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Situating Worker Cooperatives: The Urban, Racial and Gendered Geographies of Cooperative Development in New York City's Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative

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SITUATING WORKER COOPERATIVES: THE URBAN, RACIAL AND GENDERED GEOGRAPHIES OF COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN NEW YORK CITY'S WORKER COOPERATIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

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Worker cooperatives are gaining increased traction as an urban economic development strategy aimed to better support low-income women, immigrants and communities of color. Worker cooperatives are businesses that are owned and managed by its workers, and their supporters see them as a more equitable form of development that facilitates enhanced economic agency and access to ownership and wealth building. Reflecting and reinforcing growing cooperative momentum, New York City developed the nation's first municipal-sponsored cooperative development initiative in 2014. The Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) brings together policy makers, city administrators and nonprofit community-based organizations to provide educational programming, cooperative business incubation and technical assistance to oversee the organizing of worker-owners and the development of worker cooperatives.

Drawing from two years of fieldwork in New York City between 2015 and 2017 with city officials, cooperative developers and nonprofits, and worker-owners affiliated with the WCBDI, this dissertation examines worker cooperative development as urban economic development in New York City. I question how worker cooperative development 'takes place' in a neoliberal urban context and ask how and in what ways the WCBDI supports marginalized and precariously situated workers.

My research examines the contradictory outcomes of the WCBDI. On one hand, worker cooperatives are the ideal neoliberal urban economic development strategy and worker-owners are the ideal neoliberal subjects. With their emphasis on self-reliance, self-governance and self-determination, worker cooperatives and their owners – rather than the state – are responsible for their own economic well-being and success. Reflecting neoliberal devolution, the WCBDI relies upon an extensive, decentralized network of nonprofits to administer and distribute funds. This contradictory framework simultaneously empowers workers through cooperative organizing yet makes them reliant on nonprofit organizations that complete for city funds to support cooperative development. Rather than supporting and benefiting worker-owners and their cooperatives, I argue the funding and administrative structure of the WCBDI instead supports the development of the nonprofit sector.

Yet, even as worker cooperatives are highly aligned with neoliberal sensibilities, my research demonstrates that worker cooperatives represent new spatialities of labor that are potentially transformative and empowering for worker-owners. I center the voices of worker-owners whose stories challenge the notion that worker cooperatives are just another iteration of neoliberal economic development. My research with worker-owners finds that participation in a worker cooperative is more than a job and provides access to self-determination and autonomy in both economic and social relations. Ultimately, this dissertation explores the implications of worker cooperative development for differently positioned actors in New York City – implications that may be relevant for other cities seeking to do the same.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDC - Community Development Corporation

CFL - Center for Family Life

CHCA – Cooperative Home Care Associates

DMWA - Damayan Migrant Workers Association

FPWA - formally, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

ICA - International Cooperative Alliance

ICE - Immigration and Customs Enforcement

ITIN - Individual Tax Identification Number

NSM - New Sanctuary Movement

LGBTQIGNC+ - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and gender-non-conforming

LLC - Limited liability corporation

NYC - New York City

NYCNOWC - New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives

MOIA - Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

SBA - Small Business Association

SBS - Small Business Services

NPO - Nonprofit organization

USFWC - United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives

UWCC - University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives

WCBDI - Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative

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To my family and friends who continue to lift me up, reminding me again and again the power of a village, and the importance of mutual aid and cooperation. Thank you all for the encouragement, the love, good times past and those to come.

***

And finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the workers, the organizers and the people who support cooperation in its many forms. In particular I am most grateful to the specific workers-owners, cooperative organizers and developers who shared their time, experiences and critical insights with me. The work you do helps to make this world a better place - thanks to each of you.

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In closing, it would be irresponsible for me to ignore the circumstances of the world at the time of submitting this document. Here in Milwaukee in March 2020 it is 'safer at home' and my family and I are 'sheltering in place'. These stressful, complicated and terrifying conditions for my young family are punctuated by the concern for those who are more vulnerable to COVID-19. I stay awake worrying about the elderly, the poor, the immune compromised, the families in detention, the prisoners, the children and others who are not safer at home, the healthcare workers, grocery store employees and other laborers who continue to put themselves at risk so we don't have to. I believe this pandemic will change the world. To the extent that we are able to weigh in, it is my hope that in the ways that it is possible, the world will be changed for the better. What brings humankind together is stronger than the differences that keep us apart.

Chapter 1.
Introduction to the urban, racial and gendered geographies of cooperative development

Introduction

Worker cooperatives are enterprises where the workers own and democratically manage the business. Since 2014, New York City has pioneered a collaborative Worker Cooperative Development Initiative (WCBDI).[1] As an economic development strategy, the WCBDI seeks to draw on the expertise of local nonprofit organizations to access communities considered vulnerable and well suited for cooperative economic development projects. The Initiative relies on City funding to oversee education and training for the purposes of identifying potential worker-owner entrepreneurs. In the case of some collaborators, business incubation programs to support fledgling worker cooperatives are established to mitigate start up risks.

Initiative leadership and City policy makers indicate that the WCBDI, now in its sixth year of funding, is working with measurable success and can serve as a model for municipalities and collaborations across the United States (Camou 2016; Sutton 2019; and WCBDI 2019). Despite its duration and these claims of success, there is a dearth of scholarship investigating the WCBDI's implementation, inner workings, and outcomes. Of the limited research that does exist, none of the literature on this development strategy centers the experiences of worker-owners themselves. This dissertation – which draws from in-depth, qualitative research with worker cooperatives, local cooperative organizers, nonprofits, and City employees affiliated with the WCBDI – aims to address this gap in the literature.

[1] Referred to interchangeably as WCBDI or "Initiative".

Though to date it has been afforded limited scholarly consideration, the WCBDI has garnered attention from other municipalities. In fact, following the lead of New York City, twelve cities have developed similar economic development strategies or implemented new policies friendly to worker cooperatives (Sutton 2019).[2] For example, in Rochester, New York, the Mayor suggested that cooperative development has the potential to "remove institutional barriers [to]...build a stairway out of poverty," (Quoted in Abello 2016, para. 10). In Madison, Wisconsin, drawing on the example of the WCBDI, a cooperative coalition formed to "address income inequality and racial disparities," (MCDC 2020; and Cassano 2015).[3] Further, cities like Oakland, California are developing resolutions, advocacy, and policy action for legislation in support of worker cooperatives nationally (SELC 2020).[4] The culmination of these efforts is evident in the 2018 passage of the "The Main Street Employee Ownership Act", the first national legislation that seeks to "improve access to capital and technical assistance to transition small businesses to employee ownership," (USFWC 2018). The Executive Director of the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives characterizes the momentum for worker cooperatives in this way: "I believe we're at the

[2] Sutton (2019) compares the strategies and policy development in twelve cities across the country and introduces the term "cooperative city" to refer to places that have "begun making municipal support for worker cooperatives legible," (1082). In the study, Sutton compares the cooperative cities from a legislative lens and presents nuanced typologies to describe the city development strategy as "developer", "endorser", or "cultivator" and concludes that New York City is a cultivator cooperative city. Sutton further notes however two additional cities that passed worker cooperative resolutions and have not yet acted on it through funding or staff designation. Prior to Sutton's research the Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance (2012) compiled local government support for cooperatives more broadly that includes seven additional municipalities not included in Sutton's 2019 study.

[3] Madison Mayor Paul Soglin was quoted as saying, "I'd read about what Mayor de Blasio had proposed for New York City when I was in the process of developing the 2015 city budget...I simply went back to the office the next day and said: 'We're not going to be upstaged by New York City," (Quoted in Casano 2015, para. 3). The initial announcement and proposal was for $5 million dollars over five years but was changed to $3 million at the time of final approval (City of Madison, 2018).

[4] In 2015, the Oakland City Council passed the "Resolution Supporting the Development of Worker Cooperatives In Oakland," and in that same year, the California Worker Cooperative Act was passed. The State Act aims to clear barriers to worker cooperative incorporation and further solidified the narrative that "worker-owned businesses are central to a full economic recovery and to closing inequality gaps," (Burnley 2015).

beginning of an important trend in the growth of worker ownership…worker co-ops are becoming a mainstream part of the U.S. economy," (USFWC 2018, para. 6).

Building from more than two years of research on the WCBDI, I make three key arguments throughout this dissertation: 1) worker cooperatives have been a part of freedom movements and as organized strategies for resistance to oppression for vulnerable and marginalized populations throughout history; 2) as such, these spaces provide access to meaningful transformation for worker-owners as individuals and towards larger social justice aims; 3) top-down implementation of cooperative development has the potential to both reinforce racialized and gendered inequalities *and* disrupt disparities - reflecting the highly contradictory nature of this project.

Therefore, while this is indeed a particular moment for worker cooperatives, we should be cautious in how we measure success as a growing number of cities look to "scale up" worker cooperative development. Over the past ten years the number of worker cooperatives in the United States has nearly doubled from approximately 350 enterprises in 2010 to closer to 600 today (Harvey 2018; Palmer 2020; and Van Slyke 2019).[5] The majority of this growth has taken place among women, immigrants and in communities of color (USFWC 2020). As the New York Times reported, "worker owned cooperatives, [are] an age-old business model that has lately attracted renewed interest as a possible antidote to some of our most persistent economic ills," (Dewan 2014, para. 3). As my dissertation reveals, this 'moment' for worker cooperatives simultaneously presents cooperative organizing as an innovation for vulnerable populations, while through its implementation,

[5] In tracing the framing of this moment, I argue (in chapter 2) as have others (Cheney et al. 2014; and Harvey 2018) that the designation by the United Nations in 2012 as "The Year of Cooperatives" in combination with the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis "together with the rise of ideas of democracy in organizations, have awakened interest in cooperativism in both academic and community circles," (Cheney et al. 2014, 592).

reinforces traditional strategies of economic development that are potentially harmful to the communities they are meant to benefit.

As worker cooperatives become a more common approach to urban economic development, it is critical to examine the impacts and outcomes of such agendas. I argue that contemporary cooperative discourse often ignores – and obscures – the long histories of cooperative organizing within marginalized communities. Further, despite the emphasis on participatory democracy, self-determination, and agency within worker cooperative organizing, the WCBDI is largely conceived of as a 'developers movement.' Indeed, as my research reveals, the WCBDI involves very limited engagement with the populations that are touted as beneficiaries of this development work. Through its focus on worker cooperatives and worker-owners themselves, this research complicates the largely positive assessments of the WCBDI appearing in published reports (WCBDI 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019). Rather, my research uncovers the ways in which worker cooperatives and worker-owners have largely been absent from the planning and implementation of the Initiative and the sorts of challenges they've faced in this development process.

Researching urban cooperative development and the WCBDI

My research on urban cooperative development and the WCBDI is situated within the 'cooperative moment' described above. My project is animated by one overarching line of inquiry: What are the implications and outcomes of urban worker cooperative development in the contemporary neoliberal moment and how, and in what ways, does this approach support marginalized workers in a system of gendered, racial capitalism? I address this overarching question with four sub-questions developed through an

interdisciplinary body of scholarship and empirical research on worker cooperatives and from over two years of in-depth, qualitative research on the WCBDI in New York City:

First, I ask, **what are worker cooperatives and what is their economic and social significance**? I situate contemporary cooperative development within the historical, racial and gender geographies of a much longer cooperative movement. In exploring these often-obscured histories, I consider how current trends in urban cooperative development relate to shifting perceptions of cooperatives in the United States. My genealogy challenges dominant accounts of cooperative histories that prioritize white, male, cooperative economic subjects. Rather, I emphasize cooperative organizing amongst women, low-income and immigrant communities of color. In doing so, I challenge gendered and racialized assumptions about cooperatives and to add to the small but growing body of scholarship theorizing cooperatives through gender and race (e.g. Gordon-Nembhard 2014; Sengupta 2015; Wilson 2010; and Zitcer 2014).

Second, **what does it mean when one of the largest cities in the world pursues cooperative economic development? Are the promises and benefits of cooperatives diminished when they are mainstreamed and formalized in urban economic development?** I address these queries by examining the origins of the WCBDI and considering the cooperative business incubation approach to development that is prevalent among Initiative collaborators. My research challenges the notion that cooperative development in this context is markedly different from traditional urban economic development approaches. To that end, I question how the goals and agendas of Initiative actors at the scale of the city, the nonprofit organization and the worker cooperative are reconciled through these processes. In providing a rich chronicle of the WCBDI and its

practices I add an important dimension of understanding to how cooperative development is experienced at multiple scales.

Third, **how and in what ways are worker cooperatives more than traditional forms of employment?** I start from the understanding that worker cooperatives are more than just jobs, but are empowering, wealth-building opportunities that engage worker-owners in participatory democratic and intentional workplaces (e.g. DuBois 1907; Fairbairn et al. 1991; Gordon Nembhard 2014; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; and Novkovic 2008). Building from this point, I explore the transformative potential of worker cooperatives at multiple scales. In doing so, I discover that meaningful participation for worker-owners can be life-changing, having the potential to disrupt hegemonic power structures in the workplace and allowing for political education and supporting access towards larger social justice aims. However, my research objects to the rosy notion that this is always the case. By directly considering the experiences of worker-owners on their journey towards self-determination, this dissertation also considers the challenges and problems worker-owners face during their organizational cooperative development.

Lastly, some worker cooperatives endeavor to organize their incorporation structures to accommodate worker-owners who are particularly vulnerable in the economy in part due to their citizenship and documentation status. In light of this fact, I ask **in what ways are expanded spatialities of sanctuary giving rise to the potential for worker cooperatives as sanctuary workplaces?** To answer this question, I document and situate cooperatives within the U.S. Sanctuary Movement and consider how contemporary sanctuary efforts reflect the current political environment for immigrant communities especially for those with intersecting vulnerable identities, for example

LGBTQIGNC+.[6] I examine how worker cooperatives are expanding sanctuary into the workplace and the challenges of doing so within contemporary legal and economic infrastructures. In developing this focus, this research offers important contributions to current scholarship on the expanded spatialities of sanctuary into cooperative workplaces by illuminating the limitations of these efforts within the racialized and gendered economy.

Ultimately, this dissertation seeks to better understand what organizing as a worker cooperative accomplishes and for whom. The project seeks to uplift worker-owners themselves, by emphasizing their voices and experiences within the WCBDI development process. By centering worker-owners, this research addresses a gap in urban geographic scholarship and in the literature on cooperatives. I now turn to a discussion of my theoretical framework and the multidisciplinary body of scholarship underpinning this project.

Theorizing Worker Cooperative Development

A diverse body of scholarship within and beyond geography informs this project. In this discussion, I offer a broad overview of my theoretical framework. However, I also include a detailed discussion of relevant theories as they relate to the empirical focus in each subsequent chapter. This study is grounded within the fields of urban political economy and feminist, anti-racist economic geography. I combine feminist geographic insights about difference and power with the diverse economies literature and geographic scholarship on urban governance and economic change in a neoliberal era. In this section, I introduce this framework in three parts: I first consider neoliberalization and urban

[6] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and gender-non-conforming.

political economy; then feminist, anti-racist and critical theories of difference; and finally, worker cooperatives in the diverse economy.

Neoliberalization and urban political economy

This project is embedded within geographies of the city and thus draws significantly on urban geographic theories in order to contextualize cooperative development as a form of urban economic development. I use the term urban political economy to broadly refer to the economic and political policies and practices that constitute production and exchange in the market. Drawing from an extensive body of scholarship, I understand contemporary urban political economy as contoured by neoliberalism (e.g. Brenner & Theodore 2005; Cope 2001; Harvey 2005; Peck & Tickell 2002; Roberts & Mahtani 2010; Theodore 2007; Wilson 2006). I understand neoliberalism as a mode of organizing the capitalist economy and bring theories of neoliberalism and neoliberal governance together with theories of racial capitalism that identify economic policies and development as thoroughly racialized (e. g. McKittrick & Woods 2007; Melamed 2006; Roberts & Mahtani 2010; Theodore 2007; and Wilson 2006).

As geographers have well documented, for some 40 years, urban policies and practices have increasingly reflected the devolution of federal responsibilities towards the 'local' (e.g. Brenner & Theodore 2005; DeFilippis et al. 2010; Elwood 2004; Hackworth 2009; Harvey 2005; Lake & Newman 2002; Peck & Tickell 2002; and Wilson 2004, 2009). The neoliberalization of urban governance, policies, and practices has emphasized austerity, "liberating" markets from regulation, and increasing privatization (of assets and service provision) with the objective of achieving individual freedom (in the marketplace) (Brenner & Theodore 2005; Harvey 2005; and Peck & Tickell 2002). Harvey (2005)

characterizes the neoliberal state as operating "under the assumption that 'a rising tide lifts all boats'," and that "the elimination of poverty...can best be secured through free markets and free trade," (64-65). Indeed, within neoliberal regimes of governance, "individuals' successes or failures are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings" rather than as impacted by systemic oppression or exclusions (ibid., 65).

At the scale of the city, the neoliberal devolution has given rise to a growing 'local' nonprofit industrial complex (including both nonprofits and community based organizations) to address gaps in community and economic development created by receding state institutions (Chaskin 2001; Chaskin & Garg 1997; Bonds et al. 2015; DeFilippis et al. 2010; Elwood 2004; Hackworth 2009; Lake & Newman 2002; Wilson 2004, 2009; Wolch 1990; and Zupan 2011; see also Halpern 1995). Though these organizations and their approaches to development are often understood as more inclusive, they are challenged by local dynamics of race and class and have the potential to tokenize participants who have historically faced systemic inequality and are considered 'vulnerable' or 'marginalized' (Bonds et al. 2015; and Maskovsky 2006). Bonds et al. (2015) for instance illustrate how despite the expectation towards community self-reliance, neoliberal regimes of governance can be self-defeating when the implication is that the poor are not only to blame for their plight, but also again responsible for becoming un-poor.

Critical urban scholarship reveals that neoliberal policies and practices are experienced unevenly, with disproportionately negative implications for women, people of color, and the poor (Bonds 2013a, 2013b; Brahinsky 2011, 2014; Brenner & Theodore 2002; Leitner et al. 2007; Peck 2004; and Roberts & Mahtani 2010). Further, the

devastating impact of neoliberalism on communities of color suggests that the process of racialization in the economy intentionally reinforces neoliberal sensibilities (Bonds 2013a, 2013b; and Wilson 2009). These contributions center race in the production of poverty and highlight the complex geographic and political histories that surround what is constructed as 'local' development. However, the manner in which neoliberal regimes of governance have impacted worker cooperative development as a 'local' form of urban economic development strategy has yet to be taken up in the literature.

I draw on these theories to argue that within the neoliberal regime of governance in New York City, worker cooperatives are an attractive strategy. On one hand, worker cooperatives are businesses that are conducive to countering the marginalization experienced by economically and socially vulnerable populations. Worker cooperatives operate as anchor institutions in marginalized communities, providing stability, stewardship, and long-term investment in neighborhoods. They are values-based businesses that foster and facilitate building capacity for disenfranchised groups and generate new economic activity (Fairbairn et al. 1991; and Gordon Nembhard 2004). Yet, on the other hand, the language used to describe worker cooperatives as "flexible" and fostering "self-determination", "economic independence", and "empowerment" is remarkably similar to neoliberal discourses of self-help and personal responsibility. Indeed, worker-owners may be the ideal neoliberal subjects, the ultimate example of the devolution of the neoliberal state, wherein workers themselves are responsible for their own community and economic development.

In this dissertation, I argue that worker cooperatives are being co-opted through traditional, neoliberal modes of economic development at the scale of the city. I argue that

more attention should be paid to how urban neoliberal strategy relies on local nonprofit and community-based organizations to mediate the very urban development programs, such as worker cooperatives, that are supposed to alleviate urban challenges like poverty and access to employment. Drawing from critical scholarship on neoliberal urban governance, my research indicates that there is a risk of placing the burden of autonomous development back onto those marginalized by neoliberal restructuring in the first place.

Feminist, Anti-racist, and Critical Theories of Difference

In order to understand the production of difference, vulnerability and marginalization in the economy, I bring feminist and anti-racist theories of difference and theories of racial capitalism together with critiques of neoliberal regimes of governance.

As scholars in these fields have long argued, the political economic production of difference gives rise to intersectional forms of marginalization and inequality (e.g. Bondi 1993; Hill Collins 2015; Kobayashi & Peake 2007; Massey 1995; Pratt 2002; Rose 1993; and Valentine 2007). In particular, these theories call attention to the "significance of space in the processes of subject formation," (Valentine 2007, 10), demonstrate the "unnaturalization of landscapes upon which gendered and racialized relations are played out," (Kobayashi & Peake 2007, 225) and question, "what counts as legitimate geographical knowledge and who can produce such knowledge," (Rose 1993).

Feminist critiques of the erasure of social reproduction in the economy have been particularly significant in drawing attention to the ways that capitalism is gendered. Referring to the activities that are required for the reproduction of society,[7] Strauss and

[7] The reproduction of society is both the paid and unpaid work that includes "the reproduction of bodies, households, communities, societies and environments," (Strauss & Meehan 2015, 1) and more broadly what Katz (2001) describes as "the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life," (710).

Meehan (2015) emphasize, "the concept of social reproduction...grounded in the recognition of the structural exercise of economic and social power, is also a lens for focusing on the unequal distribution of conditions of flourishing that render some bodies, some workforces, and some communities far more precarious than others," (1-2). These interventions trouble the binaries of public/ private, work/ home and production/ social reproduction that discount the "spatial and place-based understandings of the world," (ibid., 2; Katz 2001; Mitchell et al. 2004; Nagar et al. 2002; and Strauss 2013). Feminist political economy affirms that gender is one dimension of mutually constituted and intersecting identity formations that are unevenly implicated in the political economy (McDowell 1999; and Peake & Kobayashi 2002).

Additionally, scholars theorizing race and racialization bridge anti-racist scholarship with feminist political economy emphasizing that race and gender are not only inseparable and interlocking but also implicated in broader political and economic processes (e.g. Barraclough 2009; Bonds 2013a, 2013b; Brahinsky 2011, 2014; Cope & Latcham 2009; Goldberg 2002; McKittrick & Woods 2007; Melamed 2006; Price 2012; and Pulido 2000).

I draw particularly from Robinson's (1983) theory of racial capitalism, which is based on the understanding that "the development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions," (2). Robinson goes on to contend that "as a material force...racism... inevitably permeate[s] the social structures emergent from capitalism," (ibid.). In this way, as Melamed (2011) notes, there "is no outside between the two," (8) so that all "capitalism is racial capitalism" (Melamed 2015, 3). Further, Bledsoe et al. (2019) extend this illumination and confer that both capitalism and its alternatives (such as worker cooperatives) are thus shaped by, dependent on and

implicated in the reproduction of (racial) difference.[8]

These claims are advanced by scholarship that traces shifting formations of race with gender within the geographies of capitalist development (e.g. McKittrick 2006; McKittrick & Woods 2007; Robinson 1983; and Melamed 2006, 2011, 2015). These scholars draw much needed attention to the ways in which racial identities, racial knowledges and the racialization and gendering of particular bodies are produced together with the capitalist economy. Examples of research making such connections includes scholarship examining the linkages between patterns of racialization and racial exploitation and imperial power (Melamed 2006; and Robinson 1983); the destruction of a Black sense of place and identity through plantation and prison systems (McKittrick 2011; see also Gilmore 2007); efforts to challenge Black places as "normalized...geographies of exclusion," and need (McKittrick & Woods 2007); and Black bodies as market commodities (Leong 2013; McKittrick 2006; and Woods 2007). By untangling the dependence of the capitalist economy on Black bodies (symbolic of all bodies of color) and labor, these scholars emphasize the historical, systemic processes connecting past racial economies (such as the plantation) with examples of contemporary patterns (such as the prison industrial complex) (see McKittrick 2011).

Drawing from these insights, I theorize worker cooperatives as alternatives impacted by and operating within a system of gendered and racial capitalism. I consider worker cooperatives as actively fostering and reproducing alternative and transformative social and economic relations, interactions and identities that challenge racialized and

[8] Although Bledsoe at al. (2019) are specifically engaging with racial difference, I have explored the role of gendered capitalism through theories of social reproduction and called attention to additional and intersecting identity formations beyond race and gender. Therefore I emphasize difference more broadly to encompass additional identity formations impacted by oppressive capitalism.

gendered capitalism.[9] I theorize worker cooperative organizing and development as appealing to worker-owners just as it is appealing to neoliberal regimes of governance. I argue that worker cooperatives and the conditions that lead to their organizing and development are potentially transformative and emblematic of what Gilmore (2004) calls "a geographic imperative [that] lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice," (16). In my examination of worker cooperatives and the WCBDI, I reposition worker-owners who occupy various intersecting identities often located at the margins (immigrant, womyn,[10] person of color, LGBTQIGNC+) to be centered in this analysis and connect this organizing work as social justice work.[11]

Worker cooperatives in the diverse economy

From theorizing urban political economy and neoliberal capitalist development to feminist political economy and anti-racist critiques of gendered and racial capitalism, I turn now to theories of the diverse economy and position worker cooperatives within this literature. To do this, I draw heavily from the instrumental work of J.K. Gibson-Graham (e.g. 1996, 2006) which has expanded the definition of "the economic" by challenging the dominance and inevitability of capitalism as the default structure encompassing all economic activities and defining economic actors. In their rethinking of the economy, Gibson-Graham (1995; 1996; 2006) advance the theoretical position of an already "diverse

[9] Here I draw from Brahinsky (2011) and others (McKittrick 2006) who contends that geography (space, scale, place and location) is not a neutral backdrop but is seriously implicated relationally in "the economic and social consequences of racism," (144).

[10] I use this spelling of 'womyn" to distinguish gender non-conforming identities beyond a man-woman binary including but not limited to a range of LGBTQ expressions. This alternate spelling highlights this distinction by removing "man" or "men" from the written word.

[11] McKittrick and Woods (2007) state, "within and against the grain of dominant modes of power knowledge, and space...black geographic narratives and lived experiences need to be taken seriously because they reconfigure classificatory spatial practices," (5). They continue by connecting societal power with consumption and ownership in order to make claims on spaces "demarcating "our place," (ibid.). I draw on this as I relate access to ownership and self-determination through participating in a worker cooperative as transformative for worker-owners.

economy" that is heterogeneous, not fixed and composed of multiple alternative and community economies. They (1996) caution against positioning the diverse economy as an alternative to capitalism and instead argue that these other economic processes and ways of being economic operate in tandem and alongside capitalist structures. For example, Gibson-Graham (2006) call for a broader and encompassing definition of the economy that in addition to identifying what is economic, helps to legitimize what is relevant (also Bergeron & Healy 2013). I draw an important connection between economic power and agency with relevancy and power overall. Diverse economies scholars have explored many topics, looking to reorient economic analyses away from being centered around capitalism, however not many have specifically investigated cooperatives as non-capitalist enterprises in rethinking the economy (except Cornwell 2012; Byrne & Healy 2006; and Gibson-Graham 2003). I find Cornwell (2012) particularly applicable in theorizing the cooperative economic subject in the diverse economy. She argues that there are "new spaces of possibility...opened up by collective ownership," (ibid., 731) and that contribute to "cultivat[ing] powerful subjective transformations," altering the ways of being economic through "connection and community rather than alienation and exclusion," (741).

Despite the feminist underpinnings of these critiques, diverse economies theory has not deeply engaged with theories of racial capitalism (see Bledsoe et al. 2019). Race and racialization are also largely absent within the cooperative literature (but see Gordon Nembhard 2014; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Meyers 2011; Sengupta 2015; and Zitcer 2014). Even narratives about the roots and history of cooperatives tend to overlook the racial histories of cooperative development. However, as the case is being made for worker cooperatives as an urban economic development strategy to support immigrants,

women, and low-income communities of color, I suggest that the cultural image of cooperatives is shifting.

There is growing literature that reflects this shift and explores intersecting identities such as race and gender with regard to worker cooperatives and is critical for my analysis (e.g. Bledsoe et al. 2019; Berry & Bell 2018; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006, 2014; Mathew 2017; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Miller 2011; Rowe et al. 2017; Sengupta 2015; Sutton 2019; Wiksell 2017; and Wilson 2010). In particular, Jessica Gordon Nembhard's (2014) work is central to my theorizing of worker cooperatives in urban economic development. Her work provides an accounting of Black cooperative organizing in the United States and in doing so makes connections between cooperative organizing work and work towards broader social justice concerns.

My theoretical framework brings together feminist critiques of neoliberal political economy that support the "cultivat[ion] [of] geographies of justice," (Strauss & Meehan 2015, 4) and combines these critiques into dialog with theories of racial capitalism. These approaches are both grounded in efforts to redefine economic agency and access and to "...advance a different way of knowing and imagining the world," (McKittrick 2006, xxvi). By connecting these literatures, I argue worker cooperatives offer emancipation from oppression, access to self-determination and create spaces of possibility. In the next section, I introduce the origins of this project and then describe my research design and overview of this dissertation.

Project inspiration

This project first came about after I read an article in the Fall 2014, "End of Poverty" edition of Yes! Magazine entitled, "How America's Largest Worker Owned Co-op Lifts People Out of Poverty," (Flanders 2014). The article highlighted Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) in New York City that employs 2,300 workers who all "enjoy good wages, regular hours, and family health insurance," (Flanders 2014).[12] This piece was among the first to announce New York City's new efforts to support cooperative development, noting that, "with an investment of $1.2 million to the cooperative sector, New York City is hoping to build on the group's success," (ibid.). The cover of the magazine itself was provocative. Cooperatives were positioned as "jobs that lift us up" implying a correlation between life fulfillment and work as transformative; there was provocation that prompted, "we've got the money, do we have the will?" to invest appropriately in order to accomplish "the end of poverty" (Yes! 2014). As a native New Yorker, life-long co-oper and budding academic, the article piqued a unification of many of my interests.[13]

[12] The articles emphasis was that the cooperative model represented a previously allusive cure for urban poverty and highlighted the challenges of working within the traditional urban political economy. For example, while CHCA's ownership is made up of 90% women of color, the cooperative did not qualify as a "minority" or "women" owned business through City programs that would have given them priority bidding for contracts. Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) programs such as the one in New York State may have difficulty fitting multi-ownership cooperative models into a mold set for traditional business structures.

[13] I attended my first cooperative membership orientation after moving into a student housing cooperative as an undergraduate student at U of M. The orientation covered what a cooperative is, and how it could be applied to all sorts of businesses - including ones that I might already be connected to. Sure enough, I had opened an account at the local credit union and I was a member at REI and the local food co-op. I learned that the orange juice brand I preferred was a cooperative business and was established, like many agricultural cooperatives in the U.S. during the Great Depression. I was astonished to learn further that the co-op apartment building I'd lived in my whole life was similar to all these other enterprises. Until that point, I had not connected that the committees my parents had helped organize and run along with our neighbors was anything unique or *cooperative*. The take away was that cooperatives have been a strategy used to promote mutual aid and survival for hundreds of years and in many different sectors. Since then I have come to learn firsthand the transformative role active participation in a cooperative can provide.

As an investigator, I saw a pattern emerge. I followed the establishment of the WCBDI more closely and was surprised and encouraged by emerging attention to worker cooperatives in other places as well. Jackson, Mississippi had elected a Mayor in 2013 who ran on a platform to "build a dynamic "new economy" rooted in "cooperative development" (Jackson Rising 2014). An announcement from the Madison Common Council to "fund worker owned co-op businesses," came shortly after the New York City commitment (Blumgart 2014). I began to see the energy for worker cooperatives building as a continuation of the organizing trajectory from the 2008 Evergreen Cooperatives anchor model of cooperative development in Cleveland Ohio.[14] Additional momentum came from the 2012 United Nations designation for the "International Year of the Cooperative". At this same time, in Milwaukee Wisconsin, I was involved with a group endeavoring to pioneer a hyper-local approach to cooperative development. We hoped to engage community asset mapping, popular education methods and community surveying to offer financial support and technical assistance to establish and organize worker cooperatives in our Riverwest neighborhood.

Based on gathering interest in worker cooperatives over space and across urban and geographic scales, I was motivated to study the first significant city sponsored worker development initiative in the country. I thought of it as an opportunity to make a theoretical contribution to the limited scholarship on worker cooperatives in geography as well as a practical imperative for understanding cooperative development in other places.

[14] I will discuss this occurrence in greater detail in chapter 2.

Research Design

My research design is structured to investigate the origins of the WCBDI and its implications from the perspective of convening organization and municipal interests, and from the perspective of individual worker-owners. To do so, this qualitative project relies heavily on interviews, participant observation and content and discourse analysis. Much of my analysis draws from 29 in-depth, semi-structured interviews that yielded over 23 hours of recorded content. The greater number of these interviews took place over the course of two years of fieldwork in New York City from 2015-2017, with additional interviews in January and February of 2020. Appendix B provides a complete list, schedule and classification of Interviews and Table 1.1 below provides an overview of organizations and interview categories that contributed to this research.

Table 1.1: Overview of Research Organizations and Interview Categories

WCBDI Agencies*	Additional Cooperative Organizations	Interview Categories[15]	No. of interviews
NYC Small Business Services	Cooperative Economics Alliance of NYC	Worker-Owners	11 / **12**
Democracy at Work Initiative	U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives	Cooperative Developers	3 / **4**
FPWA		Cooperative Organizers	**8**
The Working World		Service Providers	**1**
Urban Justice League		Funders	**1**
Center for Family Life		Policy Analysts	**2**
Green Worker Cooperatives		City Staff	**1**
Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative		Board/ Committee Members	(4)**
NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives		Cooperative Consultants	(4)**
			29 Total

* Organizations that have received funding through the WCBDI in the last five years.
** I note these additional categories and number in parentheses to demark Interviews where contacts occupied multiple relationships within the WCBDI.
/ Demarks the cases where I had more than one interview with same contact.
Source: Author

[15] Twenty-one the twenty-seven organizers, developers and worker-owners interviewees identified as women, queer or gender non-conforming, indicating the gendered nature of cooperative organizing.

I conducted research for the dissertation in two major phases. The initial phase took place mostly "off-site" from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. During this time, I reached out across my professional and personal contacts to establish connections with individuals active in the cooperative movement and organizing landscape in New York City. These early contacts provided me with key names, organizations and introductions that allowed me to both begin charting the Initiative and its networks and to identify potential interviewees. Because of its complicated structure, I found it necessary to visually diagram the Initiative (drawing lines, circles and arrows), to delineate various geographical networks and relationships. This diagramming was particularly helpful for analyzing the scales of cooperative development and governance,[16] Additionally, this Initiative mapping served as a guide for prioritizing my fieldwork, including which key actors to interview first, and helped me to prepare for the interviews themselves. This initial phase of the research allowed me to gain insight into the geographies and scales of the Initiative and to establish contacts and lines of communication that gave way to privileged insights about agency contacts.[17] In some cases, these tidbits of information and frames of reference led to the discovery of a shared network of contacts that was particularly useful for me to draw upon for building rapport with Initiative developers. This stage in my research was also important for strategically planning my field trips to New York City that I planned around Initiative and other cooperative development events in order to attend workshops, advocacy events, City hearings, and conferences.

[16] A version of this Initiative map appears in chapter 3 as a picture of the overview of the WCBDI.
[17] In one instance, an old colleague of mine was eager to share with me in a conspiratorial manner some gossip about an Initiative developer (Field notes Oct. 14, 2015). At the time I found the unsolicited commentary unwelcome and worried it would taint my approach to interviewing this contact. In the end, I found this information came in handy (more than once). When I sensed respondents being cautious about breaching confidentiality on group dynamics that I was able to reveal I already knew about, those contacts were noticeably relieved and more open to freely sharing their opinions on the matter.

The second phase of my research involved a combination of "onsite" fieldwork, collection of Initiative materials and media, observation of meetings, workshops, and events, transcription, coding and analysis. I took eight trips to New York City between the years of 2015 and 2017 lasting between five and fourteen days long to conduct onsite research at events and through scheduled interviews. These onsite visits were also dedicated to observation, writing field notes, and participating at Initiative events.

Given the structure of the WCBDI, I endeavored to speak first with Initiative developers and nonprofit staff who acted as gatekeepers for access to worker-owners.[18] After establishing initial connections and introducing the goals and aims of my research, I was able to gain trust and approach worker-owners directly. In this manner, each interview led to another contact and so on. Whenever possible, interviews occurred face-to-face and one-on-one.[19] All interviews took place at locations and times initiated by participants.[20] When I met with staff from nonprofit organizations, this often meant interviews took place in a private or shared office space at a professional office location. When I met with contacts that would be classified as organizers or service providers, those meetings were arranged typically over lunch hours at coffee shops or restaurants. On two occasions, meeting sites were more spontaneous and picked based on their proximity to a different meeting or event we had both attended. Thus, my interview sites were flexible

[18] Throughout the dissertation, I refer to people who spoke with me in their professional capacity, as their title and role in the Initiative. In contrast, in an effort to elevate worker-owners in my analysis, I have given these interviewees names. In order to protect the identity of contacts, I use carefully selected pseudonyms.
[19] There were some exceptions to this due to canceled or rescheduled meetings after I had already left the field or in the case of five interviews, where participants lived and worked out of state and were interviewed through video conference call.
[20] Elwood and Martin (2000) have found noticeable spatiality or geography to research sitings and locations, and my experience found this also to be the case.

and designed to offer minimal disruption to the busy professional and personal lives of the individuals participating in my study.

Meetings and interviews with worker-owners took me to very different sites than nonprofit professionals and organizers. The locations and times selected by worker-owners were to accommodate their schedules and often involved meeting in convenient places during daily commutes. These "micro-geographies" of social space (Elwood & Martin 2000) offered a glimpse into the everyday patterns and routes for worker-owners who often would need to traverse long distances to make a living. The 'professionals' I spoke with met with me during their regular workday and therefore our meetings were during paid salary time. In contrast, my interviews with worker-owners took place on their own personal time, generally on their way to or from home/ work. The everyday spatialities of worker-owners versus my professional contacts was powerfully revealing of the labor geographies and scales of privilege at work across the lives of those participating in my study.

As noted above, in addition to interviews with worker-owners and Initiative developers and nonprofit professionals, I engaged in participant observation in the field at an array of Initiative-related workshops, meetings, and events. My detailed notes at each event and before and after interviews resulted in two notebooks filled with observations, accounts, and photographs. I made a point of arriving early to all interviews and appointments so that I had the opportunity to take account of routines and the micro-geographies within the spaces where interactions between worker-owners and Initiative agencies intersected. Throughout this process, I collected brochures, flyers, and print materials from various Initiative agencies. And was able to attend staff meetings at

community-based nonprofits involved in cooperative development where I observed interactions between worker-owners and nonprofit cooperative developers both 'at work' and outside the office at public events. At the scale and site of the City, I attended City Council budget hearings and a worker cooperative advocacy event at City Hall where I listened to public testimony and was able to observe as Initiative collaborators and worker-owners prepared for these events.

As a participant at Initiative and community nonprofit events I was an invited guest by Initiative contacts or worker-owners. In these instances, at celebrations, conferences and workshops, my role was as a community member interested in worker cooperatives. These opportunities to be observer and participant allowed for me to achieve both a flexible and fluid positionality in the field. In this manner, I was able to be a participant when I could, an observer when I could or both as it allowed.

My analysis began with the transcription of the audio files from my interviews. I contracted out this process to save on time and to avoid any personal bias in interpretation of what might be initially construed as insignificant and then not included in the typed transcripts.[21] My coding process was, as Cope and Kurtz (2016) describe, "recursive, sporadic and, frankly, messy," (650). I employed an iterative reading process for interview transcripts, which involved re-reading each with different questions in mind to identify key themes, descriptions, and quotes and to better understand discourses about race and

[21] Throughout this research I endeavored to promote cooperative economic justice and thus to be as non-extractive as possible in my fieldwork. Specifically I employed Scribe Collective to transcribe my interviews and reached out, as it was applicable for assistance from worker cooperatives with translation services. Thus this cooperative research project supported other cooperative endeavors. I am grateful to Jenna Loyd who first told me about Scribe Collective.

gender in urban cooperative development in the WCBDI.[22] For coding I used a similar approach to analyze field notes, print materials, and other documents produced by and for WCBDI, its organizations and worker cooperatives in New York City. These material artifacts include flyers and brochures, posters, conference materials, handbooks, curriculum designed for worker cooperative development (including webinar and powerpoint materials), reports, as well as media (including social media postings and newsletters).

My analysis builds from a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006) and is steered by a feminist and anti-racist methodology and praxis that recognizes and challenges power relations and positionality in the production of knowledge through reflexivity. I find Derickson's (2016) "critical politics of recognition" is a useful framing of my approach as it involves "listen[ing] [more] to Black people and understanding Black lives," (828) in order to work towards a "project of producing emancipatory knowledges," (825). I seek to emulate what Derickson (2019) later frames as "a commitment to radical knowledge as plural knowledges," (162), acknowledging multiple experiences and understandings in order to avoid Haraway's (1991) "god trick" of seeing and knowing from above. Derickson (2019) calls for radical knowledges to include anti-racist and anti-capitalist projects that "ought not only to count and chart forms of dispossession (see McKittrick 2014), but rather take seriously, learn from, respond to and mobilise utopian visions of otherwise being," (162).

[22] I find the clear introduction to discourse provided by Waitt (2010) helpful to understand "how particular knowledge systems convince people about what exists in the world (meanings) and determine what they say (attitudes) and do (practices)," (218). However, I am mindful of the critique offered by Wilson and Bauder (2001) who suggest there is a liability to discourse analysis that has the potential to institutionalize marginalization in groups already silenced.

Further, I draw from Parker's (2016) critique of the "salient silences" in urban research and instead employed a feminist "intersectional and materialist urban analysis that take[s] difference seriously" (1337). In this way while analyzing my data, I "recognize[s] that power falls upon and is articulated, embarked and resisted differently by different bodies and institutions," (ibid., 1343). Further that, "categories like race and gender are not stable but socially produced, unmoored, and maintained through practices that operate at and across different temporal and spatial scales,"(ibid., 1344; also McKittrick 2006, 2011). My research with worker-owners and the WCBDI aligns with Parker (2016) and "challenges theorizations of intersectionality and agency that underestimate the way that structures constrain the capacity of individuals to enact some realities," (1345). In addition, though, I also find my arguments "reinforce existing conceptions, but [may] dismantle and challenge others," (ibid., 1354). Reflecting on my positionality in the field served as an important reminder about the role of power and privilege in knowledge production.

In the field: reflexivity and positionality

Feminist scholarship has long engaged in a thoughtful and critical debate about the role of researcher self-reflexive positioning as it relates to partial knowledge, power relations, privilege and ethical practice in qualitative research (e.g. Nagar & Geiger 2007; and Rose 1997). Focusing specifically on the dynamics of race, Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) draw from W.E.B. DuBois to suggest that scholars "must gain reflexive control over...assumptions and deliberately form new ones," (575).[23] Drawing from these insights reflexivity is a key aspect of my research design. I occupy multiple and intersecting

[23] I interpret assumptions to include ideas on racial domination, privilege, knowledge production and power.

positionalities in this project. Taking seriously how my own subject position impacted and shaped my research with worker cooperatives, I found myself as both an insider and an outsider. On one hand, my identities as native New Yorker, white, woman and researcher gave me certain credibility and access to cooperative actors in this project.[24] Further, my networks and connections as a cooperative professional provided access to key organizations and cooperative developers that advanced my research. The process of recognizing shared contacts and overlapping relationships in the cooperative movement is notable for two reasons: First, it underscores the relatively small size of the cooperative movement, which means that those active in cooperative organizing can easily connect with movers-and-shakers across the country. Second, this relatively small network not only provided a shared base of cooperative knowledge, it lent credibility to my research as a cooperative "insider," and helped me to establish rapport with worker-owners and organizers alike. This unique vantage point created by this "insider" status, alongside my privileged social positioning, gave me access to information and data that might otherwise have remained unshared.

Yet, even as I was an "insider" in some ways, as a white, English-speaking, cis gendered woman conducting research with Latinx, Filipino and indigenous womyn, I was also an "outsider" for many significant reasons. I take seriously my own racial privilege vis-à-vis the communities I interact with in the field (e.g. Mullings 1999; Parker 2016; and Waters 1999) and the significant role that white women play in reproducing white supremacy (e.g. Bonds 2019). Acknowledging and navigating these power relations in the

[24] If my credentials hadn't been asked about at the start of a meeting, I was sure to share them. In this way, I established some standing and emitted what I hoped was a sense of shared experience and sympathies. Overall this strategy to develop rapport and garner trust was affirmed by comments such as "*you* know how it is," (Field notes Feb. 8, 2016).

field was at times uncomfortable in ways I was not prepared for. For example, I often felt extremely tentative when asking probing questions about experiences with precarity or how worker-owners felt about the Initiative's targeting of immigrants, low-income communities of color, and women as a poverty alleviation strategy. While coding and analyzing interview transcripts I reflected and realized that my discomfort in raising these issues was because I was confronting my own privilege as a white, educated, middle class and gender conforming woman with access to resources and forms of stability not available to many of the worker-owners I interviewed. The responses from interviewees - both spoken and observed - reflect neither surprise nor unease in being asked to respond to their identity in the face of intentional development initiatives (Field notes Jan. 4, 2017; and Jan. 26, 2017). People (like me) who occupy spaces of intersectional privilege have the luxury of having the option to not think about race and other forms of differences while those who are racialized as non-white and are otherwise marginalized in society navigate those oppressive systems as a daily reality.

Even as an individual born and raised in New York City, this project served as a reminder of just how geographically vast the city is. After twelve years living in Milwaukee I had taken for granted that in twenty minutes (or so) I could get anywhere. Not so in New York City. One night it took me over two hours to get to an Initiative event in Brooklyn via subway from where I was staying with my sister in the Bronx. On a good weekday with transfer timing on my side, I could get downtown for meetings and events in just over an hour. I often spent these long commutes marveling at how this downtime used to be built into my everyday routine and how I experience a sense of scale differently depending on where I am (Field notes Dec. 14, 2016). These commutes gave me a sense of awe about the

people doing this organizing work and movement building with so many subway stops to travel in order to make those connections happen. In each chapter of this dissertation, cooperative development is explored at various scales. I'll turn now to an overview of this dissertation with a brief description of each chapter.

Overview of chapters

My dissertation is embedded in the theoretical framework and research design discussed above. I structure my arguments and analysis into four main chapters that examine the impacts and implications of and for worker cooperative development efforts within the confines of the dominant political economy in New York City. To do so, I center the experiences of worker-owners who participate in worker cooperatives seeking transformative economic justice and self-determination.

In chapter 2, I define and situate cooperatives more generally and locate worker cooperatives specifically, within a larger movement that has both significant social and economic impact. My research illustrates how worker cooperatives are increasingly being considered as an urban economic development strategy, promoted particularly to low-income women, immigrants and communities of color. At the same time, I argue that cooperative histories of organizing among these groups have largely been ignored. To make this point, I introduce the dominant narratives of cooperative origins that have persisted over time and obscured other cooperative organizing histories. In doing so, I challenge the perceived novelty of cooperatives for marginalized groups who have a rich history of utilizing cooperatives to survive and resist racialized and gendered capitalism (Gordon Nembhard 2014). I draw from key cooperative thinkers like DuBois (e.g. 1907)

and Gordon Nembhard (e.g. 2014) whose work documents the long histories of cooperative organizing among women, immigrants and communities of color. I conclude by suggesting that contemporary discourses and images about worker cooperatives are shifting to reflect new strategies of cooperative development to alleviate racialized and gendered poverty and economic and social precarity.

Chapter 3 chronicles the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), which, as noted above, is an economic development initiative made up of nonprofit agencies, cooperative developers and services providers that is funded and administered through the New York City Council and Small Business Services. I situate the WCBDI within the New York City political and economic conditions that led to the Initiative organizing. I argue that the WCBDI is not only exemplary of neoliberal urban governance practices but that worker cooperative development in particular is attractive for an urban system that values individual uplift with limited state intervention. However, I identify a contradiction that emerges. Despite the emphasis on bottom up cooperative organizing and worker-owner engagement in cooperative structures, the WCBDI itself makes little effort to involve the marginalized workers they claim to be empowering. By examining the experiences of one worker cooperative incubation project with the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park Brooklyn, this chapter reveals potential tensions between well-meaning nonprofit organizations and worker cooperatives. I conclude with applying Sutton's (2019) recent theorizations of municipal support for cooperatives and critically examine her assessment of New York City as a "cultivator cooperative city." I argue that the results of the WCBDI in practice are in fact top down just as they promote a bottom up approach to economic development.

In chapter 4, I theorize worker cooperatives as transformative labor geographies by examining multiple scales of influence connected to cooperative businesses. I examine these scales of transformation by centering the voices and experiences of worker-owners at two worker cooperatives, Caracol Interpreters Cooperative and Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative. My research demonstrates the impacts of participatory democracy on the individual worker-owner and the significance of place-making (from Pierce et al. 2011) for cooperative workplaces as flexible arenas for building power that challenge dominant oppressions in the political economy. Furthermore, my findings establish how for worker-owners, worker cooperatives are transformative opportunities to access political and economic activism as a mode of resistance to gendered racial capitalism and thus self-determination.

Chapter 5 builds on my previous arguments about the challenges of organizing within the confines of the dominant political economy and the transformative potential for worker cooperatives to engage individual workers to access larger social movement involvement and solidarity. In this chapter, I explore the literature on the Sanctuary Movement in the United States and its expanded spatialities today. I theorize sanctuary worker cooperatives and share the experiences from Mirror Beauty Cooperative and again Caracol Interpreters Cooperative. Both of these groups use sanctuary intentions in their organizing practices to support, protect and provide access to economic self-determination for workers who may be particularly vulnerable due to their intersectional identities. I find that while worker cooperatives remain a best hope for providing both economic justice and sanctuary, there continues to be a hidden burden, in organizing as a sanctuary workplace under the current political economy.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation explores some of the many facets of worker cooperative development in the context of neoliberal political economy. While many of my conclusions are critical of the WCBDI, I do not think they are wholly condemning for its future or for other municipal supported cooperative development efforts. I maintain that the complex and contradictory nature of cooperative organizing that I explore in this dissertation have implications and relevance for other cities considering or implementing cooperative forms of development. This project is a worker-led analysis of scaled up urban cooperative development. As such, I have centered the voices and experiences of worker-owners and present both the promise and limitations of these cooperative development efforts especially for marginalized and vulnerable workers.

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Chapter 2.
Cooperative context, impact, histories and legacy

Introduction

As discussed in the introduction, cooperatives have increasingly gained attention nationally and numerous cities throughout the United States have seized upon the cooperative model as a strategy for economic development (Camou 2016; and Sutton 2019). Cooperative businesses are widely understood to be more locally grounded, as well as socially and economically just compared to traditional urban and community development strategies that often rely on extra-local financing, organizations, and expertise (Birchall 2004; Healy & Graham 2008; and Rothschild 2000). In addition, cooperative developers and advocates portray the cooperative model as one that is more 'empowering' and community-driven, making it more flexible and responsive to member-owners because of its structure of direct participation in governance (DuBois 1898, 1907; Fairbairn et al. 1991; Gibson-Graham 2003; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006, 2014; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Healy 2009; Ifateyo 2014; Meyers 2011; Novkovic 2008; Rothschild & Russell 1986; Rothschild 2009; Whyte & Blasi 1982; and Zeuli & Radel 2005). As municipal governments seek to expand cooperatives into community and economic development, cooperatives are often represented as a *new* approach with potential to achieve individual and community economic independence from the state (Burns 2014; Franklin et al. 2014; Henehan et al. 2011; Powers 2019; and Zeuli & Radel 2005). In these arguments, cooperatives are framed as leading to "new employment landscapes" (Powers 2019, para. 3), as having "captured the imaginations of many low-income communities of color," (Burns 2014, para. 5) and as "remedies to market failure…attractive in an era of downsizing government," (Henehan et al. 2011, 1).

Following these logics, cooperatives are touted as a better means through which to incorporate and involve marginalized groups who have historically been ignored or devalued within urban governance structures and by hegemonic neoliberal development strategies (Berry & Bell 2018; Camou 2016; Franklin at al. 2014; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Meyers 2011; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Stewart 1984; and Wilson 2010). Alongside this renewed attention to cooperatives as a more just and empowering model of development, a problematic cultural imagery persists. Cooperative enterprises are often associated with white racial identities and spaces associated with whiteness, often at the exclusion of those communities thought to benefit the most from these organizing models (Barker 2016; Dubb 2019; and Zitcer 2014). Further, cooperatives are not new in the least, but rather have been models of development for people of color, women, and immigrants for centuries.

In this chapter, I foreground scholarship documenting these long, often obscured histories of cooperative organizing in the United States to challenge the ways in which marginalized groups are invisibilized within dominant cooperative narratives (for exceptions see Curl 2009; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006, 2014; and Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999). For example, since the late 18th Century, Black cooperative organizing in the U.S. has operated as a means of resourcefulness and as a form of resistance to oppressive social and economic systems that exploited Black labor and Black bodies (DuBois 1898, 1907; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006, 2014; and MacKinnon & Derickson 2013). Women have a long history of participation and presence in cooperatives, organizing primarily around labor justice and purchasing power (Frank 1994). In fact, by the early 1900s nearly as many women participated in cooperatives as men (ibid.).

Immigrant communities in the United States also established cooperatives as mutual aid for support and community building (Ji & Robinson 2012). Furthermore, as Curl (2009) notes, "the first North Americans to practice collectivity, cooperation and communalism were, of course, Indigenous," (15). Modern cooperative organizing is rooted in concepts of community and mutual aid that have been essential to human survival throughout history.

This chapter seeks to accomplish three goals. First, I establish what a cooperative is and provide an overview of the economic and social context for cooperative impact. Second, I challenge the mainstream version of cooperative history that locates cooperatives within white-male-European traditions in ways that hide or obscure diverse cooperative experiences. These eclipsed and hidden cooperative histories are not one origin story but rather multiple trajectories and forms of cooperative organizing as a matter of self-determination and survival. Yet these histories are difficult to trace because they have been interrupted (by imperialism or capitalist development) and diminished within hegemonic racial, gender and economic discourses. Third, I conclude by recognizing that the current image of worker cooperatives is changing in ways that disrupt prevailing and dominating narratives of cooperative history.

My analysis draws from literature and media produced by and for cooperatives and cooperative organizations. In addition, I utilize data collected by local, national, and international cooperative organizations to promote and measure the cooperative landscape and the socio-economic impact of cooperative businesses. I combine an interdisciplinary body of cooperative scholarship with data and observations collected from two years of fieldwork from 2015 to 2017 on cooperative development in New York City.

Defining "cooperatives": the cooperative movement and cooperative advantage

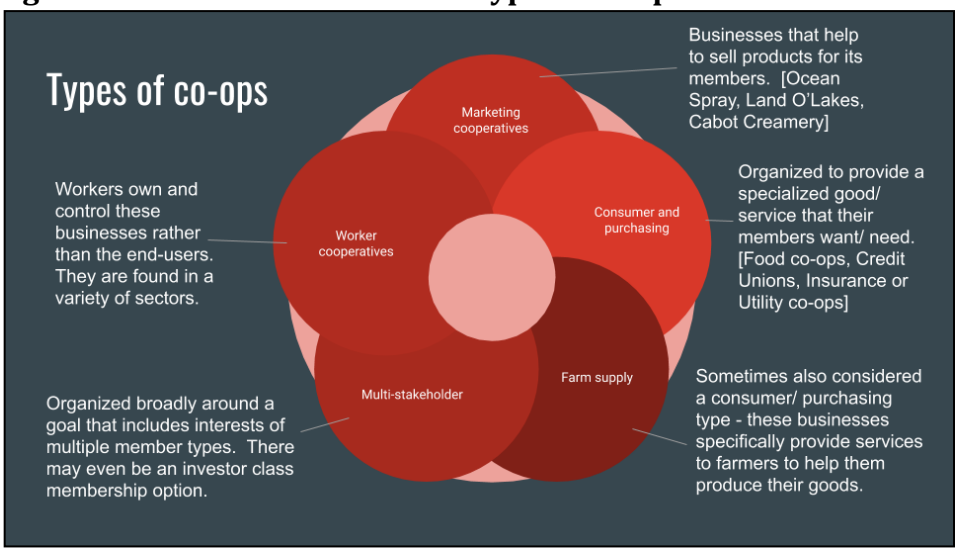
The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) is one of the world's largest non-governmental organizations representing approximately "one billion cooperative members from any of the three million cooperatives worldwide," (2020, "About Us"). According to the ICA, a common definition of a cooperative is "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise" (ICA 2020, "What is a Cooperative?"). In more simple terms, cooperatives are controlled by its members who are also user-owners of the business. While this dissertation is focused on worker cooperatives - where the user-owners of the cooperative are also its employees or worker-owners - there is a wide extent and variation across cooperative models. In fact, the cooperative model can be adapted to businesses in nearly any sector in the economy, including but not limited to: real estate (e.g. housing cooperatives and land trusts); food production and service (e.g. agriculture, farming, restaurants); manufacturing; hospitality, and childcare; education; utilities; and finance (e.g. credit unions). Figure 2.1 below is an overview of the different types of cooperative structures and businesses in practice.

Identifying a cooperative however is not always as simple as it might seem. Some organizations may utilize a cooperative framework, but do not explicitly identify as a cooperative. For instance, many cooperative enterprises choose to avoid cooperative terminology in their marketing, making them difficult to distinguish from other business structures.[25,26] Moreover, some corporations use the language of employee ownership as a

[25] For example, in the United States, credit unions are financial cooperatives that traditionally do not use the language of "co-op" to promote membership and participation. Large brands including Land O'Lakes and ACE

way to falsely associate cooperative principles and ethics to market their business.[27] To help further solidify the cooperative difference, there are seven guiding principles that help to define and unify cooperatives worldwide. They act as a guide for establishing and organizing cooperatives as well as an important value structure for cooperatives to align their mission with. The cooperative principles are: Voluntary and Open membership; Democratic Control; Member Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Cooperation among Cooperatives; and Concern for Community (ICA 2020).

Figure 2.1: Overview of different types of cooperative business structures



Source: Author

Hardware in the agriculture and hardware/lumber sectors are not widely known as cooperatives yet have been ranked as among the top ten largest in the United States (NCB 2019).

[26] However, this is changing. In 2015, the national outdoor equipment and apparel store REI shifted their marketing to promote "REI Co-op" calling attention to and highlighting their cooperative roots and governance structure (REI Co-op 2015). I believe this is a trend that will continue as "co-op" becomes more mainstream and marketing continues to equate ideas about "worker owned" with better, more equitable economics. I see this similar to the sustainability trend that made a positive difference for businesses that advertise being "green".

[27] Woodman's Food Markets (2020) is a regional grocery chain in the Midwest that promotes being "employee owned" implying a cooperative structure. In fact, Woodman's is incorporated as a single proprietor business that has an Employee Stock Ownership Trust which, although offering an opportunity for wealth building and employee investment in the company, does not actually provide access to decision making and governance for workers as would be the case in a worker cooperative.

In the United States, there is a commonly held conception of cooperatives as local (coded as "small") and minor in economic consequence. In fact, they have significant economic and social impact within and beyond the local scale. According to research on the cooperative economy, "cooperatives provide jobs or work opportunities to 10% of the employed population[28] [in the world] and the top 300 cooperatives and mutual or cooperative groups generate 2.1 trillion USD in turnover while providing the services and infrastructure society needs to thrive,"(WCM 2017). In 2006, the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC) conducted an extensive survey of cooperative businesses and found nearly 30,000 cooperatives operate at 73,000 places of business throughout the United States. These businesses own over $3 trillion in assets, generate over $500 billion in revenue and over $25 billion in wages alone (Deller et al. 2009). This comprehensive study and first research endeavor of its kind further found that Americans in the United States, hold 350 million memberships in cooperatives mostly in consumer cooperative businesses. Extrapolating from the research samples to the larger population, taking into account revenue, jobs and wages, cooperatives may bring a total of $133.5 billion dollars in value-added income to the U.S. economy (ibid.).

These numbers are compelling and in the wake of a nearly fifteen-year gap in data, the UWCC has recently published its first draft of an interactive data set and census of cooperatives in the United States. This important research helps to fill the void left due to underreporting by both the U.S. Census and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics who do not yet specifically track economic measures for cooperatives.

[28] This is reported as 280 million people.

Worker cooperatives and the cooperative advantage

Again, this dissertation specifically focuses on worker cooperatives, where the workers are owners and managers of their business. The Democracy at Work Institute[29] (2015) identifies two essential defining characteristics of a worker cooperative: (1) worker-owner financial investment and equitable distribution of surplus; and (2) collectivized democratic decision-making based on the cooperative principle of 'one member, one vote'. These essential ingredients can be summed up as: investment, decision-making and structure. In this way worker-owners are engaged in governing *and* directly benefit from the business' success. Worker cooperatives can be found in a wide variety of sectors, from transportation to manufacturing to home health care. The U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) reports 465 known worker cooperatives in current operation that employ 6,454 workers and gross over $505 million dollars (Palmer 2020).[30]

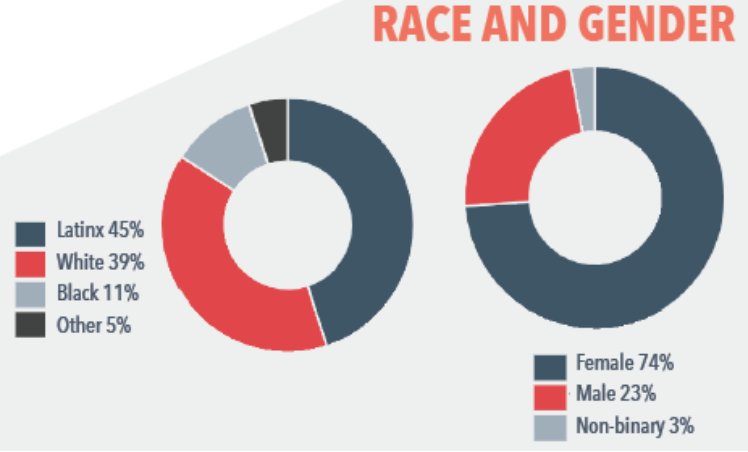
There has been significant growth of worker cooperative businesses since the early 2000s. In fact, 60% of current cooperatives enterprises have formed since the year 2000 and 31% of new worker cooperatives have been established since 2010 (DAWI 2014). This growth is punctuated by shifting of demographics that reflect a change for whom is being served by urban cooperative development strategies. Since 2010, the majority (60%) of new worker-owners identify as people of color and 68% of total worker-owners are women (Abell & Hoover 2016). Palmer (2018) attributes some of this growth among women-worker-owners as "likely due to more home care, child care, and cleaning

[29] The Democracy at Work Institute (DAWI) was created by the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC). The stated mission of DAWI is "to ensure that worker cooperative development in economically and socially marginalized communities is adequately supported**,** effective**,** and strategically directed," (DAWI 2020)**.**

[30] 465 include 415 verified and operational worker cooperatives in 2018 (Palmer 2020).

cooperatives reporting," (2). Additionally, the 2017 census of worker cooperatives illustrates an increase in non-binary gender worker-owners to a total of 102 workers up from 43 workers in 2016 (ibid.; and Figure 2,2).

Figure 2.2: Worker-owner breakdown by race and gender[31]



Source: 2017 State of Worker Cooperatives in the United States (Palmer 2018).

Moreover, in a publication promoting cooperative organizing for immigrant communities, Ji and Robinson (2012) report, the earnings for immigrants working in cooperatives is twice the annual income of immigrants working for other people (4). Further, cooperative news networks point to the increasing utility and presence of immigrant organized worker cooperatives worldwide as a growing area of development to address income inequality (e.g. Abello 2016, 2017; Aziza 2018; Kelly 2016; Runyeon 2016; and Voinea 2014).

As I document in later chapters, this dissertation research supports the findings of other research of cooperatives (Bledsoe et al. 2019; DuBois 1894, 1907; Franklin et al. 2014; Gordon Nembhard 2004, 2006, 2014; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Hope II

[31] Based on sample of 105 worker cooperative businesses surveyed in 2017 (Palmer 2018).

1940; McClintock 2018; Meyers 2011; Rothschild 2009; Sengupta 2015; Shipp 1996; Stewart 1984; and Woods 2007), namely that worker cooperatives provide access to employment and wealth building for individuals and communities that are traditionally exploited and marginalized both socially and economically (e.g. low income, immigrant, women and communities of color). I argue the increasing attention toward cooperatives as a means of urban economic development more broadly is in part responsible for the types of businesses being developed as worker cooperatives and thus the types of workers being courted. Complicated intersectional forms of identity such as race, gender, nationality and labor are apparent in how, where, and what kinds of cooperative development takes place.

Worker-owners receive member benefits from participating in a worker cooperative including but not limited to: shared participatory and democratic decision making; self-governance, autonomy and agency in their work; shared equity and profits towards shared prosperity; dignity in their work; fair living wages and access to other employment benefits; professional development and education; safe and equitable treatment; and job security (e.g. Berry & Bell 2018; Cornwell 2012; Fairbairn et al. 1991; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Rothschild 2009; Rothschild & Russell 1986; Meyers 2011; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Novkovic 2008; and Shifley 2003). The USFWC (2017) promotes the worker cooperative model as well suited for labor-intensive industries, values-based businesses, as well as among new and low-wealth entrepreneurs. They further maintain that in addition to "providing meaningful jobs and asset building opportunities for workers of all income levels, worker cooperatives can play an important role in building movements for economic justice and social change: as institutions where

real democracy is practiced on a day-to-day basis, they are a model for empowerment," (USFWC 2020, "What is a Worker Cooperative?").

To reiterate, cooperatives are both social and economic institutions and as such have both significant social and economic impact. Additionally, cooperatives are seeing a surge in growth overall and specifically among worker cooperatives as a viable tool for self-determination among and in particular for low-income communities of color, immigrants and women. I argue, the advantage of worker cooperatives for these communities as a business model are multiple and occur at a variety of scales from the individual worker-owner, their families, the cooperative business itself and links to larger social justice movements.

The case of New York City's Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), the initiative that grounds this dissertation project, reflects these trends and demonstrates the expansion of worker cooperatives into emerging industries. Although regrettably there is not currently published data that reflects the racial, gender and national identities of worker owners in New York City, as I discuss again in chapter 3, the USFWC reports significant increase among people of color and women in worker cooperatives nationwide (Palmer 2018). I further document the multi-scalar transformations of worker cooperative participation in chapter 4. Finally, I illuminate how worker cooperatives connect to larger social justice movement building in both chapter 4 and 5 through a focus on two cases of cooperative development in New York City and their access to activism and second by connecting immigrant owned and organized cooperatives with an expanded notion of sanctuary into the workplace.

Scholarship on cooperatives

There is a considerable body of work focused on cooperatives, however much of it has been produced outside of the academy for popular consumption. This includes work produced by and for cooperative practitioners that: reimagines and challenges economic and political institutions (e.g. Nadeau & Thompson 1996; Ranis 2016; and Restakis 2010); connects worker cooperative organizing with revolutionary activism (Abrams 2008; Kelly 2012; and Wright 2014); and makes the case that employee ownership is good for business (Rosen et al. 2005). Moreover, there has also been extensive attention to broader cooperative landscapes, especially the Mondragon cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain that consist of a network of cooperative businesses (e.g. Bretos et al. 2019; Bretos & Errasti 2017; Cheney 1999; Kasmir 1996; and Whyte & Whyte 1991). Additionally, cooperatives have been connected to community wealth building and a larger solidarity economy (Alperovitz 2013; and Dubb & Rudzinski 2016), and as fundamental to human well-being in order for society to both thrive and survive (e.g. Forsey 1993; Nadeau 2012; Nadeau & Nadeau 2016; and Nowak & Highfield 2011).

Scholars have taken up various histories of cooperative organizing in the United States, though these histories have tended to reflect the dominant narratives I discuss in the next section, leading to gaps in knowledge (Birchall 1994, 1997; Dreyfuss 1973; Fairbairn 1994; and Thompson 1994). Interestingly, in his extensive history of cooperatives and the cooperative movement in the United States, John Curl (2009), though writing outside of academia, provides an opening for understanding early cooperation in America as stemming from Indigenous and Native American philosophies and practices. Housing cooperatives as affordable housing has also received notable attention (Deller et

al. 2009; Jacobus & Davis 2010; Porcino 1991; and Sazama 1996) and relatedly, property tax legislation to support development for housing cooperatives (Deller et al. 2009; and Sazama 1996).

The body of cooperative knowledge in academia is growing, particularly in the fields of economics and sociology. Much of this research focuses on rural and agricultural cooperatives (Cook 1995; Cook & Iliopoulos 2000; Kimball 1988; and Sykuta & Cook 2001); or has analyzed cooperative efficiency, resiliency and success as compared to traditional capitalist models of development (Bradley & Gelb 1979; Bretos & Marcuello 2017; Novkovic 2008; Pérotin 2012; Rice & Lavoie 2005; Rothschild & Russell 1986; Shipp 1996; Stryjan 1994; Webb & Cheney 2014; Whyman 2012; and Zeuli & Cropp 2004) and as a community development strategy specifically (Zeuli & Radel 2005). Birchell and Ketilson (2009) offer a compelling argument indicating that cooperatives are quite resilient in times of economic crisis. However, their conclusions are narrowly based on credit unions. There has been recent exploration of the cooperative model and applicability for public utilities (Bauwnes et al. 2016; and Herbes et al. 2017) as well as in the realm social work (Matthew 2017), public administration (Brintnall 2016) and as a management style for social enterprises at large (Audebrand 2017). Despite this growing attention in other fields, there remains a noticeable dearth of research on the economic and social impact of cooperatives in geography, with the exception of the work I discuss below.

While cooperative research remains nascent in geography, Kathy Gibson and Julie Graham, writing together as J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010) have long recognized the geographic importance of cooperatives. Their feminist critique of political economy identifies cooperative enterprises as both alternatives to capitalist structures and

as existing within an economy that in actuality is not wholly capitalist (1996, 2006). Subsequently Gibson-Graham has inspired a new generation of geographers in a subfield known as diverse and community economies (Bergeron & Healy 2013; Cameron & Gibson 2005; Cameron & Gibson-Graham 2003; Graham & Cornwell 2009; Healy 2009; Healy & Graham, 2008; and Miller 2013). Cornwell (2012) for instance, adds critical knowledge about subject formation and collective identities among worker-owners in her case study of a worker cooperative copy shop in Massachusetts. Further, Cornwell et al. (2014) share stories about success and challenges in cooperative organizing in the Connecticut River Valley. Similarly, Gibson-Graham (2003) consider the case of the Mondragon cooperatives as an example of an ethical economy.

The diverse economies literature on worker cooperatives offers a meaningful feminist intervention into what had been a largely class-based framing of worker cooperatives. Yet, while this scholarship is sensitive to the ways in which social difference is produced through economic relations, it has not adequately considered how gender articulates with other forms of difference (Meyers & Vallas 2016; Miller 2011; Sengupta 2015; Smith 2003; and Van Vliet 2006). More recently, Bledsoe et al. (2019) and Sengupta (2015) seek to address this gap. Sengupta (2015) examines leadership in cooperatives through an intersectional lens and claims that "viewing co-operatives as organisations solely from a class based perspective is necessarily incomplete without an analysis based on gender and race," (19). Bledsoe et al. (2019) theorize diverse economies from a racial capitalist framing that understands capitalism as inseparable from the legacies and "forms of racial and colonial oppression," (1). Building from the examples of Black commoning and food cooperatives and Indigenous community housing projects, they illustrate how "these

communities push beyond a diagnosis of oppressive dynamics and create place-specific alternatives to the expressions of capitalism they encounter," (ibid., 8). The central tenet of their argument has particular relevance for examining worker cooperatives. For, if "both capitalism and its alternatives are shaped by racial differences," (ibid., 1) ignoring these processes and their systems in cooperative structures would result in a lapse in understanding. Zitcer (2014) also explores issues of race and cooperatives in a Philadelphia case study. Zitcer's conclusions are based on a consumer food cooperative and argues that cooperatives "struggle[s] with racial and class homogeneity" and exhibit what he frames as a "paradox of exclusivity" (ibid.,12). The paradox has the unintended consequence of reinforcing the prevailing image of food cooperatives as white and middle class even as they strive to be accessible and inclusive to communities of color.

The importance of Jessica Gordon Nembhard's (2004, 2006, 2008, 2014) scholarship on Black cooperatives cannot be overstated. Her work has been crucial in building a more comprehensive body of knowledge on the histories and potential of Black cooperative economic development (Gordon Nembhard 2008, 2014). She builds on the scholarship of W.E.B. DuBois (1898, 1907), whose work engages with the potential of cooperative enterprise as a means towards Black self-determination and community economic control. Gordon Nembhard maintains that even as DuBois is perhaps most remembered for his proclamation in 1903 on 'the problem of the color line', he was not just focused on the problem, but rather in his 1907 publication, *Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans*, actually presents a solution – cooperative economics (from interview with Ifateyo 2014).

Gordon Nembhard is not the first scholar to revisit DuBois (e.g. Booth & Fortis 1984; Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999; Shipp 1996; and Stewart 1984). For example, Stewart traces the roots of community and economic development strategies to the "historical cooperative efforts by blacks to build an economic base," that he argues "illustrate[s] how social economists can refine notions of solidarity and social justice through detailed scrutiny of the black experience," (1984, 360). Haynes and Gordon Nembhard (1999) call for further work to "understand how collaboration and cooperative enterprise development address the unique experiences and many of the socio-economic needs of African Americans and all inner-city populations," (66). The inner cities, filled disproportionately with people of color are portrayed as "throw-away places" and "enclaves of defeat and under-development…[where problems cannot] be solved in the usual way" (ibid., 53), where instead there is "a need for collaboration, teamwork and "workplace" democracy"[32] (ibid., 65).

Others have considered the role of racial difference and gender in as examination of worker cooperatives (Berry & Bell 2018; Meyers 2011; Meyers & Vallas 2016; Sengupta 2015; and Wilson 2010). Meyers and Vallas (2016) for example, study diversity regimes in worker cooperatives, concluding that worker participation has material consequences for workplace equality. Additionally, Meyers (2011) recognized the "intersecting importance of both race/ ethnicity and gender *with* class in the workplace," in cooperative businesses

[32] Sutton (2019) engages in a discussion of *economic democracy* that is often used interchangeably with *workplace democracy*. Sutton further notes this concept "is theorized differently across contexts," (ibid., 1084), For example among economists and political scientists although small variants emerge, the definition includes "self-management" and in some cases "continued democratization of the public sphere," (ibid.). For my purposes, I agree wholeheartedly with DeFilippis (2004) who offers that worker cooperatives are "the purest form of economic democracy currently operating in the United States," (66). Further I draw my conception of worker cooperatives as rooted in participatory decision making from the core principle of workplace democracy "that workers have some form of democratic participation in the workplace," offered by the USFWC (2020, "Democratic Workplaces").

(emphasis added, 113). Further, Berry and Bell (2018) and Wilson (2010) position worker cooperatives as a meaningful alternative for marginalized workers (framed as including immigrant, refugee, women and racial/ethnic minorities) who would otherwise be subjected to limited precarious work opportunities. However, oppressive systems and dominant cultural norms are difficult to surmount.

For example, Sengupta's (2015) study on racialized women in cooperatives finds that although cooperatives are more egalitarian and have great potential, cooperative principles remain ideals rather than reality. He argues that unless there is "an explicit and active approach to addressing gender and race issues [in cooperatives] …the default situation is towards racial and gendered hegemony by dominant groups," (ibid., 25). This is a critical point that echoes what Bledsoe et al. (2019) and contemporary cooperative scholars and practitioners recognize: while cooperatives provide access to meaningful self-determination, organizations that operate within a system of racialized and gendered capitalism must work actively to dismantle the oppression that persists (Zitcer 2014; Cumbie & Barker 2017; Ifateyo 2009; and Smith 2003).

As noted in chapter 1, this is a significant moment for worker cooperatives as they occupy a more prevalent and viable role in urban economic development strategies in the United States (Sutton 2019). Geographers are well positioned to examine the scales of cooperative economic development in urban places. I argue that such scholarship is needed in order to better understand how intersecting identities take place in worker cooperatives. I argue that current worker cooperative development and movement building challenges prevailing narratives of cooperatives through the history of white, working class men.

Cooperative history: dominating and eclipsed narratives

The foundations of cooperative philosophy are generally associated with Britain and are traced to three different origins. First, cooperatives are often attributed to businessman Robert Owen (1771 – 1858) and his utopian idea that people's characters are best developed by *cooperation* and not competition. Second, William King's (1786 – 1865) publication "The Co-operator" was used to promote and provide the tools to the working classes so they might organize cooperatively. And third, the Rochdale weavers in Langshire England are widely regarded as the founders of the modern-day cooperative movement. Known as the Rochdale Pioneers, this group pooled their money together after an unsuccessful strike in 1844 to buy their own storefront and sell basic household supplies to one another and shared the profits that were made (Birchall 1994, 1997; and Dreyfuss 1973).

Figure 2.3: Rochdale Pioneers of Langshire England in 1844

Source: "History of Cooperative Movement" (International Cooperative Alliance 2020).

However, in each of these chronologies, the prevailing dominant narrative of cooperative history is exclusively attributed to white, European, male cooperatives, obscuring rich cooperative histories that span across a range of geographic and social

contexts. This limited and misleading version of history masks the connection between cooperative endeavors as a means for survival and mutual aid for vulnerable groups whose access to power and resources has been limited by the structural relations of race, class, and gender. Further these accounts create a particular image of what a cooperative enterprise looks like and who belongs in these spaces.

In 2016, Jade Barker, a cooperative professional and activist in the food cooperative and food justice movements provocatively asked, "So Our Co-ops are Mostly White, Now What?" Barker's commentary on the whiteness of cooperatives in the United States is based on thirty years of experience as a woman of color in cooperatives and from her perspective as a member, national cooperative consultant and worker-owner. Barker and her research partner Patricia Cumbie (2017) build on Zitcer's (2014) work to address the question, "even in multi-racial neighborhoods, food co-ops have overwhelmingly white ownership and staff…if everyone is welcome, why do so few people of color participate in food co-ops today?" (Quoted in Dubb 2019, para. 13). Patterns of racism and segregation persist in cooperative organizing despite the principles of equality and access.

This is also the case for gender. Miller (2011) and Smith (2003) find similar patterns of occupational segregation in cooperatives as would be found in the mainstream labor force. Miller's analysis indicates that "the cooperative community as a microcosm of the general labor force," (2011, para. 4) in which women in cooperatives tend to be "crowded into less skilled jobs, receive lower pay, and have fewer leadership opportunities than men," (ibid., para. 2).

Accounts locating the origins of cooperatives in Europe and among working class men reinforce perceptions of cooperatives as spaces of whiteness. In fact it was the

misconception that "black people don't do co-ops" that first prompted Gordon Nembhard to want to reveal the rich history of Black cooperatives in the United States (Quoted in Ifateyo 2014). She argues that dominant accounts of the origins for the cooperative movement invisibilize the long histories of cooperatives as a means for survival and resistance for immigrant and indigenous communities and for women and low-income people of color. However, these efforts were not always known as cooperatives or even formally organized as such. Instead they took the form of mutual aid societies, buying and social clubs and other largely informal institutions that evolved into the precursors to modern day cooperative enterprises (Gordon Nembhard 2014). Figure 2.4 is an image from 1948 at one such enterprise called the Progressive Club.[33]

Figure 2.4: The Progressive Club circa 1948

Source: Federation of Southern Cooperatives (from Murphy 2014).

As mentioned above, DuBois recognized the important role of cooperative economic practices for Black communities as a means to build wealth and to counter the effects of racism and discrimination in labor and consumer markets. Decades later, Civil Rights advocate, John Hope II (1940) was asked to deliver a lecture on "Cooperation Among

[33] According to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, "the Progressive Club was a consumer cooperative and credit union that also hosted the first Citizenship School to teach southern blacks how to qualify to vote," (Murphy 2014). The Progressive Club reflects the social, economic and political connections in cooperatives.

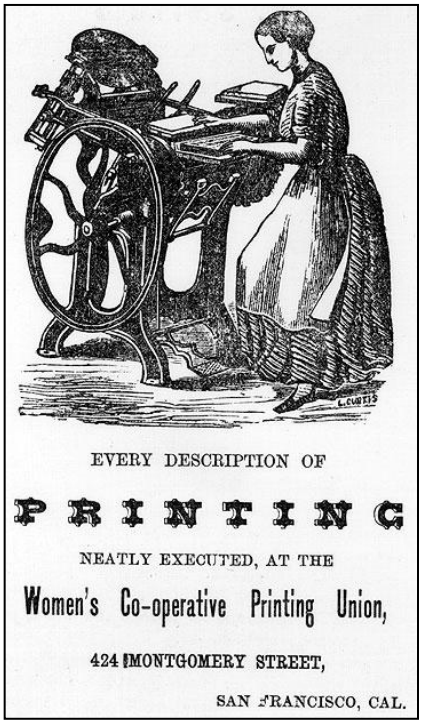
Negroes in the Unites States" and he framed his account as "Negro Self-Help Rochdale Style," (ibid., 39). By presenting on the state of Black cooperatives within the Rochdale framework these efforts were not contextualized within the history of Black organizing or based on DuBois' earlier research.

Even less widely known is the fact that "cooperation and mutual aid have been a part of the Asian American experience ever since the earliest documented examples of immigration," (Yen Liu 2018, para. 5). Immigrants throughout U.S. history have relied on mutual aid and cooperation to survive and thrive (Curl 2009). However, as Yen Liu (2018) argues, "what made these institutions was the political context of exclusion," that immigrants faced upon arriving in the U.S (para. 7). The connection between cooperatives and exclusion then is certainly applicable today as I document in later chapters.

Eurocentric accounts of cooperative privilege the experiences of men, largely erasing women from cooperative histories. In fact, women drew from cooperative models and organized commercial and industrial cooperatives to improve their economic and social standing (Berryhill 2019; Curl 2010; Frank 1994; and Gordon Nembhard 2014). Women participated in cooperative labor organizing in very significant numbers as they entered the workforce (Curl 2009) and yet are consistently under-represented in cooperative histories. Gordon Nembhard (2014) exposes histories of women connecting "workplace issues and labor rights [with] economic development," (51). The participation of women in the Knights of Labor and the critical role of Black women specifically in early organizations such as the Ladies Auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters are salient examples of this point (ibid.). Frank (1994) maintains that although women participated in cooperatives in nearly equal numbers as men in the early 20th Century, they

were paid lower wages and less likely to be in leadership positions than their male counterparts. Even today, there is no cooperative research or organizations that have to date compiled statistics on the number of women in cooperatives (Ifateyo 2015).

Figure 2.5: Cooperative advertising circa 1870



Source: Curl (2018).

Although there are clearly examples of cooperative organizing histories among communities of color, immigrants and women, these accounts have been sidelined within accounts of privileging Eurocentric, male histories. An anti-racist, decolonial account recognizes that men's stories are privileged because they have long been represented as the proper economic subject and have therefore also dominated the politics of knowledge produced on cooperatives. Moreover, the diverse histories of cooperatives are eclipsed as part of politics of knowledge production. However, the current trajectory of growth in worker cooperatives is *not* among middle class populations of white men and these

privileged narratives and the cultural images they reproduce are being challenged. In the next section, I describe circumstances I argue have been instrumental in setting the stage for development initiatives such as the WCBDI as well as initiating the changing demographics and cultural images of what cooperation looks like in the United States.

Major Shifts in the U.S. Cooperative Movement

I assert that the establishment of the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland Ohio marks a major shift in the appeal for worker cooperatives in mainstream economic development. First launched in 2008, Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, Ohio, is the result of a collaboration and partnership between The Cleveland Foundation and The Democracy Collaborative that began in 2005 with a community wealth building roundtable.[34] The collaborators brought together various stakeholders including City policy makers, neighborhood residents, workforce development agencies, small businesses and their associations and local based large-scale institutions such as Universities and hospitals. The result is a group of three cooperative businesses[35] that employ an "anchoring" approach to development by aligning their services with institutions that cannot get up and leave and likewise are not suited to outsourcing their services and labor abroad.

The perceived innovation of the Evergreen model had immediate appeal in a neoliberal political economy that prefers private entrepreneurial efforts to be overseen by

[34] The Cleveland Foundation is a nonprofit community endowment that provides access to grants for community development and The Democracy Collaborative is a think-tank focused on leveraging anchor institutions to democratize the economy.

[35] The three businesses that make up the Evergreen Cooperatives are: Evergreen Energy Solutions that provides commercial and residential solar installation and contracting services; Evergreen Cooperative Laundry that provides commercial laundry services; and Green City Growers which is an urban hydroponic farming business.

market interests and nonprofit organizations instead of public institutions and programs. I submit a quote that sums up the attraction: "For Republicans, [supporting employee-ownership] is about expanding entrepreneurship, for Democrats, it's about democratizing wealth and making sure people receive a fair cut of what they're producing," (Schneider quoted in Heller 2018, para. 16). Evergreen Cooperatives were initially touted as a possible national model for economic development (Alperovitz et al. 2009) and continues to receive national attention today (Camou 2016; Heller 2018; and Kahn 2008).

Evergreen Cooperatives is the first time that a collaboration of development stakeholders employed worker cooperatives as an applicable poverty alleviation strategy in low-income urban communities. Since then, there has been significant policy momentum for urban worker cooperative development across the United States. These policy interventions range from feasibility studies and research to larger budgetary staffing designations and funding support for cooperative enterprise across sectors. The WCBDI in New York City is one such example, but as Sutton (2019) has traced, there are twelve municipalities operating as "cooperative cities" and there has been additional local legislation passed in support of worker cooperative development since her analysis.[36] In each of these places, coalitions are being built with a variety of stakeholders including policy makers, nonprofit agencies, lenders and cooperative development support and education institutions.

[36] Sutton (2019) conducted a textual analysis of cooperative development policies from twelve municipalities and identifies a developer, top down approach in four cities (Cleveland, OH; Richmond, CA; Richmond, VA; Rochester, NY), an endorser or grassroots approach in five cities (Austin TX; Berkeley, CA; Boston, MA; Oakland, CA; Philadelphia, PA) and a cultivator hybrid approach in three cities (Madison, WI; Minneapolis, MN; New York; NY) (1089). She further notes that El Paso, TX, Ann Arbor, MI and Cook County, IL are other municipalities that have passed legislature in support of cooperative development (ibid., 1098-1099).

Additionally, the 2008 financial crisis led to the need for new ways to support economic growth (Harvey 2018) and with it brought new interest in the cooperative model (Sutton 2019). Within that year, Michael Moore's documentary, "Capitalism: A Love Story" (2009) profiled worker cooperatives and in 2011 Occupy Wall Street called attention to the failure of capitalism and inspired alternative solutions. Then in 2012, the United Nations designated the Year of the Cooperative that propelled cooperatives as an economic development strategy at a larger international scale.

The Executive Director at the USFWC reflected that from within the movement in the late 2000s there was a shifting from serving "long-established worker co-ops which tended to be more middle [and] upper middle class" to a recognition of "the power of the co-op model to address all of the social, racial and economic issues…of different communities," (Quoted in Harvey 2018, para. 6). The USFWC began to coalesce around an idea: "this [co-op model] seems to have served white people really well…what about bringing some of this wealth and success to communities of colour, to immigrant communities, [to] black and brown workers?," (ibid., para. 9). In summary, the moment for worker cooperatives today can be traced to Evergreen Cooperatives, which was the first major project that brought neoliberal regimes of governance to the table with worker cooperatives to see how it might be applied to urban economic development.

Conclusions

This chapter contextualizes and situates cooperative geographies in the United States to illustrate how they work and where they can be found in the economy. The social and economic significance of the cooperative sector is large and growing. I argue this

growth has been facilitated in part by the Evergreen Cooperative model and the economic and political conditions since 2008 that together made a credible appeal for worker cooperatives in a volatile neoliberal political economy. These conditions have both catapulted cooperatives into the mainstream and legitimized work-ownership models as an approach to urban economic development. This momentum gave rise to the WCBDI and has spurred other cities to consider strategies of cooperative development. However, while cooperatives target racialized groups, racialized labor hierarchies characterize the effort.

For example, I conclude this section with McElhinny (1998) who describes the organizing and identity challenges in a worker cooperative that while aiming to bring together a heterogeneous group of women, resulted in "the experiences of the largely white, middle-class leftist group," leading the effort. This occurred when the European-Americans in the group took the place as facilitators and regulated the racialized women as the participant employees (Sengupta 2015). I observed the reinforcement of dominant narratives during my fieldwork with the WCBDI as well. With little exception, the cooperative development staff and professionals I encountered steering the Initiative likely identified as white, middle-class and highly educated while the worker-owners were overwhelmingly racialized women of lower economic class.

The potential of worker cooperatives for traditionally excluded and marginalized communities must therefore be premised with a recognition of these hidden histories, a commitment to recovering these stories and experiences and to approach development from an active intersectional and anti-racist lens that centers the voices of those traditionally oppressed in the systems that they are organizing to resist against.

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Chapter 3.
The scales and geographies of cooperative development in New York City: The Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI)

Introduction

What does it mean when one of the largest cities in the world pursues cooperative economic development? Are the promises and benefits of cooperatives diminished when they are mainstreamed and formalized in urban economic development? In this chapter, I build from chapters 1 and 2 to examine these questions in New York City through a detailed focus on the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI).[37] My research demonstrates that, although the WCBDI aims to support marginalized, low income workers, worker-owners have largely been excluded from decision making processes. I situate the WCBDI within wider processes of urban development and neoliberalization to consider its contradictions. While the program is innovative in its effort to cultivate cooperative economic development, it is also contoured by the dynamics of racialized and gendered neoliberalism.

In this chapter, I make two central claims. First, I argue that the Initiative in New York City embodies and reflects the neoliberalization of urban governance. This is illustrated by the City's minimal financial investment and its devolution of implementation and oversight to local community based nonprofit organizations (for further discussion of the 'local' on neoliberal development, see Bonds et al. 2015; DeFilippis 2008a, 2008b; Martin 2004; Maskovsky 2006; and Wilson 2004). I build on this point to argue that cooperatives' inherent emphasis on economic self-determinism and emancipation from the

[37] I refer to the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative as 'the Initiative' or interchangeably as "the WCBDI" throughout the chapter.

state make them particularly attractive in an urban neoliberal environment that holds marginalized communities responsible for their own uplift (Maskovsky 2006). Second, I contend that the Initiative primarily funds nonprofit and community-based 'developer' organizations with little direct investment in worker cooperatives businesses and workers themselves. As my research reveals, though worker-owners are called upon to "show up" for promotional events and be "the face of the Initiative," they are generally not invited to the decision-making table. My analysis of the WCBDI implementation illustrates the inherent challenges and tensions in the incubation approach to cooperative development that emphasizes individual responsibility and autonomy for workers, yet does not always center them in the process.

I draw on two years of fieldwork from 2015-2017 in New York City researching the WCBDI's implementation directly with worker-owners, worker cooperatives, developer nonprofit community-based organizations and city administrators. I maintain that the WCBDI is striking because it embodies the paradox of city governments' involvement in cooperative entrepreneurship, within which the workers are ostensibly "doing it themselves," even as the Initiative is steered by a group of nonprofit professional "developers". In this way, I observe the WCBDI to be top down as much as it promotes a bottom up approach to economic development.

In what follows, I first discuss neoliberalization as it relates to racialized and gendered urban economic development. I then situate worker cooperatives within scholarly literatures, specifically focusing on research in the areas of diverse economies and autonomous geographies. Finally, I discuss the WCBDI and examine its origins and implementation in more detail. With regard to the latter, I focus particularly on the

cooperative business incubation program at one nonprofit organization, the Center for Family Life (CFL)[38] based in Sunset Park Brooklyn. I forefront the case of Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa,[39] a worker cooperative established through CFL, to analyze how the program has worked. I consider the incubation approach to cooperative development such as at CFL emblematic of the neoliberal features of the WCBDI in New York City, and suggest that the experiences of Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa is revealing of the tensions and challenges of these development dynamics in practice.

Neoliberalism, urban economic development, race and gender

In chapter 1, I noted that contemporary urban political economy is characterized by neoliberal regimes of governance that are embedded in systems of gendered and racialized capitalism. Neoliberal practices and policies have been extensively theorized and examined within geography (e.g. Brenner & Theodore 2005; DeFilippis et al. 2010; Harvey 2005; and Peck & Tickell 2002). Geographers have particularly documented the neoliberalization of urban community and economic development, which has involved the devolution of federal and state responsibilities to local governments and nonprofit service providers. A significant body of scholarship documents what this neoliberal reorganization has meant for both local nonprofits and the communities they serve (e.g. Bonds et al. 2015; Elwood 2004; Hackworth 2009; Harwood 2007; Lake & Newman 2002; Wilson 2004; Wolch 1990; and Zupan 2011).

[38] CFL is a program of SCO Family of services and provides a range of "neighborhood-based family and social services" in Sunset Park, a neighborhood framed by CFL frames as "densely populated, low-income…with a large percentage of recent immigrants," (CFL 2020).

[39] In order to protect and respect the wishes of the cooperative businesses I encountered, groups were offered the option to be anonymous or known in this dissertation. All but one group opted to be known.

For instance, urban scholars have found that the implementation of local development strategies can be challenging, fragile and fraught with instability (Bonds et al. 2015, DeFilippis 2008a, 2008b; Martin 2004; and Wilson 2004). Further, though often framed as inclusive and empowering, these local processes risk reinforcing social hierarchies and, in some instances, can be a tokenizing experience for participants who have historically faced systemic inequality (Bonds et al. 2015; also Maskovsky 2006). Neoliberal strategies do not acknowledge or alleviate racial and gender injustice; rather they depend upon and exacerbate it (Bonds et al. 2015; DeFilippis 2008a, 2008b; Inwood & Bonds 2013; Inwood & Yarbrough 2010; Martin 2004; Maskovsky 2006; Pattillo 2007; Wilson 2004; and Wolch 1990).

For example, contemporary anti-racist scholarship grounded in the Black Radical Tradition underscores the inextricable linkage between social difference (such as race) and capitalism (Melamed 2015). Bledsoe et al. (2019) have furthered this argument and contend that capitalism as well as its alternatives (including cooperative structures) are also "shaped by racial difference," (1) and that strategies that strive for economic diversity can only be fully understood through a critique of racial capitalism (3). Racial capitalism, Melamed (2015) explains, is an understanding that the "procedures of racialization and capitalism are ultimately never separable from each other" (77).

Moreover, insights from feminist geography reveal the fundamentally gendered nature of neoliberal economic development where privatization and creative entrepreneurship reign (Hashimoto 2016; Kern & Wekerle 2008; Leslie & Catungal 2012; McLean 2016; and Parker 2008). Bergeron and Healy (2013) bring the notion of feminist care and ethics to their critique of neoliberalism and "business as usual" economic

development. They suggest that despite a progressive shift towards "[supporting] alternatives associated with gender equity," that which is deemed 'feminine' labor, including care work and social reproductive work, continue to be devalued and understood as activities "outside" of formal economic markets (ibid., 4). Additionally, McDowell's (2009) work analyzes how race, gender and other forms of social difference contour notions of work and workplace environments.

I discuss racial and gendered capitalism in more depth in chapter 4; however, I highlight it here to again underscore the significance of race and gender within neoliberal regimes of governance. Research in this vein complicates the racial, gendered geographies and political histories that surround local development projects. This point is particularly salient in the consideration of city investments for cooperative development that are, as in New York City, targeted towards low-income immigrant, women and communities of color.

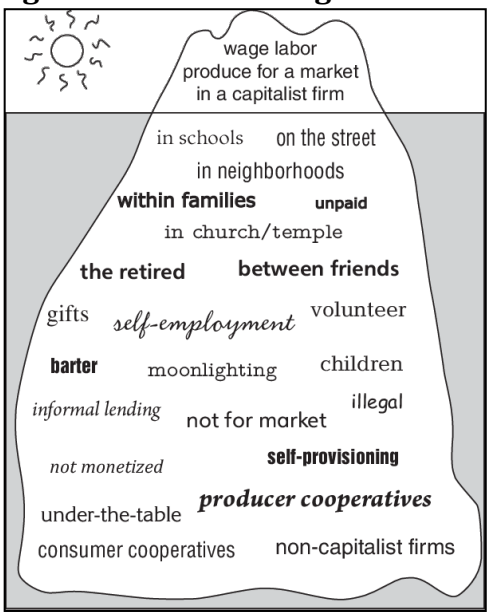
Situating Worker Cooperatives: Diverse Economies and autonomous geographies

As discussed in chapter 2, worker cooperative businesses are owned and controlled by their workers who are engaged in the governing of the business and directly benefit from its success. Worker cooperatives are part of what community economies scholars Gibson-Graham consider the 'diverse economy'. This approach is informed by feminist insights about how socially constructed identity formations such as race and gender shape economic processes. These scholars challenge the normative economic critiques that tend to overlook other economic formations that exist within and alongside capitalist frameworks (Bergeron & Healy 2013; Gibson-Graham 1996, 2006; Cameron 2005; Cameron & Gibson 2005; Cameron & Gibson-Graham 2003; Healy 2008; Healy & Graham

2008; also see extensive work by Community Economies Collective).

The iceberg image in Figure 3.1 illustrates the diverse economy and highlights what is recognized above the surface compared to what is often marginalized, devalued and oft invisible in dominant understandings of the capitalist economy. Instead of being positioned as an alternative, diverse economies framework demonstrates a range of economic activities that operate in tandem with traditional capitalism. Diverse economies literature also contends that capitalist wage labor is made possible in part due to diverse non-market economic arrangements. For example, the social reproductive labor by a parent staying home (from the labor market) to provide ("free" or non-monetized) childcare makes it possible for another parent to work (outside the home in the labor market). In this framing normative notions of 'the economic' are challenged, including what work counts as labor and who and what type of work is defined as economically productive.

Figure 3.1: The iceberg



Source: Gibson-Graham 2006 originally drawn by Ken Byrne.

Worker cooperatives (included below the surface) further trouble a traditional and

wholly capitalist economic framework by challenging the notion of prioritizing profit at the expense of labor. As established in chapter 2, within worker cooperatives, the worker-owners are empowered to advocate for themselves for more than basic wage terms of employment. Worker cooperatives become sites where more than work takes place and are linked towards large-scale individual betterment and community wealth building.[40] Cooperative economic structures avoid exploitation and present "...strategies...for social and individual betterment linked closely to changes in the external labor process," (Haynes & Gordon Nembhard 1999, 57). Thus because they are grounded in the principles of participatory democratic management, worker cooperatives are often framed as an avenue towards a "more peaceful, prosperous and just world," (Birchall 2004, iii; also Rothschild 2000).

As sites of "collective forms of politics, identity and citizenship," cooperatives are also part of what Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) describe as non-capitalist 'autonomous geographies' (730). 'Autonomous geographies' are constituted through participatory decision-making and are "multiscaler strategies" that make connections between "...resistance and creation...theory and practice," (ibid., 730). Whereas Pickerill and Chatterton illustrate autonomous geographies within a framework of mass protest and as a means to achieve justice aims, the melding of everyday practices and justice through cooperative collective processes is applicable for worker-owners in worker cooperatives. I discuss autonomous geographies and this linkage in greater detail in chapter 4.

Worker cooperatives have a long history in movements for liberation and social

[40] The New Economy Coalition and the Democracy Collaborative are two think tanks that research cooperatives as an avenue for community wealth building that is accessed through participation and ownership and in concert with social, economic, racial and environmental justice in mind.

justice. As I argued in chapter 2, interest in cooperatives as a response to oppression and inequality is not a new phenomenon (see DuBois 1898, 1907; and Gordon-Nembhard 2014). However, worker cooperatives as an urban economic development approach are more recent. Haynes and Nembhard (1999) argue that 'urban' is often coded as "places that people move out of and do not want to live in," marveling that "then no wonder there is not good policy about how to sustain and revitalize them," (ibid.,51). They note the lack of "any serious attention to the work being done in cooperative enterprise development, self-management, worker-ownership" results in "viable solutions [being] left unimagined," (ibid.,53). Their argument is similar to Gibson-Graham's when they call to challenge "what we understand today as economics, and redefine the structure and function of economic activity," continuing "it is to this challenge that political economy and cooperative economics speaks," (ibid.).

Despite the large presence of cooperative businesses in agriculture and rural sectors, worker cooperatives are clustered in urban centers (Paviovskaya 2018). The racialized and gendered urban landscape is a central part of the narrative that the WCBDI encourages economic agency and counters marginalization among low-income, immigrant, women and people of color. For communities who have traditionally been silenced, the autonomous geographies made possible through worker cooperatives are opportunities for economic agency and avenues towards self-determination.

This dissertation addresses the gap in the literature and contributes a geographic perspective to the unfolding example in New York of city engagement in cooperative development. I argue that despite the important contributions of geographers in theorizing cooperatives as components of diverse economies, worker cooperatives remain

understudied, and the voices of worker-owners particularly unheard relating to projects of urban economic development. This dissertation brings an urban geographic and feminist and anti-racist framework to analyze the WCBDI and the workers most impacted.

WCBDI: why New York City?

In this section I make a case for the distinct context of New York City and consider the question of 'why New York' for staging the first large-scale municipal investment in cooperative development. Despite its uniqueness, we can still draw lessons from the WCBDI implementation and the 'scaling up' of cooperative development that informs research and policy making in other urban contexts. Indeed, cities across the country are looking to the WCBDI and considering implementing cooperative development programs of their own (Camou 2016; and Sutton 2019).

As is well known, New York City is the most populous urban area in the United States. Nearly 20 million people live within the New York Metropolitan area, which includes commuting communities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania (U.S. Census 2018). It is an undisputed center of global finance and commerce as well as home to the United Nations headquarters (Sassen 2005). New York City is also a symbolic place, long understood as an immigrant gateway to the promise and prosperity of the United States. It is home to the largest immigrant population in the country, with 3.1 million immigrants in the city who own 52% of businesses and contribute 22% to the city's total GDP (MOIA 2018). These staggering numbers suggest that over 37% of New York City residents were born outside the country and contribute to the City being the most linguistically diverse in

the world, with over 800 different languages are spoken (Amaya 2018). These statistics emphasize the significance of New York City, in size, scope, and influence.

Prior to the Initiative's origins in 2014, New York City was already home to 23 worker cooperatives and a diverse host of other cooperative businesses including housing cooperative apartment buildings, credit unions and consumer cooperative businesses. The New York City Council had also previously allotted funding to cooperative development and training on a small scale since 2011 with some success. Specifically, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn had championed a grant of $150,000 to the Center for Family Life (NYC Council 2011) for their worker cooperative incubation program (discussed further in later sections). The timing and subsequent approval for the larger investment and Initiative is in some ways a matter of planetary alignment and underscores the unique set of circumstances that are New York City.

First there was the political will by City Council champions on the Committee for Economic Development to scale up city investment in worker cooperatives as a project of the department of Small Business Services. The incoming progressive Mayor ran on a platform to address income and economic inequality and worker cooperatives fit nicely into his focus "to build economic security for all New Yorkers," (WCBDI 2015). On the campaign trail, Mayor deBlasio (2013) painted New York as "a tale of two cities" highlighting economic inequality as evident in the high poverty rate and stark income gap.[41] And indeed, inequalities in New York City are stark. Economic and employment data from 2013 was used to persuade the City Council and showed the mean income of the population at the top 5% was nearly 49 times more than those with the lowest income

[41] In 2014, one in five New Yorkers lived below the poverty line, while in Manhattan, residents made over $860,000 on average in annual earnings (Holmes & Berube 2016).

(Roberts 2013) and over 21% of New Yorker's were living in poverty (Franklin et al. 2014). Further, despite strides in recovering from the 2008 financial crisis, in 2013 New York's "business hiring trends [had been] dominated by mostly low-wage retail and service sectors" and thus only added to the "growing ranks of the working poor," (ibid.). For example, the underemployment rate for African Americans had doubled from 2008 to 2013 landed at an alarming 22.9% (ibid.).

These statistics were leveraged by anti-poverty advocacy nonprofit FPWA.[42] FPWA works "to promote the social and economic well-being of New York's most vulnerable," (FPWA 2019). A Policy Analyst at FPWA "happened to stumble upon worker coops" as they were researching different ways to address workforce development challenges (Interview Dec. 13, 2016). The stated challenges were that although there were established programs for training a workforce, the jobs available and businesses that were hiring at the other end were quite limited (ibid.). The chair of deBlasio's transition team happened to also be the new incoming Executive Director at FPWA and both she and the new City administration were looking for a quick policy win and with evidence showing prior success on a small scale for cooperative investment. Within this context, the case for worker cooperatives was described to me as an "easy sell" (ibid.).

With relatively minimal financial investment by the city and oversight delegated to well established community-based, cooperative and nonprofit organizations, the City Council saw the Initiative as a low stakes and low maintenance way to both address the economic needs of and support divested communities. Cooperatives emphasis on economic self-determinism and emancipation made them attractive in the urban neoliberal

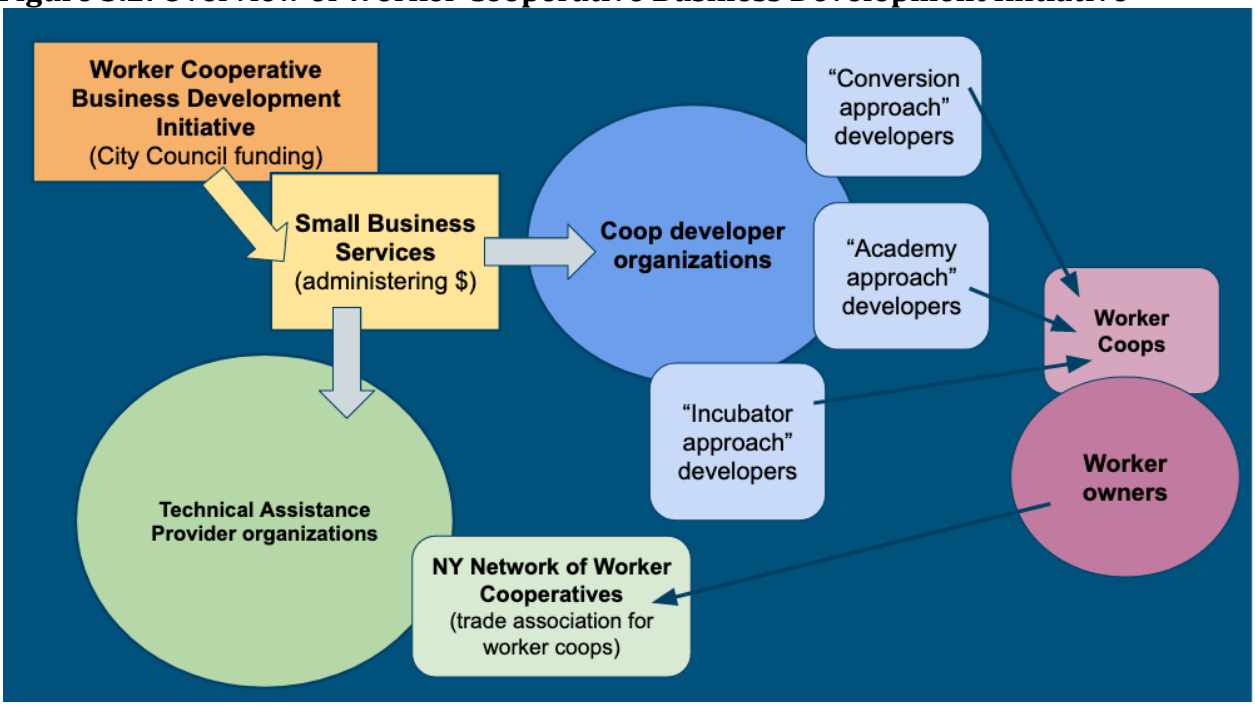
[42] FPWA was previously the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

environment within which governance strategies seek to help individuals help themselves (Harvey 2005).

The FPWA initially "invited" actors to the table who were organizational representatives that had already been working in and with worker cooperatives (Interview Oct. 8, 2015). These organizations included developer groups and organizations providing technical assistance to worker coops such as legal and accounting support.[43] This group morphed into a self-selected New York City Worker Cooperative Coalition that leveraged FPWA's positioning at the table with the Mayor and took advantage of their advocacy expertise to court sponsors or 'champions' on the City Council. Council Member support allowed for access to the decision-making Committee on Economic Development to consider a funding proposal. The initially approved $1.2 million in funding was granted to eleven coalition organizations in that first year of the Initiative who were designated as 'service providers' by the City. The money is distributed by Small Business Services (SBS) who provides project management for the Initiative, data collection and reporting. To ensure accountability and oversight on behalf of the City and public interest, a full-time employee at SBS was required just to "train the service providers on how to report using [City] data protocols and systems," (Interview Feb. 18, 2016). Figure 3.2 illustrates the structure of the WCBDI.

[43] In the first year of the WCBDI, of the ten organizations that received funding, four are nonprofit organizations that provide direct services to specific communities. Each of these organizations focuses their community and cooperative development work on communities impacted most by racialized and gendered capitalism. This is apparent in the consistent themes that are reiterated again and again to identify the communities in need of cooperative development: "low-income communities of color" and "those facing challenges to economic democracy" as well as "low-income immigrant communities" or specifically "Latino and working class communities," (Field notes Nov. 16, 2016).

Figure 3.2: Overview of Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative



Source: Author

The City is involved with the Initiative in two key ways. First and foremost, the City Council holds the Initiative's purse strings. The funding for WCBDI is entirely at the will of the Council and specifically its Committee on Economic Development, and is therefore not guaranteed.[44] As Council members come and go and their interests change, so might the City Council's goodwill towards funding worker cooperatives. The second area of City involvement is at an administrative level through the department of Small Business Services (SBS). It was obvious to me in an interview at SBS, that my contact was hesitant when responding to questions, considering carefully whether they were answering from their own perspective or "speaking as SBS," (Interview Feb. 18, 2016). Here the long shadow of the City and the boundaries of representing the 'company line' are apparent. SBS occupies a middle ground area as enforcer of City protocols and local laws and yet they are

[44] In my concluded chapter I will revisit the implications of how the WCBDI fits into city budgeting.

'on the ground' building the working relationships with WCBDI coalition members. It was through my conversation at SBS that I first encountered the critical role of translation that is needed in the WCBDI. As the regular City contact for 'service provider' agencies, part of the SBS job description was to work with the nonprofits to identify 'prospective products', 'deliverables' and ways to engage 'entrepreneurs' for both reporting purposes and as a way to access additional funding streams and opportunities (ibid.). My contact at SBS reflects, "we call it products right?, business language," as a way to emphasize the coalescence of shared goals and emphasis between the City department and worker cooperative developers (ibid.).[45]

The reported results from the City reflect this positioning to fit worker cooperatives into a more traditional business development context. Table 3.1 below shows the "results" of the Initiative as published by the City of New York in their annual reports. The metrics used to measure the success of WCBDI are categorized as worker cooperatives created, services provided to businesses and organizations (not limited to cooperatives), education and outreach and lastly, total number of hires or worker-owner jobs created. As illustrated in the table, education and outreach is labeled "entrepreneurs reached," highlighting how neoliberal terminology and understandings of development remains the yardstick for measuring cooperative success.

[45] With regard to translation and shared language, my impression from this interview in particular and other conversations with cooperative developers is interesting in two ways. First and again through the city's use of 'capitalism centric' language as a standard that reinforces the dominant political economy and second, thus ends up requiring an intermediary "expert" agent to interpret and speak to the city on behalf of the worker-owners who are assumed to not have this expertise. In this manner, I argue this dynamic ends up reinforcing neoliberal regimes of governance despite my claim that worker cooperatives have the potential to disrupt the dominance of capitalism in the political economy. The need for nonprofit experts is normalized in the incubation approach. One worker-owner explained their dependence on nonprofit cooperative developer this way, "they understand how it works, all the little tricks and tweaks…it works out fine," (Interview Dec. 1, 2016).

Despite this critique, the WCBDI has provided much needed development funds and attention to worker cooperative development as an option for small business development. This strategy fits nicely into SBS infrastructure that already has an emphasis on developing "women and minority owned business," which most of the worker cooperatives are (Interview Feb. 18, 2016). The WCBDI has brought attention to an area of potential for urban economic development that prior to this had received very little funding or consideration previously, and again the WCBDI is serving as a model for cooperative development in other places across the country (Camou 2016; and Sutton 2019).

Table 3.1: Measurable "results" of the WCBDI

	Funding	Orgs. Funded	New Worker Coops est.	Total hires	Entrepreneurs Reached	# Services Provided to # of coops/ grps.
FY 2015	$ 1.2 M	11	21	141	938	84 to 24
FY 2016	$ 2.1 M	14	27	164	2164	709 to 114
FY 2017	$ 2.2 M	12	36	185	2272	1769 to 180
FY 2018	$ 3.1 M	12	48	141	2501	1469 to 184
FY 2019	$ 3.6 M	13	49	116	3396	2087 to 201

Source: Data compiled by Author from WCBDI annual reports (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Small Business Services is a logical home for WCBDI oversight and as one city employee that I interviewed noted, "SBS as a department is pretty progressive and promotes better jobs, stronger businesses and a fairer economy and the WCBDI is just aligned with them," (Interview Feb. 18, 2016). Further, early coalition organizing documents and conversations center worker cooperative development engaging specifically with low-income workers of color and women (Select Interviews Oct. 14, 2015; Mar. 16, 2016; June 28, 2016; and Jan. 27, 2017). As my city contact observed, "based off

the work that the service providers have done in the communities they've reached out to, it would seem to be the case that worker co-ops are providing upward mobility for especially immigrant populations, and immigrant women in particular," (Interview Feb. 18, 2016). They went on to say, "I'm at this role because I do have a personal passion for worker cooperatives, and I believe that New York City is maybe the only place where worker cooperatives are predominately run by immigrant communities," (ibid.). They continue, "…people of color, women of color, young people like youth of color are being served by the Initiative," (ibid.). However, the question as to how exactly they are being served remains. As my research revealed, the city does not directly engage with the worker-owners. Rather implementation happens through administrative mediating agencies such as at the City's SBS and via nonprofit organizations. Further, the mediating nonprofit organizations do not offer direct funding support to worker cooperatives.[46] Instead it is expected that the benefits of these funds trickle down to worker cooperatives by way of services and support.

And yet, worker-owners are called upon to attend and participate as the face of the Initiative at promotional events or to provide testimony to policy makers.[47] In these instances, worker-owners are asked to share their personal experiences and simultaneously be representatives for entire groups marked as economically and socially vulnerable. One worker told me, "honestly I think that there's still a lack of trust in co-ops, I

[46] The Working World is one nonprofit exception that offers small business loans directly to worker cooperatives with part of the funding it receives through the WCBDI.
[47] I attended a Budget Hearing at City Hall and observed a worker-owner (I'll call her Alexa) being coached in her preparation for presenting to the Committee. I reflected in my field notes that while cooperative development nonprofit staff appeared genuinely attached and connected to Alexa, the process of performing at City Hall seemed a little forced. For example, nonprofit staff offered prompts and key words or phrases to help Alexa strengthen her written testimony that she would later read to City policy makers (Field notes Mar. 16, 2016).

think that there's still a view that this is just an experiment...and that there are people who know better [than us] who can guide us," (Interview Dec. 2, 2016). This contradiction mirrors observations made in the literature about how ostensibly "local" development projects can be tokenizing to communities who have historically faced systematic inequality (Bonds et al. 2015). In the next section, I consider how one local nonprofit reconciles worker-owner inclusivity, worker cooperatives, navigating the city and producing results.

The local scale: Center for Family Life's incubation approach

The Center for Family Life (CFL) began its cooperative incubation program in 2006 and initially aimed to encourage and support the establishment of one new cooperative business each year (Interview Oct. 8, 2015). CFL's entry into worker cooperatives was motivated by the challenges they faced in aligning program requirements for their adult employment program with the population of immigrants they serve in the community. In 2011 the immigrant community in Sunset Park accounted for 45% of total residents and 72% of the community spoke languages other than English at home (Bransburg 2011).

English language skills were not the only barrier to traditional workforce development programming for these workers. Many only had experience in low-skill level employment such as factory work, domestic and restaurant services, had little to no computer knowledge and in most cases, they were still "working through their immigration situation," (Bransburg 2011). In an effort to counter these barriers, CFL staff began researching more non-traditional job readiness models as an alternative (Interview Oct. 8, 2015). What they found were two immigrant-run worker cooperative examples: one in

California called Women's Action to Gain Economic Security (WAGES) and another closer to home, called UNITY Housecleaners Cooperative in Long Island, NY. Inspired by a model that might support the creation of "a new pathway to economic stability and opportunity for leadership," CFL embarked on launching a 12-week training program for the unemployed and underemployed women receiving other services through their organization (CFL 2020).

The result of CFL's first cooperative development effort was *Si Se Puede! Women's Cooperative* (We Can Do It!), a housecleaning business established in 2006 and founded by 15 women as a "means to creat[e] meaningful and living wage jobs" (Bransburg 2011). Five years later at the time when City Council Speaker Quinn took note, Si Se Puede! had grown to 27 worker-owners, built up a client base of over 1,000 and had increased their hourly wages from $7-$8 in previous jobs to making an average of $20 through the cooperative (ibid.). In 2017, the cooperative had over 80 members and was continuing to grow. The early success of Si Se Puede! provided the proof of concept for WCBDI to get off the ground. In fact, it was the worker cooperative incubation program pioneered at CFL that led to the organization to be among the few initially "invited to make a proposal" by FPWA for the early conception of the Initiative. The idea was that CFL would "train other organizations on how to be co-op incubators," (Interview Oct. 8, 2015).

In 2016, the Program Director described the incubation model at CFL as "relatively high touch" on the spectrum of developer approaches and in contrast to the academy model that offers educational tools but leaves the cooperative business to develop on its own (Interview Mar. 16, 2016). In practice, the CFL picks the industry based on a "consultative" process of getting input from and building connections with potential

worker-owners drawn from a pool of community members already connected with and receiving assistance from the social service agency (ibid.). The incubation relationship between the worker cooperative and the nonprofit is first and foremost a financial one. The cooperative signs a contract with CFL and receives a year of "services" that include administrative staffing support, office and meeting space, continued education, training and consultation at no charge. At the end of the first year, the cooperative starts paying 5% of their gross income towards the costs of "back office and consultation" until they reach break-even point and are covering the full cost of services. Once that break-even point is reached, the financial model switches to a fee-for-service model. CFL estimates that it takes five years for a worker cooperative to mature to this switching point.

The Incubation Model at work: varying perspectives

It is easy to see the appeal of an incubation model. "It looks good on paper," (Interview May 3, 2016) was a sentiment expressed to me by a cooperative developer who started off in a similar nonprofit incubation model and later changed courses. A professional contact of mine shared with me knowingly, "...people have *feelings* about CFL," (Research notes Oct. 14, 2015).[48] From one vantage point, the incubation model is decidedly top down. The nonprofit recruits the workforce, trains them, and has the last word on which industry and what business the worker cooperative established will be. Worker cooperatives - while technically considered 'autonomous' - are still bound to the interests, agendas and support of the nonprofit. The worker cooperative start-up risk is mitigated by the nonprofit and the hands-on support helps the cooperative thrive in its

[48] This was similar language and sentiment shared with me by the same contact who gave me background information on many WCBDI organizations and contacts in the early phase of my fieldwork. I discuss the context for receiving this sort of information in chapter 1.

early precarious years. And yet, at some point it would seem to be the goal to have the worker cooperative move on and mature to not needing the incubator.

The growth and evolution of "Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa" at CFL is illustrative.[49] After five years of steady growth, Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa reached their break-even and was paying 100% of its fees for services from CFL. In anticipation of the end of their contract with CFL, Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa[50] was ready to evolve and "leave the nest," (Interview May 2, 2016). From the vantage point of one of its worker-owners, the Cooperativa "had grow[n] over the past five years and the relationship [with CFL] didn't grow with that," (ibid.). This worker described the departure of the Cooperativa from the physical and organizational folds of CFL as rough and challenging. "When we left it was kind of on a sour note," they continue, "my understanding [of] the idea behind the contracts...is supposedly designed to - well for the co-ops to be less and less reliant on the incubator over time, right?" (ibid.).

They went on to share two main points of contention. First, the staffing dynamic was challenging. The "high touch" approach by CFL provided a free administrative staff position for a year, the cost of which was then shared with the Cooperativa in years two through four of the program and then completely covered by the cooperative in year five. However, year-to-year, it was unclear who was responsible for the supervision of this staff position, which created discomfort and awkwardness at the office. The staff people in this administrative role found themselves taking direction from both CFL and the cooperative,

[49] Again, in order to protect and respect the wishes of the cooperative businesses I encountered, groups were offered the option to be anonymous or known in this dissertation. All but one group opted to be known.
[50] I will refer to Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa as "Cooperativa" interchangeably.

leading to uncertainty about who was 'in charge' (Interview May 2, 2016).[51] Even as Cooperativa was gaining their autonomy, their payroll still went through the nonprofit. This led to a lack of transparency for worker-owners with regard to their own organizational finances and for contracted staff (such as a shared office manager) regarding who they are accountable to.

Second, information sharing (by the worker cooperatives) was expected for the purposes of fundraising efforts (by the nonprofit) and was also described as a point of tension. A worker explained, "there were issues around how the co-op shares information with CFL, which CFL then uses to do fundraising," (Interview May 2, 2016). This interviewee went on to note that "[t]here wasn't a clear sense that the [fundraising] money was benefitting the co-op directly or indirectly," and while the Cooperativa wanted to renegotiate these points, the impression from workers was "there wasn't the willingness to make those changes on the part of CFL," (ibid.).

Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa was among the early incubation projects undertaken by CFL, which perhaps helps to explain some of these difficulties. At the time of my fieldwork, few other worker cooperatives at CFL had reached the five-year mark for a comparison.[52] Notwithstanding, my research demonstrates tensions emerging from a top-down economic development that simultaneously promotes worker-owner economic control and agency. By contrast, from the perspective of the cooperative organizers and

[51] A worker-owner from another cooperative incubated at CFL expressed a similar dynamic (Interview Dec. 1, 2016). When I asked her about how the relationship between cooperative developer agency and worker-owners played out she explained that the cooperative contributed to a shared office manager and additionally "whatever [CFL] think[s] its necessary to pay," (ibid.). My impression was that this dynamic was sometimes a bit opaque, for example as she continued, "in [one] sense it is our office manager...but also in a sense we pay CFL and its their employee not ours…but they help us…," (ibid.). This point highlights potential challenges in workplace dynamics through this incubation approach.

[52] Today there are nine worker cooperatives that were launched between 2006 and 2017 that have transitioned out of direct incubation by CFL (CFL 2020).

development staff at CFL, it was the working relationship with other organizational leaders at the scale of the city (not the worker cooperatives) that proved most taxing.

Working with/in the City

From the vantage point of City policy makers, organizing the Initiative to invest in development at the nonprofit scale makes perfect sense and the Center for Family Life was an ideal example. As a reputable and well-established nonprofit, CFL has rapport and experience working with the local immigrant community and has a well-connected and dedicated bilingual staff able to "translate," both literally and figuratively. That is, CFL professionals offered language translation and could act as mediators between downtown city policy makers or administrators and the workers themselves. The small-scale success and incubation approach CFL had demonstrated further supported them as a "safe" development investment. As a medium to large scale nonprofit, CFL is also equipped to cover advancing funding for Initiative expenditures and to easily weather the long City reimbursement period that can take more than a year (Interview Feb. 18, 2016).

Yet just as the City had to accommodate liaising with WCBDI partners by adding necessary staff at SBS, CFL had to accommodate the City. The CFL staff described the time-consuming data and reporting processes required by the City to be difficult and cumbersome (Interview Mar. 15, 2016). In addition, although SBS staff told me that collecting personal data on worker-owners (such as race, income and immigration status) was not required, cooperative organizers described being hesitant to share data with the city (Interviews Mar. 13, 2016; and Mar. 15, 2016). One developer told me her organization would enter fake names and contact information in order to insulate workers and maintain their privacy from the city (Interview Mar. 15, 2016). From their perspective, there was a

responsibility to protect vulnerable workers, especially those whose immigration status might be in question from municipal authorities (ibid.). However, I emphasize again, just as organizers on the ground at CFL were committed to protecting their constituents and being sensitive to the vulnerability of the communities they serve, they were also in a position of power and influence. This was evident in how they were involved in activities like hand picking select workers to both give testimony at City hearings and to tell their stories for the purposes of fundraising to support the broader nonprofit mission (Field notes Mar. 16, 2016; and Interview May 2, 2016). In this way, nonprofit staff further legitimized a neoliberal regime of governing the implementation of cooperative development. This happened through making the role of an intermediate agency compulsory and thus limiting access to decision making for worker-owners in the Initiative.

The experience of Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa illustrates that despite best intentions, power dynamics at play in the incubator approach to worker cooperative development created significant challenges and tensions. These power dynamics are perhaps best captured by the ways in which CFL would capitalize on worker identities and experiences in order to raise money (that did not clearly or directly benefit the cooperative) or promote their cooperative programming while also maintaining control of worker-owner autonomy and staffing through their "high touch" approach.

Other approaches to worker cooperative development

The top down nonprofit incubation model used by CFL is not the only avenue for developing worker cooperatives (Camou 2016; and Sutton 2019). The Democracy At Work Institute (2019; Abell & Hoover 2016; and Camou 2016) paints New York City's "ecosystem" approach to worker cooperative development as also including both academy

and conversion models. The former was pioneered and developed by the founder of Green Worker Cooperatives in the Bronx and "focuses not on being *the* entrepreneur, but on basically supporting entrepreneurs," (Interview May 3, 2016). Although most every approach to worker cooperative development includes education and training, the Green Worker academy approach is unique in that it involves an intensive "Co-op Academy" that centers a truly bottom up process and engages worker-owners where they are and with their own personal interests. The conversion model is as the name suggests, an appeal to existing business-owners to sell their businesses and thus convert them into a worker cooperative model. In each approach, engagement with workers is unique. Yet at the scale of the Initiative, a common sentiment kept surfacing: people I spoke with agreed that 'for better or worse,' this is not a workers Initiative but rather a "developers Initiative," (Interviews Mar. 16, 2016; May 2, 2016; and June 28, 2016).

The lack of direct involvement by worker-owners in decision-making in the WCBDI was seen as problematic for some Initiative organizers and not others (Field notes May 2, 2016). For instance, Initiative contacts I spoke with who had a background in community organizing and advocacy were critical of the lack of worker-owner involvement in the WCBDI leadership (Interviews Mar. 13, 2016; Mar. 15, 2016; Mar. 16, 2016; and Jan. 27, 2017). In contrast, one interview states that "I think it's fine if this is a developers Initiative...maybe there's a good thing that there's a space for the developers to get money for themselves and to build more enterprises...to the extent that they want worker-owners input, that's great, they should get worker-owner input," (Interview May 2, 2016). This sentiment is striking and highlights the irony of a worker cooperative development strategy that is supposed to be empowering to workers and yet makes little effort to create

the space for worker engagement. This further highlights the neoliberal sensibilities present in the WCBDI that does not center the workers most impacted by this development process.

Despite this, and since the start of my fieldwork, strides have been made to encourage and make space for worker-owner voices. Since 2016, this has happened through an elected 'Leadership Council' organized through the New York Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNOWC). NYCNOWC serves as the membership organization for worker cooperatives in the City and is also a part of the Initiative leadership. During my fieldwork, the efforts by NYCNOWC to include worker-owners were just getting off the ground and the intention for the leadership council was described to me as the way worker-owners could be involved in the WCBDI (Interview Mar. 13, 2016). Despite this intention, challenges were already well articulated for how to sustain and engage worker-owners. These barriers for involvement included a lack of funds to compensate worker-owners for their time, childcare needs, and conflicting schedules that were difficult to align. This is especially the case as organizers considered what workers would be available and willing to be flexible for meetings during the day when they might overlap with city meetings and other Initiative leaders or if workers were only available during evening hours. From my firsthand personal experience and from what I gathered talking with worker-owners, these logistical challenges often lead to the same few people being called upon again and again to participate and shoulder the representation (Field notes Dec. 1, 2016). Although there is an effort by NYCNOWC to be inclusive to workers, the reality is that it is limited in scope and diversity of the voices and experiences of worker-owners, so that many continue to be silenced.

Conclusions: the work/er cooperating with the City

The emergence of New York City's WCBDI and the way it takes place provides a wealth of critical knowledge for other cities looking to invest in cooperative development. In particular, several themes emerge from this analysis that demonstrate the continued reliance upon and reinforcement of neoliberal regimes of governance in development strategies. These strategies depend upon and capitalize on the differences between the communities who are being courted for cooperative development and the nonprofit "experts" who serve as intermediaries with the city.

First, the logistical realities are that well-established and larger nonprofit organizations are better prepared to deal with demands of working with city machinery. In particular the staffing capacity at CFL was responsive to the time commitment required for reporting and data collection for the city. A smaller nonprofit or through funding a worker cooperative directly might not have yielded the same capacity for coordinating with city administrators. Similarly, small organizations and businesses typically do not have the budget to compensate for long reimbursement periods whereas CFL was able to withstand getting funding from the city well after money went out the door. These dynamics that require a certain capacity or organizational scale in order to function have consequences in the Initiative. In this way, worker cooperatives as small businesses are not set up to ever be a recipient of direct city funding but rather rely on trickle down support from mediating nonprofit agencies. It also means that city funding that is connected directly to job growth by and large ends up supporting jobs and staffing capacity in the position of cooperative developer at the nonprofit level not actual worker-owners themselves.

Second, the Initiative operates at multiple scales including the City Council, the city administrators, the nonprofits (both local and national in scope), the worker cooperative and the individual worker-owners themselves. These multiple scales require interpretation by actors who can translate both figuratively and literally across cultural, linguistic, professional and philosophical divides. The language barriers were beyond the spoken word but also involves the language of capitalism and (re)framing to bridge communication at the individual scale and relevancy at the scale of the city.

Third, the complex power dynamics of these nested scales at work in the Initiative ensure that despite well intentions, workers who are predominantly immigrants, women and people of color, remain at the periphery of decision making just as they are on the outskirts of economic opportunity. Further, the incubation approach while promoting an 'empowering' path to autonomy can be experienced by workers as insincere and tokenizing. Cooperative developers working directly with worker-owners feel compelled to protect them from exposure to the City and yet leverage those relationships to further the nonprofit agenda or to help put their best foot forward with the City.

This chapter provides an overview of Initiative origins and functioning as well as a picture and critical analysis of the WCBDI in practice. While fore fronting some of the challenges, I do not want to discount the well-meaning and hard work of the individuals involved. Despite any obstacles city administrators and Initiative representatives face in working together, there is a Coalition that continues to grow and the Initiative has persisted. The recognition and use of the mediator positioning to translate between scales allows for critical access for both the City and worker-owners alike. Although a small group, the Leadership Council through NYCNOWC is evident of progress and is working

towards giving more meaningful access and representation for workers at the Initiative level. Lastly, I have observed that both cooperative organizers and worker-owners seem to have the same goals, to support the sustainable growth of the cooperative sector in New York City and beyond. In this way, they are living the 6th cooperative principle - cooperation among cooperatives. The next chapter examines and compares two worker cooperatives that originated and expanded from the Initiative.

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Chapter 4.
Just(ice) work: cooperatives as transformative (sites of) labor

Introduction

In chapter 3, I introduced the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI),[53] its origins and implementation. I argued that although worker cooperative development may imply involvement by workers themselves, the WCBDI - developed in partnership with City and nonprofit organizational interests - is in fact a "developers" movement. Within the WCBDI framework, nonprofit professionals act as necessary mediating agents and translators between worker-owners and neoliberal City actors and interests. The discourse promoted by the WCBDI claims to cater to worker-owners and advocate for their business needs and goals. However, my research demonstrates that it is the nonprofit organizations rather the worker cooperatives that are the direct beneficiaries of the City funding and its staff. Instead, the experiences of worker-owners are conjured when needed to further nonprofit organizational agendas and to bolster the success rate in the eyes of the City. Further, as I argued, it cannot be assumed that nonprofit organizational agendas are aligned with the goals of self-determination within worker cooperatives.

In this chapter, I continue advancing this argument by focusing on worker-owners themselves and the ways they describe the transformative nature of worker cooperatives evident at multiple scales. Specifically, I examine the work taking place at two cooperative businesses organized as resistance to racialized and gendered capitalism and neoliberal regimes of governance. To this end, I center worker-owners and their contributions and connections to larger social justice movements.

[53] Also referred to interchangeably as 'the Initiative' throughout.

First, I argue that despite the challenges of working with nonprofit organizations and the City, worker cooperatives offer more than jobs. Worker cooperatives provide access to meaningful participatory democracy and economic and political agency and are thus transformative at the scale of the worker-owner. Interviews and research with worker-owners reveals that beyond an exchange of wages for labor, worker cooperatives provide numerous opportunities to: share in profitability and wealth building; access autonomy and ownership on decisions about work; and establish economic agency. In using the term 'transformative' I refer to individual development, subject formation and connection to active and engaged citizenship.

Second, I explore the ways in which worker cooperatives are organized and structured in non-hierarchical ways that challenge traditional power and hegemonic social relations and economic transactions. As a result, worker cooperative businesses have the potential to act as catalysts for transforming and reframing what economic development and entrepreneurship can look like and where it takes place. For these reasons, I argue that worker cooperatives are also transformative work sites. In this context 'transformative' indicates a reframing of work dynamics and workplace-making. Lastly, I argue that worker cooperatives create pathways to political activism and economic agency in ways that offer access to meaningful participation in and advancement of larger social justice movements. The term 'transformative' at this scale is a reference to the multiple ways that workers describe their participation as an owner to be life-changing, generative and revolutionary.

My analysis draws from interviews and fieldwork on the WCBDI from 2015-2017.[54]

[54] Since 2017, I have had email exchanges and several follow up conversations with worker-owners.

In this chapter, I focus on two worker cooperative businesses in particular.[55] I draw from my research with Caracol Interpreters Cooperative, which is made up of a group who self-identify as a mix of Latinx, indigenous, immigrant and LGBTQ womyn.[56] They provide interpretation and translation services with an emphasis on employing language justice practices. As I discuss later in more detail, language justice is a practice of creating a multi-lingual space that disrupts and breaks away power structures that inhibit equal participation and communication. The second worker cooperative featured in this chapter is Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative, who provide mostly office services and were founded by a group of formally labor trafficked Filipina women.

My conclusions are drawn from in-depth interviews with worker-owners at these and other worker cooperatives in New York City and with agents of developer nonprofit organizations. I also draw from my observations and participation with worker-owners at key events including: at an advocacy workshop that preempted a day of action at New York City Hall; New York City Council budget hearing; at the 2014 U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) National Conference for workplace democracy; and at a 2016 celebratory social event hosted by one of the cooperative developer organizations, the Center for Family Life (CFL). Finally, my analysis is also informed by documents and materials produced by Caracol Interpreters Cooperative and Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative, including internal and external documents, newsletters, social media, photographs, videos and promotional materials and thus I foreground the voices of the

[55] Although I feature only two worker cooperative business profiles in this chapter, my analysis brings in voices from worker-owners at other cooperatives whose experiences are also relevant for supporting my arguments.

[56] I use this spelling of 'womyn" to distinguish gender non-conforming identities beyond a man-woman binary including but not limited to a range of LGBTQ expressions. This alternate spelling highlights this distinction by removing "man" or "men" from the written word.

worker-owners themselves in my analysis.[57]

Feminist Praxis and Knowledge Production about worker cooperatives

As I discuss throughout this dissertation, the project is informed by a feminist and anti-racist research praxis. I draw from key feminist critiques of power and positionality in research, understanding that the situated production of knowledge based on identity and power is inherently partial (e.g. Haraway 1988; Harding 1988; Nagar & Geiger 2007; and Rose 1997). The project is also informed by participatory approaches that emphasize the potentially emancipatory role of scholarship and shared knowledge production (e.g. Derickson 2016; Kobayashi 1994; McKittrick 2011; Mohanty 1991; Mullings 1999; Parker 2016; and Waters 1999). Further, I am inspired by scholarship on participatory action research, and align specifically with the transformative potential of research activism that starts with personal experience (Cahill 2007; Cameron & Gibson 2005; Gibson-Graham 2002; Kitchin & Hubbard 1999; and Pain 2004). My analysis is conscious of the production of difference and centers the voices and experiences that are often missing from dominant society (Derickson 2016; and Parker 2016). While the stories of worker-owners and cooperatives featured in this chapter are not universal, they offer important insights about the transformative potential of worker cooperatives within urban economic development.

Transformative labor at the scale of the worker-owner

While worker cooperatives are transformative at multiple and nested scales the impact of cooperatives outward begins with the individual worker-owner and their ability

[57] In order to respect the privacy of those who have shared their experiences with me all individuals' names have been changed to pseudonyms.

to make decisions about their own labor. In this section, I situate issues of agency, identity formation and personal transformation for workers that emerged within my research in the current literature in order to argue that worker cooperatives are more than just jobs.

Geographers have long been concerned with labor, with research examining the relationships between labor, space and place and networks of collaboration and solidarity (Coe & Jordhus-Lier 2010; Gidwani & Chari 2004; Herod 1997; Jordhus-Lier 2012; Lier 2007; Rutherford & Gertlert 2002; and Rutherford 2010). Feminist critiques have highlighted the problematic gendering of labor and the invisibilization of socially reproductive labor, raising fundamental questions about what is valued as work (and what isn't) and where and when work "takes place" (Hanson & Pratt 1988; McDowell 2009; Parks 2012; Southworth & Stepan-Norris 2003; Strauss 2013; Weeks 2014; and Wright 2010). Challenging white feminists' long-standing focus on the public/private dichotomy of labor, Black feminist geographers note that Black women have always had to work outside the home, in many cases under conditions without pay (McKittrick 2006). In making this point, they underscore the fact that worksites outside the home have not always been equated with freedom and liberation but rather have been arenas of racial violence and oppression (McKittrick 2006, 2011). Black feminist geography challenges the notion of "space as innocent" (McKittrick 2006, 6), linking its social production to the ways in which differently racialized bodies are "placed" in space (5).

Herod's (1997) research on the role of worker agency in actively constructing the economic landscape offers important insights into the geographic study of labor. He critiques geographic approaches that privilege the interests of capital to instead focus on how labor – through worker agency and organization – produces economic space. Feminist

intervention in geographies of labor has furthered this observation by emphasizing the social construction of work and labor and linking labor organizing to social justice and resistance to inequality (McDowell 2009; Parks 2012; Strauss 2013; Weeks 2014; and Wright 1997, 1999, 2010). According to Weeks (2014), one of the limitations of work is the over emphasis of value based solely on "the extent that we produce," (10). However, Wright (2010) discusses the potential for work to resist exploitative capitalism when it is more than a job. Research that recognizes the possibilities of work towards agency and power for workers is foundational for my analysis on worker cooperatives, yet much of this literature has been theorized within a capitalist framework. I draw again from my discussion of diverse economies in earlier chapters to situate worker cooperatives as potentially transformative labor geography.

For example, Byrne and Healy (2006) frame the cooperative economic subject as able to "think as both a worker and an owner…concerned with [their] own individual reproduction…and with the continued viability of the firm," (ibid., 249). These observations position the subject formation at a worker cooperative to revolve around "a particular relationship with work and with the community economy" (ibid., 241). Cornwell (2012) further examines "subject formation in cooperative rather than capitalist production processes," (727) to reveal "cooperative activist" worker identity. The "cooperative subject" is produced through access to ownership, control, decision-making and movement building and whose subject formation leads to new "spaces of possibility" at work (ibid., 731). She contextualizes these spaces of possibility "opened up by collective ownership," that allow worker-owners to (re)produce "both material and emotional changes in their workplace and relationships," (ibid.). This transformative process for worker-owners

promotes material benefits (better wages), professional development and social emotional benefits (such as agency and power) that lead to "connection rather than alienation" at work (ibid., 735).

Scholarship in the broader social sciences reinforce the transformative potential for workers-owners by linking cooperative participation with other direct and in-direct benefits such as access to: better wages, wealth building, democratic engagement in participatory political processes and marketable skills related to running their business that further extend outward to individual engagement as an active citizen (DeFilippis 2004; Mathew 2017; Mathew & Bransburg 2017; Rothschild 2009; Shifley 2003; and Stone 2004).[58] This is significant in particular for individuals for whom traditional work opportunities can be marginalizing and predatory, for instance: first time entrepreneurs; workers locked out of the job market due to incarceration or other legal status; and contractors or contingent workers (USFWC 2017).

Research on gender and racial disparities in worker cooperatives reflects larger structural societal trends with regard to representation, discrimination and inequality (Meyers & Vallas 2016; Miller 2012; Rothschild & Tomchin 2006; and Sengupta 2015). However, in terms of earnings, access to leadership and advancement women and people of color tend to fare better at worker cooperatives than they do in more traditional work models (Berry & Bell 2017; Gordon Nembhard 2014; Hacker & Elcorobairutia 1987; Meyers 2011; Sengupta 2015; Sobering 2015; and Wilson 2010).

[58] I believe that it was directly through my experiences living and working in cooperatives that taught me and honed my communication skills and knowledge of procedures and processes. In short, my cooperative experience allowed me to be a more thoughtful, engaged and active citizen in the world. These skills are often overlooked and taken for granted in the hegemonic power structures that mostly represent white men.

Sociologists Meyers and Vallas (2016) are attentive to both race and gender as they consider diversity regimes in worker cooperatives. They find that access to worker control evident in worker cooperatives structure "illustrates many of the conditions that are necessary for the democratic ideal of worker empowerment at levels beyond the purely financial," (ibid.,123). Further, they conclude that organizing as a worker cooperative is in fact, "key…[to] overcoming the limits traditionally imposed on white women and men and women of color,"(ibid.,123). I submit that my research from a geographic perspective supports this scholarship and demonstrates the transformative potential that cooperatives have for individuals traditionally marginalized in the economy.

For these populations, the person-before-profit approach to business operations allows for education, training and support that seeks to bring people up and provide safe and healthy access to work. The goal is for the workers to be successful as well as the business and as such, worker cooperatives tend to value their workers for more than what they produce. This emphasis on individual positive transformation through building more than just marketable skills and accessing participatory democracy is significant and although not entirely unique to worker cooperatives, is a core value among them and worthy of further exploration.

Transformative labor at the scale of the workplace

At the scale of the workplace, I regard worker cooperatives as transformative in two important and related ways: first as arrangements that challenge and transform traditional power relations (both social and economic) and second that through this disruption, create transformed possibilities for what constitutes the site of and performance of work. I build

from early discussions of diverse economies and autonomous geographies as another way to locate worker cooperatives as transformative.

Autonomous geographies are "non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity and citizenship," (Pickerill & Chatterton 2006, 730) that acknowledge the intersections between the political, social and economic towards a more socially just society. A critical dimension of autonomous geographies is its emphasis on the "revolution of everyday," (ibid., 732). This is realized through creating non-hierarchical spaces for direct participatory democracy that offer "laboratories for resistance and creation", different models of ownership, transaction and value (ibid., 741). Chatterton (2005) clarifies these spaces as based in "a desire for freedom, self-organization and mutual aid," (545) and further links organizing and movement building with a desire for collective autonomy around "work, dignity and social change," (551). The motivations that "provoke a new relationship between work and social life" (ibid., 555) drive collectivizing towards a solidarity economy that combines spaces of workplace autonomy with larger social and economic justice activism. The two worker cooperative case studies I present later in this chapter similarly combine cooperative organizing with the power of autonomy and promoting justice as they transform how the workplace works.

This literature acknowledges problematic power dynamics that persist in autonomous geographies where "no place [is] outside the reach of capitalist relations," (Pickerill & Chatterton 2006, 742). However, while this work touches upon difference and indigeneity, it does not critically engage with the production of other differences or

structural power relations beyond a mostly class analysis.[59] Further, while, Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) see autonomous geographies as "grounded in particular places," they maintain that there are limits to the local (735). For worker cooperatives, identity in place challenges power dynamics imposed through racialized and gendered capitalism (discussed later) through its organization and governances as well as through its flexible and fluid sense of (re)defining work/place. To understand the transformative making of 'workplace' at worker cooperatives, I see place-making as relevant.

Pierce at al. (2011) define place-making as "the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live," (54). Geographers have theorized place-making processes in collective action and social movements (Leitner et al. 2008; Leitner & Sheppard 2003; Martin 2003; Martin & Miller 2003; and Schmidt 2008), however have not considered the workplace as a possible site for these processes. I see Martin and Miller's (2003) understand of place-making as interconnected with social processes "where everyday is situated" (147) as aligning with autonomous geographies. Pickerill and Chatterton (2006; and Chatterton & Pickerill 2010) use similar language to frame autonomous geographies as places where power and protest is embedded in the everyday. I argue that work is an underexplored location where the everyday is experienced as a potential place-frame.[60]

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[59] Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) problematizes the process of othering in the context of indigenous movements; however, I maintain that in the context of racialized and gendered capitalism, difference is not thoroughly considered in theorizing autonomous geographies.

[60] Many of the cooperative developers I spoke with describe their cooperative work in terms of "living it everyday," (Interview Mar. 15, 2016). I found in my conversations that other cooperative ties come up, for example cooperative developer staff are not just working with cooperatives at the Initiative level but may also be members at food cooperatives and credit unions, volunteering on committees and boards of national cooperative organizations, and or living in a housing cooperative apartment or cooperative living arrangement (Field notes Mar. 15, 2016; and Nov. 16, 2016). Cooperatives touch more than one facet of their living/ home life. Further, worker-owners I spoke with consistently described their experiences in their

Building on transformative cooperative subject formation and melding autonomy and place-making at work requires attention to the ways in which labor is entangled with racialized and gendered oppression. From slavery, indentured servitude, modern incarceration to the glass ceiling and #Me Too movement, work and the workplace has been discussed within the contexts of race and gender oppression, inequality and exploitation (e.g. McDowell 2009; McKittrick 2006; Strauss 2013; and Wright 2010). For vulnerable workers, the workplace is extractive and is a space of potential trauma and harm instead of economic agency. Worker cooperatives however not exempt from these potential abuses are also spaces of possibility rooted in and modeled from the cooperative principles (see chapter 2). I argue that worker cooperatives have transformative potential to change the workplace from a site of power over and extractive exploitation to a site where access to power and agency are redistributed into something different - based on trust, opportunity for economic and political agency and social change.[61]

Worker cooperative workplaces are not fixed and confined within traditional notions and relations between labor and capital/ power and oppression. Instead worker cooperatives are spaces of possibility that (re)create the workplace as a site where experimentation and autonomy is made, challenging hegemony in the political economy. In addition, worker cooperatives oppose a rigid notion physical workplace. In many instances, and among most of the cooperative workplaces established in New York City, the

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worker cooperative in familial terms equating their work with language of the home (Field notes Dec. 2, 2016).

[61] Based on my research, I find that the relationship that worker-owners have to work/ workplace is transformed through participation in a worker cooperative. Rosa described to me, "It is a democracy...but it's like we're one big family, you have to trust one other because you're in this business together," she continues, "I don't plan on leaving, it's wonderful...I'm not stuck inside - it doesn't even feel like a job," (Interview Dec. 1, 2016).

workplace is fluid and unbound by physical infrastructure.[62] Work *takes place* at home, after hours, at multiple sites, across borough and state boundaries and thus is a dimension of autonomous place-making. The worker-owners and worker cooperative utilize a flexible workplace as a site for conducting and producing work, owning that means of production and as a location for resistance, organizing and fostering *power to* - that disrupts an old model of power over.

Transformative labor at the scale of worker resistance

I claim that worker cooperatives are autonomous and transformative labor geographies at the scale of the worker-owner and creation of a cooperative identity. I have further argued the workplace is a transformative site for building power, autonomy and (re)making where the everyday is experienced *and* where work takes place. In situating worker cooperatives as transformative autonomous geographies it is essential to revisit the ways that regardless of the perception or actuality of cooperative structures as more socially just and contrasting to capitalist models, the "the fact [is] that both capitalism and its alternatives are shaped by racial difference,"(Bledsoe et al. 2019, 1). In this section, I support these points by discussing the role of worker cooperatives over time as they have evolved in a tandem trajectory to resistance movements within the Black Radical Tradition. In this way, I make a connection to the transformative role of worker cooperatives in social

[62] I find in my research that the majority of the new worker cooperatives established since the start of the Initiative have focused on businesses that do not require large start up costs such as brick and mortar store fronts. These businesses are providing services off site (in other workplaces/ homes/ community) or from flexible sites (co-working spaces or from home) including but not limited to: cleaning, elder or childcare, dog walking, translation/ interpreting, training and education, construction services etc.

justice and organizing explicitly with movement building for resistance to racialized and gendered capitalism.

As discussed in chapter 1, I draw from Cedric Robinson's (1983) systematic and historical overview of racial capitalism that explains the evolution of capitalism its very existence and advancement is due to racial oppression and its systems (slavery, violence, imperialism, genocide etc.). Melamed (2015) elucidates, "racial capitalism requires its users to recognize that capitalism is racial capitalism...and the procedures of racialization and capitalism are [thus] ultimately never separable from each other," (3). Scholarship linking expressions of Black resistance to racial capitalism remind us that although historically given little attention, Black geographic thought and its influence on political and economic strategies for freedom and self-determination are nothing new (Hawthorne 2019; Kelley 2017; Melamed 2011, 2015; McKittrick 2006, 2011; McKittrick & Woods 2007; Robinson 1983; Tyner 2006; and Woods 2007). And again, DuBois recognized early the oppressive and discriminatory system that is known as racial capitalism and his solution was cooperative economics and solidarity among and within communities of color (DuBois 1907; and Gordan Nembhard 2014). Restated here, worker cooperatives organized by people of color have long been an example of efforts to transform oppression into power and as resistance to racial capitalism.[63]

Within the context of challenging racial capitalism and its systems, McClintock (2018) and Bledsoe et al. (2019) both directly consider contemporary examples of Black collectivizing and alternative food system projects, the former in urban gardening and

[63] In his discussion on blues geography, Woods (2007) too notes that African Americans have long and consistently supported cooperative endeavors. He recounts an argument made by a civil rights activist and blues promoter in 1971 that "cooperative forms of development would be necessary to reach the ultimate goal of total freedom," (ibid., 73) and observes that a statement might easily have been made in 1871.

agriculture and the later in food systems in Detroit and Jackson. While their claims on dispossession and the making of racialized space with regard to food systems are salient, I argue that Black and Indigenous spaces of commoning reach beyond a fixed notion or one particular land use. Rather, I contend that cooperative organizing among women and communities of color are acts of resistance to racial and gendered capitalism and are transformative expressions of labor and access to ownership with regard to the means of production. I see worker cooperatives and collective workplaces as an extension of resistance work across other sectors (beyond land use and food systems) and with different interpretations of (re)making space (the workplace).

However, despite these acts of resistance there is often the omission of the role that gender and plays in racial capitalism and its oppressions. This point is furthered by McKittrick (2006) who argues "black women's geographies open up a meaningful way to approach the power and possibilities of geographic inquiry," (xii) and thus are an access point and lens through "more humanly workable geographies can be and are imagined," (ibid.). Likewise, women of color must be centered in any analysis of 'new cartographies of resistance' (Bailey & Shabazz 2014) as it their bodies and labor that continue to be devalued both at home and at work. Additionally, Mullings (2012) adds, "the body as a social category determining the value to labor," (412) along with racialization and "how workplaces function as sites of embodied performance in the service of capital," (413). These observations reinforce the role of intersectional identities and are expanded by Melamed (2015) who calls attention to beyond the white-black binary in traditional "geographies of solidarity" to make room for Indigenous-led activism (2). This point

reflects a more to shift in centering not only Black women in resistance work but other racialized people of color who have been continually regulated to the periphery.

I reiterate that worker cooperatives are transformative at multiple and intersecting scales: the worker-owner as a cooperative subject, as an autonomous economic and social individual and collective agent, as active in transforming the workplace in the service of capital and as a transformed site of performing work. Further, my research reinforces the notion that immigrant women and women of color are doing most of the cooperative organizing work in New York City. These more human (read socially and economically just) geographies exist in worker cooperatives and are transformative opportunities for women and among immigrant communities of color to resist and mobilize against racial and gendered capitalism.

I turn now to my analysis of Caracol Interpretation Cooperative and Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative. Both worker cooperatives organized as the WCBDI itself was gaining momentum and have benefited from Initiative funding either directly or indirectly. These cooperatives are instructive because they: were established during, in tandem with or underwent major changes due to the WCBDI; exemplify different strategies for development in New York City; representative of the types of businesses that have been developed through the WCBDI; illustrate the coupling between cooperative organizing for a democratic work[place] with social justice organizing; demonstrate a sample of the people who are the worker-owners impacted by the Initiative, its subsequent discourse and narratives.

By examining in-depth the work that these organizations do, how they came to this work, and the role that being a cooperative plays in furthering that work, I claim that

cooperative work by its definition and in practice provides access to and an avenue for social justice activism and transformation at a variety of scales. I argue that by examining the different and transformative relationships between labor and capital in these worker cooperatives provide a unique vantage point from which to examine subject formation and worker agency, activism, work/place making and resistance to racial capitalism.

Workers organize to address language and labor justice: A case of two worker cooperatives in New York City

In November 2016, I attended an evening cooperative advocacy workshop training hosted by the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNOWC).[64] It was an open event where no advanced registration was necessary. The sign in sheet and piles of handouts at the door made it clear that the organizers weren't sure how many and who would show up. Materials for the evening were provided in both English and Spanish and Chipotle take out was available to the 28 people in attendance. It was at this event that I first met several worker-owners who had been catapulted into leadership positions in the Initiative. The meeting itself was an opportunity for networking but also for information sharing. NYCNOWC and FPWA[65] staff presented and distributed information to the group on the process of public policy engagement and advocacy work at the City and State scale. We learned how items appear on public agendas and who makes that happen. We were guided through the budget cycle and some discussion about what policy changes could and would impact the worker cooperative movement. This workshop is an example of one of the many ways that active participation for worker-owners provides access to

[64] NYCNOWC is pronounced "nick-nock".
[65] Formally the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, in 2015 the organization officially changed their name to the acronym FPWA.

transformation through education, beyond the skills needed to get a job done, but to build knowledge around how systems work in order to better navigate the structures working against them.

What struck me most upon reflecting on the break-out sessions was the energy and intent participants brought to the discussion. In my field notes I wrote "tonight what I observed was a workers performing the labor of organizing outside of and beyond their typical workday and tasks, at a temporary location/ site - doing the work of collaborating, continual education, connecting and movement building" (Field notes Nov. 28, 2016). It was after 7pm and I was drained having taken one bus and two trains to get to the meeting in deep Brooklyn. I had commuted to the meeting during the rush hour with other travelers, presumably most on their way home from the traditional workday. Tired as I was, here at the NYCNOWC event were a couple of dozen people who had also overcome rush hour after their full day of work to show up for cooperatives. It was exciting to be in a place where work was framed as something more than wages, more than a job, but a community.

Caracol Interpreters Cooperative: cooperative work as Language Justice

> "The Caracol Interpreters Cooperative opens multilingual channels of communication to ignite language justice in our community. We work to create a world where language is not a barrier for exchange, but a helpful tool that can be used democratically to communicate, learn and strategize together.
>
> *La Cooperativa de Intérpretes Caracol abre canales de comunicación multilingüe para encender la llama de la justicia lingüística en nuestra comunidad. Trabajamos por un mundo donde el lenguaje no sea una barrera para el intercambio, sino una herramienta de uso democrático para comunicarnos, aprender y crear estrategias juntos y juntas.*
>
> - Caracol Interpreters Cooperative (2017)

Caracol Interpreters Cooperative[66] is a small worker cooperative of fifteen worker-owners and worker collaborators who self-identify as representing Latinx, indigenous, LGBTQ, immigrant womyn. The initial three co-founders of Caracol graduated from the "Co-op Academy" offered through Initiative nonprofit, Green Workers Cooperative. As I discussed in chapter 3, the academy approach to cooperative development is an intensive (in this case five month long) training and support program that focuses as a "boot camp" strategy for "aspiring entrepreneurs" (GWC 2020). This approach is considered a grassroots bottom-up development strategy in contrast to the more "high touch" incubation model utilized by CFL with Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa (chapter 3).

Figure 4.1: Organizing at the 2012 Green Workers Cooperative Academy

Source: Caracol (2020).

The services Caracol provides are multiple; spoken interpretation services at meetings, trainings, and other events; translation of written documents and materials; training for clients internal staff and volunteer interpreters; and consulting more broadly "for building multilingual organizational capacity (Caracol 2017). Critical to the work they do is an intersectional framing of language justice as central to social justice. 'Language

[66] In their own documents and materials the worker cooperative is referred to interchangeably as Caracol Language Coop, Caracol Language Co-op Interpretation Services or their formal name, Caracol Interpreters Cooperative. For brevity I will also refer to them in this chapter as simply "Caracol".

Justice,' as described by a Caracol worker-owner, is the intentional practice of "bring[ing] down barriers [of communication in order to] bring down differences," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). Alondra, clarifies:

> "*When you're talking about language justice, what you're talking about is making all efforts possible to make sure that you are bringing down barriers and differences in languages [so that] people can have access to information and are able to express themselves and communicate as equally as possible...the production of knowledge doesn't occur just from one place, like a one-way thing, but it's something that occurs in all kinds of directions so you provide the means to make all the multiplicity possible as much as possible*," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017).

Caracol uses criteria developed through a social justice lens to determine if a client is a "good fit". For example, a "good fit" might mean the group seeking interpretation services is "organizing"[67] or actively doing work to "improve the material conditions of the communities"[68] (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). This standard allows Caracol to prioritize work "aimed at improving conditions for the LGBTQIGNC+,[69] people of color, immigrant communities, which are so often marginalized," (Caracol 2017). This criterion is flexible and encompassing purposefully. Another worker-owner, Lupita explained that if a government agency was conducting a workshop on immigration, Caracol might offer translation services because they categorize that event as educational for a community in need despite being hosted by a government entity (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). In this way, Caracol aims to have a transformative impact on the individual clients and wider communities they serve. In their holistic practice of language justice both internally and

[67] In the context of this statement and specified in the interview, "organizing" is meant to imply social movement building in particular around, although not limited to, labor, housing, immigration, economic, racial and gender justice for people and the communities where they live.
[68] Here "communities" implies areas that are traditionally defined as disadvantaged, economically and socially.
[69] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and gender-non-conforming.

through the services they offer, Caracol thus actively builds power and creates transformative spaces of experience and resistance to gendered and racial capitalism.

With regard to their client base, Alondra estimates that "80% of the people we deal with are women...and once we get to the place beyond the staff that can work for [an] organization - it is people of color and mostly women we deal with" (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). She continues, "I mean when you are talking about tenants who are organizing, it's mostly women of color, when you are talking about people who are going to education justice events, it's mostly women of color," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). This point illuminates the feminist critique of gendered labor that divides valued wage labor from community support work, organizing and other forms of social production (Strauss 2013; and Strauss & Meehan 2015). Caracol recognizes that women, particularly women of color, are a group in need of language justice support. Access to the service they provide and the ability to subsidize that service as needed is an extension of that commitment to larger social justice aims, building resistance to oppressive systems and transforming access and experiences for clients. For worker-owners, language justice becomes an opportunity to build their own knowledge and helps to build the knowledge and experience for others to help connect them to larger movements.

In addition to the access, it is also the specific type of services provided that compliment social justice aims. At the start of the NYCNOWC meeting, a Caracol interpreter explained they would be using two techniques to strive for a more multilingual space: 'consecutive' interpretation[70] that allows for a pause after speaking so that the listeners can

[70] The benefits to this approach is that it requires less technology and is therefore more easily accessible for larger events and various logistical set ups. However, the challenge with this approach is the time since everything is said (at least) twice and thus also interrupts natural flows in conversation and discussion.

hear the speaker's voice, emotion and infliction and 'simultaneous' interpretation[71] that uses special audio equipment allowing for real time translation. In this way the dominance of English in the room would be challenged by allowing Spanish first speakers to stay engaged in dialog as it was happening. The goal is to create a "multilingual space" where there is "resistance to the dominance of any one language in the room" (Antena Aire 2013). As a native English speaker, the effects of this intention for me were immediately felt at the training. Because I could not follow the words easily, I found myself focusing on body language and other non-verbal communication cues in the room (Field notes Nov. 28, 2016). Who was speaking and how they were speaking took on a different emphasis and layer of meaning than it would have had the space been dominated in English. It becomes more than interpretation but rather the "effort to hear those things and engage with them through direct dialogue and dynamic group conversation [as] central to manifesting the respect and mutual consideration that are the foundation of any truly cross-cultural or cross-racial work," (Antena Aire 2013). The result for meeting participants is a greater understanding and consciousness of sometimes invisible, structures of oppression working around us. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below, illustrate Caracol worker-owners providing interpretation services through both consecutive and simultaneous methods.

At the NYCNOWC meeting, Spanish and English were not the only languages in the room, a point that does not escape the notice of Caracol. Further limiting the scope to an English-Spanish binary fails to challenge the imperial histories of those two languages or

[71] This approach does not interrupt conversation flow and people are able to speak together directly even if they do not share a common language. It does however require access to technology.

even that language is singularly spoken.[72] Both these points are forefront in internal dialog at Caracol. Lupita tells me that, although at one point Caracol considered adding other languages to their cooperative, the direction they decided on is to support other groups who are better nested and equipped to support language justice in those other language and cultural contexts. "We definitely see that there is a huge need - for all kinds of languages…so we try to promote our relationships with other people who work independently," (Interview Jan. 22, 2020).

Figures 4.2 and 4.3: Language justice at work


Source: 2014 National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health conference, by Caracol (2020).

Caracol's commitment to this work even at their own financial loss is demonstrated through providing "rates that are below our sliding scale for some organizations," as well as working pro bono (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). In their efforts to challenge traditional for-profit motives, there is also an acknowledgement of the needed balance between providing volunteerism and discounted work with recognizing that *this is work* and that the laboring

[72] Although there is recognition by the worker cooperatives that not all language is spoken at this time Caracol does not provide sign language interpretation.

by Caracol worker-owners has real economic value. Described by Alondra, the labor being performed is "all in our bodies and our minds," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). She elaborates that "the skills we have developed with us in our bodies," include the whole person as an asset and therefore encompass organizing experience, reading interests, social and cultural background, political identities, experience and knowledges.

Caracol worker-owners, like many business owners, find blurry lines between home and work. "There is a lot of work especially internally [that] is still unpaid," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017) and with the responsibility and pressures to maintain a successful business it is not hard for "work hours [to] blend into personal time," (Caracol 2015c). The transformative work performed by Caracol worker-owners is not confined to the services they provide to clients. In their own words,

> "*We don't just engage in the work of translating and interpreting, every day we also engage in the work of sustaining our business as peers with equal responsibility and agency, and it turns out that unlearning the internalized capitalistic practices in our body and experience is hard and ongoing work*," (Caracol 2020).

In conversations with worker owners this sentiment was expressed in different words many times. Worker owners described how they have been transformed through their experiences in worker cooperatives and their moment of epiphany coming to understand the histories and impacts of oppression systems and structures on their opportunity and agency. The formation of active and engaged cooperative subjects at Caracol that brings together the multi-dimensional identities of its worker-owners to literally transform traditional fixed notions of what labor is, who does it, where it takes place and what it represents for larger issues of access, justice and resistance to racialized and gendered capitalism.

Work at Caracol does 'takes place' in complex and numerous forms. "We are lucky in that we don't really need a [physical] space…[or] many materials," and the limited equipment that is needed most "everybody already has - a computer, internet and phone," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). Although they do have specialized interpretation microphone equipment, this expense is shrugged off as minimal comparatively. "It's not like putting up a restaurant," (ibid.) alluding to all the start-up costs and infrastructure needed for other types of businesses. Further, the formation of Caracol as a cooperative offers a democratic work environment where workers have access to decision making as well as a financial stake in the business as an avenue for building wealth. 'Work' is thus fluid as it implies internal development and identity work as well as outward labor rooted in a language/social justice lens. The 'workplace' itself is also fluid and flexible happening remotely on event/ job sites and at home as well as taking 'place' beyond only one site as a moving and expansive project. Caracol worker-owners and collaborators are first wave immigrants and live in both New York City and Puerto Rico. 'Workplace' dynamics are conducive to personal and professional growth by promoting challenging and transformative discussion at the scale of day-to-day operations as well as connection to wider social justice movement building. These points illustrate the distinct subject formation at cooperatives that link cooperative work with spaces of possibility and community made by both Byrne and Healy (2006) and Cornwell (2012).

Caracol prefers to become deeply involved with their clients and outside of specific one-time events, they foster a long-term commitment from groups they work with. "What we see is the people who hire us, who work with us constantly, their bases grow...it's really cool to watch and good to see," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017; and Jan. 22, 2020) and thus just

coming in for a one-time interpretation job isn't enough. As Alondra explained, "you have to incorporate language justice in your day to day," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). This stewardship of the work is indicative of promoting social justice and transforming the everyday into small acts of resistance and activism, as in the creation of Pickerill and Chatterton's autonomous geographies (2006). Caracol provides consulting and training to bring multilingual best practices into every facet of the clients they work with. This can materialize in consulting on how to organize events and upgrade materials to training staff and volunteers to interpret and/or translate so that clients can have internal access to these services "all the time because it is something that has to be done all the time," in order to be sustaining and transformative (Interview Jan. 24, 2017).

With regard to the cooperative structure, "there's a richness and a lot more conversation [that] wouldn't happen if you had [organized as] another [type of] agency," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). A sense of ownership and a vested interest in what happens that contributes to this cooperative sense of making the 'workplace'. "When somebody takes ownership it's really, really beautiful...people are empowering themselves and then they feel like they have something to say...a voice where you work," (ibid.). Lupita is a newer worker-owner at Caracol and she describes her personal transformation:

> "*For me I had known Caracol for a long time, as a collaborator and as a community – that is as a client of Caracol, and I think that it is very different. I had mostly worked in nonprofits…in lots of different categories as a manager and as a programmer, community organizer and it's so different to have this level of agency and responsibility, and it's so obvious how much work we have to do to unlearn the ways that have been internalized of what it means to be…at a work and to work, you know?...both in really libratory ways and ways that are really challenging. Cause you also see that we are still navigating capitalism so the contradictions are just so strong and you have to constantly make choices around it*," (Interview Jan 22, 2020).

Lupita's reflection underscores the active and conscious work by owners at Caracol to practice cooperativism and communalism as resistance to racial and gendered capitalism. Her statement also speaks to the subject and identity formation that is (re)framed through working cooperatively. Caracol worker-owners find that the cooperative model is more accommodating and responsive to complex and multiple identities. Alondra explains, "you have to understand, we are part of the communities that we interpret for...we represent these communities in one-way or another - indigenous women, Latina women, Black Latina women, single mothers," (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). The recognition of their cooperative work as providing access to more than just a job was a sentiment that all of the worker-owners I spoke with affirmed. As a worker-owner, these individuals learned how "to express themselves," to go out and be "part of conversations" that are meaningful (Select Interviews Dec. 1, 2016; Dec. 14, 2016; Jan. 24, 2017; and Field notes Dec. 14, 2016). Berta, a worker-owner at a different worker cooperative describes how in her mostly Latino neighborhood, the struggles in her community were often attributed only to language barriers, however she now understands the impacts of other intersecting systems of oppression. "I feel like cooperative help that – to that whole empowerment, you can't just be fired because of your color, or because you don't know the language very well, or your immigration status, whatever it may be," Berta goes on to explain "being part of the cooperative, you have the resources which help you to get rid of that fear, to feel better…to share their worries and [to] all just join together," (Interview Dec. 14, 2016).

Caracol is exceptional in the Initiative as both archetype and unique. The worker-owners and collaborators at Caracol are a part of the demographics the City is referring to

when they target small business development and "entrepreneurship among low-income New Yorkers," (SBS 2020). These are workers who are predominantly "self-taught" and without formal secondary education (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). They represent working class immigrant women of color who began as volunteers and part time employees, self-started and grew a business that meets a community need as well as provides gainful fulltime employment (Field notes Jan. 24, 2017). In addition to being a model worker cooperative, Caracol also occupies a role providing technical assistance services to the Initiative and its coalition members. In this way, funded agencies can use WCBDI money to pay for Caracol and thus they are actually one of the only worker cooperatives in New York City that directly benefit from WCBDI funding as a contractor.[73]

I argue that central to Caracol's work and its transformative capacity is through its organization as a worker cooperative. The inspiration for Caracol founders to seek out the cooperative model came from their involvement as volunteer interpreters with Domestic Workers United[74] and participating in the seven-year organizing struggle to secure rights for domestic workers in New York City through a Bill of Rights (Interview Jan. 24, 2017). Labor organizing brought to light the power of coalition building and working together for positive social change. Further the cooperative and collective models for organizing and distributing power were not new to Caracol organizers and in fact, one of them had already

[73] As I discuss in chapter 3, the WCBDI funds Initiative coalition developer agencies and nonprofit organizations. Caracol contracts with NYCNOWC providing interpretation services that are categorized as technical assistance. NYCNOWC tries to provide access to contracted work for the worker cooperatives in New York City (Interview Mar. 13, 2016) and promotes the cooperation among cooperatives principle (see chapter 2). A worker-owner at a different cooperative business (that does not directly access WCBDI funding as a contractor) points out the city funding is "very restricted," (Interview Dec. 1, 2016). She explains that while nonprofits receive funding, the money has to be spent within a certain time frame on certain pre-approved or directed focus areas (such as specific training topics) (ibid.). Throughout my fieldwork worker-owners voiced frustration that WCBDI funding could not more significantly support startup costs for worker cooperatives directly (Select Interviews Dec. 1, 2016; Dec. 2, 2016; and Feb. 20, 2020).

[74] Now the National Alliance of Domestic Workers (2020).

been a worker-owner at a health and wellness collective dedicated to providing accessible and holistic health care services to communities who are often left outside of traditional health care access.[75]

Figure 4.4: Caraol worker-owners receiving "2018 Co-op of the Year" award

Source: USFWC (2018).

It is not a coincidence that the founders of Caracol came together from an organizing background around issues at the intersection of labor and immigration. The workers at Caracol consider their efforts more than just jobs – they are a part of creating a transformed radical democratic workplace that challenges the impacts of racial capitalism by providing accessible essential services in order to dismantle problematic and dominant power dynamics, promote equality and access, contribute to creating the space for economic, racial and social justice. Caracol was honored at the 2018 US Federation of Worker Cooperatives conference held in Los Angeles as "cooperative of the year in

[75] 3rd Space Healing is a health and wellness collective part of the Audre Lorde Project and serves the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Two-Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color, HIV+, low income, (im)migrant and/or disabled (3rd Space Healing 2018).

commitment to social justice," (USFWC 2018). I will conclude this section with Caracol's response:

> *"We believe that language justice is crucial to social justice and that is why we work with groups that organize, build power and transform the conditions of our communities. It is an honor to accompany you day by day and do this work in struggle and joy for a world where many worlds fit. Without language justice there can be no social justice,"* (Quoted from USFWC 2018).

Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative - "powerful and precious"

> "*The domestic workplace becomes not just a job, it becomes a site of community and solidarity building*,"
>
> - Cooperative Developer, the Center for Family Life

Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative[76] is among the 15%[77] of worker cooperatives in New York City that are cleaning businesses and as such do not require significant start-up capital, physical infrastructure or licensing and insurance requirements or regulations. In this way, these types of businesses are often easier to get off the ground, in cost and time. This is useful in the WCBDI where City expectations for measurable results year to year and a focus on low-income immigrant communities is a priority. A cooperative developer explained to me that targeting industries such as cleaning and hospitality is "definitely not a coincidence" (Interview Mar. 15, 2016). And in fact, businesses that are perceived as "low-hanging fruit" allow access for marginalized workers who face barriers to employment and wealth building, including but not limited to educational attainment, immigration status, language, race and gender etc. (ibid.). The transformative capacity of worker-ownership for these communities is demonstrated by the experience of workers at Maharlika. While some worker-owners already had experience with the transformative

[76] Referred to interchangeably in this chapter as Maharlika.
[77] Figure based on statistics I compiled from the "Cooperative Business Directory" (NYCNOWC 2020).

potential that comes with participating in worker cooperatives, as in the case of Caracol founders, others such as at Maharlika, worker-owners were recruited and new to the model from the start.

Maharlika boasts being the first worker cooperative of Filipina domestic workers in the U.S. and is made up of seven Filipina women who initially came together because of their shared experience as survivors of human labor trafficking.[78] Most of the women at Maharlika were trafficked by diplomatic employers, pushed to leave their own families and extreme poverty in the Philippines, and pulled by promises of jobs and wages - having no context for what fair wages and conditions might be in the United States (DMWA 2020; and Savitch-Lew 2015). They were forced to work long hours, providing domestic and childcare services, often without days off, vacations or consistent compensation. One worker-owner describes her "first years in this country [as] spent in isolation, on call for work 24 hours a day, barely making any money," (Quoted in Sillesen 2016; and The Laura Flanders Show 2016b). These women were forced into abusive and exploitative employment and for the worker-owners at Maharlika who escaped these circumstances, finding an opportunity to be a worker-owner with economic and political agency, was significant and no short of life changing.

Prior to their rebranding and re-launch in 2017, Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative was called Damayan Cleaning Cooperative named for their parent nonprofit organization the Damayan Migrant Workers Association (DMWA).[79] Damayan is a nonprofit

[78] Labor trafficking is defined through the Trafficking Victims Protections Act of 2000 as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery," (The Polaris Project 2020).

[79] The Damayan Migrant Workers Association (DMWA) refers to themselves interchangeably as Damayan, and in the chapter, I will do the same.

organization that received early funding through the WCBDI to launch a worker cooperative business incubation program. For Damayan, who had no prior cooperative experience, the model promised to "provide opportunities for migrant workers who have come from experiences of exploitation and marginalization, and create a new space for worker organizing and leadership development," (DMWA 2018). For an agency focused on serving low-wage, mostly Filipina domestic workers to improve, "labor standards and dignity at work" and to support "workers' power and solidarity towards economic and social justice" - worker cooperative development seems like a perfect fit (DMWA 2020).

Figure 4.5: Worker-owners getting organized in 2015

Source: Maharlika (2020).

Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard worker-owners articulate the cooperative advantage and benefits to organizing as a worker cooperative again and again (Field notes Jan. 27, 2016). Worker-owners were drawn to the model because of its possibilities to counter economic, political and societal marginalization, to access dignity in their work, control over their own labor, fair living wages, and safe and equitable treatment. Worker-owners either understood worker cooperatives as a link towards larger movements and personal transformation or these broader histories and movement connections were

explained to them as they became more engaged. My research with Maharlika demonstrates however, that top-down cooperative development is just as susceptible to oppressive and disenfranchising labor as other development processes.

At the time when I first became connected with the group, the cooperative had just emerged from a traumatic separation from Damayan and was rebranding as Maharlika. According to the President of the cooperative, as the workers continued their cooperative education, they began to see contradictions and a lack of transparency emerge in their relationship with Damayan (Interviews Nov. 28, 2016; and Dec. 2, 2016). On one hand, the nonprofit seemed to adhere to cooperative principles and claimed that the workers would be the "ones to manage" on the other hand, they would interfere with worker-owner decisions, leaving some individuals in the dark about contract and publicity opportunities in favor of specific workers who they felt would better promote their nonprofit mission (Interview Dec. 2, 2016). Eventually Damayan demanded 50% profit-sharing from the cooperative (ibid.). When the worker-owners wanted to negotiate the profit-sharing percentage, Damayan pulled business away from them claiming the group "wasn't supporting the movement of th[e] nonprofit organization," (ibid.). Damayan effectively used the promise of client contracts as a control mechanism over the cooperative to promote their larger nonprofit mission, fundraising goals and agenda.

The experience of being exploited for their labor a second time just as their collective consciousness and economic autonomy was growing was emotional and distressing. Reflecting on what happened, Carmen explained, "[it was] traumatic and it's still very deep in our hearts...something like a battle of the mind, like putting in your brain that you can't do this, so you better stay with us, you know? 'You don't have the experience,

you don't have the leadership'," (Interview Dec. 2, 2016). The worker-owners at Maharlika encountered trauma on top of trauma as their confidence was belittled, with workers describing their experience as emotional abuse. The distressing circumstances lived through by Maharlika underscore McKittrick's (2006) salient point regarding potential harm at the workplace. In this case the top-down development of the cooperative as if it were just another top down economic development project had the result of reinforcing marginalization and reproducing a "victim" rhetoric.

This hard lesson demonstrates the vulnerability of workers and the challenges within the Initiative when collaborators and convening nonprofit organizations do not have the same vision and agenda as the worker-owners. In this case, the workers-owners at Maharlika continued to gain economic independence, training, support and liberation from an exploitative system. Through developing agency and autonomy, worker-owners began to realize their labor continued to be abused by Damayan who was using the Initiative funding and notoriety as a means to promote their own work at the expense of the workers. This realization in itself became a transformative moment for the workers' individual cooperative subject formation and their collective group identity.

For Maharlika, it resulted in a bitter power struggle with leadership at the nonprofit misunderstanding cooperative governance, interfering with the managing autonomy of the cooperative, undermining decisions, demanding profit sharing etc. Maharlika separated from the nonprofit at the recommendation of free legal counsel and had to relinquish their name, their identity and come back together to (re)emerge and (re)invent and transform themselves yet again in the labor market.

Maharlika workers became an even closer-knit community in the aftermath, remaining committed to the cooperative model, reminding themselves, "we can do this," (Interview Dec. 2, 2016). Reclaiming their identity as survivors is reflected in their new name. Maharlika means "power" and "precious" in Tagalog, the language of the Philippines (Interview Nov. 28, 2016). Worker-owners feel their "name embodies [their] commitment to building power collectively to help each other, [their] community and clients, and [the] belief that all people are precious and important," (Maharlika 2020). These sentiments illustrate the multiple ways that support for one another as resistance to oppression is a priority for worker-owners and reinforces the observations made by Gordon Nembhard (2014), Kelley (1999) and Melamed (2015) about the critical reliance on mutual aid and collectivism for social benefit among marginalized groups.

Interestingly enough, Damayan has also remained committed to the cooperative model and since 2017 has also re-launched a cooperative business, the Damayan Workers Cooperative[80] that offers dog walking, office cleaning, elderly care, nanny and babysitting services (DMWA 2020). More cooperative businesses of course further contribute to the proof of concept for the WCBDI. However, in this instance the separation of Maharlika and Damayan ended up siphoning leadership and dividing the Filipino migrant community, thereby creating unnecessary competition between the two worker cooperatives. Further, while Maharlika is completely autonomous, their worker-owners are as of yet not able to sustain their cooperative work full time. They are vulnerable in the market as a small business and do not have the larger Damayan network advocating for them in the

[80] The mission at the rebooted Damayan Workers Cooperative "is to create dignified and sustainable jobs and workplaces for immigrant works and to help reshape the local economy to better serve the interests of workers, clients and community" (DMWA 2020). Damayan does not currently receive any WCBDI funding.

community in which they hope to work. Meanwhile it is not clear that workers involved at the new Damayan Workers Cooperative have autonomous control over their business as a true worker cooperative would, or if they are similarly beholden to the nonprofit in ways Maharlika was not comfortable or willing to tolerate.

Conclusions

> "*In 2008, I had the opportunity to begin working with the cooperative. My life changed completely – personally, professionally, and economically. The beginning of the cooperative was not easy. No one knew about our co-op; we did volunteer work at organizations and universities and often gave childcare in exchange for opportunities to market our group in the places we volunteers. I had basic English then. I have learned so much more. I have also learned to use computers. My salary is better. I work the amount of time I want to work…My first daughter will graduate from college in June. My youngest son is in third grade. The best benefit of all of this is giving my children the opportunity to have a better education*," (Worker-owner at Committee Hearing Testimony Feb. 24, 2014)

On March 16, 2016 I attended a budget hearing for the Committee on Community Development at New York City Hall where council members heard testimony in support of continued funding for the WCBDI. The above testimony is an example of the worker-owner experiences shared in these spaces. This excerpt supports what I have argued in this chapter - that worker cooperatives have the potential to be transformative at multiple and interconnecting scales, including how worker-owners came to participate in worker cooperatives in the first place and also in the ways their participation links them to broader cooperative and social justice movements. The worker cooperatives cases I have presented demonstrate how worker-owners are organizing and performing work at intentionally framed workplaces set up to transform power relations and become a catalyst for larger resistance work and social justice.

The case of Caracol is illustrative of the multiple scales of transformative labor evident through worker cooperative organizing. Individual worker-owners at Caracol are valued as whole people in addition to the critical labor they perform. Their cooperative identities encompass their commitment to the everyday and all-around necessity for language justice that in practice, transforms power dynamics and creates multilingual spaces in order to challenge dominance and oppression of gendered and racialized capitalism. The workplace for Caracol is not static or unjust but rather encourages creative collaboration transforming the workplace into a fluid and multifaceted site at home and out in the communities they serve and claim as their own.

Maharlika, like Caracol, shows the transformative potential at worker cooperatives. In this case, the organization and (re)formation of Maharlika demonstrates a literal transformation as individuals and as a group from being exploited for their labor within a transnational and racialized capitalist system to being exploited for their cooperative labor through the inexperience of well-meaning nonprofit cooperative developers. The latter demonstrates further evidence to support arguments I made in chapter 3, highlighting the risks of neoliberal sensibilities applied to cooperative development. Maharlika was the first cooperative project incubated by Damayan who had prior to WCBDI funding, been unfamiliar with the cooperative model and results were distressing.[81] However, powerful

[81] Damayan is not the only nonprofit organization without prior cooperative experience to be funded through the WCBDI and have mixed results. For example, Make The Road New York (MRNY) is a nonprofit that serves "Latino and working class communities," that was funded the first year of the Initiative (WCBDI 2015). Similar to the experiences of worker-owners at Maharlika, I spoke with a worker-owner who had been involved in a project initially conceived of through a focus group organized at MRNY. This worker-owner described how MRNY took advantage of worker identities and their project idea to start the first trans-led worker cooperative and leveraged it for their own benefit (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). As my contact disclosed, MRNY focused on two other projects, which were launched successfully, and "the trans group was basically left," (ibid.) She continued, "[MRNY] didn't designate a staff person or continue supporting us, they kept a go-fund-me account active over the last 3-4 years, didn't close it down," (ibid). Fundraising for the trans led

and precious, the worker-owners at Maharlika emerged as cooperative subjects and active agents in their economic and political future. Through the creation of an autonomous geography, worker-owners at Maharlika have also changed their relationship to work and their experience of the workplace from a place of harm to a place of power.

The transformative possibilities for worker cooperatives at these scales are salient for immigrant women and women of color who are particularly vulnerable to the gendered and racialized capitalist systems working against them. Through democratic participation at worker cooperatives, worker-owners are building knowledge about systems of oppression and how to navigate spaces of engagement and resistance through active citizenship and connection to larger movements for justice. As a group of worker-owners organized as a worker cooperative, these businesses defy the standard of capitalist social and economic relations and further our understanding of who, how and where economic development takes place and the spaces of possibility that are opened when workers are working for themselves.

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worker cooperative continued despite the fact that MRNY had abandoned active organizing and support and ended up "fundrais[ing] about $16-$17,000," that never actually went to the group of workers who are currently and actively looking to open this worker cooperative business (ibid.). Another worker-owner summarized for me, "the sad reality is that the beneficiaries [of WCBDI] are the community based organizations," and this story "is an example of organizations and people that are lucrative and are gaining from our struggles and our stories," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020).

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Chapter 5.
New spatialities of sanctuary: The potential of worker cooperatives as sanctuary workplaces

Introduction

In previous chapters, I have argued that 1) worker cooperatives are rooted in emancipatory movements and organizing for self-determination as resistance to oppression; 2) worker cooperatives are potentially transformative at multiple geographic scales; and 3) top-down processes of organizing worker cooperatives risk reinforcing, rather than disrupting, neoliberalization and racialized and gendered inequalities. In this chapter, I extend this analysis by focusing on worker cooperatives and their potential alliances with the Sanctuary Movement as part of emerging spatialities of sanctuary practice in the workplace.

Sanctuary has multiple meanings and forms of operation.[82] In one sense, sanctuary widely refers to a framework of institutional policies, such as immigration and enforcement laws and practices, including offering shelter or other support to people at risk for deportation or detention due to their immigration status (e.g. Paik 2017; Roy 2019; and Villazor & Gulasekaram 2018). Sanctuary can also mean the creation of safe space[83] and access to opportunity for individuals whose intersecting identities render them additionally vulnerable in both the economy and society as a whole (e.g. Ellison 2019; and Yukich 2013b). In this chapter I draw from both these meanings to contribute to growing

[82] Houston (2019) submits that the lack of a formal definition for sanctuary results in a variety of inconsistent applications, interpretations and evaluations for the term in practice.

[83] I draw from the discussion by Ellison (2019) on the production of safe space that I will discuss later in this chapter. Briefly Ellison (ibid.) describes the interventions by Queer theorists to document the shift "from a politics of sanctuary to a politics of safe space," that required activists to take on "the project of community policing," to intentionally engage in place-making to confront and "work against the impossible politics of difference," (107).

scholarly interest in sanctuary and in the Sanctuary Movement by examining how some cooperative practitioners are endeavoring to cultivate their worker cooperatives as 'sanctuary workplaces'. I consider sanctuary worker cooperatives as intentionally organized outside existing infrastructure to promote avenues for economic access and justice for vulnerable workers.

I ground my analysis in the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of the Sanctuary Movement in the United States, focusing on three key phases. I discuss the historical geographies of sanctuary in the faith-based organizing efforts in the 1980s as a response to U.S. foreign policy in Central America (e.g. Perla & Coutin 2013). Second, I describe the resurgence of sanctuary in the mid 2000s post-9/11 that is marked by efforts to support and defend a broader immigrant base from escalating deportation, workplace raids and an overall heightened climate of immigration fear and reform (e.g. Ridley 2008). Third, I describe the shifting and expanded ways that sanctuary is practiced today in a Trump era characterized by corporate welfare, cruel and racist abandonment, and anti-immigrant policy (e.g. Houston 2019; Paik 2017; Paik et al. 2019; Roy 2019; and Villazor & Gulasekaram 2018). These policies rely upon and exploit difference and thus "can be viewed as a renewal of white supremacy…[and] institutionalization of white power in statecraft," (Roy 2019, 3).

In my discussion of the interdisciplinary scholarship on sanctuary, I contextualize the phases of sanctuary alongside their critiques. I draw, in particular from Paik (2017) and Roy (2019) who caution that sanctuary framing rooted within liberal democracy, "risks reproducing the exclusions it has sought to dismantle (Paik 2017, 3). As Roy (2019) notes, sanctuary, "has [a] quite limited scope, relying on, rather than limited, police power," (Roy

2019, 2). In this way, particular groups are deemed worthy of protection at the expense of others and state power is consolidated and legitimized through police enforcement of, or non-compliance with immigration policies.

My research of the Worker Cooperative Development Initiative (WCBDI) in New York City from 2015-2017 and follow up research in 2020 with two cooperatives, the Latinx- and Trans -owned Mirror Beauty Cooperative, and with Caracol Interpreters Cooperative (also discussed in chapter 4), owned by Latinx and Indigenous mostly queer workers[84] is the basis for this chapter. I argue that the efforts by some worker cooperatives to incorporate sanctuary principles is revealing of the expanding spatialities of sanctuary in the current conjuncture. My research reveals a paradox of organizing within a sanctuary framework and intersecting identities in mind: even as these sanctuary efforts are designed to support vulnerable and immigrant worker-owners, sanctuary worker cooperatives encounter undue burdens that disproportionately harm the marginalized individuals they seek to protect. I complicate this kind of organizing and its limitations within the neoliberal racial capitalist framework, connecting my theorization of sanctuary worker cooperatives to the concept of abolition democracy (DuBois 1935) introduced by sanctuary critiques as a possible reframing (Ellison 2019; Paik 2017; and Roy 2019).

The U.S. Sanctuary Movement: historical and contemporary efforts

Sanctuary is a response to anti-immigration policies and rhetoric. The concept is inherently spatial, rooted in ancient religious terminology meaning "a holy place", a place

[84] Worker-owners I spoke with described their intersecting identities as mostly queer and LGBTQIGNC+ (Field notes Jan. 24, 2017). I use the acronym to refer broadly to Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and gender-non-conforming identities.

"that offers refuge" and "protection or safe harbor," (Paik et al. 2019, 3; Buff 2017; Paik 2017; and Roy 2019). Grounded in physical space, sanctuary is also tied to relational space that "implies political negotiations that are sensitive to, and informed by, *both* the interconnections and specificities of place," (Darling 2010, 126 original emphasis). Sanctuary practices are examples of resistance and contentious politics that draw on multiple spatialities (Leitner et al. 2008). For example, in contesting immigration law and practices, sanctuary challenges state authority and also has deeply scalar implications (Paik et al. 2019; and Villazar & Gulasekaram 2018). In this manner, sanctuary offers "protection beyond the law," where within sanctuary spaces and places serve "as a reminder that the nation-state does not have exclusive sovereign control over what happens within its territory," (Paik et al. 2019, 3-4). The relational spatial dimensions and dynamics that have given rise to sanctuary over time have implications for people and places. I now turn to the interdisciplinary scholarship on sanctuary to discuss key phases in the movement and the literature.

The Sanctuary Movement (1980s)

The U.S. Sanctuary Movement emerged in the 1980s to support and respond to the increasing number of mostly Central American migrants and refugees seeking asylum from the U.S. backed dictatorships and political violence in the region, particularly in El Salvador and Guatemala. This history – and the United States' hand in this violence – are well documented (e.g. Brown & Scott 2018; Caminero-Santangelo 2013; Carney et al. 2017; Houston 2019; Orozco & Anderson 2018; Paik et al. 2019; Perla & Coutin 2013; Ricketts 2019; Ridgley 2008; Villazor 2008; and Yukich 2013a, 2013b). During this time, the Sanctuary Movement was mobilized by over 400 religious and faith-based organizations

inspired by a moral calling to protect those experiencing and fleeing from state violence (Caminero-Santangelo 2013; Orozco & Anderson 2018; and Perla Jr. & Coutin 2013). The term state violence includes various forms of violence and brutality committed by governments against its own citizens as a response to a challenge in their ostensibly legitimate authority (Perla Jr. & Coutin 2013; and Roy 2019).

Perla Jr. and Coutin (2013) document the legacies of early sanctuary organizing in the U.S., underscoring the transnational frameworks implicated, including where sanctuary takes place, who is involved, and the manner of sanctuary provided. They highlight the obvious linkages between nation-states and global political economic conditions giving rise to the Sanctuary Movement, but also reveal how definitions of sanctuary as neither foreign or domestic was an intentional strategy among revolutionary leadership to "mobilize opposition to U.S. support for the Salvadoran government," (ibid., 74). They further argue that during this time, "Salvadoran immigrants had to be willing to strategically stay quiet, become invisible, or abstain from taking on certain leadership roles... embracing identities, such as "refugees' or 'victims' that to some, implied weakness or passivity," to occupy an unthreatening perception of worthiness in order to receive sanctuary (Perla Jr. & Coutin 2013, 74-75). In this period, those needing sanctuary were well defined as those in need of physical shelter and material support such as legal aid, social services, food, transportation, resettlement aid, as well as rapid response and protection from deportation (Orozco & Anderson 2018; and Yukich 2013a). The eventual goal of the Sanctuary Movement at the time was for those in need of sanctuary to receive legal status in the United States.

The early Sanctuary Movement provides a starting point from which to understand the notions of who, where and how sanctuary was understood and practiced in the U.S. The

early Sanctuary Movement had clearly defined goals and actors: it emerged directly in response to a specific social and political situation and primarily supported a clearly defined group, strategically represented as non-threatening immigrant asylum seekers from Central America. Through the mobilization of religious networks guided by a moral imperative to oppose U.S. international violence, sanctuary at this time was more narrowly defined.

The New Sanctuary Movement (NSM) (since 2007)

In the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, xenophobic and racist anti-immigrant sentiment combined anti-terrorism rhetoric and policies in new and violent ways. In 2005, the U.S. passed the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act,"[85] resulting in an increase of "raids in neighborhoods and workplaces," and deportation (Orozco & Anderson 2018, 4; Caminero-Santangelo 2013; and Villazor 2008). The Act criminalized immigrants in the U.S. illegally and didn't offer a route to citizenship for immigrants already inside the country. In response, massive protests and marches took place nationally and in 2007, the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM) was formed (Caminero-Santangelo 2013; Paik 2017; and Yukich 2013a). In this period, sanctuary was reconstituted in several meaningful ways.

For instance, Caminero-Santangelo (2013), notes that the NSM, was "less about physical sanctuary," but rather more "about providing a new means of telling the story of the human costs" of U.S. deportation policies (92). The illustration of these human costs painted a broader picture of the kinds of immigrants deserving and in need of sanctuary. During the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s, constructions of the "deserving immigrant"

[85] Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, H.R. 4437 accessed through the National Conference of State Legislatures (2020).

represented immigrants as passive and living "under the radar" in order to not draw attention to their immigration status. In contrast, the NSM was "reconfigured as a public and performative practice," as a means to offer a "counter-discourse to dominant rhetoric on immigration," (ibid.).

That is, rather than emphasizing a named group of vulnerable peoples needing sanctuary, this new movement was less defined and more flexible allowing for subjective societal interpretation and broader inclusion. Specifically, the NSM encompassed both "arriving refugees…[and] neighbors who have been in the U.S. for decades and had built their lives here," (Orozco & Anderson 2018, 4; and Caminero-Santangelo 2013). The rhetoric from the 1980s emphasizing asylum seekers fleeing from state violence in life or death situations shifted in the NSM to account for the "ordinary life," and immigrants who long built lives in the U.S. and contributed to a "national sense of belonging," (Caminero-Santangelo 2013, 96; and Yukich 2013a). Villazor (2008) notes that this shift in the discursive framing of sanctuary was motivated by unity and resisting immigration policies that would separate families, "emphasizing the importance of protecting the integrity of the family," in order to align with a sense of belonging to core American values (145).[86]

Of course, the social construction of "the model immigrant" and "deservingness" simultaneously also relies upon the contrasting image of the "bad/undeserving" immigrant (Yukich 2013b, 302). These relational constructs rely on the exclusion of certain immigrants, such as, whose identities intersect with other forms of racialized and gendered difference. For example, identities that are outside the dominant cultural and religious

[86] Although I do not explicitly engage with what comprises "core American values", I consider them invoked in this context as reflecting dominant white supremacist and masculine positions. I interpret the motivations by activists at the rebirth of the NSM to appease white fear post-9/11 that contributed to the aggressive criminalization of immigrants in the United States.

values (read as unemployed, with criminal record, unwed, LGBTQ+, people of color etc.) (Yukich 2013b). Noted by Yukich (2013b), "in drawing distinctions between model group members and those who did not share their dominant-friendly characteristics, New Sanctuary activists implicitly portrayed many undocumented immigrants as undeserving of the rights and responsibilities of legal residency and citizenship" (303).

The New Sanctuary Movement understood sanctuary as having multiple meanings beyond physical shelter and material support (Caminero-Santangelo 2013). It was during this time that 'sanctuary cities'[87] emerged as a new domain of sanctuary, extending beyond the capacity of faith-based organizations and private citizens to include municipal support of sanctuary policies (Lippert & Rehaag 2013; and Villazor 2008, 2010).[88] 'Sanctuary cities' "refer to jurisdictions declining to participate in federal immigration enforcement" resulting in contesting structural power and the "hard lines that separate federal and sub-federal sovereigns" (Villazor & Gulasekaram 2018, 554).

Cities' enactment of sanctuary policies, however, does not mean sanctuary is enforced or followed by local agencies. This gap between policy and implementation manifests in scalar conflicts. For example, although New York has been a 'sanctuary city' since 1989 (Tapper & Claiborne 2007), a representative of the New York Police Department (NYPD) made clear, "make no mistake about it...the members of law enforcement in the NYPD want to cooperate with ICE," (Quoted in Paik 2017, 14). This

[87] Villazor (2008) explains that prior to the NSM, "about twenty-three cities and four states had enacted a sanctuary law in the 1980s" (142). She continues, "that the shift during the NSM was in a broadening of these policies and an overall increase in the number of cities and states making provision for immigrant sanctuary in their policies" (ibid.).

[88] Sanctuary policies provide access for immigrants without documentation to healthcare, emergency services, and other benefits of "local citizenship". With regard to the latter, Villazor (2010) challenges the notion that citizenship is restricted to the context of the nation-state and argues that local citizenship that might be granted from outside of and nested within the nation-state, and is an appropriate scale of membership to consider in the context of sanctuary.

statement illustrates the challenges for the NSM that "struggled to re-imagine sanctuary to meet the demands of a new political environment," (Yukich 2013a, 107). During this time, sanctuary was undefined and flexible and resulted in the emergence of different policies across the country that ranged from shades of non-cooperation practices to "don't ask, don't tell" approaches (Houston 2019; Paik 2017; and Villazor 2008).[89]

In sum, during this initial period of the NSM, notions of sanctuary, including its practices and spatialities - were expanded to include broader definitions of who was in need of sanctuary protection and the multiple forces that made them vulnerable. This period also shaped discourses on how anti-terrorist and anti-immigration policy was particularly focused on Muslim communities, as new forms of Islamophobia emerged post-9/11. Sanctuary was geographically expanded by individual institutions into the public sphere in ways that gave space for shifting narratives and experiences of those impacted by U.S. immigration policy. The places and institutions that became engaged in sanctuary practices reflect the increased and multiple scales and spaces of jurisdiction and add complexities of meaning attached to sanctuary in these new spatialities.

Expanded Spatialities of the New Sanctuary Movement (since 2016)

Since Donald Trump's election in 2016, there has been a resurgence of sanctuary in response to increasing racist and anti-immigrant violence in policy, political rhetoric, and open hostility to undocumented immigrants emulated and promoted by the Trump administration.[90] From the Muslim Ban to the border wall, the "far-reaching immigration

[89] Villazar (2008) dedicates an article to the question of *what sanctuary is* and points out that that as political rhetoric during the 2007 Republican presidential debate, conjuring sanctuary as an accusation was synonymous with being soft on immigration (134; and Tapper & Claiborne 2007).

[90] Both Paik (2017) and Roy (2019) discuss an important observation that while there is a particular outwardly and normalized racist rhetoric expounded by the Trump regime, "it is not a uniquely American

agenda in the United States" has led to a "crackdown on sanctuary jurisdictions," (Roy 2019, 3).[91] Scholarship produced in the last five years reflects this surge, exploring the expanding terrains of sanctuary into new spheres in both public and private, and tangible and virtual spaces.

One example of a new jurisdiction of sanctuary includes colleges and universities (Carney et al. 2017; Ricketts 2019; and Young 2019), adding to the growing number of cities, counties, and states passing sanctuary resolutions (Barnecut 2019; Carney et al. 2017; McDaniel 2017; and O'Brien et al. 2019). This expansion also encompasses workplaces, which I will discuss in more detail below (Brown & Scott 2018; and Villazar & Gulasekaram 2018). Beyond the emergence of new *sites* of sanctuary, new spatialities of organizing in support or against sanctuary have emerged, particularly in online and digital platforms (Roy 2019; Villazar & Gulasekaram 2018; and Young 2019). For instance, "social media sanctuary" has emerged as a virtual organizing tool where warnings about impeding ICE raids appear; however, these spaces have been critiqued for their unreliability and unnecessarily "stoking fears among immigrant communities," (Villazar & Gulasekaram 2018, 559). As a whole, however, the shifting geographies of sanctuary make clear that it is a socio-spatial process inherently connected to solidarity with broader social, economic and immigrant justice movements (Buff 2019; Houston 2019; Paik et al. 2019; Vannini et al. 2018; and Yukich 2013a).

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phenomenon," and in fact "around the world, ring-wing populisms and chauvinist nationalisms are on the rise," (Roy 2019, 2). Nor is racism, its expressions and the current racial system new or something that happened overnight but rather have long existed as a legacy of past racial thinking and policies that continue to shape geographies of race and difference over time and place (Bonds & Inwood 2016).

[91] Trump issued an executive order in January 2017 ordering "all jurisdictions to comply with federal immigration laws," or risk losing federal funds (Roy 2019, 4).

In this regard, Buff (2019) notes "the broad, emancipatory conceptualization of sanctuary that has evolved since 2016 represents a resurgence of internationalist possibilities repressed by discourses and practices purporting to advance not just immigrant rights but "human rights," (11). In this way, she argues, "sanctuary becomes not only a specific place in a church or other building but a set of practices by which people come into relations of accompaniment and solidarity," (ibid.). This emphasizes that sanctuary framing is about safety and safe space as much as it is about freedom (also Houston 2019; and Paik et al. 2019). Accordingly, sanctuary practices link immigrant organizing to other emancipatory movements striving for racial, gender and economic justice through accessing avenues for self-determination. Scholars that examine these linkages take seriously that immigration status is but one aspect of identity, to also include LGBTQ+ immigrant communities and the role of gender among leadership in immigrant movements (Carney et al. 2017; Chávez 2017; Ellison 2019; Milkman & Terriquez 2012; Nadadur 2019; and Terriquez 2015).

Contemporary understandings of sanctuary have evolved from the New Sanctuary Movement and have expanded into new spatialities, leading to both new relational identities in need of sanctuary protections and additional arenas of scalar conflict. I argue that worker cooperatives are consciously aware and sensitive to the multiple and intersecting worker identities. I find consider how organizing in support of intersectional identities and immigrant justice is complicated in the process of worker cooperative incorporation.

Critiques of the sanctuary framework

Sanctuary is not without critics (Bagelman 2013; Houston 2019; Paik 2017; Roy 2019; Squire & Bagelman 2012; and Yukich 2013b). Yukich (2013b) argues that the sanctuary framework reinforces a dichotomy of deserving immigrants and undeserving delineating which immigrants are worthy of protection and those situated as others, not conforming to the dominant (white) cultural and religious norms and values. Squire and Bagelman (2012) further this point by exploring the binary that is reinforced by "mobile enclaves of sanctuary" they understand as the complex (co)constituted relationships that arise between "citizens and non-citizens...the protected and protector...between the worthy and the unworthy," (158).

Paik (2017) builds on this point and calls attention to constructions of the good or deserving immigrant in liberal frameworks, noting that this category is defined in "terms of neoliberal subjectivity," for example "law-abiding, hard-working, gainfully employed," (ibid.). This "paradox of liberal sanctuary" operates from a progressive framework "convey[ing] that immigrants should be included in our communities," while also "implicitly conceding that their membership is provisional," (16). Thus to be a deserving immigrant, the requirement is a "submission to the capitalist extraction of their labour and to the state's (racialised) criminal justice apparatuses," (ibid.).[92] And yet enforcement of immigration law is interwoven with criminal law and deeply implicated in enforcement authority (Houston 2019; Paik 2017; and Roy 2019).[93] Roy (2019) explains, "in the United States, sanctuary jurisdictions rely on, and even consolidate, local police power," (7). In this

[92] Paik (2017) states, "criminalised people are unable to comply with the "rule of law" because US law targets their being and their bodies, not their behavior," (ibid.). She continues by asking rhetorically, "what does it mean to provide sanctuary under an emerging autocratic regime that targets not only immigrants, but everyone except the 1 percent who are white, heterosexual, cis-gendered men?" (ibid., 5).

[93] Houston (2019) borrows the term "crimmigration" from Juliet Stumpf to refer to the fusion between criminal law and immigration law (567).

way, "local refusal to enforce federal immigration law rests on local authority, notably the authority of the police" (ibid.). Sanctuary policies exist in relation to state power and while meaning to protect "illegalized subjects" to do so end up reinforcing systems and infrastructure needed for detention and deportation (ibid., 2). This revelation emphasizes that the current sanctuary framework "is a paradigm of liberal inclusion, extending rather than limited state violence" (Roy 2019, 7).

These concerns draw attention to the limits of a sanctuary framework in the current dominant political economy. I respond to these critiques through an analysis of the potential for worker cooperatives as sanctuary workplaces. While the workplace has emerged as an expanded space for sanctuary policy and practice within a liberal framework (Brown & Scott 2018; and Villazar & Gulasekaram 2018), sanctuary worker cooperatives as non-capitalist transformative access to economic opportunity and spaces for social justice remain underdeveloped in the current literature. The efforts by worker-owners to create their own spaces of sanctuary reflect an approach that differs from the current political and legal sanctuary structures and demonstrate the inability of the liberal platform to address their needs. In the next section I theorize the emergence of sanctuary worker cooperatives and center the experiences of worker cooperatives in New York City as they embark on this path.

Sanctuary at work: theorizing sanctuary worker cooperatives

As is well documented, the United States has long depended upon and exploited immigrant labor and it is therefore perhaps not surprising that sanctuary practices and organizing have expanded into the realm of the workplace. Here I build from and reiterate the key elements of my arguments in chapter 4; namely that the worksite can be potentially

transformative, from one associated with trauma, exploitation, policing and harassment to another where power and protection for worker-owners is inscribed in the process.[94] Increasingly the workplace has been central site for expanding notions of sanctuary where the "focus [is] more on preventing hostile work environments in which employees get targeted, at times wrongly...because of their perceived undocumented status," (Villazor & Gulasekaram 2018, 558). For example, Rusch (2016) as with Villazor and Gulasekaram (2018) explore the emergence of the 'sanctuary restaurant movement' that organizes support for and among immigrant populations already strongly associated with labor in these spaces. Promoting the motto, "A place at the table for everyone," the sanctuary restaurant movement connects sanctuary and activism with broader social justice concerns specifically for "restaurant workers, employers and consumers impacted by hostile policies and actions, including immigrants, Muslims, LGBTQI people and others," (Rusch 2016).

The significant number and impact of foreign-born workers in the economy has compelled businesses to participate in the Sanctuary Movement.[95] For example, Brown and Scott (2018) explore the emergence of 'sanctuary corporations' and document how some businesses are claiming a religious defense[96] to avoid possible legal consequences for noncompliance with immigration law. And furthermore, in response to Trump's plans to

[94] The "Sanctuary Workplace" campaign through the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives describes these spaces as "hate-free zones that intend to be safe spaces for our communities," (2020a). This definition and my case for worker cooperatives as sanctuary workplaces will be discussed more completely in analysis of my case studies and in the conclusion of this chapter.
[95] The Department of Labor reported that in 2018, there were 28.2 million foreign-born persons in the U.S., comprising 17.4% of the total labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Foreign-born persons are defined as persons who were not U.S. citizens at birth but reside in the U.S. (ibid.).
[96] Brown and Scott (2018) examine Hobby Lobby v. Burwell and the use of the Religious Restoration Act (RFRA) in that case.

roll back the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program,[97] some technology corporations have rallied to support their employees who may be affected. Referring to the 39 'dreamers'[98] who work at Microsoft, the company's president stated, "if the government seeks to deport any one of them, we will provide and pay for their legal counsel," and asserted that Microsoft would also seek to intervene in those cases (Finley 2017; Shaban 2017; and Villazor & Gulasekaram 2018).

Union labor is another arena where dialog on sanctuary, immigrants, and workers and work intertwine (Bacon 2017; and Zimet 2018).[99] In 2018, New York City Teamsters representing over 120,000 workers declared themselves a "sanctuary union" with the intention to protect its undocumented members through utilizing "...its political leverage to resist efforts by ICE and other federal officials to deport any immigrant workers," (Zimet 2018, para. 1). In the words of one Union official, "supporting workers and supporting immigrants are completely intertwined...if you allow immigrants to be exploited, (you just) lower the wages and working conditions of everybody," (ibid.).[100] I argue this exhibition of

[97] In September 2017 Trump announced his intention to end the program that would impact approximately 800,000 young immigrants who were protected from deportation and allowed to work in the U.S. under DACA (Shear & Davis 2017).

[98] The young people who were brought to the United States as minors and protected under DACA are broadly known as "dreamers".

[99] Although not the focus of this project, I note that there has been increasing interest among both scholars and cooperative practitioners as to a collaborative union-cooperative model. Ji and Robinson (2013) present a good overview of areas of overlap and the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives as an active Union Co-op Council that meet regularly to discuss union cooperative strategies, current efforts and trends (2020b).

[100] This quote reminds me of the interlinks between labor and immigrant movements emphasized by Neidi Dominguez, a grassroots organizer and immigrant rights activist she articulates in a 2017 interview. When asked about the role the labor movement should plan in supporting immigrants, Dominguez replied, "I grew up in a household where my mother was a domestic worker and organizer. My entry point into this movement was the intersection of workers' rights and immigration. So for me, labor being engaged and fully at the forefront of the immigrant rights fight in this country is not just out of solidarity. Those are our members. We have millions of immigrant workers in our unions. And immigrant workers are what make this country run everyday, regardless of whether they have a union contract or not" (Interview by Ballesteros 2017, para. 15).

worker solidarity reinforces a relationship between labor justice and worker organizing that resonates with the transformative potential and goals of worker cooperatives.[101]

By and large the expansion of sanctuary framing into the sphere of labor and work has been limited to theorizing traditional labor within traditional capitalist work structures and largely from a liberal platform of existing legal and political structure. However, increasingly the transformative potential of worker cooperatives as access to economic agency and justice particularly for low-wage immigrant workers has gained traction (CFL 2019, 2020; Martin 2011; Reza 2017; USFWC 2020a; and Wilson 2010. For instance, Wilson (2010) and Reza (2017) consider whether worker cooperatives might be a response to precarious employment for immigrant and refugee workers in Canada.[102] Wilson (2010) finds that worker cooperatives "were successful in creating alternative spaces of employment that provided control and flexibility over their work and lives and a sense of community and empowerment," (59). And in the United States, Martin (2011) considers worker cooperatives as part of a countermovement to mediate between workers and employers/labor markets in Chicago. These studies call attention to a critical point in my argument, that there is a need for economic access and justice among immigrant workers who are particularly vulnerable in a racialized and gendered capitalist economy (Martin 2011; and Wilson 2010).

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[101] A worker-owner shared her experience of working to build community uplift along with individual achievement. In addition to access to work itself, Rosa speaks passionately of "be[ing] in a space where you can empower yourself - but not just you, you can empower others at the same time" (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). Luna, a co-owner of Rosa's, further emphasized the benefit of building one another up as part of greater whole, when she states, "the fact [is] when we are all working is when we all have succeeded" (ibid.).

[102] I understand "precarious employment" to encompass work in the informal economy and is associated with job insecurity, limited benefits, low wages and high risk (Martin 2011). Wilson (2010) describes, "for racialized workers, precarious employment is an extension of their precarious citizenship status and situation in society at large," (61). She continues to understand that precarious workers thus "are constructed as "other" against the white male citizen," (ibid.).

Moreover, increasingly immigrant owned worker cooperatives are recognized as an area of significant growth for the sector and movement nationally (Ji & Robinson 2012; Johnson 2010; Maschger 2016; Nuñez 2015; Raymond 2019; Runyeon 2016; and Voinea 2014). In New York City, Initiative leaders are acutely aware of this point. I found that Initiative organizers who work with immigrant populations were wary of city reporting mechanisms and are protective of the vulnerable populations they serve, in some cases even creating fake contacts to shield documentation status of their constituents (Field notes Mar. 15, 2016). Further, City administrators claim to support the rights of immigrant workers-owners regardless of their documentation status demonstrated through the creation of "Know Your Rights Blurbs" that confirm immigration status is not being tracked by the city (Interview Feb. 18, 2016).

As I have argued previously, worker cooperatives are more than jobs and through democratic participation, offer worker-owners an opportunity to become more conscious of systemic oppression and build the knowledges and tools to better navigate the challenges they face. I understand worker cooperatives as offering opportunities for transformation at multiple scales to support personal betterment, workplaces that offer an avenue for self-determination, and access to broader social justice aims. And yet, sanctuary worker cooperatives are not immune to the far-reaching limitations imposed by racialized and gendered capitalism. I turn now to the experiences of worker-owners who are organizing within the confines and challenges of the current liberal sanctuary framework.

Sanctuary practices at Mirror Beauty Cooperative and Caracol Interpreters Cooperative

> "*We understand the discrimination policies of our current administration and there is some fear around this political climate but we are not focusing on the fear, we want to thrive. Because, if we really want to tell society that immigrant trans communities are like anyone else, and should have the same rights as anyone else, there is no other way to do it than to launch this worker cooperative fully,*"
>
> - Worker-owner at Mirror Beauty Cooperative (Interview Feb. 20, 2020)

> "*With the immigration climate we have now, you may be at risk no matter what your documentation...and it would be a lot better if we could just incorporate as a cooperative, but then we have those racist laws…*"
>
> - Worker-owner at Caracol Interpreters Cooperative (Interview Jan. 22, 2020)

These two quotes highlight the perceived benefits and experienced challenges for sanctuary worker cooperatives operating in an economic system characterized by deep racialized and gendered inequalities. Whereas I have made the case for the transformative and emancipatory possibilities of worker cooperatives I also trouble this potential for justice and transformation with the mixed outcomes from formalized cooperative development in a neoliberal context, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Despite their transformative potential across multiple scales, worker cooperatives are complicated by relations of difference and are vulnerable to neoliberal capitalist interests and co-optation. These issues re-emerge in my discussion of Mirror Beauty Cooperative and Caracol Interpreters Cooperative.

In the case of both of these worker cooperatives, worker-owners organized their structure around a decision to provide economic access and justice for all of their workers and in doing so actively aspire to be a sanctuary workplace. Confined within existing legal bounds, these cooperatives incorporated as limited liability companies (LLCs) because

social security numbers are not required for employee owners in this structure and thus are "friendly to undocumented people," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020).[103] LLCs are business structures where owners' (defined as members) personal financial liability is limited to their investment in the business. For cooperative businesses operating in states without a cooperative corporation option, the LLC is encouraged for incorporation.

Further, LLCs are often recommended to low-income and immigrant worker cooperative start-ups for a number of reasons including: because the fees and process to form are more affordable and easier than for traditional corporations; they allow for flexible governance and management structures; they provide limited liability protections for workers; they extend flexible membership such as to outside investors; and lastly – and again perhaps most significantly - LLC members are not limited to U.S. citizens or permanent residents (Ji & Robinson 2012). My research indicates that the LLC structure is being promoted by WCBDI agencies to immigrant owned worker cooperatives seeking to organize and incorporate around principles of sanctuary.

The U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives defines 'sanctuary workplaces' as "hate-free zones" that "promote dignity, collective advocacy, and solidarity," through the intentional creation of "safe space...where worker-owners and employees are empowered knowing their workplace rights as workers and owners," (USFWC 2020a, para. 1). This framing recognizes that there are communities facing harassment and persecution in the workplace including but not limited to all people of color, immigrants, people with

[103] New York State has several incorporation options for businesses including an option for cooperative corporations. In a conference session entitled, "Low-Income & Immigrant Worker Cooperative Formation" presented in 2013 at a Cooperative Education and Training Institute, New York State's cooperative corporations law was presented "as one means of improving the economic welfare of its people, particularly those who are producers, marketers or consumers of food products, to encourage their effective organization in cooperative associations for the rendering of mutual help and service," (CCL shared by De Bardieri 2013).

disabilities, and people who identify as LGBTQIGNC+, who are all deserving of protection, safety and economic access through work. This definition emulates the expanded and intersectional spatialities of contemporary sanctuary explored in the literature as a response to critiques of a liberal sanctuary framework (e.g. Buff 2019; Ellison 2019; Paik et al. 2019; and Roy 2019). I draw from this construct and propose that while many businesses could be a sanctuary workplace, a sanctuary worker cooperative is intentionally organized as resistance to oppression with provisions of sanctuary in mind through incorporating as an LLC.

Mirror Beauty Cooperative[104] is a sanctuary worker cooperative. Launched by three transgender womyn[105] in 2019, Mirror worker-owners "are very happy to be one of the first worker cooperatives in the whole country led by transgender womyn," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020).[106] The idea for a trans-owned worker cooperative first came from a failed organizing effort back in 2015 through one of the community based nonprofit organizations originally funded during the first year of the WCBDI.[107] Since 2015, the trans-womyn who are now Mirror have graduated with cosmetology licenses, successfully completed the intensive cooperative training and support program through the Green Worker Cooperative Academy, and are actively fundraising for their own salon.

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[104] For brevity I will refer to Mirror Beauty Cooperative interchangeably as 'Mirror'.

[105] As in chapter 4, I use the spelling of 'womyn" intentionally to remove "man" or "men" from the written word.

[106] The intersecting identities for worker-owners at Mirror are at the surface of their organizing. For example, in addition to their identities as trans-womyn, worker-owners at Mirror introduced themselves to me with their preferred pronouns, followed by "I am Mexican" or "I am Puerto-Rican" and finally with "I am an owner at Mirror Beauty Cooperative" (Interview and Field notes Feb. 20. 2020). In this manner and throughout the conversations, worker-owners demonstrated recognition of their own intersecting and multiple identity formations, and further how these social constructions impacted their material experiences in society and the economy.

[107] Also referred to interchangeably as 'the Initiative'.

The worker-owners at Mirror consider their organizing work explicitly with sanctuary in mind to respond to the needs of both the immigrants without documentation and the trans communities. Luna, one of the worker-owners, explains that when organizing the worker cooperative as an LLC, "we thought of those intersections and how our worker cooperative will be a sanctuary space for [trans immigrants who might not have documentation] to be able to be a worker-owner in a safe and affirming environment," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). Luz, another worker-owner elaborates, "adding to what my comrade is saying, we also developed this worker cooperative so it could be a safe sanctuary space for the broader community," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). In the context of the larger trends of expanded spatialities of sanctuary beyond physical space and into intentional spaces of organizing, the case of Mirror demonstrates intersecting identity that includes protecting immigration status but also allows people to be themselves in a space that doesn't require accounting for other forms of intersectional difference (Field notes Feb. 20, 2020).

The worker-owners at Mirror are no strangers to unsafe environments and discrimination at work (Lavelle 2019; Riedel 2019; and U.S. Transgender Survey 2015). For example, Luz shares "the trans community has always had issues in obtaining or maintaining a stable job [and] New York City is a very expensive city to survive [in], as a transgender womyn that has a high level of discrimination in the workplace, we have less opportunity to obtain financial power to be able to live in this economy" (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, Latinx trans individuals faced significantly higher rates of discrimination than their white counterparts. The organizing of a worker cooperative is an example of how Ellison (2019) describes the motivations for

creating safe space "often...through a politics of sanctuary as creative interventions crafted by everyday people to sustain movement culture or to respond to the cycles of violence of racial capitalism," (107). Worker-owners at Mirror are an illustrative example.

Mirror worker-owners recognize the connections between their organizing work, social justice and resistance to broader systems of oppression, however the connections to broader transformative justice was not what first brought them together. Luna explains, "we do go against the traditional capitalist economy model [but] in the beginning we really didn't know that we were fighting against the traditional economic status quo...because we wanted to stop people from experiencing discrimination at the workplace, getting people a job and we didn't really see ourselves as revolutionaries and organizing in other and different ways," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). Mirror worker-owners assert that one of the greatest benefits to organizing as a worker cooperative with LLC status is "providing and assuring a safe space for communities for undocumented LGBT immigrant communities [while] making sure there is a social popular education platform to educate around other alternatives that combat employment discrimination and the lack of upward mobility," for this population (Interview Feb. 20, 2020).

Today, Mirror remains committed to raising funds for a physical location despite fundraising obstacles they've faced so far. When I last spoke with the team, they were preparing to present a proposal to a WCBDI funding organization for a start-up loan. But for now, through the LLC structure, Mirror worker-owners are able to access individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITINs).[108] ITINs allow worker-owners who are

[108] According to the American Immigration Council, ITINs, which are issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) are a mechanism "to ensure that people - including unauthorized immigrants - pay taxes even if they do not have a social security number and regardless of their immigration status" (2018).

undocumented to access benefits of local citizenship such as "open bank accounts, apply for loans and establish credit, and tax histories" (Reidel 2019).[109]

The experiences of Caracol Interpreters Cooperative[110] provides additional insight to the challenges of creating intentional sanctuary workplaces through worker cooperative organizing. The efforts of Caracol worker-owners to cultivate a sanctuary worker cooperative from the existing infrastructure reveals an unforeseen impact that incorporating as an LLC has had for them. Caracol provides translation and interpretation services mostly to non-governmental nonprofit organizations, or broadly "folks who are doing something that we find akin to language and social justice," (Interview Jan. 22, 2020).

Early in my fieldwork when I first connected with worker-owners at Caracol the group was still in the early stages of setting up their incorporation. This planning process was marked by long conversations about group identity and intention regarding building a structure that was flexible and inclusive (Interview and Field notes Jan. 24, 2017). The process, though a priority and essential part of planning and visioning, was described as "slow going" and requiring many non-billable hours (ibid.). Based on their core values and commitment to immigrant justice and solidarity I was not surprised to learn Caracol sought to be a sanctuary worker cooperative (Field notes Jan. 24, 2017). When I conducted follow up interviews with Caracol worker-owners again in 2020 after they incorporated in 2017, I expected worker-owners would be relieved to have that milestone behind them.

[109] In addition, some ITIN holders may access the Child Tax Credit that in 2017 was reported as worth up to $2,000 per qualifying child and impact an estimated over 4 million U.S. citizen children (American Immigration Council 2018).

[110] Caracol Interpreters Cooperatives is discussed further in chapter 4 and again for the purposes of brevity I will refer to the group interchangeably as 'Caracol'.

Instead, as Alondra, a worker-owner, shares "incorporating as an LLC has been eye opening...really instigating philosophical conversations" (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). She continues to describe the process as "anything but socially just - we basically have to choose between two systems - one that legitimizes a racist legal structure that puts people, whether they are here with documents or not into a vulnerable position, or we do the LLC - which then puts the financial and economic burden on the individuals who are still vulnerable" (ibid.). This sentiment reinforces how organizing within a liberal sanctuary framework can legitimize oppressive systems and create additional vulnerabilities for the individuals meant to be protected (Paik 2017; and Roy 2019). The worker-owners describe how through the LLC the workers are taxed as individuals and that Caracol as a cooperative doesn't actually pay taxes. In this way, even though Caracol has a bank account, money that accrues there, including money paid out to workers as earnings, are attached to individuals and are considered 'taxable' when workers file their individual income tax returns. I can hear the desperation in her voice when Alondra indignantly explains, "it's very very unfair...the business cannot even legally cover how much you pay on that money that stays in the business...and the taxes are super high, comparable to being an independent contractor" (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). In comparison to incorporating as a cooperative corporation, "you can have a bank account and the cooperative pays the taxes on the money that stays in the account" (ibid.).

The juxtaposing experiences of Mirror and Caracol reveal a paradox in understanding sanctuary worker cooperatives in practice - sanctuary worker cooperatives are all unduly burdened by the financial constraints of being taxed for funds that under a cooperative incorporation structure would not fall onto the individuals. WCBDI organizers

are promoting LLC incorporation structures to immigrant-owned worker cooperatives based on the recognition that "immigrant entrepreneurs - many of whom are undocumented - are driving the current surge in New York City worker cooperatives," (Runyeon 2016). And while the LLC structure does provide economic access for worker-owners who might not otherwise participate in the formal economy the challenges articulated by worker-owners highlight the problems in this incorporation model.

For Caracol worker-owners, the cooperative finances have become an unreasonable and burdensome choice between protecting individual workers from discriminatory immigration laws or from burdensome financial liability. Alondra explains, "we continue to think that we made the right choice to incorporate as an LLC because we never want anybody to be at risk under a racist government but then you have these humongous tax responsibilities...where at the end of the day its very uncomfortable to have to be prioritizing things like the law and the finances when the work that you really want to be doing is something else," (Interview Jan. 22, 2020).

Lupita, another Caracol worker-owner, reflects that these challenges are not exclusive to Caracol. "We are trying to think about and research what different folks are doing...if they have found work-arounds," however admits that these findings are "very complicated," involving multiple cooperative corporations and membership tiers (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). To date there has been little critique or support in the cooperative community to actively address these challenges. Caracol worker-owners tell me warily that "apparently" the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNOWC) and the USFWC are both "looking into advocacy work to try to change some of these laws," but they are clearly not very optimistic in the "current political climate,"

(Interview Jan. 22, 2020).[111] And in the meantime, Lupita says "it's still very hard for us trying to figure this all out while none of us are able to cover health insurance for each other," (ibid.). She sees these overlapping challenges as all justice related and "navigating how to resolve these issues and to learn what these alternatives can be is happening as we're going through it," calling attention to an additional emotional and time burden on Caracol human resources committed to justice work.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have reviewed the evolution of the Sanctuary Movement, its policies and practices since the 1980s to date. Contemporary notions of sanctuary have expanded into new spatialities that include additional geographies (such as campus, cities, states and workplaces), scales of jurisdiction and enforcement (police departments, unions) and a broader framing of who is deserving of protection. However, embedded in a liberal sanctuary framework, the social process of defining inclusive bodies results in an exclusion of other bodies. Those deemed undeserving are additionally vulnerable in the political economy that depends upon and exacerbates racial and gender inequalities.

I argue that worker cooperatives as transformative, justice oriented alternative and non-capitalist workplaces are inherently well suited to creating spaces for building economic and social justice for vulnerable workers. In the WCBDI, my research shows that organizers and worker-owners alike are in tune with the opportunities and potential for immigrant-owned worker cooperatives. The outward expressions of support for individuals who are considered vulnerable in the economy by Initiative leaders results in

[111] The USFWC has created a toolkit of resources and workshops framed as a sanctuary workplace campaign through worker cooperatives (2020).

promoting incorporation as an LLC for organizing worker cooperatives. Thus a worker cooperative as an LLC can create inclusive access for all their workers, to further expand sanctuary to include economic access as well as safe space and also to organize in solidarity with immigrant populations.

However, the conditions of urban neoliberalism defined by sharp racial and gender inequalities cast a long shadow. My findings at Caracol in particular, reveal the challenges of organizing as a sanctuary work cooperative and the hidden burden for worker-owners that results through the promoted sanctuary LLC structure. In the words of one worker-owner, "at the end of the day, the brunt of it falls on the individuals and all of this is tainted by the fact that we are immigrants - immigrants, womyn, people who are LGBT...and everything that that means," (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). Despite best intentions of sanctuary worker cooperatives and their organizers, the dominant political economy steered by racialized and gendered capitalism persists.

Despite this critique, I want to end on a note imagining other possibilities. Paik (2017) and Roy (2019) propose an abolitionist future for sanctuary.[112] An abolitionist framework for sanctuary would take an intersectional approach seeking to understand the overlapping oppressions of different groups (Paik et al. 2019, 4). Further such strategies would lead to the creation of autonomous spaces and practices such as "the ideal of the free

[112] W.E.B. DuBois (1935) first used the term 'abolition democracy' in his Black Reconstruction essay on the period following the formal end of slavery in the United States. According to Angela Davis (2005) who applies this framework from which Paik (2017) and Roy (2019) draw upon, DuBois argued, "in order to achieve the comprehensive abolition of slavery...new institutions should have been created to incorporate black people into the social order" (91). Davis continues to explain, "...that slavery could not be truly abolished until people were provided with the economic means for their subsistence" (ibid.). Building on this and restating in simpler terms, Roy (2019) "interprets abolition democracy as the necessary task of redistribution" (2). Redistribution would provide opportunity and access to dignified and safe modes of ownership as well as the means of production and therefore self-determination.

city" (Roy 2019, 13).[113] Moreover an abolitionist framework recognizes everyday enactments of sanctuary as projects of self-determination, produced by and for affected communities (Paik et al. 2019, 8). In creating their own spaces to protect and provide safety, these communities demonstrate "self-made sanctuary practices and communities," (ibid., 9). I argue and my research has shown that worker cooperatives are autonomous workplaces that utilize processes to engage democratic participation, access to economic and social justice and these efforts towards self-determination can be framed as abolitionist projects. Worker-owners at Caracol and Mirror seek to create their own institutions as sanctuary spaces on their own terms because traditional models have failed them.

Caracol worker-owners continue to look for creative solutions and in anticipation of the next U.S. presidential elections in November, one can hope that the political climate will shift in favor of abating fear and criminalization for immigrant communities in this country. While the critiques of sanctuary remain salient (Ellison 2019; Paik et al. 2019; Paik 2017; and Roy 2019), as Paik (2017) Roy (2019) both admit, despite its limitations, "sanctuary continues to be a symbol of resistance and defiance," (Roy 2019, 11). In a similar vein, it is my opinion that organizing sanctuary worker cooperatives are also a best hope for vulnerable workers-owners and allies who seek self-determination through economic justice.

[113] I consider the reference to a "free city" by Roy (2019) to be akin to Francesca Polletta's (1999) discussion of "free spaces" she describes as "small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization" (1).

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Chapter 6.
Conclusions: findings, the WCBDI today and remaining questions

Summary of findings

In this dissertation, I utilize the results of over two years of fieldwork in New York City on the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative,[114] to examine worker cooperative development as an urban economic strategy in New York City. I draw especially from twenty-nine interviews with worker-owners, city officials and nonprofit organizers and developers to better understand the different facets of the Initiative and the ways in which its been experienced by differently positioned participants. I combine these interviews with: participant observation of Initiative workshops, meetings, actions and events, as well as interactions between worker-owners and WCBDI actors; and analysis of materials and documents produced by and for these cooperative actors and their endeavors. I situate my analysis within an interdisciplinary set of literatures, connecting urban political economy, feminist and anti-racist economic geography, and diverse economies into dialog with literature on autonomous and labor geographies, place-making, the Sanctuary Movement in the United States and literature on cooperatives specifically. Taken together, I applied this research to argue that worker cooperatives occupy a contradictory status within a neoliberal framework.

On one hand, worker cooperatives are the perfect neoliberal urban economic development strategy and worker-owners the ideal neoliberal subjects. With their emphasis on self-reliance, self-governance and self-determination, worker cooperatives and their owners fulfill a need in a neoliberal context where individuals are responsible for

[114] Referred to interchangeably as WCBDI or "Initiative".

their own economic well-being and success. Worker cooperative development in this neoliberal process also represents the ultimate step towards devolution from the state. The implementation of the Initiative depends upon nonprofit and community-based organizations – many with no cooperative experience – and these organizations channel and administer funding for worker cooperatives. The program thus aims to empower worker-owners, yet they are reliant on nonprofits. The competitive budgeting process results in the development of the nonprofit sector rather than directly benefiting worker-owners and the development of worker cooperatives.

And yet, at the same time, worker cooperatives as urban economic development represent new spatialities of labor that are potentially transformative and empowering for worker-owners. Though worker cooperatives are highly compatible with neoliberal sensibilities, my research finds that they do empower and support resistance to gendered and racial capitalism. My analysis centers the voices of worker-owners and draws from their own experiences and interpretations to complicate the common histories of cooperative development. These stories challenge the rosy accounts of success from the City and from developers; yet they also reveal feelings of agency and transformation. When organized and developed through non-extractive and socially just processes, worker cooperatives continue to offer affirming and transformative opportunity and access for vulnerable communities.

In chapter 2, I situate the impact of cooperatives in the United States and call attention to the dominant narratives in cooperative movement history that eclipse the cooperative origins and organizing among women, immigrants and communities of color, reinforcing misconceptions about cooperatives and whiteness. I consider the establishment

of the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, Ohio as a critical moment galvanizing interest in cooperatives as a form of urban economic development. This analysis informs my subsequent chapters, which focus on worker cooperatives organized by women and immigrant communities.

In chapter 3, I document the conditions that gave rise to the WCBDI and examine its organization and implementation in New York City. This is where I consider the WCBDI as particularly attractive in a neoliberal framework that devolves responsibility for social wellbeing to individual workers. Yet, as I argue throughout this dissertation, cooperatives also have the potential to challenge neoliberal structures by creating intentional autonomous geographies that foster economic agency, power and control. Worker cooperatives disrupt hegemonic capitalist relations and create pathways for economic justice and self-determination for populations that are marginalized in economic and social relations. I conclude that, in practice, the reliance on nonprofit experts who may or may not have cooperative experience results in tensions between the agendas of the nonprofit agency and the autonomy of the worker cooperatives that are challenging to navigate and reconcile.

Chapter 4 interrogates the appeal of worker cooperatives from the perspective of worker-owners and, by doing so, centers their voices. I argue that worker cooperatives create potentially transformative labor geographies at the scale of the worker-owner, the workplace, and within larger movements for social and economic justice. Finally, in chapter 5, I explore the shifting spatialities of sanctuary and its expansion into the workplace. I focus in particular on two worker cooperatives in New York City seeking to employ sanctuary practices in their organization. Ultimately, I argue that the experiences of

worker-owners demonstrate that despite the desire to create sanctuary worker cooperatives, their efforts are often insufficient because of the legal and economic contexts in which they are embedded. These systems require individuals to be taxed based on their personal liability in the cooperative, creating additional and undue financial burdens for individual workers already more vulnerable through their intersecting identities and citizenship status.

The Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative today

As I write this dissertation in March 2020, New York City continues to fund the WCBDI. During its sixth year, a coalition of nonprofit organizations and services providers received over $3.6 Million dollars[115] "to support the creation of jobs in worker cooperatives by coordinating education and training resources and by providing technical, legal, and financial assistance," (NYC Council Finance Division 2019). The New York City Council describes the WCBDI as an Initiative that "offers workforce development and concrete skills for unemployed, underemployed and discouraged workers in high-needs neighborhoods," (ibid.). Beyond this mention, these "discouraged workers" and the "high-needs neighborhoods" where they are located receive no further attention; nor do the stark conditions of inequality that define our system of gendered and racial capitalism and that make workers and communities vulnerable in the first place. However, the individual organizations that make up the eleven funded Initiative agencies in this sixth year illustrate the people and places being targeted for worker cooperative development. The language used by Initiative organizations to describe the populations they serve are consistent and

[115] Funding total for FY 2020 is $3,609,000 up from $3,499,000 the year prior (NYC Council Finance Division 2018 and 2019).

aligned: 'traditionally underserved groups' such as 'low-income people of color', 'immigrants' and communities in need of 'tools and opportunities necessary for self-sufficiency and economic mobility', 'economic stability' and 'economic democracy'. The Initiative specifically aims to reach vulnerable groups, but as my research indicates, the outcomes of such efforts continue to have the potential to reinforce traumatic workplace dynamics and marginalization.

Further, the list of nonprofit organizations being funded today is not the same as it was five years ago, which is notable. Of the eleven organizations that received funding during fiscal year 2020, only six were part of the original 2015 group, with only one organization offering direct incubation support to worker cooperatives. The remaining 10 organizations provide consultation, basic education, limited funding and technical assistance. In addition, the Initiative now includes three national consultation organizations (none of which are headquartered in New York), three nonprofits who have no previous experience with worker cooperatives, and the City University of New York (CUNY), which hosts general education programming. There is a case to be made for attracting new organizations to apply for WCBDI funding. The Initiative can continue to be promoted as far reaching and can be more flexible by distributing funds to specific community-based organizations city-wide. However, as this dissertation illustrates - particularly through research with the Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative (in chapter 4) - there is a risk for potential worker-owners who are fostered by agencies not experienced with worker cooperatives. As this chapter revealed, while local nonprofit and community-based organizations have access to particular targeted communities, they do not share the same goals as worker-owners who value cooperatives as avenues for economic agency,

autonomy and self-determination. Meanwhile, organizations that do have experience and a record of success for grassroots worker cooperative mobilization are not guaranteed funding through the WCBDI to continue their work.

It follows that as annual funding for the WCBDI continues to increase and grow so will the measured and reported successes for worker cooperative development in New York City. More funding will lead to more outreach, education and training and funds dedicated to support incubation for new worker cooperatives. However, my research indicates that the trajectory of this growth will continue to support staffing for nonprofit and community-based organizations with little trickling down in gainful full-time cooperative jobs for worker-owners. My conversations with cooperative organizers and worker-owners alike illustrate the expansion of nonprofit staff dedicated to implementation and reporting for the WCBDI. Worker-owners, by contrast, continue to struggle, in some cases managing more than one part time job to get by while still spending hours of unpaid time organizing and providing sound bites for developers (Interview Dec. 1, 2016; and field notes Dec. 2, 2016, Jan. 24, 2017).

Optimistic reporting on the Initiative's successes tends to highlight sound bites from selected worker cooperatives and misses two critical points: First, it is not clear whether or not widespread public awareness for cooperatives is happening beyond the Initiative. Second, exclusively focusing on successes overlooks the unique and uneven experiences of worker-owners, devaluing their understandings and limiting their ability to offer feedback for future improvements. Among the worker cooperatives I focus on in this dissertation, the results are mixed and could have implications for other worker cooperatives in the city and for municipal planning on other cities interested in establishing similar initiatives.

Lo Limpiaremos Cooperativa (discussed in chapter 3) has now been independent of the Center for Family Life (CFL) for three years and has experienced significant growth. They now boost over 100 worker-owners and have been featured as a model for immigrant worker cooperative organizing in the cleaning services sector/ businesses. Although the separation from the incubation program was challenging, both the cooperative and the nonprofit have moved forward and remained strong. Maharlika Cleaning Cooperative (discussed in chapter 4) is also no longer incubated by CFL, yet it is still struggling to be a viable full-time employment option for all its worker-owners. In the face of fierce competition for clients, Maharlika has pooled together with other smaller worker cooperative businesses to form a larger apex cooperative to leverage resources and provide self-promotion in the hopes of getting more business.

Caracol Interpreters Cooperative (discussed in chapters 4 and 5) are not taking on any new clients at this time and consider themselves at capacity. The worker-owners at Caracol recognize that there continues to be a critical need for language justice work and reflected on how it remained undervalued in the economy.[116] Mirror Beauty Cooperative (discussed in chapter 5) although dedicated and organized, is still in need of funding in order to implement their business plan.[117] Both Caracol and Mirror continue to dialog about how to support a vulnerable immigrant workforce without sacrificing their cooperative principles and within the current available capitalist infrastructure. My research with worker-owners in New York City demonstrates that regardless of whether

[116] A worker-owner at Caracol described from her point of view, the "reality that being a cooperative, especially language work...means our work is not valued," (Interview Jan. 22, 2020). This point was accentuated by the fact that "...at one point we had $8,000 in the bank and over $70,000 in unpaid invoices," which then "puts a lot of stress on our human resources," (ibid.)

[117] At the point of my last contact with Mirror, worker-owners were preparing to request a loan from The Working World, an Initiative organization who provides business loans to worker cooperatives (Interview Feb. 20, 2020).

evolving from a "high touch" incubation strategy, such as those utilized by CFL, or from an academy approach, such as used to develop Caracol and Mirror, there continues to be a lack of available funding to support a scaled up approach to worker cooperative development. Worker cooperatives would greatly benefit from access to significant funding for zero or low-interest loans for startup capital and expansion, access to health insurance for work-owners and pooled marketing and promotions that help small businesses compete in a big city. These points are ironic considering that there are millions of dollars dedicated to the task of worker cooperative development in New York City and yet none of it is directed towards the spending worker-owners can actually use.

Momentum continues

Early research reveals that the City-authored reports are driving some of the momentum to develop frameworks for cooperative development in other cities. Stacy Sutton (2019) conducted an extensive textual analysis of the "enabling environments" present in what she calls "cooperative cities". Her work introduces three cooperative city typologies: developer, endorser and cultivator. In Sutton's (ibid.) view, New York City's WCBDI approach is emblematic of a cultivator cooperative city that promotes both bottom-up and top-down approaches where "grassroots and advocacy organizations lead," the initiative and "concurrently, municipal champions mandate inclusion of worker cooperatives through legislative processes, administrative reforms, and capital investments" (1088). However, my analysis indicates that the case of New York City does not reflect a meaningful or concerted effort from the city to cultivate their businesses through city contracts or through what Sutton (2019) calls the "leveraging of patient

capital" (1098).[118] Finally, my research with worker-owners challenged the "grassroots" nature of the Initiative organizations and their role as development leaders. One worker-owner explained, "I've seen different organizations who are trying to work with worker cooperatives…I see in my experience that most [organizations] give you very generic information and the organizations applying for grants really know nothing about [this kind of] development," (Interview Feb. 20, 2020). By and large worker-owners described uneven education and training programming through the WCBDI where very few could be considered truly nurturing agency and empowerment for worker-owners. With this in mind, my research echoes Sutton's (2019) assertion that "though fostering enabling environments is promising, it is critically important that the cooperative movement not become overly dependent on political champions or deviate from the cooperative principles centering member or worker-owners and maintaining autonomy, including in the ways they measure scale and analyze success," (1098).

However, as Sutton (2019) also observes, these local efforts have had a larger national impact. For example, she notes that "the city-level contributions...led Congresswoman Nydia Valázquez and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York [to] sponsor the Main Street Employee Ownership Act of 2018," (ibid. 1082). I discuss this Act in chapter

[118] New York City does have legislation that implies an intention for expanding public awareness, legitimacy and access to city contracts by policy makers. The City's Local Law 22 of 2015 requires the monitoring of "the participation of worker cooperatives businesses that receive city contracts, with an eye for expanding the number of worker cooperatives that do business with the city," (Rosenthal 2015). Further, the legislation specifically called for reporting to be published with "a description of difficulties or obstacles," and "recommended measures" to remedy stated difficulties for worker cooperatives to obtain city contracts. And yet, many of the reports that are accessible are spreadsheets listing the number of city contracts awarded to worker cooperatives as compared to total city contracts awarded (NYC MOCS 2019). Recently in March of this year the WCBDI published an addendum to the annual reports from the last three fiscal years and highlighting three challenges for worker cooperatives identified by "organizations that work daily to help worker cooperatives start and grow in NYC," (2020, 3). The states challenges are focused on difficulty accessing information from the city due to overuse of heavily technical language, difficulty competing for city contracts and overall the inaccessibility to funding (ibid., 4-5).

1, and emphasize again its importance in the context of neoliberal regimes of governance and current cooperative city trends in urban economic development. Although the Act does not directly allocate any funding to worker cooperative development, it does "broaden avenues for securing seed financing, and for conducting community-outreach programs through local Small Business Association offices," (Chen 2019). As the Executive Director of the Democracy at Work Institute notes, "it's a start...it's the very first time that anyone ever said worker co-ops matter in federal legislation," (Quoted in Chen 2019, para. 3). This underscores the significance and widespread impact I lay out in chapter 2 of worker cooperatives in a broad social and economic context.

In addition, albeit subtly, worker ownership has entered the debates for the next U.S. President. Bernie Sanders introduced an economic plan that would create "Democratic Employee Ownership Funds" controlled by a body of trustees elected by workers (Krieg & Noble 2019). Further, in an interview with CNN, Sanders explained "having employees directly vested in the company's success and playing a role in the decision-making process will lead to different outcomes. Outcomes that will benefit working people as opposed to stockholders driven by profit margins," (Quoted in Krieg & Noble 2019, para. 9). Further, according to his campaign website (2020), Bernie Sanders asserts:

> "*the time has come to substantially expand employee-ownership in America. Study after study has shown that employee ownership increases employment, increases productivity, increases sales, and increases wages in the United States. This is in large part because employee-owned businesses boost employee morale, dedication, creativity and productivity, because workers share in profits and have more control over their own work lives*," ("Give Workers an Ownership Stake in Corporate America").

This continued momentum is promising and indicates a changing public image for worker ownership. I argue that this point further affirms the critical importance of my

research embedded in this moment for worker cooperatives and other models of worker ownership. As I argued again in chapter 2, the increased legitimacy of worker cooperative development, as a broader economic development strategy demands continued investigation of how these processes are implemented. However, as I learned from worker-owners directly, "you can't come in and say, 'we're doing this' and then ignore… history," (Interview Dec. 1, 2016). My research identifies the challenges in urban cooperative development that does not adequately take into account how personal and community histories of organizing and structural oppressions continue to provide hurdles for development success.

Remaining questions

More research on worker cooperatives is needed and my study raises several specific questions. For example, New York City continues to offer additional insights and with its longest standing city-sponsored initiative, the WCBDI remains influential for other cities. Further research is needed to more deeply examine the decision making and approval processes by the City Council for Initiative funding. Understanding the reasoning behind how and what funding is directed to whom would reveal a great deal about the discourses connecting cooperative development with poverty alleviation for vulnerable communities. More research on how critical decisions are made and by whom would shed light on this and potentially reveal new insights about the gendered and racial dynamics of city contracting with private businesses.

My research uncovers an emerging pattern with regard to the types of businesses being developed through the WCBDI that correspond with broader racialized, gendered

and classed constructions of labor in ways that reinforce assumptions about what work should be done by whom. For example, businesses that are perceived as "low hanging fruit" in terms of their ease of establishment are largely in the domestic service industry and are targeted to mostly women of color who have little formal education. I observed that worker-owners who had more flexibility during the day – namely women – were more likely to be called upon to join leadership committees or represent worker interests at the city. With little exception, women are performing the socially reproductive labor of cooperative organizing. Further research exploring the nuances of worker-owner engagement in the WCBDI and the types of businesses being developed would be useful for documenting the ways in which race and gender are reproduced through economic development.

Cooperative development is taking shape beyond New York City and questions remain regarding how results differ across place. Research comparing similarities and outcomes – particularly as they relate to gender and race - would provide critical information for ensuring that worker cooperative development truly supports vulnerable workers and communities. In addition, while my focus on worker cooperative development has emphasized *urban* strategies, the Democracy at Work Institute (2020) reports, "rural economic developers are increasingly interested in innovative, community-driven economic development that uses worker ownership to retain businesses or to start new ones" ("Rural Development"). Once again, often obscured historical geographies of cooperative organizing in the United States among low-income, immigrant, women and Indigenous communities can inform rural cooperative development.

Finally, my research emphasizes the critical value of research centering the subjects of worker cooperative development: the worker-owners themselves. While this dissertation creates a space for some worker-owner voices, many more have yet to be heard. Further research foregrounding the experiences and knowledges of worker-owners would enrich understanding on worker cooperatives and cooperative development alike. As I state in chapter 1, this dissertation is ultimately about uplifting worker-owner experiences in urban processes of cooperative development and how such processes impact individual and cooperative outcomes. In closing, I want to reiterate my feelings of the coalescence between worker cooperative organizing and the potential to achieve broad social and economic justice for workers who are marginalized and disenfranchised in these areas. When we work together, we can accomplish anything.

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Appendix A
Sample Interview Questions

For Initiative organizers and developers

1. How do you define co-operative development? When/ how did you get involved in co-operative development? What is your connection/ relationship to the WCBDI?
2. How did the Initiative come about?
3. Explain the relationship and differences between what happens "on the ground" and what happens with the city. What are some examples of the division of work/ tasks/ roles between organizers and city counterparts?
4. What has happened through the Initiative (to date)? And how is success being measured, monitored and reported? And to/ for whom?
5. How does the program work? How and to whom are programs being marketed?
6. In your opinion what has been the most impactful result of the Initiative to date?
7. Do you make any connection between worker co-ops and social and/or economic and/or racial justice work?
8. What are you learning through your involvement that is applicable for co-operative development in other places? Where do you see the Initiative going in the future?

For City contacts

1. Explain the relationship between what happens "on the ground" and the city. What are some examples of the division of work/ tasks/ roles between organizers and city counterparts?
2. What has been surprising (or notable) about working with co-op organizers (as opposed to nonprofit organizers or other business folks)?
3. Who are the communities being served by the WCBDI?
4. How is success being measured, monitored and reported? And to/ for whom?
5. How do you see the Initiative fitting in with other community and economic development strategies for the city and in general? How is the same or different?
6. What are you learning through this process that is applicable for this model of development in other cities?
7. Do cooperatives represent a new and different more socially just model of urban economic development?

For Worker Owners

1. Tell me about your role and the work your co-op does. How did your co-op get started?
2. Do you know about the WCBDI? How are you involved with nonprofit and community based organizations/ WCBDI?
3. Did you know what a co-op was before getting involved? Has your understanding or definition of co-op/ worker co-op changed since your involvement?
4. What makes the co-op different than another business structure?
5. Worker co-ops are being talked about in particular ways that link them to possibilities for improved social and economic position. Do you identify with these points? In other words, do you think being involved as a worker owner brings increased value to your life? How so and in what ways?

Appendix B
List of Interviews

Interview 1, former Initiative Cooperative Developer #1 [△], October 8, 2015
Interview 2, Initiative Cooperative Developer #2, October 14, 2015
Interview 3, Staff for Initiative at NYC Small Business Services #1, February 18, 2016
Interview 4, Cooperative Organizer #1 [*], February 19, 2016
Interview 5, Policy Analyst #1 [↟], March 1, 2016
Interview 6, Cooperative Organizer #2, March 13, 2016
Interview 7, Initiative Cooperative Developer #2, March 15, 2016
Interview 8, Initiative Service Provider #1, March 16, 2016
Interview 9, Cooperative Organizer #3 [↟], March 29, 2016
Interview 10, Initiative Service Provider #2, May 2, 2016
Interview 11, former Cooperative Organizer #4 [△], May 2, 2016
Interview 12, Worker-owner #1, May 2, 2016
Interview 13, Initiative Cooperative Developer #3[△], May 3, 2016
Interview 14, Cooperative Organizer #5 [*], May 3, 2016
Interview 15, Cooperative Organizer #6 [*], June 28, 2016
Interview 16, Cooperative Organizer #7 [*], November 16, 2016
Interview 17, Worker-owner #2 [○], December 1, 2016
Interview 18, Worker-owner #3, December 1, 2016
Interview 19, Worker-owner #4, December 2, 2016
Interview 20, former Policy Analyst #2 [↟△], December 13, 2016
Interview 21, Worker-owner #5, December 14, 2016
Interview 22, Worker-owner #6 [○], January 24, 2017
Interview 23, Cooperative Organizer #8, January 27, 2017
Interview 24, Worker-owner #7 [○], February 8, 2017
Interview 25, Worker-owner #6 [○], January 22, 2020
Interview 26, Worker-owner #8 [○], January 22, 2020
Interview 27, Worker-owner #9, February 20, 2020
Interview 28, Worker-owner #10, February 20, 2020
Interview 29, Worker-owner #11, February 20, 2020

↟ Representatives from convening organization for Initiative
* Not representing and organization funded through the Initiative
△ Part of initial planning team for Initiative
○ Contact at worker cooperative that also provides technical assistance to other co-ops

Rebecca E. Nole Wolfe

Curriculum Vitae
Department of Geography
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (expected May 2020)

Dissertation: "*Situating Worker Cooperatives: the urban, racial and gendered geographies of cooperative development*"
Committee: Drs. Anne Bonds (Chair), Kristin Sziarto, Hyejin Yoon, Anna Mansson McGinty, and Marc Levine

M.A. Urban Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2012)

Master's Thesis: "*All Pull Together: Evaluating Collaboration in Milwaukee's Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative"*
Committee: Drs. Judith Kenny (Chair), Joel Rast and Douglas Ihrke

Certificate in Nonprofit Business Management, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2012)

B.A. Social Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan (2002)

FELLOWSHIPS

2013-2020. Mary Jo Read Fellowship, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles:

Bonds, Anne & Kenny, Judith & **Wolfe, Rebecca E.** (2015). Neighborhood Revitalization without the Local. *Urban Geography*, 36(7): 1064-1082.

Other:

2010-11. Editorial Board, Urban Studies E-polis Electronic Journal. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

PRESENTATIONS, CONFERENCES & COLLOQUIA

2019. "*Situating Worker Co-operatives: the urban and racial geographies of cooperative development*." Preliminary research presented at the Geography Spring Colloquium at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2015. "*Situating Worker Co-operatives: the urban and racial geographies of cooperative development."* Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

2015. "*Situating Co-ops: the urban and racial geographies of cooperative development*." Research proposal presented at the Geography Spring Colloquium at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2012. *"All Pull Together: Evaluating Collaboration in Milwaukee's Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative."* Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, New York, New York.

2012. "*All Pull Together: Evaluating Collaboration in Milwaukee's Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative."* Paper presented at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Urban Studies Student Forum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2010. *"A Sense of Community: Conversations with Intentional Community Members."* Paper presented at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Urban Studies Student Forum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Conference Organization:

2015. Planning Committee for the ICU Gender and Geography Commission Pre-AAG Conference, "*Gendered Rights to the City: Intersections of Identity & Power*," University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2011. Planning Committee for the Urban Studies Student Forum, "*Retrenchment, Revitalization, or the Right to the City?*" University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2010. Planning Committee for the Urban Studies Student Forum, "*The Changing City*." University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2009. Planning Committee for the Urban Studies Student Forum, "*City Life: Emerging Perspectives*." University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
August 2009—present (11 years)

Instructor of Record, *Department of Geography*

2019-20. The Geography of Race in the United States, Geography 114
2017-18. The Geography of Race in the United States, Geography 114
2016-17. The Geography of Race in the United States, Geography 114

Teaching Assistant, *Department of Geography*

2018-19. Natural Hazards, Geography 306
2018. Conservation of Natural Resources, Geography 350
2016. Introduction to Environmental Geography, Geography 125
2014-15. The Geography of Race in the United States, Geography 114

Research Experience, *Department of Urban Studies*

2011-13. Research Assistant, Center for Economic Development & the Center for Canadian-American Policy Studies
- Conducted both qualitative and quantitative data collection and mapping,
- Research and analysis on subjects including "*The Urban Condition in Chicago 1900-1949*," and "*Downtown Development in Milwaukee*," and "*R&D Spending at Research Universities and Patent Trends*," with Drs. Marc Levine and Joel Rast,
- Contributed to Social-Economic Impact Analysis produced by Center for Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, with Kate Madison,
- Helping organize and support public hearings on SEWRPC Plan, with Kate Madison.

2011. Research Assistant, "*Historical-Geographical Study of Milwaukee's Rivers*," with Dr. Ryan Holifield (Geography).
2010. Research Assistant, "*Contesting Hunger and Food Insecurity through Community Gardening*," with Dr. Rina Ghose (Geography).
2009-10. Research Assistant, "*African American Youth in United States Central Cities, 1940-1980*," with Dr. Joe Austin (History).
2009-10. Research Assistant, "*Milwaukee Housing Archive Research*," with Dr. Judith Kenny (Geography).
2009. Research Assistant, "*Racial Integration in Milwaukee Neighborhoods*," with Dr. Marcus Britton (Sociology).

Other Professional Experience, *Departments of Geography*

2016-20. Project Assistant, Department of Geography
- Attending monthly Faculty Meetings,
- Keeping official minutes for Faculty Meetings.

2014-15. Project Assistant, IGU Gender and Geography Commission
- Participated on Planning Committee for Pre-AAG Conference, "*Gendered Rights to the City: Intersections of Identity & Power,"*
- Responsible for communications with conference session organizers, presenters and participants,
- Organized registration and conference logistics in advance and onsite.

2014-15. Project Assistant, GIS Certificate Program
- Provided organizing support for GIS presence at University week-long events,
- Communicated between GIS Club, Geography Faculty, GIS Support Staff and University.

2013-14. GIS Assistant, American Geographical Society Library
- Provided customer services to AGSL visitors and guests,
- Ongoing archival maintenance of extensive, sensitive mapping materials and priceless map collection,
- Responded to and fulfilled library requests for maps, prints, collection materials, GIS data and other information.

AFFILIATIONS

2014-18. Association of American Geographers.

2020. Gamma Theta Upsilon International Geographical Honor Society.