this deadlock (Theodossopoulos 2016, p. 167). The presence of such organisations has seen a replacement of the vocabulary of charity with solidarity, and a de-stigmatisation of gift-giving in Greek society (Theodossopoulos 2020; pp. 141-142; Rozakou 2016a, p. 186). The shift in rhetoric is not exclusively mutual aid organisations. Rebranding with 'solidarity' is used in reactionary efforts to ward off redistributive justice, wealthy philanthropists doing the very same thing to redress the wider ideological asymmetries between aid providers and recipients' (Theodossopoulos 2020, p. 146; Theodossopoulos 2016, p. 171). Theodossopoulos even goes so far as to argue that 'humanitarian solidarity is more valuable in its role as a means of broadening the political awareness of those who participate in it, than it is as a mechanism for providing help to those in need', a comment on the multifaceted role of solidarity economies (Theodossopoulos 2020, p. 181).

As this section deals with a number of examples of recent politicised responses to crisis through the solidarity economy, and the dynamics of internal debate about political utility is not only a productive question towards solidarity economies in general, but a demonstration of the type of questions raised in my thesis. The importance of the solidarity economy, I argue, is not limited to its discourses, but the total economic, social and political nexus that binds a community. A more complete understanding of how the economies I studied sustained themselves despite and through their ideologies and constituency requires an engagement with kinship and

Containment

Speaking of care and social reproduction in an economy must consider how community that it serves is encompassed. For solidarity economies, circulating material objects and care is a given, and given its moral, political and social element, we require a language to understand the system's set of ethics, political narratives and subjectification, or a collective ethical-political subject. The collective ethical-political subject refers to the Foucauldian understanding of subjectivation that occurs in a collective, that is posited on a political-ethical project (Lazar 2017; McNamara 2021a). Lazar's anthropological approach employs 'containment' to explain how such a collective is formed through identification with political narratives, and unconsciously, through kinship practices that are material, social and sensorial (Lazar 2017). Lazar's monograph, 'The Social Life of Politics' demonstrates the myriad of functions that unions hold

in Argentinian society, in communities, families, businesses and places of education, described through therapeutic and familial terms (Lazar 2017). Lazar describes this collective subjectivity that allows arduous struggle, defeats and setbacks, through political narratives and kinship structures of care and support (Lazar 2017). Containment is enacted through the quasi-therapeutic relationship from delegate to worker, ‘...connecting their personal problems to wider structural issues’, creating collective ethical subjects in response, which is socialised through everyday actions like a ‘chat over coffee and cigarettes in the break times’, to organised events like delegate training schools (Lazar 2017; pp. 19, 114).

This approach sutures weaknesses in solidarity economy and the theory of containment both: solidarity economy finds its role in containment through providing material care and social reproduction alongside the ‘political encompassment’ of containment; containment is a product of ongoing embedded economic relations (Lazar 2017; p. 145; McNamara 2021b). The politics of solidarity economies must also be understood as advancing political goals, subjectification and social cohesivity while continually renewing its base of support. I argue containment is applicable to both RT and CUK, despite holding vastly different membership numbers and levels of commitment – twelve thousand Facebook page members to around thirty rotating volunteers. Containment can account for differences within a solidarity economy, as well as in comparing them, whether it be a shared vision as Marxist-Leninist insurrection and promoting the party for that sake, or a progressive sharing culture

benefitting LGBTIQ people (McNamara 2021b). Given these insights, it is contingent upon the politics of solidarity economies to determine to how, for who and to what extent political encompassment comes about. For this purpose, I commence by addressing the politics of Rough Trade Melbourne.

Anarchism? Prefigurative Politics and Hybrid Strategy

Rough Trade Melbourne, a group self-described as anarchist, requires both an explanation of that ideology, and the types of practices that follow from this. Anarchism advocates struggle against capital, the state and unjustified hierarchy. The definition of anarchism practiced in Rough Trade however, emphasises prefigurative politics and hybrid strategy which emphasises that ‘the liberation of everyday life is an essential component of anti-authoritarian revolutionary change’ (Laurence 2010, p. 63). In a departure from ‘classical’ anarchism, grounded in socialist thought of last century, this is disparagingly labelled as ‘lifestyle anarchism’ (Bookchin 1995; Gordon 2009). Bookchin critiques this tendency ‘a personalistic commitment to individual autonomy and a collectivist commitment to social freedom’, finding this tendency to be forfeiting revolutionary struggle (Bookchin 1995, p. 4; Price 2009). Academic consensus is split between agreement that the ‘new school’, is indeed characterised by experimental communities, ecology, tactics of spontaneity, affinity groups, collective decision making. Others still challenge this division as a caricature, arguing that hybrid strategy and prefigurative politics are anarchist in both the ‘new school’ and ‘old school’, the historicization of this polarisation of tactics is

clear (Gordon 2009; Graeber 2002; 2014; Price 2009; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009, p. 19; White 2011).

Lifestyle anarchism, moving away from mass political movements, parties and organisation, represents a turn towards piecemeal, de-politicised consumer-based choices (Portwood-Stacer 2013). While Portwood-Stacer isolates this to a 'particular aspect of ... The culture of contemporary US anarchism', 'rather than a definitive, exhaustive account of an entire movement', anarchism as a political movement has declined (Portwood-Stacer 2013, p. 11). Some have argued instead it is a practice, such as in Portwood-Stacer's account of American lifestyle anarchists who view it as an unattainable goal to struggle towards (Graeber 2002; Portwood-Stacer 2013, p. 78, 81). A similar movement has occurred with the centring of indigenous knowledge forms and the disappearance of anarchism in the mid-20th century, as political movements emerging in recent years have eschewed the label (Saed 2017; Turner 2006). Prominent movements associated with anarchist politics do not identify as such, including Chiapas' Neozapatismo and Democratic Confederation in Rojava, Marxist-Leninist insurgencies who later developed their ideologies with a mixture of anarchist, indigenous, feminist, ecological practices, and grassroots democracy. Anarchism has moved towards an ideology of practice.

Prefigurative politics is immanent anarchist political practice, where the means of achieving this future are consistent with its ends. They are employed '...by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that

embody the desired transformation', rather than asking (Leach 2013, p. 1004; Jeffrey & Dyson 2016, p. 78). Such tactics reflect the broader anarchist method of direct action - doing an action that unites means and ends, rather than appealing to authorities. Ethnographies of the solidarity economies invoking this anarchist element have found its implementation wanting, citing issues from racism to co-optation by governments (Borowiak et al. 2018, pp. 582-585; Nelms 2015). Lou's ethnography of anarchist 'freeganism' and 'freecycling' discusses the weakness of left-wing movements in the 21st century, and demonstrates the importance of 'hybrid tactics', which speaks to the essential strategy of compromise required in political organising.

Hybrid tactics are employed in 'freegan' 'freecycling' group through a 'Really, Really Free Market', demonstrates in Lou's ethnography in another solidarity economy in Hong Kong (Lou 2019, p. 250; Gordon 2009). Much like Rough Trade, Lou's fieldwork shows activists only accessed a certain degree of freedom through their practice, without major impacts on the function of capitalism (Lou 2019, p. 250). They create a community of people living an ethical lifestyle promoting self-discipline, and a transient freedom through occupying public places and subverting capitalist economic practices (Lou 2019, p. 256, 259). However, the compromise of Lou's solidarity economy and need for further use of hybrid tactics is demonstrated as the market refuses to take profits, and becomes unsustainable due to rent, and dissolves (Lou 2019). Gordon does not find that 'hybrid strategies' to be any less anarchist, rather a reflection of the capacity of the anarchist movement (Gordon 2009). This facilitates a low

intensity, low engagement lifestyle engagement, who feel connected to the ethos of anarchism, but not necessarily the organising that entails reviving such a movement.

LGBTIQ & Queer Communities

In this study, I come to show how Rough Trade provides an important institution for the Melbourne LGBTIQ community, and touches on several disparate issues in queer studies. I follow calls to construct an economic anthropology combining ‘...queer epistemologies with substantivist and historical approaches’, rejecting ‘pink money’ and mainstream the queer economies literature that pinkwashes capitalocentrism (Peñaloza 1996; Gluckman & Reed 2012; Ho 2018, p. 148). Redistributive elements like those found in Rough Trade is explored in Stout’s queer erotic economies, which demonstrates the blurring between ‘real’ and ‘commodified’ relationships found between tourists and sex workers in Cuba (Stout 2014). LGBTIQ ethnography not only shows how gender and sexuality change economies, but the ways their communities are formed.

The digital anthropologies literature has recognised the importance of the internet for community formation, containment and care in the LGBTIQ community, and was a significant element of participation in Rough Trade, creating a safe space through pre-vetting on the internet (see Miller 2011; Scheuerman et al 2018). Ethnography of the LGBTIQ community has shown positive outcomes for queer people over social media, including identity-making for queer students with disabilities (Miller 2017, p. 509). These platforms are

used also by the LGBTIQ people 'to publicly announce their identities', find support, write articles on social justice and to build community for transgender youth of colour (Miller 2017, p. 512; Wargo 2019; Singh 2013). In contexts of isolation that marginalised people, such as LGBTIQ youth may encounter, such private, non-physical avenues can be preferable.

Self-Care

One frame in which marginalised people come to care for themselves, build capacity to engage politically, and withstand trauma is the discourse of self-care. Self-care need not be simply considered a depoliticised neoliberal trend, as it has a deep historical role in 'building sustainable and transformative' feminist organisations (Michaeli 2017, p. 50). Nicol and Yee promote 'radical self-care' in the context of the academy as women of colour (Nicol & Yee 2017). This means 'learning to prioritise our well-being and survival', following bell hooks, Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldua, who see these task of self-care as 'revolutionary and transformative.' in fighting against 'racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression' (Nicol & Yee 2017, p. 133-134). It is through this personal-cum-political fulfilment that they reconnect the person to the '...larger collective struggle for social justice for those who are marginalized, silenced, and disempowered' (Nicol & Yee 2017, p. 135). Similarly, Dutton finds that self-care imparts '...agency and self-determination' in healing from sexual assault, despite the practice being 'undermined and commodified within the contemporary North American neoliberal context' (Dutton 2014, p. 1). From this, Dutton builds a conception of 'queer self-care', that questions the stereotypical image of self-

care, going against the victim-blaming discourses of 'risk management' and 'prevention' strategies, and centre survivor agency (Dutton 2014, pp. 3-5).

Studying trans activist groups, Edelman shows how self-care is achieved not through 'solitary and normative resilience strategies but within and through spaces of coalitional action.' (Edelman 2020, p. 110-111). Given the precarious space for its membership that negotiates between '...the difficult and painful articulations of lives that feel worth living and deaths that feel okay dying', Edelman looks to counter the precarity and suicidality of trans communities (Edelman 2020, p. 109). This is particularly important as queer people, especially activists of colour often neglect self-care, leading to 'burnout, compassion fatigue, and in some cases suicidal ideation.' (Vaccaro & Mena 2011, p. 339). McMaster advocates practices of 'radical self-care', that is the combination of 'ameliorating the bad feelings associated with living through "capitalist white heteropatriarchy"' and to 'disrupt and interrupt such an oppressive system' (McMaster 2017, p. 5). It is easy to connect care in the queer community to an anarchist ethic of prefigurative politics, where the rewards of acting ethically are not put off or held ransom by the powers that be. Thus, acts of giving, receiving and trading by LGBTIQ people in solidarity economies can be understood thus as community-creating, identity and life affirmation.

Class

Class holds importance as an economic position and identity. Engaging in this topic requires a reflexive angle, as my informers were almost all working-class

identifying, both distancing themselves from and simultaneously some accepted aspects of middle classness. To understand class dynamics in a setting of emic and politicised notions of class requires understanding the growth of the service economy and the neoliberal shift away from class as a discourse. Quantitative data has shown that most people in Australia have shifted to seeing themselves as middle class, rather than working-class as they did until 80s, all while wealth inequality has rapidly increased (Shephard & Biddle 2017). This follows the observation that neoliberalism has weakened class identification (see Ost 2000; Merlyn 2007). It is to be noted that for this reason, my use of middle-class as a characterisation throughout the thesis reflects this cultural attitude, and may only reflect possible upward mobility, or attainment of education – not a necessary contradiction of a participant’s working class identification.

A number of theorists and schools of thought have spoken to this distinctly neoliberal condition, characterised by a loss of class solidarity and a decentring of traditional class as a discourse and move towards ‘identity politics’, retreating from the traditional politics of labour rights and Marxist ideas of class (Collins 2012, p. 12-14; Turner 2006). Those concerned with social reproduction have attempted to efface the liberal distinction between ‘...production of commodities and reproduction of labor power’ and have hence moved towards a valuing of reproductive labour and care (Bhattacharya 2017, p. x; Graeber 2011; Chatzidakis et al 2020). In social movements and their ethnographic study, this has meant an expansion of class, placing greater concern with social issues of indigeneity and feminism - encompassing fights around the commons, austerity

budgets, privatisation and 'accumulation by dispossession' (Collins 2012, pp. 12-15; Kasmir & Carbonella 2008; Federici 1975; Turner 2006). Class in this conception is not merely an economic position, but political and cultural (see Thompson 1963).

Marxism-Leninism

Finally, I address the relevance of Marxist-Leninist ideology of CUK, through its relationship with the ACP. Marxism-Leninism is the theoretical edifice produced by Stalin, following in the Leninist tradition of revolutionary Marxism – a right wing tendency in early 20th century Marxism, that rejected the electoral politics coming out of late 19th century Germany Marxism, or direct worker control advocated by anarcho-syndicalists. It advocates seizure of state power and believe communism must be brought about by an enlightened party informed by historical materialism (see Engels 1907). Rather than focusing on the ideology itself, I am interested in the effects of Marxist-Leninist organising, especially ethnographic scholarship that comments on its relation to kinship and political change. Rather than supposing these parties follow the iron law of oligarchy, are uniquely despotic or change-resistant, I take Shah's work on Maoist Naxalite parties to argue communist parties can both create egalitarian social relations, while also perpetuating inequality and privilege, and despite this, create progressive intra-organisational change.

A critique of Marxist parties is their mythologising of the communist horizon, while suppressing the working-class, promoting authoritarianism and ultimately

becoming a new ruling class. Shah's ethnography of the Maoist Naxalite guerrilla army in Northern India, however, explores a guerrilla movement that continually resists the Indian state and produces egalitarian kin relations, and grapples with class, gender and caste hierarchies even under a constant state of war (Shah 2006; 2019). The revolutionary guerrillas base their operations in the jungles of Northern India, against mining companies who encroach onto indigenous Adivasi land. The intimacy between the Adivasi villages and the Naxalite guerrillas are so strongly felt that even seismic geopolitical phenomena were experienced in terms of clashes between kin (Shah 2019, p. 23). These groups become intertwined with one another through kinship networks - the guerrilla army acting as 'another home' for Adivasis, creating intense familial ties that creates both dedicated revolutionaries, and in the same way, leads to pain, feuds and fatal betrayals (Shah 2019, pp. 145, 264). In the context of genocidal land clearing and imposition of Hindutva ideology and capitalism on the indigenous population, what prompted Adivasi to move between the guerrilla army, to village life and even joining the state-backed Adivasi death squads, was but familial disputes. Here Shah follows a similar approach to the Gens, especially Ho, in building from the grassroots ethnographic context to larger geopolitical issues.

To reiterate arguments of Greek austerity scholars like Theodossopoulos and in Lazar's 'containment', political and ethical concerns are immanent to the everyday practices of such collective projects, and similarly for the Naxalites guerillas, 'Communism was not simply a utopian dream of a future society but influenced the remaking of revolutionary subjects and the restructuring of social

relations.’ (Shah 2019, p. 264). Shah highlights the unequal class relations between high caste metropolitan Hindu leaders and local Adivasi tribal people, seeking armed insurrection against the state and transnational mining corporations through protracted guerrilla warfare (Shah 2019). However, the high-caste revolutionary leadership also unconsciously project sexist, casteist, Brahmanical values onto the egalitarian Adivasi (see Shah and Pettigrew 2017). The Naxalite leadership supplant traditional sexual freedom with party approved monogamy, they ban egalitarian mahua alcohol consumption which in mainstream Hindu society are viewed as a shameful vice (Shah 2019, p. 219-222, 232; Shah 2011). This demonstrates the dangers of a higher-class ruling leadership within such organisations (Shah 2019, pp. 155-156).

However, the power dynamics and cultures in these communist social movements are not set in stone. Internal party democracy and deliberation is a functional process, and changes within the organisation work dialectically between the politically revolutionary, but culturally reactionary leadership and the egalitarian culture of Adivasis. The Maoists’ position had once been to shunt issues of gender equality – treating it as a matter of ‘superstructure’, a mere chimera that would dissipate after the revolution, but after years of internal dispute, especially female activists and decision making processes through the party has brought gender equality to the fore and implemented as a precondition for socialism (Shah 2019, p. 208). Hence communist parties show several social effects – creating egalitarian social relations, perpetuation of class inequality and progressive intra-organisational transformation.

4. Interviewing Young LGBTIQ Roughies

This chapter examines Rough Trade, a Facebook-based trade and gifting network centred in the Northern suburbs, providing a space for the circulation of care in

the LGBTIQ community. The LGBTIQ community, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer, which is referred to interchangeably as the Queer community. Rough Trade is a solidarity economy as it uses trade and gifting, promoting an ostensible anarchist ideology and its participants come to view this as a political act for the LGBTIQ community in varying degrees. In this chapter, I first introduce Rough Trade research participants and explore their relations to the group through ethnographic interviews. I argue that the organisation is based on a loose kinship system that circulates commodities as care. I also demonstrate bifurcated engagement and kinning, based on their tendency to give or receive and whether or not they see the project as politically meaningful. Rough Trade, in providing care for the LGBTIQ community allows both political engagement for few, and self-care through ethical consumption and a 'community feel' for most.

I joined the Rough Trade Facebook group as a suggestion from my sister, who had been using it while living in share houses in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne, given my interest in alternative economies. Immediately noticing its announcement of anti-oppression, anarchist politics and rules against bigotry on the front page. Based in Melbourne and centred on the Northern suburbs, especially the City of Darebin and Moreland areas. Known as an epicentre of 'lefty' politics, it hosts progressive businesses, LGBTIQ organisations, unions, community gardens and various environmentalist projects. The area also discontinued of Australia day celebrations and renamed parks and electorates previously named after John Batman, a settler colonial official known to be

implicated in the genocide and dispossession of Aboriginal people. The 'North' as a part of the inner suburban metropole is also undergoing gentrification - its proximity to the city, universities and employment, and status as a 'cultural capital' has meant an explosion of development (Overell 2009, p. 684-685). The Northern suburbs exemplifies progressive metropolitan suburbia - cultural and identity politics, concentration of wealth and a groundswell of gentrification (Overell 2009). In this context that the cultural ethos of the anarchist-influenced Rough Trade thrived, finding all but one of my participants identified with the LGBTIQ community, and were nonbinary or transgender.

The interviews I conducted on Rough Trade users found a complex of reasons for the practice of giving, taking or swapping commodities – this ranged from material needs and convenience, to a sense “community” or a “community feel”, ecological responsibility and political care for young LGBTIQ people. The participants lived almost exclusively in share houses in the wealthy, gentrifying Northern suburbs of Melbourne. Most had the privilege of living out of home as students, supported by the state through subsidy methods like the living out of home allowance, student and other welfare payments - the participants had been either forced to leave, or preferred to live outside of home because of an atmosphere of queer/transphobia. While isolated from the social and familial networks of their youth and finding themselves in new suburbs, new to university, they struggled with lower employment, lack of cash, social isolation, and usually had a significant social presence on the internet. This is how the material and affective care of a solidarity economy became so popular.

These participants form structural roles in Rough Trade as a solidarity economy. Rough Trade is spoken of in a number of different terms by my participants and myself: as “group” or “page” in the internet sense, a method or platform for trading things - as in to “Rough Trade” as a verb, or to “put it up on Rough Trade”, and finally, as a “community”. Not a traditional community, but an imagined community that is manifest through the acts of non-monetary exchanges and gifting over the internet, where market-like exchange of commodities substitute functions as care (Fox 2004). Through exploring my interviews, I identify each participant’s identity and reasons for participating, showing that the LGBTIQ community gives or receives from the group depending on their material and social needs - either to provide themselves or others care, comfort or essential goods when they face fatigue, illness or have no money. For Mac, the oldest participant who ‘admin-ed’ a few other related groups for the queer community: dumpster diving and freebies, working for the solidarity economy was a form of activism. I show how Mac’s recoiling from middle-class heteropatriarchal society inspires a queer community aid for younger queer people. I also show how other participants benefit from this. Rachel represents the complement to this relationship. A student also disconnected from their family interstate, having a debilitating disability without NDIS, Rachel relies on Rough Trade for several purposes. Their combination of isolation, unemployment, disability and gender queerness prompts them to rely on RT for consumer goods and lifestyles they cannot afford. I then consider the other participants, whose participation reflects a position on the spectrum between

politics and lifestyle. The first is Tim, whose ongoing relationship with their conservative family allows them greater privilege than other participants, using the platform to promote their crafts and improve their lifestyle conditions. I look at Ben's ludic ethic and perspective on RT contrasts to their commitment to anarchist politics. I also include Pooja's and Jay's lifestylism, and the self-sufficiency and post-activist lifestylism of Alfred.

From these participants, I identify the structure of Rough Trade based around beneficiaries, givers and traders. I show how Mac takes on the role as a contributor to the solidarity economy. Through Mac's dumpster diving, 'freeganism' and survivalism, tjeu promote a solidarity founded in queer oppression. Mac particularly embodies the argument raised by Edelman, that trans activism is a form of care particularly important in making life worth living (Edelman 2020). Rachel's reliance on the solidarity economy and mental health tribulations on the other hand, demonstrates self-care, as they use Rough Trade for consumption habits (Dutton 2017; McMaster 2014; Michaeli 2017). I also find most participants, such as Pooja's ethical consumer lifestyle, and Jay's thrifty sequestering of prestige goods reflects Aptekar's 'green-washed convenience' (Aptekar 2016). Ben's and Alfred's political anarchism expresses a distance the organisation has to authentic politics (cf. Gordon 2009; Bookchin 1995). Additionally, the collective experience of individual trades is articulated with the "feeling of community", rather than a commitment to an "authentic" community. Instead, the RT solidarity economy facilitates a section of the LGBTIQ community.

Mac

My most impactful informant was Mac. A white 28-year-old nonbinary person renting in a share house. Mac was an admin of a queer dumpster diving group and was involved in a number of other 'freegan' groups. They were an avid participant and tireless contributor to Rough Trade. Mac had joined RT six years ago while still attending university, and had since traded, given and taken many things. I had managed to catch them one afternoon for a call after contacting them on Facebook, talking to them from a seat in the middle of the city with the phone to my side, and my laptop to record and write notes. Mac had traded "a lot", giving away "a yoga mat, mowing lawns in exchange for apple cider" and trading their foraged blackberries for hiking boots. While Mac also emphasised the practice of 'decluttering' and recycling as important, their participation came from a sense of duty in "helping their community" – the LGBTIQ community.

The experience of being queer was the explicit reason for their involvement in Rough Trade. Mac was an admin of the group and engaged with it as a form of activism. It was one of many Facebook groups that allowed them to give things to the mostly vulnerable and left-wing LGBTIQ people, without any strings attached – alongside involvement in "Northside freegans and dumpster diving (queer friendly edition)" and "queer babbies need things", for instance. The explicit rhetoric and political identity of participants including Mac was decidedly left-wing with rhetoric implying affinities to anarchist, environmentalist and working-class ideas. Their working through a purportedly anarchist organisation

and tactics reflected a distancing from mainstream society through an ethical-political commitment that surpassed other members of the group.

They felt a responsibility for the direction of the group in the last few years, owing to their very active role as a contributor. While other participants spoke of the group speculatively, Mac was knowledgeable about the “admin team”, and had a grasp on the going on behind the scenes, recalling history and recent changes in the group. Mac’s commitment to building the solidarity economy, which I argue reflects the focus of the organisation in general, was for the sake of the queer community. Mac’s proactive engagement with RT and other solidarity economies, included dumpster diving, foraging and scavenging. They framed this through not only material necessity, but through a visceral, affective political orientation towards commodities, they relished recovering ‘abject’, but still useful objects that the middle-class were averse to (cf. Giles 2014). Mac represents one of the two essential roles in RT – as the ‘giver’. In the section that follows, I describe their relation to RT as a product of three interconnected elements. The first is their identity, which is made apparent through experiences of queerphobia and marginalisation, and the conscious political connection to class and identity divisions in society. I then show how they connects this personal narrative to a political rebellion against a hostile, ‘middle-class’ society. Next, I speak to a desire to provide for other people, especially other vulnerable LGBTIQ people. Finally, I speak to Mac’s pragmatic negotiation of politics in relation to their interest vis-à-vis the state. *

Mac's engagement in the solidarity economy was a matter of their identity – in particular personal experiences of marginalisation and political convictions. They had experienced marginalisation by both their family and wider society for their LGBTIQ identity. Mac framed their participation in RT in bitter opposition to the conservative middle-class culture of their birth family. Mac 's experiences of queerphobia was the reason for their dedicated involvement to the network. In the interview, they answered sparingly to questions about their family: they 'grew up in north-eastern suburbs, Doncaster. Parents were both 'Uni' educated. one from [the] country, one from [the] city'. Doncaster being a wealthy, conservative suburb, betrayed their middle-classness. However, they had 'not a lot of contact with their family of origin'. I didn't wish to probe any further, sensing a certain trauma, and moved to other topics. With barely any contact with their family, and struggles with precarious employment in hospitality, they had left their teaching job due to mental health issues. Their reasons for participation were visceral, clearly directed at carving a space outside of heteronormative society, at a safe distance from the family and community that pushed them away.

Mac distinguished RT as something very different from the new support groups that were "popping up" in response to COVID-19. Mac prefaced that the participants of these groups came from "all sorts of other class and financial backgrounds, and I know that *I do* feel more hesitant to reach out to them". Instead of wasting their time on middle class people who were guilty of "selfishness" and "not seeing us [queer people, and other marginalised people]

as their community”, instead, Mac insisted that “...I’m going to watch out for the community that I built”. It was melancholic, hearing around Mac’s abandonment and vitriol, at the same time glad they were using RT and similar groups to make a positive impact. Mac’s framing of their downward mobility and politics against the middle classes became more apparent when they asked me about theorising Rough Trade at the end of the interview. Once I introduced Mary Douglas*, they connected the ‘dirt’ concept to various freegan practices, observing how different “types of people” would dumpster dive, while hard rubbish picking was more acceptable for the middle class. In this way, Mac framed their work in Rough Trade not only against homophobia, but in the rhetoric of a class conflict.

Mac’s protective ethos was piqued, thanks to their intuitions about the group. ‘Even in the last 6 months, I felt everyone was getting more precarious. Retail taking a downturn.’ They noticed people were in more and more dire straits, posting more medical bills, for instance. They were aware of the asymmetrical negligence and corruption they expected in the wake of the COVID crisis (Balamayuran 2021; Vilanica et al. 2020). Mac claimed that ‘...when it comes to the doctors, landlords... the state doesn’t take goodwill as payment’. There would be more desperation, and hence money, not just gifts and goodwill circulating through RT and other networks to protect vulnerable people in their community. I empathised with Mac’s anxiety, facing precarity and the need to pay for their right to live, realising how much more meaningful Rough Trade was in its imagined effects as a space where affect and emotion were above currency. Their efforts, from merely participating in a mutually beneficial trade or to

providing keys and locations for ‘dumpstering’, were all explicitly political acts. Mac’s work in Rough Trade was replete with an intersectional analysis of class that prioritised the interests of marginalised people. Mac saw themselves as overseeing a community, reaching out to other queer people and vulnerable minority groups, wanting to help those who were pushed to leave home and faced discrimination. However, this marginalisation, and host of negative experiences was only one side of the coin of RT. The solidarity economy of RT also provided a sense of community, personal fulfillment as a hobby and ethically supply goods to queer, left-wing and marginalised people.

In this arrangement, Mac had a proactive role in helping other marginalised people and the reproduction of this community. In fact, participants spoke of overwhelming positivity with their interactions on the webpage and in person. Mac, much like the other participants I interviewed appreciated RT for its “community-feel”, and emphasised the “niceness” and generosity of Rough Traders. They had several trades they could recount and reflected positively on their experience with people in it. While everyone else had a casual commitment to putting surplus things on RT, alongside sharing things with friends, giving away to “op shops” and putting stuff up on Facebook marketplace, and went out of their way to find things to build the Rough Trade community. Mac did this not simply because of the failure of society, but played into a mixture of survivalist, scavenger and mutual aid tropes.

They were inspired by books from their childhood about survivalists in early colonial history, they identified with Deny King, the famous survivalist of 30s Tasmania, and thought “I could sort of imagine myself doing that. And when I found RT I totally saw myself in that, being anticapitalist and having people help each other”. At the same time, they were weary of the American fringe right-wing ‘prepper’ culture that was in uncomfortable cultural propinquity, explaining that ‘the term prepper is too doomer-y for me’, instead listing terms that suited their way of thinking, such as “positive-deep adaptation, drawdown and deep ecology”. Unlike the other participants, Mac actively sought out ways to make gifts in Rough Trade. While they did also trade things for their own comfort and enjoyment, they spoke of dumpster diving, foraging and hard rubbish collecting as things they would scout for. I would often observe Ed’s making offers on RT and other Facebook mutual aid groups, to donate or pick up items during and after my Rough Trade research, coming to support CUK as well.

Mac however, recognised the limitations of the ideologies Rough Trade engaged in, and had to negotiate their relationship with anarchism and the state, in parallel as they did with self-sufficiency and community solidarity. Mac’s work in RT as a political project compensated for the government’s failure at ‘stepping up to the plate’, whether the government had failed to or was unwilling. While participating in a putatively anarchist network, describing their politics as “...anticapitalist and [for] having people help each other”. Their relationship to the state was nonetheless one of pragmatism. Rather than outright reject and antagonise the government, they kept a baseline mistrust, and expressed

negative feelings. Instead, it was framed as a failed relationship where the austere state had failed to uphold its end of the bargain, and thus provoked their rebellion (see Thompson 1973). Rather than a structural opposition Mac spoke for people like themselves: “we don’t trust the government due to the bushfires... and also previous to that” yet they could imagine things being different – “I would love it if we had a government that would step up, but I keep seeing these lost opportunities. People stepping up to the plate are people who historically have been at the bottom of the society”, framing Rough Trade as a “welfare of sorts”. Rough Trade found its place in Mac’s life as a response to the hostility and austerity of their birth family, queerphobic community and the state.

Rough Trade Melbourne’s inclination toward the state could be considered both resistant - creating space for the predominantly LGBTIQ people suffering disproportionate harm and neglect, and synergistic - sustaining the lives and lifestyles of a class of marginalised people who ultimately would contribute to capital and the neoliberal state (Theodossopoulos 2020). Mac recognised their work was not a total alternative to regular consumerism and only played a stopgap role in enabling ‘normal’ lives for the young, queer students or workers. Furthermore, in Mac’s own relation to the practice of RT, it was not as clear cut as pure activism. While they emphasised their activist role in the solidarity economy, they were still looking out for themselves, and were not convinced either way in rejecting society or completely dedicating themselves to selfless charity, or full time solidarity economy that could provide for people’s needs.

They had “a set of keys and am willing to talk to people and get them cut”, but was busy dealing with the everyday life of wage labour or “brushing up on my resume”, as they were doing as their service job disappeared with COVID-19.

Furthermore, Mac’s role in the community as a contributor was tied to their experience and the greater stability and income that came with age. Conversely, the people that Mac sought to help, and those that most actively engaged and received from the solidarity economy’s circulation were financially insecure, young queer people encountering higher education, employment insecurity and moving out of home. Rough Trade allowed a way to care for vulnerable and poor especially of the queer left-wing communities in the North, forming a survivalist identity as well as their own consumption patterns. Mac ethical-political commitment to look after those who suffered under heteropatriarchy, and ultimately, through their political, intersectional understandings, against other combined institutions - capitalism, the state, heteronormativity et cetera (cf. Aptekar 2016; Lou 2019).

Rachel

Rachel held the opposite role to Mac in their Rough Trade membership. They were living in an apartment near the State Library, so we rendezvoused at the cafe down the back and had coffee. They had brown hair, a big smile and a walker. I commented that it was a similar model to my own sister’s one, and noticed it was similarly emblazoned with some quirky fandom and LGBTIQ stickers. They were reminiscent of the bookish Dr. Who obsessed friends I had in

high school. Rachel quite quickly related their own experience of writing their honours thesis, which was about science fiction and its relation to romanticism – connecting Mary Shelley and Jeff Handamer’s *Annihilation*. They told me about their interests, like Jeff, who wrote about topics like ecofascism, and their struggling with chronic illness, and I felt like I was speaking to family. Like many, Rachel found it to be essential for their mental and physical wellbeing. Like most participants I interviewed, they had moved from outside of Melbourne and were now renting in a share-house. Poor and isolated, they accessed RT as a way of attaining commodities and most importantly, to feel connected, as if it were “...a bit of a community, and to reduce waste at the same time”. The importance of RT was compounded by the fact they were young and nonbinary and had recently moved out of home to study. While living in the city, they relied on it to get hobby items, food and plants. They had just finished their thesis, were on the dole and struggling with their disability and relied on Rough Trade for their mental health after their relationship broke down.

Rachel was primarily a beneficiary of RT. For Rachel, participation in Rough Trade, obtaining consumer goods, for them is an act of self-care. That is, the act of giving, receiving and trading between participants of RT thus becomes an act of care, affirmation and community-creating. In what follows, I detail the difficulties of settling into Melbourne, how they come to use the solidarity economy of Rough Trade, and in doing so provide themselves self-care to offset the effects of a hostile society (McMaster 2014, p. 6). I follow Rachel’s story of living in Melbourne, going through various experiences to explore Rachel’s

experience of precarity, marginality and enrichment through RT. I connect this more deeply to social and environmental marginality and displacement that Rachel experiences through their experience in Melbourne. I then focus on the class dimensions that make RT attractive to use. *

For the young, precarious LGBTIQ people who made up my largest group of participants, engaging in the solidarity economy of Rough Trade meant receiving commodities as care. While these trades or giveaways did not produce lasting connections, they did sustain precarious and marginalised identities of queer people, and a larger sense of the LGBTIQ community. Rachel, coming from rural Tasmania, described the great benefit of engaging with RT in the things they received. “I had a bunch of stuff I didn’t really need. Every time my mum came up they would bring stuff up. I had separation anxiety about letting go of my stuff, so it was good”. RT allowed them to feel part of a community, access consumer goods, practice recycling and let go of their old things. Rachel also mentioned a reason for using Rough Trade as a concern for the environment, relating it to their upbringing in Tasmania. RT was more relevant in its emphasis on provisioning with commodities to help their mental health, provide entertainment and offer utility.

They recalled their bouts of depression after having moved to Melbourne, feeling isolated, fatigued and surviving on very little income. Their attempts to be a student and “have a fun experience” going out with friends was hamstrung by their lack of money. They had to learn to tell their friends they couldn’t afford

drinks and spoke of “... how depressing it is to constantly be like, eating oats and spinach”. They found RT was one of the alternative methods of keeping their friendships alive through finding novelty goods and consumables, and saving money so they could go out to bars and clubs. RT was a large and very impactful part of Rachel’s life after they had moved from Tasmania, away from their conservative, anti-LGBTIQ preacher stepfather, and to the Melbourne Metropole to pursue university education. When asked about their trades, they summoned from memory some things they had received and traded away, “Agave, a hoyia plant, pots, a quilt because I don’t have a mattress. Sasha and Nicola my plants, (excitedly) I love them so much!”. RT had also been a boon for Rachel’s mental health, receiving in one trade a “banjolele” - a banjo ukulele hybrid had become their hobby, providing entertainment in their inner-city apartment as they suffered from fatigue and mobility issues, and could rarely leave the house. The importance of piecemeal interactions and care, as gifts and trades through Rough Trade is made clear by the precarity of my participants’ lives. The sense of excitement and enjoyment emanating from these items made sense through the other aspects of Rachel’s life - compared to the sense of despair and painful humour at their living, working and share-house situation.

In a state of social marginality, Rough Trade became one of Rachel’s tools for managing their budget and mental health. Their horrific experiences with share housing, compounded with mental illness, financial stress, university and relationships underlied their need for self-care. Rachel’s experience of social and geographical displacement was the most extreme example of the group, coming

to Melbourne from rural Northern Tasmania as a young student, "... caus my stepdad is very homophobic". "It was really bad for a few years", beginning with staying in their mother's friends' garage, moving due to "unmanageable anxiety". They then moved in with a friend in Rosanna, where they started working in a cafe. There, the owner was "...always being creepy saying I'm hot and sexy, he was always asking me to sit with him. ... It was probably sexual harassment now that I think about it..." at times subtly shaking their head and widening their eyes as they told me about it. They finally left the job after the owner sat them down one day, and asked them to marry someone for a VISA for \$10000, assuring them "its not about sex". However, the instability worked out in their favour. "After that I got on Disability... also I got a \$5000 scholarship for rural relocation", entering the infamously inaccessible National Disability Insurance. Then they were suddenly uprooted, as their friend had suddenly sold their house and forced them to move in with them. The friend delayed telling Rachel because of not wanting to "stress them out". However, the place they moved to was nicer and they helped cover the internet bills, so they stayed for three years; "...then I had a health breakdown and moved in with my sister for a while." The issues were unrelenting.

They moved again soon after, to a "disgusting" place filled to the brim with dirty plates and pets eating from their rubbish bins, then to another place after that with their new girlfriend, the "triples" - a three way relationship, and one cult escapee. They were later joined by two young queer people, friends of Rachel's friends who would otherwise be homeless. They brought heaps of their things,

and their two cats and a dog, to the house, causing even more problems, “My (then) girlfriend was scared of dogs, so she couldn't even eat”. The combination of these factors was devastating to their mental health. “...it became really tense because it was really claustrophobic, everyone was tense and mentally ill or traumatised, me included”. It was too much, and Rachel and their girlfriend broke up. The housing instability only finally ended as Rachel’s mother received a promotion at work, and hence was able to buy an apartment to rent out to them in the CBD. Taking a breath after this story, they explained how Rough Trade impacted on this again through their poverty, “When I moved to Melbourne I was constantly stressed. I was living on my savings the first year.” From then on, they had to be extremely tight with money, getting “into a weird space where I didn’t buy anything for myself, even not buying groceries”. When I asked them about budgeting, they emphasised “balancing out social needs, because otherwise you just become depressed” and “knowing what's going to make you wanna spend stuff” - such as their friends wanting to go out for dinner.

Rachel’s participation in Rough Trade was connected to their class. “I was on centrelink ‘til I was 15”, they said frankly – speaking about their family as a whole, and noted to me how they usually bought things from op shops and wore hand-me-downs. They spoke of their early experience learning budgeting, “We didn't get pocket money, instead we got an allowance, and we learnt excel spreadsheet. That was really good in teaching us how to be careful with money”. They connected their experience of lacking the requisite finances to buy things as a reason for engaging in RT, their instilled practices of budgeting and cultivation

in activities that used little or no capital. “I’m into recycling, do a lot of collage art, I guess I’m a bit of a hoarder, didn’t have a lot of money growing up so I got second hand”, when asked about similar activities to Rough Trade, they listed a number of practices that adapted to their lack of money, especially through relationships, “I make my own cards because I don’t have a lot of money. Like last year was the ‘absolution of guilt’ gift for Christmas, which was good because my sisters have stable jobs and I’m a poor disabled university student.” Rachel’s subjectivity was inseparable from their class and wealth, and interest in Rough Trade was a convenient adaptation to this cash-poorness. In this way, Rachel embodied the corresponding role in the Rough Trade solidarity economy as a receiver of care.

Pooja, Ben, Alfred, Jay

My other participants were more loosely tied to Rough Trade, though still associated with queer communities of the Northern suburbs, in-between giver and receiver roles in the solidarity economies. These people were often in far more comfortable living situations. They still did subscribe genuinely to the values of RT, and the more wealthy and supported participants limited their use of RT because they simply didn’t need it. There were also the cases of people like Ben and Alfred who were cash-poor and used RT for essentials, and due to its affiliation to their political activism and promoting an ethical lifestyle. Jay used Rough Trade as an opportunity to obtain high prestige commodities like cheese or wines, and rarely used the group. Pooja expressed a similar sentiment to Jay – “I REALLY like it when people give away lots of stuff expecting nothing in return. I

like doing that with food and stuff especially because I know people are losing their jobs". After their settling into Melbourne from Mumbai, they used the service for furniture and driving lessons, now only occasionally to facilitate their Desi cooking hobby which was appreciated by the mainly white, often vegetarian membership. Ben on the other hand, found the entire endeavour, and his approach to life to be humorous and ludic, but did not entertain it as meaningfully political. Alfred found it to be both important to enact a collectivist lifestyle, values and relied on it due to their irregular employment, and was also not confident of its political or transformative value.

While there was no hard division between the true middle class and disadvantaged participants, some were luckier than others, and represented a far more privileged and secure social position than their peers. Pooja, though a migrant, seemed to have everything of an established middle-class lifestyle. Thriving in their role in social media and marketing duties for their partners family's company and having grown up in a wealthy borough of Mumbai. They were now producing a "zine for women and nonbinary people of colour", living in a two-bedroom apartment with their partner. For Pooja RT was "... a different way to get stuff, like when I don't have any money, it's a place I can shop". When asked about their politics, while also emphasising being 'very left' like the other participants, but was unable to vote as a non-citizen. Instead, they mentioned how they tried to shop at the Preston Market rather than "Woolies", on this question to directly link consumption to politics (cf. Aptekar 2016).

Emerging from the experience of paying off their visa with their boyfriends help and landing a job due to nepotism, their use Rough Trade was different from other interviewees, reflecting on how their use was more intense early on to acquire goods for their migration. "I'm a really good cook and I didn't have much stuff so I trade meals. I make really good brown food and capitalise on my own culture." Having obtained a mattress, couch, milk crates, driving lessons and even a "pentax point and shoot" camera. These goods, they received from trading paneer and other home cooked meals; mutually benefitting from the largely white vegetarian and vegan community in Rough Trade's desire for Desi food. Jay, though not as wealthy, was comfortable and didn't rely on RT. Their parents were "financially secure", and Jay could now depend on them for money, their father being the main architect of the "Nightingale" housing project. Living in a sharehouse on student allowance, they would "mainly go on there to get stuff I can't afford like cheese or wine".

Ben's participation in Rough Trade produced different meanings. They were a highly political individual "a commie. An anarchist communist", having participated in unionism, campaigning and organising, their perspective on Rough Trade was the only that did not emphasise the 'community', instead saw it as something fun or a joke coming from isolated experiences. While having a similar middle-class background, moving from Gisbourne, a "medium sized town" with "Four fish and chip shops, and one Chinese restaurant". Their tone and joking mood came through over a phone conversation, which extended to their view of Rough Trade and on life. "It's kinda funny. I think it's funny, it's an

inefficient way of doing transactions. Money is a better way of doing stuff, but I like browsing it. There's funny stories. It's enjoyable." When engaged in trades, they emphasised this need for fun: "Sometimes I've been like give me something funny. When I post something, I'll trade something [and tell the other person] you can give me something, surprise me, give me something funny." This ethic extended from Rough Trade to their attempts at socialisation: "I go out of my way to have little encounters with people that are funny, y'know, trading cigarettes for stories".

This humorous ethic was also present in their friendships, and property ownership as they enjoyed "blurred lines around personal property." and "planting toothbrushes in friends' houses... I like spreading a bit of me." Rough Trade served them with a number of trades - they traded away a blender for garden pots, and received some gardening advice during the trade. Perhaps the strangest trade was Ben's receiving a return ticket to Greece for a week. While they were ecstatic about being able to tour Exarcheia, Athens' anarchist district, they were prevented from going due to a court date given their arrest at an international mining conference protest "I definitely couldn't go to Greece without really annoying the government". Their friend Karen went instead, on the promise of photos from Exarcheia. Rough Trade was something fun, but no substitute for actual commitments to politics.

Alfred also saw RT as apolitical. They were highly qualified, and spoke of their work involving "a bit of outdoor guiding, and a little business that does digital

mapping.” but work wasn’t easy to obtain, and Rough Trade helped them get items now and formerly as a student. “They’re both like, pretty ephemeral, they’re not like, super consistent in terms of work. And y’know before I got into that, when I was studying in those areas, resources weren’t enormously prolific either.” Alfred also appreciated the “community ethos”, being a “safe space” and “inclusive space” for people who care about “social justice” without “any of the random beef you see on other groups”. The practice of Rough Trade brought him back to their time in an anarchist collective in Newcastle as a student. Comparing their experiences of living amongst a network of anarchists in Newcastle that would dumpster, and do cookouts once a week, while working in the grassroots UNSW student union.

Alfred continued experimenting with alternative forms of living, maintaining a minimalist lifestyle, and was very used to putting things up on RT. They told me about a number of perishables they had recently given away, and was adamant about maintaining a low number of personal belongings. Through RT, Alfred was able to conduct a lifestyle that drew from anarchist practice through DIY, having recently fixed up someone’s broken violin. Alfred’s use of Rough Trade allowed them to enact anarchist values at different intensities, as their politics changed from being an anarcho-communist, in their student union days, to being “hesitant to participate because everything’s fucked”, and now embraced “living in communities, making stuff happen together” and “leaning towards self-sufficiency... I don’t know if that’s political...”, towards lifestyle anarchism. Alfred didn’t see adequate political potential in Rough Trade, but engaged with it

nonetheless to facilitate his values without much commitment to the stresses of politics.

The pursuing of disparate goals and different dispositions, characterises Rough Trade. The relationship between givers and taker archetypes, embodied in Mac and Rachel was the essence of a solidarity economy that manifests care for Queer people. This also allowed noncommitted participants to engage in a community and acquire goods without understanding the value it had for others. This included Pooja using their culture as capital, to settle in Melbourne and now, alongside Jay, used it to hunt for luxuries. Meanwhile, Alfred's labours for an ethical consumer lifestyle, being unsure about the political efficacy of their participation, and Ben's separation of fun in Rough Trade from serious politics brought into question the meaningfulness of their participation. Rough Trade means commodities are circulated at different intensities, becoming a political platform for some, but certainly not for all.

In the ensuing months, as the lockdown well and truly came into being, I contacted several my informants. I was glad to talk to people during the lockdown, and happy to hear so many were "feeling rich" because of the boost to welfare payments, which offset the level of mental health issues the lockdown brought. Unfortunately for the community and my research, the use of Rough Trade had unfortunately dropped off entirely. Mac had found work in the disability sector, and Jay was doing an AUSLAN course and like many, was adjusting to the isolation through the extra mental health support and socialising

online. While they unanimously agreed that the page hadn't lost relevance, it seemed most activities, let alone alternative economies had shut down over the lockdown. This was a quandary for me, until I talked to Ben, who suggested I attend a volunteer group that was thriving during the pandemic – the Stalinist soup kitchen.

5. Fieldwork and Interviews at Community Union Kitchen

My fieldwork in the Community Union Kitchen (CUK) is a street kitchen or soup kitchen. Unlike the largely individual focused, self-care driven ethical consumption of Rough Trade, Community Union Kitchen had a political mandate as a community-run soup kitchen. It provides a service to the public, a political and social purpose for its participants, and an opportunity for the communist party to recruit from the volunteers. While the Marxist-Leninist party ostensibly

embodies the will of the working class, the membership differentiates between the kinship practices - “serving the people”, and a revolutionary politics. In this way, the relation between politics and kinship practices is attenuated. However, it was this attenuation that was key to the commitment of its membership who, rather than seeing the solidarity economy as an autotelic, open-ended goal without direction, were focused on short-term objectives like recruitment and education. This chapter draws on ethnographic interviews both online and in person, and extensive participant observation from fieldwork, including volunteering and ‘Deep Hanging Out’, compounded with secondary media and sources such as releases from the Australian Communist Party websites and social media (Rosaldo 1994).

My argument is made through three connected sections. First, I introduce the Community Union Kitchen – its membership, its use of space, timetable and origins. I then move to profile various perspectives on its political and charitable nature by its membership. I look at volunteer organiser Kevin’s commitment to the kitchen, Peter’s founding of the Melbourne kitchen and relentless dedication to make a positive space for political conversations and mutual aid. I then look to the centrality of materialism as it is employed ideology of praxis in the kitchen and by the party members. In particular, I show how it manifests the political vision of Bashar, the founder of the project and communist party leader, and explore the narrative he promotes of different political currents he believed in, projects he was influenced by, and groups he disliked before becoming a Marxist-Leninist and creating CUK. I then look at Alice and her conflicts, critique

of the organisation, and attempts to politicise the working class through education. I contrast this to the non-sectarian attitude of Nicolette, and then move to the vanguard organisation and kinship practices. Next, I look at the relation of vanguard politics to the providing care and goods as forms of kinship practices. I speak to how it attempted to keep an authentic working-class culture, combat middle-classness and liberalism, and attempted to be better than mainstream charities. The front organisation utilises a division in political tactics that differentiate between the volunteers and party members to build community relations and grow popularity for communism, and at the same time recruit volunteers for political capacity building through party membership. I suggest a bifurcation in explicit organisational practice means that the solidarity economy performs the role of material provisioning precarious people, while being subordinate to organising the party during the Coronavirus crisis (Lazar 2015). I argue this tactic deployed in the solidarity economy inevitably reproduces middle class hegemony. I also revisit Alice, and her failed attempts to change the educational policy of the kitchen.

CUK had evolved from CUD - Community Union Dinners, lavish dinners thrown to fundraise for legal costs for Unionists up in Sydney. It was transformed into a street kitchen and exported to cities around Australia, where usually young, working class political activists would cook, to supply food for the homeless. The organisers, and primary volunteers operated the kitchen at great personal cost, with some members spending their entire weekends cooking, driving, picking

people up and operating the street kitchen, “Sometimes, I’ll wake up at 8 O’clock, find out there’s not enough food and have to go to the shops, cook till 12. Then pack everything in my car, take two hours to do pick ups, then set up the kitchen early, and do the exact same thing the next day”. In fact, some volunteers ended up spending thousands of their own personal money, when the cost of nearly 9000 dollars was announced at the annual meeting, an organiser beside me bragged with a sly smile “I spent that amount on the kitchen in six months”. The meals along with second hand clothing donations, sanitary items and books would be bundled into cars, and then set up under Gazebos, on plastic tables outside of the State Library of Victoria.

Like clockwork, volunteer organiser Georgie would call out four people to set up the Gazebos, informing everyone how to set up the half broken mechanisms. The CUK stall emblazoned with both the Aboriginal flag, and the red flag with an insignia of hammer, sickle and a flag within the flag - it’s brazen radicalism and bright red stood out amongst the grey and black tones of the city. This self-referential imagery continued in the banner that girded the back wall of the stall, which depicted the CUK logo – five hands of different skin tone linking hand-to-wrist in a circle, and a cute red star in the middle. Around the logo were images of volunteers standing at previous stalls and serving food. The stalls took shape just as the far-right cult Falun Dafa closed their stall next door at 3 o’clock. If they were too close or taking up excess space, the more randy of the volunteers would tell them off, or bring out their specially made poster that discussed the conspiratorial beliefs of the sect. The poster displayed the wacky beliefs of Falun

Dafa, which included racially divided heavens, disbelief in COVID, and that Donald Trump is an angel from heaven. Roles were allocated ad hoc, with volunteer organisers or Veteran volunteers direct the newer volunteers to help set up and attend to distribution stations - either hot drinks, cold drinks, clothing, or serving food. Only after the hustle bustle of the first hour the pace would slow, the supervising ACP members would take attendance, and try to learn about people's lives, politics and scout for potential interest in "actions" or recruitment. CUK was also characterised by kin-like relations and political encompassment with membership and to a lesser extent possible recruits.

The core volunteers at CUK, who were almost all ACP members took interest in the lives, struggles and motivations of other volunteers. They wanted to make genuine connections in service of a revolutionary project that would serve all of humanity. Attending CUK was a hand-on attempt at making this a reality, providing support to people who were disadvantaged by capitalism, and simultaneously, creating the social conditions and consciousness for revolution amongst those who had the most to gain and the least to lose. The party behind CUK needed an educated, motivated cadre of activist-intellectuals who would implement Marxist-Leninist thought and struggle for the dissolution of class society. The CUK members emphasised they were doing "mutual aid", or sometimes, to avoid association with the term's anarchist origins - "mutual support" for "other members of the working class", with noticeable class distinction, in not only demographics, appearances, but the spatial separation between the groups during their practice. Furthermore, as the effort at CUK was

explicitly communist in political orientation, a stated goal of the organisation was to improve public perception of the communist ideology. This effort was centred around the kitchen, providing food, clothing and support, that was publicly visible and documented through social media presence, interaction and included graphic design, communication and art centring around the kitchen. Unlike my interviews with Rough Trade, even the least invested member I interviewed took hours out of their week to attend, at least once a fortnight for all.

Kevin and CUK as a hobby

I had approached Kevin for an interview in front of the state library. Kevin was a self-described “middle-class healthcare professional” of Filipino descent. He spoke with genuine concern and consideration, modulating his timbre to those around him, especially to new volunteers. Unlike the largely arts student cohort that dominated activist spaces in his experience, Kevin was a STEM graduate, additionally he differentiated himself: “I’m a little bit older and I’ve only somewhat recently been politicised.” and was not the usual young rebel in university – “I didn’t give a shit about any of this, I just wanted to make money and shit”. Instead, Kevin’s experience was classic Marxian alienation, saying “...when you work 5 days a week full time, even if it’s a good job, even if it’s a well-paying job, it makes you think... why is it all this way?” Kevin often complained about the “entitled rich people” that made his job “pretty excruciating”, and resented the scamming and often extortionate behaviour of the private health system he worked in. As a result, he appreciated the organisation in terms that were framed against his job, and CUK was a respite

from the strictures of this system. “I do like how the organisation feels a lot less... how do I say it.... Structured. Like... I’ve heard at Vinnies and the Salvos you have to sign up and everything. It's very much like getting a job. You have to sign up, you have to do checks, you have to do orientation.” This, he compared to CUK, noting “It's very grassroots. If someone wants to come up and help, there's no obstacle to signing up and doing stuff. You could just come on, and we’d get you to do something. Like how good is that!? Compared to other ones, we don’t have any bosses. We don’t go around commanding people”. CUK suited Kevin because it was relatively free from bureaucracy, while supporting his political beliefs without much issue, and this was much apparent in his treatment of people at the kitchen.

Kevin was not interested in pushing a hard-line stance on politics, but knew the kitchen should commit to its communist politics. He wanted to “push the political aspect of it more. Just to show like, it is a communist thing! In 2021 in the West, the red flag, the hammer and sickle all have very negative connotations. It would be a good thing for more people to see, and understand that commies are doing good things. It's good PR!”. He brought up a common concern about the lack of educational material as well, and saw it as a responsibility. Although he was convinced of the politics, the actual organising could do with some work. He complained that “unlike fascists” the organised Left weren’t very good at bringing people on their side, and that despite disliking Christian groups, he knew that people respected what they did, and wished communists would have the same appeal. Kevin emphasised many times that “...we could try to be more

welcoming”, and in this way, saw his role in making “connections with new volunteers”. Accordingly, he distinguished himself from more sectarian elements among CUK attendees or Leftists in general: “...A lot of communists exist on the internet but not in real life. I'm not like them”. Though he was a Marxist, he maintained he was “... not an absolute nerd” nor “one of those internet commies”.

Whether you called it a charity or not, Kevin was certain that it was meaningful and important thing to do. While the others were convinced, in his words that “...charity isn't a political thing, unlike solidarity or mutual aid”, he wasn't concerned with the distinction, upfront about his being “open to any community or charity work” and “wouldn't mind doing work with the Christians across the street!”. Attending CUK, working for disadvantaged classes of people, unlike attending rallies was something most “political” people weren't prepared to do. The work of “turning up every week” and serving the homeless wasn't as popular, because it was “not glamorous enough”. This was in line with an impromptu rant from Bashar, the founder of CUK and the ACP – that Stalinists like themselves were not “power hungry”, because they helped the least powerful in society. Though he was dedicated to weekly attendance, he saw it as a leisurely activity and did not care for “hardcore” political organising. Though Kevin found this was the best political avenue while still reading up on political theory and expanding his mind in the meantime.

Peter and CUK as a positive space

The providing of care was fulfilling and made the organisation so popular. Peter relating to me that his favourite thing about the kitchen was that “...it brings a lot of leftists together, you can talk about political stuff too but it's kept in a very civil manner because we're all doing something positive”. Peter, a spectacled and lanky guy of Irish descent was constantly busy at the street kitchen and was the most difficult to interview. He had many responsibilities, as the founder of the Melbourne chapter and head volunteer, so we were forced to have three separate interview sessions in between his duties over different weeks. Peter had originally started volunteering with non-political groups near the Victoria Market, and began CUK with his brother and some friends. While he was a member of the communist party, and invested in Marxist-Leninist politics, the difference in his disposition in the kitchen was very different from other members. As the founder and often sole chef and driver, he was invested in maintaining it as a positive space, and was always warm and cordial to new volunteers.

Peter was constantly engaged - in conversation, helping serve, set-up or shop for missing items. Peter also engaged in ideological work, and was always having political conversations. He read widely from Marx to Bakunin, the anarchist, and often educated me about various political groups and ideas. He was upset however, when other socialist groups that would hassle him about minute historical disputes and discount the street kitchen, wanting CUK to be civil and “more of a social space” – though one that usually attracted a politicised

audience. Accordingly, he pushed the term “mutual aid” or “community organisation” rather than a charity. When I asked about the connection between the party and the kitchen, Peter explained that originally “...it was not meant to be a front group, but it sorta is a front group or turning into one”. It had been pushed into that situation because the government had denied them charity status, which meant they would be unable to push a political message. “But we’re kinda glad we didn't get charity status because you can't push any political message. Like people think it’s not all political, but it is. Even like... Food to homeless people, there is a political edge to that”. However, Peter’s founding position meant he was exceptional in his respect to the space and those who entered it.

The communist party had de facto dominance over the front, despite openness to other political persuasions. That the organisation was openly and explicitly tied to the communist party meant its volunteers were mainly sympathetic to Marxist-Leninist ideas, or at least had left-wing ideas. However, like other’s who did not subscribe to Marxist-Leninism, I was subject to mistrust, which was compounded by my middle-classness, and academic interest, which for Marxists had a reputation for sophistry and bourgeois ideology (see Callinicos 1990).

Meanwhile other volunteers quietly shared to me that for identifying merely as a ‘leftist’, they were questioned and derided as a being a ‘liberal’, a serious insult implying one was politically ineffectual, unconsciously reproducing capitalist ideology. In one instance, I facilitated a new volunteer who disclosed her anarchist beliefs guiltily, trying to make her feel welcome, and downplayed the

importance of such historical disputes: to which a party member in earshot quickly responded 'we believe in tactical unity, to a point!'. While the latter case meant that the volunteer did not return, it was largely a hospitable space to myself, presenting as a man and being relatively social and interested in political discussions. However, there was no way to discuss the direction of the group without presumably being a part of the communist party.

Bashar's Materialism, Inter-communalism, Stalinism etc.

Marxist-Leninists are followers of Stalin's interpretation of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and the philosophy of historical materialism. Materialism, it was emphasised, led to their efficacy in organisation and putting energy into politics that mattered. In opposition to the 'idealism' they observed in other groups. However, such groups that were criticised were also Marxist, often Marxist-Leninist parties, so the concept needed more interrogation. On one occasion Bashar, the charismatic co-founder of the ACP and CUK lectured me on the topic. Even with a small stature, the guy had stage presence, the energy of someone charged with amphetamines, and accordingly the party members and kitchen volunteers looked to him as a leader. Bashar had a strong middle-eastern Australian working class accent, loud leftist-themed clothes with camo, Keffiyeh and military boots like a Che Guevara or Sankara with his own Western-Sydney flare. Even Alice, who had at times come to screaming matches with him due to their "personality clashes" admitted to following his political line unthinkingly, getting "swept up" in his charisma. Bashar lambasted the idealist political tactics of another major political faction on the left, the Trotsykists, who were centred

around universities, the unsubtle changes in his voice expressing how they were effete or posh. For Bashar, and a number of other interviewees, the Trotskyists were middle-class hipsters who piggybacked on important social issues and made the public hate communists with their incessant pamphleting, and academic Marxist abstraction. They were always about trying to make speeches, organise and make analysis without grounding in the hard, thankless work of actually helping people.

Bashar was also disdainful of the climate activists who were old, white middle-class ineffectual hippies, or “yuppie” students who “at their climate rallies, feel embarrassed when they see a homeless bloke, [whereas] we actually know them!”. Bashar also related to me the problems he faced organising as an anarchist - in particular with the antifascists and Food Not Bombs, the international anarchist street kitchen, both were divorced from reality in crucial ways. Bashar stressed that Antifascist organising was highly secretive, and activists promoted a security culture that discouraged having social media. However, was a veneer for the fact they never actually did anything, and simply was a “cool” aesthetic. Additionally, having grown up in the Western suburbs of Sydney, he lamented that the the white, middle-class antifascists with a fetish for violence were merely taking out their anger on the alienated working-class white guys he had grown up with. Bashar wanted to break the cycle of violence before it became an issue. His foray in this preventative method, at Food Not Bombs, missed the mark as well. The anarchist dumpster-diving based soup kitchen which had a chapter operating around the Victoria market, was certainly an

inspiration, but was critiqued for being inconsistent and “hobbyist”. The group lacked dedication, with the Food not Bombs organisers displaying a lackadaisical attitude, that Bashar relayed to me in a poetic flourish: “Here’s the problem: it’s always - IF we can find food in the dumpsters, and IF we can be bothered, and IF we can get people together to cook up, then we will meet here... but only IF’, their insistence on dumpster diving drove home that it was a lifestyle-hobby first, and a mutual aid effort second. It was not pragmatic and consistent enough, because they were puritanical about not supporting capitalist consumption by buying stuff. This reinforced the critique commonly held by Marxist-Leninists, that anarchist activism is a performance by childish, middle-class westerners. Bashar was exasperated with the middle-class white people who had ruined his experiences in liberatory politics. These organising experiences he theorised as issues of insufficient materialism.

As a student of anthropology, learning from and critiquing Marxist materialism, is very much a part of academic socialisation and theorising. What materialism meant within the CUK was very much bound to an actionable duty, to Marxist-Leninist political theory, which was inextricable from a nexus of struggle and work. The idea of materialism, historical and dialectical, were brought up constantly in justification of policies, in calling out incorrect actions, and in explaining historical movements. Materialism among the party members, had the feel of a magisterial and sensible scientific approach combined with a rough and ready, implicitly masculine pragmatism that would radicalise the proletariat and adapt the party to shifting material conditions. Kevin had once joked Bashar

and the organisation represented “socialism with Australian characteristics”, playing with the aesthetics and ethos of both working-class machismo Australian culture and third-world socialist kitsch. The practical politics that followed from this would be the arduous, singular road to revolution in Australia. The materialism came not from ideological purity, but a synthesis of useful tools Bashar and others had picked up along the way.

After his experience with Anarchism, he followed Intercommunalism, the politics of Huey P. Newton of the Black Panthers. Bashar continued the tradition of the famous breakfasts program and had modelled the CUK organisation after it. For the working-class Bashar, describing himself as the “local Leb who got into communism”, studying politics and theory was not something to be elevated and should be in step with providing bread, clothing and housing. Another example of the consistent labour that went into the materialist informed praxis of CUK was in Peter, another working-class guy who was often spoken about by others with awe-struck inspiration: “How does he put in so much work?” or sympathetic concern: “Peter does too much!”, “Peter does everything!”. Responsible for setting up both the Melbourne and Dandenong branches of CUK, where he was the primary volunteer, taking on all roles ad hoc, from volunteer coordinator, chef of a vast majority of meals, and transported the tables, gazebos and kettle and gas canister, and also picked up food from volunteer houses. This meant his time on the weekend consisted of cooking early in the morning, coordinating through Facebook messenger and SMS to find pickups, arriving early at both locations to set up and piling much of the equipment in and out of his car on

both days. This work ethic was also said to transfer across to the activist work the organisation did. Alice relayed to me that the party's forays into environmental and Aboriginal sacred tree blockades was not only a cause they believed in as a party, but helpful in demonstrating the power of "communist organising" – with its materialist, Marxist-Leninist connotations.

Alice against society

Alice, a communist party member of Chinese descent, had originally engaged with communist ideas through social media meme accounts. Having moved to Melbourne from living in Mullumbimby, I first talked to Alice at the kitchen, where she stood out for wearing stylish stolen clothes and using casual 'millennial' slang and occasional squeaks of existential dread. We met up for a chat at a local phở eatery, where I asked Alice about her story to joining CUK and becoming a communist. She explained how her friend had suggested moving to Melbourne to do "commie stuff", and joined an Antonio Gramsci reading group, and soon after, became involved with the street kitchen during the lockdown. It was endearing to me, hearing Alice's critique of the technocratic, conservative nature of East Asians in Australian society. She had recently finished her degree in engineering, and spoke about being interned with a local healthcare service. However, after weeks of shadowing EMTs, doctors, nurses and other healthcare practitioners, it was clear that despite her best efforts of tinkering with delivery technology, the issue was in the structurally compromised, profit-based nature of this "fucked system". She couldn't commit to a career in engineering because "I wanna build shit that actually helps people!". It was this sense of the

redundancy of STEM and desire for undiluted politics that characterised Alice's interaction with CUK.

Alice was quite forthcoming about the issues she had faced in the last few years. She had stopped talking to her family after many arguments, she had multiple psychotic episodes on drugs and didn't have a family down here. As a result, Alice poured herself into politics. She put lots of work into the kitchen, doing the difficult but necessary work of asking for donations, to talking to members of the public, and taking on the role of education officer, which involved lots of research and interviewing. It was because of this dedication, that she was so critical of the organisation. Not content to simply keep the wheels moving, she was fed up with it being "just a charity" with "no education, and no distribution of (educational) material". She truly wanted to politicise the homeless and precarious population and turn CUK into a political vehicle.

Marxist-Leninists, followers of Stalin's interpretation of Marx, Engels and Lenin (MLs) framed the struggle of organising towards revolution in a largely reactionary world, full of reactionaries and liberals. According to Alice, MLs did not shy away from creating organisational hierarchies unlike the 'white, hippy anarchists' that dominated these ecological and Aboriginal movements. The inefficiency and slothfulness of the anarchists who practiced consensus decision-making, time-consuming democracy at every level, and worshipped, rather than respected indigenous elders uncritically proved the need for something "stronger", in political organising. This rhetoric was common amongst the

members of the ACP, and it appeared this sort of critique strengthened their resolve to dive into various protests and direct-action causes. This sort of condemnatory rhetoric was a common discourse amongst various Leftist sects, where disparate tendencies would disparage one another, and Alice enjoyed this heartily.

This schism was acknowledged by Nicolette, an anarchist volunteer and unionist who was adamant to avoid or ignore these squabbles and collaborate with other political tendencies, which she argued, was a product of a “toxic” internet-based discourse from people with “no lives”. Nicolette received fair treatment at CUK, and argued that the “democratic hierarchy” was “compatible with anarchism”, and were thus “happy to work with them”. Nicolette read widely in both anarchist and Marxist texts, and had concluded that the former was “more focused on culture and society” while the latter was “more about the workplace and economics”. This complimentary perspective was uncommon, and went against the more common sectarian attitude. The Marxist-Leninists framed themselves in the idioms of masculine order - as the most “hardcore” communist tendency, unafraid of the consequences of their beliefs and blowing past pussyfooted and politically correct liberalisms of others.

The Vanguard and Kinship Practices

The theory of the vanguard party puts forward communism as a historical end-goal only to be achieved through the forming of various national organisations of the most advanced, class conscious, materialist sections of the working class who

would push the proletariat to revolution (Lenin 1902). While early Marxist parties preferred electoralism, and this tactic was again widespread in the present day, the ACP followed the Leninist model, which was upheld for being powerful enough to withstand the power of fascist, and imperialist nations (Stalin 1932). Creating activist scholars that had this level of dedication and nuance in a 1st world, communist-hostile colonial nation was no small task. At the same time, what was required from activists in terms of time, energy and resources was only available from the volunteers – predominantly the working middle-class university student demographic.

This played out in how CUK focused on socialising its volunteers. The two volunteer organisers both emphasised making new volunteers stand up the front and serve food so they could “feel involved”, often young shy students quietly did their roles and talked amongst themselves. As rhetoric employed by the more unaware volunteers was framed as “doing good”, “making a difference”, Peter emphasised CUK as “the working class helping itself”. Though they acknowledged the critique of charity as ultimately status-quo reinforcing, they continued using rhetoric as it was better than doing nothing (Theodossopoulos 2020). While some were resigned to the idea that the “mutual aid” provided at CUK was equivalent to “just charity”, others like Peter preferred using the “correct” language.

The working-class sections of the soup kitchen worked towards effacing class divisions, and attempted to distinguish themselves from more “liberal” charity

and attendant paternalism, condescension and proselytization that was ultimately a product of class division. Participants like Peter, Bashar and Alice who were working class would often be in the crowd, chatting to an older person who came for food and clothes, and attempting to engage them in politics and history. Peter, the most pivotal and dedicated volunteer in the organisation who had grown up in the outer suburbs of Melbourne and identified as working class. He complained about the “salvos” and “vinnies”, who would force homeless people to pray after meals and its workers who treated it “like a job”, having no extra time for people that attended, and no real passion for helping others characteristic of ‘corporatised provisions of care’ (Kouki & Chatzidakis 2019, p. 888). Rather than foster relations of moral superiority, or proselytize like Christians or Trotskyists, “We don’t exactly wanna be here, we’re only here caus we need to be. like it’s not that we don’t enjoy it, I just want everyone to have a meal. Whereas charities are like “look at me, I’m helping people!””. Peter, on the other hand, thought of the activism as if he were “helping a brother”. Peter attempted to resisted class divisions through treating others as kin.

The overrepresentation of middle-class people in the organisation represented a challenge to their authenticity (see Mix & Cable 2006). Rhetoric such as the occasional disavowals of “yuppies” by Bashar, and general communist, anti-middle class and bourgeoisie sentiment reflected a certain discomfort. There was a vague desire to recruit more ‘traditional’ working class members and infiltrate workplaces, but this discourse was performative, cultivating a ‘working-class’ culture and aesthetic despite the base of students who were seen as a risk of

becoming upwardly mobile professionals. However, the organisation looked to recruit from its largely middle-class swathe of student volunteers, and into an organised cadre of intellectuals who were younger and more active. This meant party members would continually engage volunteers in conversation and debate about Marxism and politics, at the expense of engaging with users of the kitchen, and tended towards small talk and occasionally intervening in disputes with the people it served. The kitchen would often be staffed by people looking to do charity, collaborating in actions or at different levels of recruitment. This led to the homeless and precarious people largely sitting and socialising amongst themselves, who already shared existing social networks and, according to Peter would often just to say hello to their friends to “stay in the loop”. In this way, encompassment occurred in the street kitchen for two different groups.

This also played out in the physical placement and educational tactics of the group. Another aim of the organisation was to spread a positive message about communism. However, in recoiling from the tactics of the campus Trotskyists, the “salvos” and anarchists to instead provide a consistent, unconditional good, CUK under emphasised political education to some degree, and presented educational literature sparingly. They only engaging the public in politics discussion when they asked the volunteers about communism. However, this was a problem because it warded off political engagement with those the kitchen served, while conversation about communism was safe with those who were volunteering and to some degree already in agreement. While the

ostensible goal of a mass organisation is to recruit from the working class, the disconnect between the largely young university students and the middle aged precarious, or homeless working-class people was only ossified by the attempts at being “hands-off”. The volunteers would talk behind the serving tables, socialise and collaborate outside of the kitchen etc. The cultural, political and class divide meant that the young middle-class clique would fraternise, be educated on the right materialist analysis and organise exclusively amongst themselves. The level of disenfranchisement and stratification in present-day Australian society and the organisational needs of building a revolutionary party, meaning class was perpetuated economically and socially. The attempts at bridging this gap through organising political actions was ephemeral.

There were some successful attempts to bridge this gap, occurring during the sustained during the hubbub of the first major lockdown and boost to Jobkeeper and Newstart, where an influx of new volunteers and more working-class members could dedicate themselves to activism full-time. Bashar spearheaded a snap action against the forced removal of homeless people from hotels after the coronavirus crisis, mobilising the network of homeless people CUK had come to serve. They organised a “tent-city” style sleep in on the lawn of the library and obtained temporary accommodation for some homeless people, but this was the extent of politicisation. Bashar and Alice, both formerly drug dealers had a lot more success fraternising with both populations and as such were most prominent in the “Tent City” action. Though I did not attend it personally, the event used gonzo reporting from the Facebook and Instagram pages of the

kitchen, and forced the city to find emergency accommodation for the homeless people involved to prevent bad press, despite lacking numbers and being quickly shut down. However, a mixture of interpersonal issues and contradictions in political theory meant the two did not work together for long, and the space lost these essential organisers. As the party's education officer, Alice's education became her downfall, compounded by her personality clashes with Bashar as she resented his control over the group. Her fatal mistake was advocating an educational model for the party inspired by Paulo Freire, and by Maoism (Freire 1970).

While being alienated from her own family, she had become close friends with Jose, a Maoist whose parents were both long-time communists. While at times she had complained angrily about her reactionary parents, her dad being a "psychopath", she appeared heartened when speaking about getting to know them – "I've never met older communists!". An erstwhile member of the Soviet-oriented party, Alice had begun reading Maoist literature. Alice trespassed the sectarian split between the USSR and Mao, arguing that they should adopt ideas from the 'mass line' strategy, organising the masses of people who were not communist would have to be done in a dialectical fashion, with continual feedback, adjustment and taking into account their various ideas (Young 1980). This came from a critique of the USSR from Mao, who argued they did not effectively engage the masses (Hammond 1975, p. 21-22). She suggested the communist party present educational material to the public more frequently from the kitchen, and open up the party's education and reading to the public.

For this, Alice was first censured, then kicked out of the party, and eventually in the aftermath following weeks of petty arguing and disputes, where no doubt her combative disposition came into play, she was banned from attending the kitchen entirely. Afterward, CUK members like Peter mentioned how she had gone into expletive filled rants at him which was simply intolerable. In the case of Bashar, still the group's leader, he returned to Sydney to find work, and education to become a teacher or lawyer, and with him left the charismatic energy that had mobilised the cross-class politics. Thus containment in the solidarity economy between two class groups for distinct purposes, held due to political organisational tactics and the shifting conditions of the crisis.

6. Politics empowers kinship

In the previous chapters, I showed solidarity economies circulate care and reproductive labour towards political ends. I argued that the kinship practices serve the political. In this section, I demonstrate the opposite is also the case. This builds on the solidarity economy literature of the Greek Crisis and Shah's work on Maoism, as well as the theoretical lens of Lazar's 'containment',

showing the importance of projective narrative fictions of radicalism and transformation in shaping the persistence of a political community in their everyday practices of care – from providing goods for the vulnerable to emotional labour (Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021; Shah 2019; Lazar 2017). Ultimately arguing that in solidarity economies, politics and kinship practices are mutually constitutive. In CUK, politics strengthened kinship, creating containment in two ways - both through the work ethic of vanguardist political action and the softer appeal of charity and mutual aid, which attracted volunteers at different levels of political dedication. In the case of RT, prefigurative politics or direct action - equating the means and ends in political practice as an articulation of anarchism, attracted both activism and casual use from the LGBTIQ users seeking an ethical, “community feel” and easy access to consumption. In comparing these field sites, I argue that both show how solidarity economies use politics to strengthen and draw people into kinship practices. In doing so, I go beyond understanding how people experience containment and are encompassed by a solidarity economy, moving to why they are brought to it in the first place.

Both groups’ use of kinship practices derive from distinct, political-ethical concerns. They emerge from the ‘alternative hegemonies’ of radical political movements that operate independently of mainstream social norms (Denning 1997). It is through advocating for political change in society through these ethical-political projects, that there is a strengthening and renewal of kinship practices. RT’s anarchist ethos encourages a *laissez faire*, individualistic

organisational ethos and ethical personal consumption patterns - allowing a commitment to lifestyle anarchism through serving the Queer community. CUK on the other hand, given its politics of mutual aid and solidarity under a Marxist-Leninist community organisation means the material provisioning for the working class, under an explicitly communist platform promotes such politics to anti-communist society at large, thus strengthening commitment to the solidarity economy.

Rough Trade practiced lifestyle anarchism by way of serving the LGBTIQ community. Thus, RT's prefigurative politics imparts the idea that all practice within the solidarity economy is immanently political. My fieldwork in RT demonstrates the utilisation of politics for kinship practices, however given its lifestyle anarchist framework, it is difficult to distinguish between the causality in politics empowering kinship practices or vice versa. There is however, a distinction between the more political focus of contributors like Mac, versus the focus on providing self-care that vulnerable people like Rachel had, and the ethical consumption including recycling and ecological impact focus of the other participants. The deeds of providing care, organising informal solidarity networks and acting based on need in the here and now follow the model of prefigurative politics. Mac's provider role through a survivalist, scavenger ethic and the needs or wants of consumers in RT placed direct importance on recycling, sustainability and second-hand use encouraged continual use of the service, not to mention the use value of the objects themselves. Operating on the basis of voluntarism and free association, it emphasises the importance of the consent against

policing of what commodities people should have access to. The cultural democracy practiced, despite possible exploitation of the system, empowering the users to make their decisions without guilt and stake claims as to what they want without structures of accountability is an enactment of lifestyle anarchist values and ensures the continued contribution by others.

On the other hand, Community Union Kitchen's Marxism-Leninism draws on the disconnect between the political party and the everyday practice of mutual aid. As a front organisation for a political party, CUK's method of using its politics to promote the kinship practices was in its links to the communist party, and the less 'hardcore' project of mutual aid. CUK consistently emphasised the outward facing use of flags and communist imagery, with party members always wearing their shirts. They also played up the fact they were connected to other political movements, with volunteers and party members joining the unemployed workers, or carrying pamphlets for the renter's union. Alice also spoke of exaggerating the extent to which the party was connected to other movements at one point, to claim legitimacy. This demonstrated their desire to promote, to quote Alice again "communist organising", "communist discipline" and materialism over the limp-wristed politics of anarchists, trotskyists and reactionaries. This was demonstrated in actions: from blockades against logging, destruction of indigenous land and sacred sites at Djab Wurrung, and the 'tent city' actions against the evictions of Homeless people from hotels by the Melbourne government. In the latter example, leveraging the relationships they set up with homeless people and volunteers to protect homeless people from

evictions as the covid temporary accommodation ended. It was also a point of intersection between differing levels of politicisation.

Equally as important in strengthening kinship practices was the understated auxiliary role played by a politics of mutual aid and charity itself, which provided a way of doing politics without needing as thorough commitment, convictions or education. This was evidenced in the swath of volunteers who were new to politics, experienced it as a preliminary foray into politics, or those who continued to show up without the time or interest in Marxism-Leninism or joining the party. The importance of volunteers like Kevin and Peter in particular, who went to great personal expenditure, one spending in excess of “ten thousand dollars in the last year” and put effort into making the space welcoming and placing value on mutual aid as an end in itself. In doing so, they constructed an activist culture that eschewed optics and promoted care-work as the underlabourer for the working class. This allowed a relationship between unequal parties that was acceptable to both mainstream charity and Marxist-Leninist audiences.

On the other hand, Rough Trade’s participants in enacting a lifestyle anarchism, collapsed social and political needs into the personal. They sought to survive better in the troubled conditions they found themselves in, allowing themselves the flexibility to give and take from the community when it suited them. The younger members who had for various reasons been put in poverty, would use it to get essentials and luxuries, an Indian migrant participant would leverage their cuisine’s vegetarian meals in exchange for furniture and driving lessons they

needed to settle into Melbourne. Hobbyist foragers and gardeners with more than enough to give away would leave bags of plants or fruit out the front of their sharehouse. Though projecting a non-monetary exchange network, rarely there were requests for bills to be paid, often only small, as often people would request items instead even if they were short on cash or resources. RT fit more seamlessly into people's lifestyles, and the neoliberal market economy. For my RT participants, their various life experiences of marginalisation and oppression meant that they made sense of giving and taking things as a containment in a collective ethical-political project that looks to create a sense of community, reverse or prevent the harms that were done to them as queer people, and contribute to the wellbeing of other people doing it tough.

While primacy is in its contribution to the queer community, RT politicises these exchanges and give-aways as prefigurative politics of anarchism, and this radical political veneer legitimises the care provided for other members of the queer community. While not labelling themselves as anarchist, they practiced its strategy of prefigurative politics where promotion of the political goal is in step with the practices. In this way, they imbued their gifting and giveaways with political meaning, that they were practicing anarchism in small ways. However, given the lack of a collective incapable of containment of a membership and no structure of a party or mass organisation, there was only the personal compulsion of individuals, who wished to share their resources in order to support the physical and mental wellbeing of their younger counterparts.

Only through comparing the ways in which solidarity economies use their political ideologies to empower kinship practices, do we gain a full picture of the relationship between politics and kinship. This establishes a link between kinship, socialisation and subjectification present in solidarity economies, and the goals of differing political discourses, both explicit and implicit. Rough Trade attracts and maintains a diverse, largely noncommittal group of users and contributors through political performance, political action, self-care, and an apolitical consumer lifestyle simultaneously becomes a site of radical self-care for the queer community. Meanwhile, CUK's attracts volunteers through militant political action, and a continuing base of less dedicated volunteers who act politically through mutual aid.

7. Conclusion

My study of the solidarity economies of Rough Trade and Community Union Kitchen makes several contributions. First, I define the solidarity economy by its circulation of commodities as care, ethical-political imperatives and projective fictions, and explicitly politicising this care and social reproduction. Through the Gens feminist methodology, I enrich anthropological understandings of my core

concepts: containment and solidarity economies. I argue these concepts are interconnected and underwritten by distinctions dependent on politics and organisation – implicating commitment and identities such as class or queerness. I demonstrate that in solidarity economies, politics and kinship practices are mutually constitutive, sharing a dialectical relation (see Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021; Theodossopoulos 2016; Lou 2019). Building on Lazar, I consider ‘containment’ outside of the context of trade unions, analysing a diverse set of political ideology and organisation practices - from the lifestyle anarchist, horizontalist, ethical consumerism and the organised mutual aid subordinate to a Marxist-Leninist party (Lazar 2017). In doing this, I show how containment may feature stratification in classes and identity groups.

Mac approached the solidarity economy through their experiences of familial and social rejection and helped others like themselves through Rough Trade, as a political project. Beneficiaries like Rachel, who faced queerphobia, financial stresses and mental illness could be provided for with little pleasures, from house plants to fresh fruit. The discreteness and ephemeral exchange-based set of interactions meant a weak containment for most, in an impressive community of twelve-thousand people, that referred to it as such, or at least providing a “community feel”. This meant that people could both contribute to or benefit from the group without knowing how others related to the group – resulting in a thin set of kinship practices. In contrast to Aptekar’s critique of Freecycle, characterised as a suburban fantasy of ‘green-washed consumption’, this study demonstrated meaningful self-care and solidarity could exist in the same space

through a shared project. Much like the oppositional, yet dependent relationship Giles shows the 'abject economy' has to the commercial market, Rough Trade represents a progressive space where LGBTIQ people of lower-middle class backgrounds could have their cake and eat it too. Pursuing education, and living away from often transphobic homes, rebelling against hegemonic values, Rough Trade constituted part of a 'lifestyle anarchist' LGBTIQ counterculture.

Community Union Kitchen boasted a dedicated collective of volunteers, a strong underlabourer's ethic and political beliefs, and thus provided mutual aid that persisted through the pandemic. Through an eclectic Marxist-Leninist organisational strategy, they organised to both provide care for the homeless and precarious people of Melbourne and recruit a cadre for the communist party. The kinship relations and hence containment was much greater in turn. Participants would put many hours in their week into cooking, helping serve and driving, because of their belief in the kitchen, and even collaboration with other political sects. Socialisation and cross-class political participation occurred between the volunteer and homeless groups, only lasted with the greater popularity and political energy during emergency welfare payments, but this came to an end due to interpersonal conflicts with more charismatic individuals like Alice and Sleek. While organising the people they provided for in the thick of the coronavirus crisis, the group gravitated towards a solely front-based model – using the solidarity economy for public relations, charity for the people, and recruiting from the young student volunteers.

My study continues the economic anthropology tradition, renewed through the work of the Gens collective and Graeber's neo-Maussian economics (Polanyi 1944; Bear et al. 2015; Graeber 2014). Rough Trade as a solidarity economy modelled on 'prefigurative politics' that is not revolutionary, but for provides care in the Queer community, amounting to voluntaristic ethical exchange and gifts so members could sort out their own self-care (McMaster 2014).

Community Union Kitchen on the other hand, dedicated to eclectic organisational strategy predominantly as Marxist-Leninists created rapport with, and sometimes organised the lumpen, precarious and homeless people to promote a positive image of communism, provided care and do political actions. However as coronavirus ended, welfare payments decreased and squabbles were had, the kitchen settled on the modest goal of recruiting a revolutionary cadre from the student volunteers. Solidarity economies through their kinship practices – the circulation of care and reproductive labour and projective visions of the future, create containment in different class and identity groups through different political ideologies and visions, to produce collective ethical-political subjects (Lazar 2017; Kouki and Chatzidakis 2021).

This research has also revealed several weaknesses in the literature.

One neglected area of great potential for future research is the intersection of queerness and anarchism. While there have been ethnographies of anarchism, direct action or solidarity economies that have confronted sexism and racism in particular, these scholarships have yet to acknowledge the presence of LGBTIQ communities and people who

make a large proportion of contemporary anarchists, nor an ethnography of the connection that the LGBTQ community has to leftist movements, given its political history (Graeber 2009, pp. 353-354; Razsa 2015; Borowiak 2018).

Further ethnographic investigation about class identification in neoliberal society is also pressing, and it is imperative to understand how it incorporates economic relations, and political consciousness around commons, welfare and solidarity economies (Kasimir & Carbonella 2008). Studying the broader networks of activism, markets and solidarity economies would create a deeper understanding of the intersection between economy, kinship practices and politics. In expanding the ethnography of my field sites, some improvements could be made. Rough Trade data could be improved through more exhaustive interviews detailing the participants' lifestyles, identities and politics. Under the effects by Community Union Kitchen could be expanded upon by interviewing the people being served, asking about changes to their living conditions and the effects of engagement – in creating social relations and communities. Another productive addition to the understanding of containment could be made through interviewing ex-participants in either group, to understand how containment was lost on certain individuals, through discourses, ideology or changing conditions.

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