

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Diversity of Solidarity Economies: A View from Danish Minority Gangs

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Abstract

The term “solidarity economy” is most commonly deployed to describe altruistic and socially beneficial ways of doing business, often in opposition to ones that are less so. Drawing on a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork among Danish minority gangs, this article seeks to open the discussion on solidarity economies beyond these traditional understandings by adding the perspective of gangs. It explores the more exclusive and violent aspects of solidarity economies, drawing on the analytical lenses of reciprocity and pooling. These dimensions afford the tracing of the conditions of solidarity within that group, rather than the mere verification of its absence or presence. I conclude that (A) solidarity economies are empirically multiple, operating on different and (a)synchronous planes as well as expressing themselves in different types; (B) solidarity is analytically beneficial for reading for economic difference; and lastly that (C) in this context, solidarity economies are inhabited as sites of struggle between two opposite, but specular forms of cultural fundamentalism.

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Keywords

Negative reciprocity, Ethnicity, Centrifugal pooling, Centripetal pooling, Cultural assimilation.

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in the concept of “solidarity economy” among scholars, activists, and policy makers. Broadly speaking, solidarity economies prioritize social justice over profit and growth. They focus on improving the well-being of individuals and communities through mutual support and cooperation (Razeto 1984; Satgar 2014; Miller 2010; Laville 2023). What defines this type of economy is its aim to empower those who are left behind in the race for profit (Loh and Shear 2022). Despite a scholarly consensus that solidarity economies are articulated very differently around the world, the practices described with this term most commonly fall into a distinct “genre” of business: third-sector non-profit organizations, social enterprises, cooperatives, mutual aid associations, gift economies, to name but a few. Other kinds of solidarity economies that are built for, and by, some of the most marginalized people in the world, such as criminal enterprises and informal transnational street businesses (Ravnbøl, Korsby, and Simonsen 2023), are rarely included in debates on solidarity economies.

In line with this journal's aim to expand the “definition and concept of business” beyond its conventional use (Vangkilde, Breslin, and Lex 2022: 165) and related field sites (Fisher 2017), I aim to open the discussion on solidarity economies beyond sectorial understandings by adding the perspective of gangs, focusing specifically on Danish minority gangs. In doing so, I align myself with other scholars who are interested in practices of solidarity that operate outside formal, corporate, and/or capitalistic forms of business (Gibson-Graham 1996; Bittencourt Meira 2014; Safri 2015; Hossein 2019). I emphasize that the perspective of gangs, which is overlooked yet globally significant, represents marginalized attempts to establish solidarity economies that call for empirical justice. If the aim of solidarity economies and their scholarship is indeed to benefit the most marginalized, then it is crucial to understand the existing im/possibilities and diverse approaches to organizing solidarity.

Solidarity economies represent a bubbling field of social experiments whose historical and geographic trajectories have fascinating anthropological implications. Yet, the anthropological perspective is often missing from these debates, as solidarity economies, put in these terms, have mostly been studied by economic sociologists (Razeto 1984; Laville 2023), economic geographers (Miller 2010; Safri et al. 2017), and political scientists (Satgar 2014; Hossein 2019). As a political scientist who is deeply inspired by economic anthropology, I seek to encourage this disciplinary exchange by sharing my own points of

inspiration. One is exemplified by my empirical entry point, the other by my analytical choices.

Danish minority gangs might seem like a counter-intuitive empirical example of a solidarity economy. In fact, when literature on gangs addresses their economic dimensions, the focus often lies on their legal/illegal facets (Rodgers 2022), exploring, for instance, the monetary profits and business models that surround the trade of illegal “flagship” goods such as weapons, stolen items, and drugs (for instance, Padilla 1992; Bourgois 1995; Levitt and Venkatesh 2000). Such a criminogenic approach to gang economies blurs the quotidian activities that make up a great part of their organizational life (Sausdal and Vigh 2019), which cannot be reduced to their illegal activities. Indeed, I choose instead to dig into the solidarity mechanisms that are classically conceived as being central to the everyday lives of gangs (for instance, Thrasher 1927: 57; Jansyn 1966), but that are rarely unpacked in their economic dimensions.

To do this, I draw on economic anthropology and diverse economies scholarship, arguing that the lenses of reciprocity and pooling afford the tracing of the dynamics of group boundary making. This allows me to trace the *conditions* of solidarity within a specific group rather than the mere verification of its absence or presence (that is, how is solidarity articulated in an economic setting vs. is this a solidarity economy?). This move further calibrates solidarity as an analytical tool that may be of use in any economic setting. I suggest that placing solidarity on an ordinal scale (from high: voluntary self-sacrifice, to low: coerced exploitation) and situating it within a broader set of economic actions (that is, beyond strictly monetary acts, here in relations of property and reciprocity), can improve our knowledge of the different practiced dimensions of solidarity. Ultimately, this might help scholars and practitioners to better differentiate between the ways that solidarity is talked of and perceived (ideals) from how it actually unfolds (praxis).

Lastly, focusing on criminalized (thus, by definition, socially unaccepted) forms of solidarity also provides much insight on the criminalizing society (Malinowski 1926; Tonkonoff, 2014). My aim is thereby also to reflect on the forms of solidarity that are *opposed* and to some extent *reproduced*. Unlike many other ganglands, this one is situated in one of the strongest and most interventionist welfare states in the world: Denmark (Johansen and Jensen 2017). Almost all gang members are marginalized citizens before actively becoming involved in a gang. As such, they formally have access to the solidarity machine of the welfare state and are even actively tracked by social workers who want to help them find a job, get an education, and stay out of trouble. Despite this, this youth group pursues another type of economic solidarity. I argue that this rejection of the Danish welfare model mirrors their own rejection, as the welfare system’s response to the problem of “integration” in Scandinavia is founded on notions of sameness and thereby seeks to underplay

difference via cultural assimilation (Gullestad 2002, 2006; Lien 2008; Rytter 2010, 2019; Jöhncke 2011; Hassan 2013). This is the last, more political, reason why I choose to frame this study with the term solidarity economy. Despite the fact that these minority gangs do not speak of their activities in terms of economic justice, they do resist certain cultures of *solidarity*.¹ This implies that different forms of solidarity economies may therefore coexist and even oppose each other. I conclude that, in this context, solidarity is inhabited as a site of struggle between two opposite, but specular forms of cultural fundamentalism that revolve around forceful processes of assimilation.

I begin by introducing my methodology and then discussing my own understanding of solidarity economies. Here, I introduce the two central analytical lenses I use to trace instances of solidarity. I then introduce the protagonists of this study, before delving into the analysis proper.

Fieldwork in Danish Gang Milieus

This study is founded on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from September 2018 to January 2020 conducted in high-security prisons and a variety of sites in the Øresund region. The data include a mix of interviews, field observations, focus group discussions, and action research in a youth center (see Jerne 2022 for details), as well as scientific research, popular culture, policies, legal proceedings, and newspapers from greater Copenhagen and Malmø. However, this particular analysis is centered on the Danish material.

Given my position as a woman, it was challenging to access the hypermasculine and exclusive gang milieus, which is why I included diverse sites of fieldwork and why I also chose to work in high security prisons. Here, I carried out 34 recorded interviews with 13 active and former members of gangs and 6 informal interviews with prison staff. On two occasions, the detainees and I also engaged in collective mapping exercises focused on property and other economic relations within gangs.

Despite not being a criterion I set, all my interlocutors in prison self-identified as ethnic minorities. This turned out to be a fortunate self-selection, for I am also an ethnic minority in Denmark, and this was a productive common ground for many of our interactions. I soon learned that repeatedly marking my position as a minority enabled more relaxed

¹ By this, I do not mean to say that these gangs consciously rationalize this opposition, but rather that the result of their organisation is in conflict with certain articulations of solidarity that are commonly practiced in the Danish context. Underlying the analysis is a syntactical approach to opposition, which does not equate conflict to intentionality, but instead focuses on illustrating the way in which different components relate in a conflictual setting (Jerne 2018: 292-293).

discussions and triggered comparative questions from their part (what do gangs do in your country? How do they compare to mafias? What do “people like us” do in your country?). Perhaps this was also because unlike most of the people they interacted with in prison, I did not have the formal task of rehabilitating them, but was genuinely curious about their lives in Denmark, including exchanging experiences of being minorities.

Furthermore, my hyperfeminine positioning implied that I was not perceived as a threat, but treated according to typically gendered roles, such as a big sister, a caregiver, or a potential partner. Navigating these dominant norms was intuitive to me as I have been socialized into them, which implied that I was well-equipped to interact with their hypermasculine posture.²

Some of my interlocutors finished their sentences during my project, so some of these interviews also took place out of prison, after we had established some level of trust. The types of prisons I worked in were organized around types of crime rather than the sites of crime, so many of these gang members come from different Danish cities. As a consequence, my analysis seeks to trace similarities between gangs rather than specificities of particular regions.

However, I also spent time carrying out observations in several residential areas which my interlocutors identified as part of the gangs’ turf in the city of Copenhagen. On an average week, I spent three evenings observing daily life on the street and in residential areas, participating in local activities such as sports, shopping in kiosks, markets, and cafés. I also carried out informal interviews and conversations with 29 relatives, friends, employers, sports trainers, religious mentors, and neighbors of the latter, in different private and public settings. Lastly, I gained insights into institutional approaches to gangs via formal interviews with 14 social workers and policemen in both Denmark and Malmø, and I spent a year observing a total of 14 court hearings that involved gang-related cases.

Reading for Solidarity: Tracing the Economic Dimensions of Reciprocity and Pooling

The gangs I studied often proclaim absolute loyalty and vocally celebrate *unconditionally* having one another’s backs, both in time (“all the brothers they’re for life”) and context (“I got your back no matter what”). However, a closer look at their organizational practices reveals that the opposite is often true. My interest in solidarity indeed emerged from the

² For example, I could identify instances of mansplaining, of harmful information being filtered for my protection, or when accomplishments/situations were embellished for the purpose of flirtation. Managing these styles of communication was central to this fieldwork.

discrepancies between what my interlocutors do and what they say they do. In fact, “having one another’s backs” or performing group solidarity is highly dependent on both the type of activity and the destination of these activities. Furthermore, the proclaimed life-long bond is more a hope than an actuality. Although hope is also an important force in forming group bonds, I will here focus on how solidarity is practiced rather than imagined. In doing so, I illustrate the overall importance of distinguishing between practices and ideas/feelings of solidarity.

But how to trace solidarity in more-than-discursive, pragmatic terms? The insights from studies in diverse and solidarity economies (Bittencourt Meira 2014; Safri 2015) provide a good starting point. “The solidarity economy,” in Kali Akuno’s words, “is about people who have to struggle to survive and fight for their rights in racial capitalist environments” (Akuno in Hossein and Pearson 2023: 7). Most commonly, it refers to an “approach developed for understanding the peculiarities of new waves of associations and cooperatives” (Laville 2010), especially for those welfare driven business models that may be broadly included in the third-sector (but not only). This makes perfect historical sense, as the pursuit of solidarity economies became the basis for a global social movement that is driven by a network of these kinds of enterprises, formalized as RIPESS in 1997 (*Red Intercontinental de Promoción de la Economía Social Solidaria*). Consequently, rather than being an analytical lens used to *explore* economic solidarity in all its diverse expressions, the term solidarity economy often prefigures a particular way of practicing economic solidarity that aligns with a set of values, including democracy, equality, and sustainability. Nonetheless, this tradition offers many analytical tools to read for solidarity in a more diverse economic landscape (Dombroski and Gibson 2020), including gangs.

Although gangs are far from these traditional understandings of solidarity economies, particularly because they also use violence to enforce their ideals of solidarity, they do nonetheless represent informal, alternative ways of providing some sense of social and financial security for many marginalized youths all over the world (Lien 2002; Hagedorn 2007; Deuchar 2009; Qvotrup Jensen and Libak Pedersen 2012; Rodgers and Hazen 2014). Though the actual benefits of being part of a gang are often illusory or short-lived, it is important to take seriously the self-reported advantages of gang economies, as this allows us to better trace the organizational logics of the group. Learning from the problematic nuances of these kinds of expressions of solidarity is also a necessary step to prevent their re-occurrence.

Differently from modern conceptions of solidarity based on notions of equality (Durkheim 1964), freedom (Bakunin 1950), or individual morality and sympathy (Smith 2007), the pragmatics of solidarity in these gang economies are more about being *dependent* and *linked* to others. In a sense, it is about affirming oneself as a subject by

becoming *indispensable* for the other. At the same time, this actually implies becoming *dependent on* others rather than freeing oneself from them.³ This resonates with what Jakob Kapeller and Fabio Wolkenstein (2013) call post-Enlightenment solidarity, which constrains liberty in the name of *loyalty* and universalizes group-specific particularities (for instance, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation) as the ground of belonging. In the case of minority gangs, this belonging and solidarity is enforced through acts of sacrifice (Kuldova 2019: 171-200). By this, I mean that this type of loyalty implies an alienation, an offering, a renunciation of something for the individuals in the group or the group as a whole, such as time, labor, safety, or material resources. I conceptualize these sacrifices as being acts of solidarity when they are voluntary and of exploitation when they are coerced.

In reading for solidarity, I plot these types of actions onto two economic dimensions that lie at the heart of the solidarity economy approach: reciprocity and redistribution (Laville 2010). These dimensions, which are also classic themes in business anthropology, are useful because they are not “sector” sensitive and, thus, apt for reconstructing solidarity in any kind of economic organization.

Reciprocity allows us to investigate mutuality, a key dimension in classical studies of solidarity⁴ (Proudhon 1923; Sahlins 2017). Reciprocity essentially describes the dynamics of give-and-take in relationships and the subsequent rights and obligations that each party carries in these exchanges. In the field of solidarity economies, the term reciprocity is often interpreted in its most democratic, egalitarian, and balanced expressions, thereby functioning as a normative category that describes desirable forms of economic mutuality. Yet, reciprocity in itself is a neutral term. Indeed, as Alvin Gouldner (1960) reminds us, reciprocity affords the analytical force of tracing the varying *degrees* and *types* of mutuality and symmetry in relations. The implications of these variations are what ultimately constitutes the diversity of sociality, making reciprocity a fundamental tool in approaching the diversity of solidarity economies.

Redistribution, on the other hand, is a term most often used to describe centralized and institutional reallocation of wealth, goods, and services, which might fall under the classical sociological categories of *gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1957), organic solidarity (Durkheim 1964), or macro solidarity. I use the synonymous term ‘pooling’ to avoid this

³ This resonates with Ferdinand Tönnies’ (1957) classic description of the elementary force of sociality, where being bound to others is “the exact opposite of freedom, the former implying a moral obligation, a moral imperative, or a prohibition” (1957: 8).

⁴ See Peter Simonič (2019) for an anthropological review on the connections between reciprocity and solidarity.

connotation. While pooling, like reciprocity, is a morally neutral term that simply describes a process of redistribution, solidarity is an ideologically and affectively charged action. In the case of pooling, it is expressed when one deprives oneself of the exclusive right to something to the benefit of someone else (for instance, paying taxes, car-sharing, volunteer work, hosting a guest).

In sum, I seek to trace solidarity among a set of economic actions and to situate it along a scale. This is why I also draw attention to examples of oppression and exploitation, which are, in my view, equally important expressions of reciprocity and pooling. As such, they belong to the same relational spectrum as solidarity; the same one that is used to establish and police the borders of the group. My questions regarding pooling mechanisms are thereby: towards *whom* one makes the sacrifice, *what* is one offering, and *how*. Overall, I suggest that this way of reading for solidarity allows us to trace some of the economic mechanisms that lie at its basis, and thereby to highlight the conditions of such solidarity.

Danish Minority Gangs

The first organized crime groups emerged in Denmark in the 1980s, in the form of outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs), or *rockers* in emic terms, and is thus something quite distinct from gangs. For over two decades, they controlled the regional drug market and even facilitated its transnational trade. At the turn of the millennium, these groups' monopoly on the criminal market and street stage began to see some competition. Smaller, neighborhood-based groups emerged in disadvantaged urban areas that were inhabited by a high number of ethnic minorities. This led to the beginning of a series of rivalries between *rockers* and youth groups. One event that contributed to the establishment of a semi-permanent state of war was the publication of the Jackal Manifesto (*Sjakal Manifestet*) by Jørgen Jønke Nielsen (2008), founder of the first Hell's Angels chapter in Denmark. The manifesto denounced and challenged the presence of these groups on the basis of ethno-racial and cultural arguments, claiming that minority gangs were villains that came to plunder Denmark, which they regarded as the "whore country" (*luderland*).

It was also around this time that these minority youth groups started to self-identify as gangs and increasingly assume gang-like behaviors, often conforming to film and music references from the United States (Kalkan 2018: 297-298). Uncoincidentally, this shift overlaps with the popular and official labelling of these groups as gangs, which confirms that formal and informal discourses have performative effects on how criminal groups perceive themselves and behave (Matsueda 1992).⁵

⁵ In fact, I have found that many of these groups do not speak of themselves as gangs, but more as brotherhoods or groups of friends. They are, however, often

More than twenty years later, the ethnic argument continues to linger in group self-identification and popular parlance: OMCs represent majority Danes, gangs the minority. However, this distinction is no longer reflected in the actual composition of these groups. During my work in prison, I observed that both OMCs and gangs are increasingly made up of majority and minority Danes. In addition, they are hybrid in their style and increasingly becoming similar in their organizational forms (Jerne 2022).

Despite the increasing similarities, *rockers* and minority gangs are still different social phenomena. The protagonists of this study are the latter, which in popular Danish parlance are often referred to as *ethnic gangs*. This is, in itself, a paradoxical and telling name. It is a particular kind of synecdoche, a rhetorical device that usually uses the part to identify the whole, here using the whole to identify the part.⁶ We are indeed in Denmark, a country with a comparatively homogeneous ethnic distribution and, more generally, a place where “people cast social relations in quotidian life in terms of sameness” (Bruun, Jakobsen, and Krøijer 2011: 6). Denmark fits into the broader Scandinavian ideal of community that tends to resolve social friction by emphasizing similarity and underplaying difference (Gullestad 1992: 197). Ethnicity, a classificatory term that marks difference, is source of tension.

It makes sense, then, that, in this context, minority gangs construct the boundaries of their group in a manner that is oppositional to what they frame as “the Danish way” (the *majority* culture). Minority gangs represent a form of ethnic resistance to cultural assimilation, an act of rebellion against marginalization, a form of counter-citizenship (Horsdal 2001; Jagd 2007; Soei 2018). In fact, despite being imported from the United States and other gangster subcultures that travel through multiple media, minority gangs identify *rocker* culture as “Danish” or, more broadly, as the majority culture that they oppose.

However, it is imperative to note that this practice of classifying the criminal group based on the level of “Danishness” or “non-Danishness” is not confined to gangs, but is a popular juxtaposition performed by several journalists, politicians, police officers, academics, crime novelists, and readers, too. In fact, this opposition can be seen as part of the broader nationalistic and cultural fundamentalist response to an increase in diversity and the problem of “integration” within

interpellated as such (by the media, politicians, and the public). As I am interested in its political implications, I found it productive to critically use and address the term myself, both in writing and in interactions with my interlocutors.

⁶ It corresponds to addressing a sports team as a *gender* team rather than a (wo)men’s team or using the term *age* club to describe a youth club.

Scandinavian contexts (Gullestad 2002, 2006; Lien 2008; Rytter 2010, 2019; Jöhncke 2011; Hassan 2013).

I want to stress that while the distinction between the *rockers* and gangs has been hijacked and misused on racial or even religious battlefronts, the opposition among the gangs I studied is primarily organizational and cultural. Further, although I am analyzing one side of the story here, the juxtaposition is one that majority Danes play an equally strong part in constructing as minority Danes. As a white ethnic minority woman,⁷ I had the privilege of learning from both sides of the story. My intervention does not defend, justify, or condemn a particular group. Rather, it seeks to illustrate some of the dynamics of a violent *form* of cultural opposition that is increasingly homogenizing and exclusive. What I do denounce is the preoccupying global diffusion of systems of solidarity based on principles of homogeneity rather than diversity. An example of which I illustrate in what follows: a case that shows the forceful socialization of new gang recruits in a particular culture of mutualism.

The Vulgarity of Counting Debt Aloud: Open and Tacit Reciprocity

Many interlocutors told me that “you do not become a gang member, you just are one.” This makes sense, since these groups are originally neighborhood-based, with members sharing a long history and sometimes being related. Because Danish minority gangs have recently expanded beyond the neighborhood and have formed more complex units, I was curious to learn how new members get access to the group in this new phase, where people with less obvious connections than living proximity or kinship are incorporated into the group and its solidarity economies.

Amir⁸ tells me it is hard to be accepted as part of the group and that there are things you have to live up to. He often differentiates between his gang and the *rockers* who have all sorts of explicit requirements, such as performing certain types of labor like cleaning the clubhouse, being a watch for X hours, paying a fee, etc. While in praxis they are tested in similar ways as *rockers*, these tests are not made clear or countable, but rather operate spontaneously, ambiguously, and change based on context. Although minority gangs do not have formal requirements for being considered worthy for group membership,⁹

⁷ My appearance and name give me access to the majority culture, but my accent and cultural understandings also keep me from it.

⁸ All names of individuals are pseudonyms.

⁹ Recently, some minority gangs have started to incorporate a membership payment system based on hierarchical standing (the higher up in rank, the more you pay), mimicking the OMC’s organizational model. However, these criteria

some have a formalized probation period where your social performance is assessed and where you are also socialized into “the game.”

Amir exemplifies this process using the story of Jonas, an ex-rocker who had good relations to several of the other members due to common friends, but had not yet fully “graduated” to being a fully-fledged member of the group. Amir describes:

We were chilling, you know, just hanging out in the car. Good vibes, talking crap. And then we pull over and Ali asks, “do you want something to drink?” ‘cause he was heading to the kiosk to buy stuff. We were chatting in the car and said, “yeah, yeah. The usual.” “Everyone?” “Yeah, usual.” He comes back in and hands us all a drink, gives it to the rocker [Jonas] and it’s warm. “Hallo, take it back, bring it in. I don’t want this.” Then Ali looks at him and says, “what did you just say?” and hops out of the car. We all turn around and look at him. Deadly silence. He’s confused, asks: “What now?” He just didn’t get it. We’re all thinking what he’s [Ali] thinking, “If this guy’s talking like this to me, then trust me he’ll talk like that all the time. I gotta set an example.” “Relax,” Jonas says, waving a 100 DKK note at Ali, “I was going to pay.” Wrong answer. We all get out and tell Jonas to get out. One of us shoves him to a wall and stares him right in the eye. The others gather around in a circle. Khalil puts his hand around his throat and says “You take what you are given, J. You got me?”

In asking Amir what offended them so much, he says to me, “ah, you’re Danish too, are you? Ahha.” What did he mean? Amir explains that I am probably assuming that Jonas did nothing wrong, since he was ready to pay. “Look, we don’t do that. We don’t use those kinds of arguments. If I borrow 500 DKK from you, you never ask for it back [...] Not like those rockers who owe each other 2 DKK and keep track of rounds of drinks. It’s the basics.” But the worst offense, the one that triggered everyone to get out of the car, Amir explains, is that he mentioned payment for the gift. “Money is dirty. We do business, it’s actually about money most of the time, but when we are hanging, we don’t talk about it. And owe each other nothing. That’s the good part of being brothers. It’s the others that owe us.” “I don’t buy it,” I tell him. Surely, I think to myself, the fact that they benefit from being “brothers” generates obligations as there is no such thing as a pure gift. I elaborate this thought by giving examples of implicit debt:

I mean, if you helped Jonas to get access to some good deal, if you hid his goods in your warehouse, if you picked up his girlfriend at

only apply once you are considered part of the group, and thereby do not constitute a requisite for access but only later benefit the groups’ assets.

work all the time, and he didn't ever return the favor... Well, then it must "count" in your assessment of whether or not he is worthy of being one of you, no?

"Yeah, of course," Amir responds. "But the point is that you don't count out loud [...] We're better than that, that's why we're there for each other. We don't count who did what for whom, we're just there for each other."

What emerges from this moment of socialization is a moral code, whose outline is traceable in the dynamics surrounding the gift exchange and reciprocity of transactions (Diprose 2020: 197). The social contract that emerges and is celebrated in this episode of initiation relates to several dimensions of obligation (Sahlins 2017). The first, and most obvious, is the obligation to receive the gift (Mauss 1990: 11), which Jonas first refused and then questioned, by marking it as an economic transaction. While the obligation to receive a gift is foundational to establishing and maintaining most social relations, in this case, the forceful response and sanction to Jonas' failure to receive the gift is linked to his low ranking status (Gouldner 1960: 171), the co-presence of seniors, and the particular disciplinary setting.

The second, more interesting, dimension relates to the obligation of maintaining a certain form of reciprocity that may be considered *open* and *tacit*. Elaborating on the work of Marcel Mauss and Marshall Sahlins, David Graeber (2001: 220) makes a useful distinction between open and closed reciprocity. He describes a relationship dominated by a logic of *open* reciprocity as one where no or little account of what is exchanged is kept. This implies a relation of permanent, mutual commitment between the parties. Par contra, reciprocity can be termed as *closed* when a clear account is kept and the exchange centers on achieving commensurability and balance. The relation between the parties is finite and tends towards being cancelled out – or, at least, has the potential to do so – since the obligation between the two may cease to exist once the debt is levelled out. This distinction, Graeber highlights, allows us to think of the role that obligations play in defining the *degree* of the relationship rather than the *kind* of the relationship.

It is now common knowledge that gangs represent an "interstitial" order (Thrasher 1927) that emerges from some condition of marginality (Wacquant 2008). Although there is little agreement on what actually constitutes a gang, most studies highlight that unfavorable economic, family, age, housing, racial, or gender dynamics are constitutive of this structural marginality (Lien 2002; Hagedorn 2007; Deuchar 2009; Qvotrup Jensen and Libak Pedersen 2012; Rodgers and Hazen 2014). Gangs are, in other words, youth formations that seek "a place to be." In this light, it makes sense that members seek out close relationships such as the ones that are enforced through open reciprocity, and that mutual commitment and solidarity are foundational to group integrity.

However, this is, I believe, only half the story. Danish minority gangs are not only socializing their members into relationships that are mutually committed; they are socializing their members into practicing mutual commitment in a different, yet specular way than the majority. And by doing so, they perform a resistance through their own solidarity economies.

In the context of Denmark, ethno-racial background in particular plays a central role in determining access to resources and granting social mobility (Olwig and Paerregaard 2011; Johansen and Jensen 2017; Hassan 2013, 2019). Differently from other minorities that choose to adapt and struggle within these unfavorable conditions, gangs refuse and oppose a certain *culture* of mutualism. If we consider cultural homogeneity as the bearing element that defines ethnic groups (rather than a shared biological-genetic pool or geographic origin (Hall 2017: 80-124)), then, in this context, this implies that minority gangs represent a process of generation, formation, and consolidation of an ethnic group and its boundaries (Barth 1969). They choose a *form* of opposition that has become legitimate and dominant in the majority culture: if you are not like us, we will either reject you or assimilate you. This is apparent both in their constant framing of the “others” as the *rockers* or the *Danes* and in their everyday practices and the actual pragmatic details of this transaction.

Relationships of closed reciprocity, ones where one balances out accounts, are oftentimes actually celebrated *also* in close and committed relationships in Denmark, and not only in formal and temporally delimited ones. This is apparent in everyday exchanges with colleagues, friends, and family. One example is Christmas, where many families agree on the respective expense of the gift exchange beforehand. This practice ensures avoiding unbalanced and asymmetric exchange, particularly between symmetrical roles, and thereby decreases the possibility of leaving someone behind, either because one gives too little (offending or failing the receiver) or because one gives too much (embarrassing the receiver or generating obligation). It is also common to exchange detailed wish lists (*ønskesedler*) to maximize the possibility of “getting it right,” not just in terms of pleasing the other’s desires, but also to fully utilize one’s budget, which is in the process made even more transparent. The logic of commensurability also continues after the gift is given, as it is not uncommon for the giver to save the receipt for the receiver, offering them the possibility to exchange the gifts or even ask for their money back – a practice that other cultures might consider rude or offensive. Nominal values are thereby oftentimes made explicit (or at least not hidden) before, during, and after the exchange, highlighting that the negotiation on the form of the exchange plays as important a role as the actual content of the transaction in ensuring the degree of mutuality.

Equality and sameness are often upheld as a form of justness and care in all phases of gift giving. It seems to me that the closed-open reciprocity axiology requires further calibration based on cultural context, for balancing accounts in this context does not necessarily, as Graeber posits, close relationships off. Rather, it opens them in time and is even the prerequisite to ensure their continuity. In other words, the precondition to mutualism is, in the Danish context, often linked to the necessity to assert a level of individual autonomy (Gullestad 1992; Bruun, Jakobsen, and Krøijer 2011). Here, the solidarity and fairness lie precisely in the individual's act of remembering obligations, in keeping track of the units that are made transparent, so that one then autonomously chooses to reciprocate. The more balanced the exchange, the more just and, thereby, the higher the chance and potential of a mutual commitment.

Minority gangs, on the other hand, celebrate and enforce a form of mutual commitment founded on principles of incommensurability and ambiguity. This is obvious in the case of Jonas' hang-around phase: the facets of his norms and behavior that are actively *excluded* become particularly visible and are made explicit through sanctioning acts that delineate the contours of the group's norms (Barth 1969). The sanctions also aim at socializing him into a particular mode of exchange. One that refuses to make nominal value explicit. One that opposes keeping tabs and the underlying culture of mutualism represented by "those rockers who owe each other 2 DKK and keep track of rounds of drinks."¹⁰ One that rejects the view that mutualism and equality are constituted by sameness (Gullestad 1992: 183-200, 2002; Bruun, Jakobsen, and Krøijer 2011), praising instead the valence of difference and heterogeneity.

The resulting relationships are not based on a distinct series of transactions that are more or less linear. Rather, they affirm a more articulate cadence of exchange that forms ties that can be redeemed or reversed; ties that are characterized by a higher level of possibility, doubt, surprise, and disappointment. Being loyal is more difficult in conditions of ambiguity. One's commitment is assessed in a form of exchange that consists in keeping the possibility of reciprocating open, inviting and allowing the other to sacrifice something, but also *to fail to do so*. Considering that counting and accounting are acts of enunciation that actualize a certain organizational form (Fauré and Gramaccia 2006), the gangs' shared norm of refusing to make debt explicit implies that they are held together by a truncation of actuality and a celebration of potentiality. Solidarity is here strongly linked to *potential obligation*, to a duration that implies bearing the weight of debt for a long time, perhaps even "for life"

¹⁰ See similar ethno-racially framed juxtapositions of mutualism in Hakan Kalkan's (2018) ethnography of the collective consumption of marginalized street cultures in Copenhagen.

as many gang members hope.¹¹ The sacrifice here lies in spreading one's material and emotional resources over time by rendering them ambiguous. Explicit and closed reciprocity is instead framed as the majority culture (represented by the *rockers*) of mutualism that is to be opposed.

The Sharing Economy of Gangs: Pooling Principles in the Administration of Property

Although the majority of gang members' activities are relatively solitary, the greater part of their daily collective life revolves around sharing their "stuff," and in particular vehicles, their turf, and different types of real estate. In this final section, I highlight the different conditions of solidarity that regulate the pooling of this property.¹²

Property is often referred to as a *thing* over which an individual or a group exercises and possesses a formal right to exclusion. Yet, in practice, even private property is often shared with others, be it kin, neighbors, or even strangers. All forms of property, whether public or private, can be commoned or pooled. Pooling acts entail a redistribution of the "right to something." Most research on commoning focuses on the dimensions of voluntary self-sacrifice and the collective wellbeing that this solidarity heeds. But pooling can also be exploitative: when the taker acts like she/he "has the right to something for nothing" (Gouldner 1960: 165), the giver is *coerced* into sacrifice and sharing becomes a demand (Peterson 1993). Thereby, I suggest that pooling can be regarded as a morally neutral axis that permits the tracing of different *degrees* of solidarity and/or its opposite: exploitation. In other words, the ethics of the organizational redistribution depend on its particular expressions.

Indeed, in the words of Sahlins (2017), pooling may be considered *a system* of reciprocities, the material side of collectivity, which "generates the spirit of unity and centricity, codifies the structure, stipulates the centralized organization of social order and social action" (2017: 172). Thereby, pooling is an "inward" force, an activity that stipulates a social center from which goods flow outwards (2017: 170). However, every medal has two sides to it. By looking at the inward forces, several principles of exclusion emerge, demonstrating the selective, exclusive, and, at times, outright violent aspects to gang pooling. Moreover, given that it is essentially a specific mode of inclusion and exclusion, pooling also affords the tracing of the dynamics of group

¹¹ This resonates with what Sahlins describes as generalized reciprocity (2017: 175).

¹² Several groups have informed this analysis and they each have their own peculiarity, which I will not render here. Instead, I trace common pooling dynamics that are similar across groups.

boundary making, which I shall illustrate through the concepts of *centripetal* and *centrifugal pooling*.

What is more, property has far more dimensions than the legal entitlements that delineate who is included and excluded from the ownership of the good. To demonstrate this, I shall draw on the diverse economies’ tradition (McKinnon, Dombroski, and Morrow 2018), which highlights six different dimensions of property: use, access, benefit, care, responsibility, and formal title/property (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013: 125-158). In this sense, property may be understood as a practice, a mode of relating to things, rather than “a thing” in itself (St. Martin 2020), and thereby a rich analytical tool to trace redistributive mechanisms in solidarity economies.

Vehicle

Vehicles play an important role in the life of gangs and their remediation, as is testified by the centrality that cars and motorbikes play in gang video games, films, and music. They are status symbols. They allow for acceleration and potentiation. Their number plates are used to identify friends and enemies and to monitor their movement on the turf. But they are also used to run errands, to transport goods and people, and sometimes simply as a space to socialize. Like everyone else in Denmark, minority gangs also often use bicycles and public transport to carry out many of their activities, but as cars afford more collective activity due to their size and force, I will focus on the sharing economy that surrounds them.

As depicted in Figure 1, there are two types of cars within Danish minority gangs: an everyday car (either owned by one of the members or leased by a subset of members) and a special occasion car (stolen from an

	Access	Use	Benefit	Care	Responsibility	Property
Everyday car	Negotiated with owner/ commoned in gang and extended kin	Negotiated with owner/ commoned in gang and extended kin	Shared by gang members and extended kin	Individual /Shared by members	Individual/ Shared among those who collectively rent it	Individual/ Temporary lease through pooled gang money
Special occasion car	Negotiated and shared among gang members, passive/ coerced access to victims of intimidation	Negotiated and shared among gang members	Negotiated and shared by gang members	Individual thieves with some solidarity from gang	Individual thieves, with some solidarity from gang	Stolen from individual

Figure 1: Commons identikit of vehicles in Danish minority gangs, adapted from Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013: 125-158).

outsider). The difference between the two is chiefly their purpose: one is used for a broad variety of individual and group activities, and the other is related to violent, criminal, and dangerous activity.

The everyday car is the most frequently used vehicle and can serve all sorts of purposes. Some examples include picking up one's mother from the doctor, dropping off kids at school, running errands, hanging out in a rainy day, going for a spin, impressing and courting women, having sex, delivering and picking up goods, going to a job interview in style. The type of purpose often corresponds to a type of car (picking up goods or your mother might be okay in a gangling Skoda, but a polished Mercedes works best when trying to land a job or impress a woman). If a member has a car, then all other group members gain certain advantages from that car. Sometimes cars are leased through an especially established common pool, particularly in the case of expensive and status-bearing cars. Although the legal responsibility and property lies on the individual, the access to the car is negotiated with the owner. In practice, this entails that members and their extended kin use the car and draw on the associated benefits, such as status, comfort, mobility, and leisure. The care of the car is, however, mainly on the individual's part (unless leased), meaning that he cleans it, pimps it up, fuels it, and takes care of maintenance. Although some members contribute to taking care of the vehicle, this is not expected. This means that the individual offers all the benefits of the private vehicle to the individuals in the collective (extended to the other members' kin and friends), but takes on all the burdens of running it.

A different car is used for "special occasions"; that is, violent and illegal activity such as kidnapping, collecting ransoms, intimidating, pick-up/delivery of illicit goods (especially weapons or bigger drug loads), or hunting down enemies/escaping attacks in times of "war." The formal property of this vehicle is never ascribable to a gang member, to ensure that their identity is undisclosed. On the other hand, given that these vehicles are stolen, the identity of someone external to the group is hijacked. This is an example of negative reciprocity, where the benefits of the collective are built on the damage of the *other* (Gouldner 1960: 172; Sahlins 2017: 173). The responsibility and care for these vehicles (stealing it, hiding it, cleaning it, repairing it, etc.) rests mainly on the shoulders of the individual thief (or thieves) who expropriated the good. In case the thief is caught, the legal responsibility is not pooled, but other forms of credit are given to the one who sacrifices himself for the gang in the form of status, extra money during imprisonment, legal assistance, care of family, etc. The benefit, access, and use of the good is, however, widely shared within the gang and is, in this case, particularly detrimental to anyone who presents an obstacle to the *group as a whole* (enemies or those who do not pay their respect or debt to any individual member, thereby challenging the credibility of the gang). The special occasion car

is often used for acts of vengeance, to balance out any failure to reciprocate, and thereby to return injuries rather than benefits (Gouldner 1960: 172). Alternatively, the car is used to expand the influence of the group and to create obligations through intimidatory acts, which in turn result in an intricate web of dependency that asserts the gang's power (Jerne 2018: 286).

Turf

Aside from the car, two of the most common spaces of collective gang life are the turf and the apartment. The turf is the physical space with which the gang identifies. About 15 years ago, it clearly coincided and overlapped with a postcode or a neighborhood, whereas now the turf extends more spasmodically, fitting into what Loïc Wacquant (2008) has termed as a process of *hyperghettoisation*, where the geographic boundaries of urban marginality become more porous (2008: 51). The turf is mainly used for purposes of leisure, but also to work and to transit from one place to another. It is composed of publicly (parking lots, streets, parks) or privately (yards of building blocks, fences, benches) owned property. Although both forms of property are cared for by either public or private actors, in both cases the responsibility and care of these areas is actively taken on by the gang, in the form of patrolling, mending, and sometimes even cleaning or refurbishing. Plenty of labor is involved in taking ownership of the turf, and lower ranking members take turns to be lookouts to ensure that enemies are not granted access.

Obviously, the attempt at marking their territorial belonging through these monopolizing acts (Barth 1969: 19) causes conflicts with public and private actors who find it unpleasant to witness a guard standing watch on their territory and are frightened or angry for not being given the choice to negotiate. Other minorities lament that it increases the territorial stigma. But gang members are persistent about keeping the enemy out, thereby creating a "soldiering" culture (Sen 2014: 208). "Who is the enemy?" has been one of my most recurrent questions. On the one hand, it can be "whomever." They describe their necessary function in keeping the families, children who are playing, the inhabitants of the projects, and the members of the broader public safe. On the other, it is also someone very specific. Here, they speak of forcefully marking their presence, persistence, and force to opposing gangs. By ensuring that access is restricted to that part of the public – that is, in positive or neutral terms, with the gang and its individual members – the group marks its boundaries and spatializes its power.

Edifice

The streets of Denmark are quite cold, windy, and dark most of the year, and although my interlocutors usually wore waterproof bomber jackets and heavy hoods, I wondered how much of their social life actually took place on the street. Indeed, the idea of street socialization is oftentimes more of a metaphor for a subculture than an actual empirical description of the social life that occurs on the street. Much of the collective life of minority gangs does not take place on the street, but rather in nightclubs, shopping malls, restaurants, and cafés. A more regulated space, however, is the private apartment.

There are several types of apartments and edifices. Ones where members hang out and have meetings (*the den*)¹³, ones where members exercise their private business (*the shop*), and ones that members hijack from others (*the fix*). *Dens* are privately owned by one of the members, who grants and negotiates access within the group, sometimes allowing non-members in. *Dens* provide a safe refuge from domestic or business troubles, a site of leisure, but also a place to coordinate group logistics and hold meetings. It is not uncommon for members to clean or even contribute to rent and refurbishing if the apartment is not the primary residence of the formal owner.

The *shop* is either the formal or the informal business of one of the members. In the first case, it will be officially owned and registered in the name of the member and usually takes the form of a retail shop of some sort. The responsibility and care of this type of shop rests entirely upon the shoulders of the formal owner, but he will share benefits and use with the members in the form of discounts, access to services, storage room, and sometimes even informal employment. The second type of shop is the unofficial business of one of the members, which, in this case, takes place in an apartment usually registered in the name of a mannequin. The mannequin is sometimes a “nerd”¹⁴ friend who is bribed or someone who is intimidated into signing the papers and keeping quiet. Although the formal responsibility is not on the individual shopkeeper, the day-to-day responsibilities and care are in his hands. This kind of shop can operate on different forms of commerce, but a common one is the hash club, where paying members have access to comfortable couches and games, a little bar, drugs, and smoking accessories. If the shop is a hash club, other gang members do not have access to it, as owners usually aim for “Danish” or more “legit” customers (see also Toksvig 2018: 201). Therefore, the minorities that look too “gangster-like” are kept out in order to provide a “clean, safe, professional, and welcoming” environment

¹³ These names in parentheses are fictive, but have a corresponding coded nomenclature.

¹⁴ Nerd (*nerd*) is often used to refer to people who have a clean record and are not part of the criminal environment.

that “Danes may want to spend time in.” These types of clubs are often aimed at women, because they tend to smoke in larger groups, attract men, and spend more money on juice and snacks, which is where the profit margin is highest. While “brothers” are not allowed in as customers,¹⁵ they are often hired and paid as shop assistants, lookouts, or cleaners. So, although the profit is individual, some of the income is shared within the gang in the form of wages.

The *fix* is the last and most exploitative form of edifice. The most common use for a *fix* is the storage of illicit or suspect material. The formal ownership and responsibility of these apartments or buildings never belongs to anyone in the gang. Two types of people usually own *fixes*: unsuspected middle-aged majority women¹⁶ who receive payment in return for the use and benefit of their space or victims of extortion. Victims of extortion will either have previously been contacted by another gang, thereby functioning as vectors of competition, or will simply happen to be so unfortunate as to have a very beneficial or well-located space or service. The gang coercively pools these benefits in an uncoordinated and random fashion, leaving the formal responsibility and care for the business in the hands of the extorted. At the same time, the gang internally distributes the labor of patrolling and intimidating the owner in the form of verbal or physical threats.

Centripetal and Centrifugal Pooling

All these forms of property contribute to forming the group and, following Sahlin's observation (2017: 170), are thereby inward working forces in the sense that they fortify the group's interdependence on common material and symbolic resources. All pooling works towards fortifying a *center*. However, some of these activities *face* outwards in the sense that they relate to the *image* which the group seeks to project to the broader social field, while others concern how the group relates internally. Thus, pooling is not only a centripetal force. When exploitative, pooling has a centrifugal aspect as well as it entails a process of exclusion and *othering*. I have marked the division between the inward and the outward facing activities on Figure 2 and 3 with a dotted line.

It is worth noting here that group activities that are tied to individual relations within the group (*centripetal pooling*, represented by the green area to the left of each line) show a higher level of solidarity and sacrifice. The *den*, the everyday car, and the *licit shop* are examples of

¹⁵ This is also motivated by the fact that “brothers” (here used as the emic term for fellow gang members) are tied by relations of obligation and reciprocity, which is not good for business, as one anonymous reviewer usefully pointed out.

¹⁶ In some rare cases, it can also be minority women, but if so, payment is usually absent.

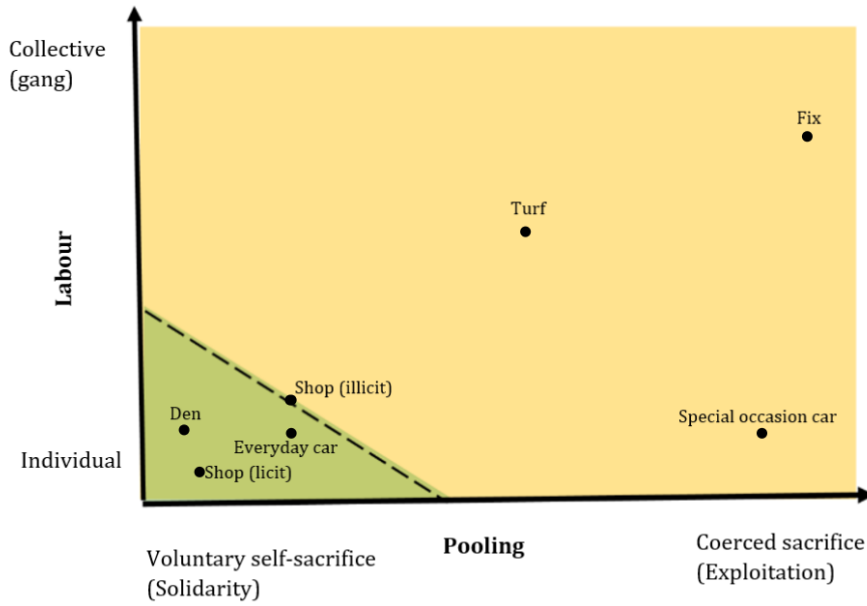


Figure 2: Labor and pooling of property in Danish minority gangs.

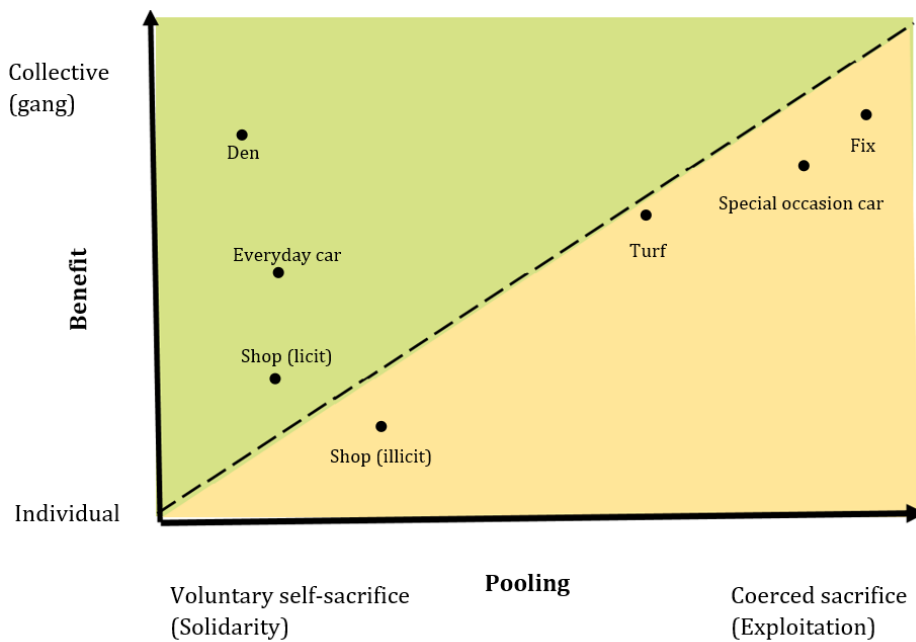


Figure 3: Benefit and pooling of property in Danish minority gangs.

inward facing pooling. They serve as places to help each other, to spend time together, and to coordinate the group. Generally, they express a *one for all* type of solidarity, where members contribute, but where the individual owner carries most of the weight, in the name of open and tacit reciprocity. The outwards boundary of the group in these cases ends at the extended kin of the individual gang members. These forms of property cater to the needs of the individuals rather than the “whole,” or the image of the whole, and are sheltered from the risks associated with illicit activities.

It is also interesting to note that when the economic prosperity and reputation of the individual member is at stake, members collaborate by keeping the ties to the illicit activities of the group as far as possible. Group solidarity is expressed through *discretion and distance*, which increases proportionately with the potential of status and wealth generation. This is rather close to what Dean Maccannell (1977) sees as characteristic of “modern” societies that have formalized the collectivization of solidarity, thereby transcending the individual responsibility to aid others, leading to what he calls negative solidarity.¹⁷

Negative solidarity has nothing to do with negative reciprocity, which I described in exploitative terms and is, as we shall see below, characteristic of centrifugal pooling. Quite the contrary, solidarity becomes negative when the principle that dominates peaceful commonality is based on avoidance and non-interference (rather than action); that is, that we do not put our noses in other people’s business unless they deviate or break a moral code. In this case, it makes sense that the closer gang activities are to formal economies, the more group members take on attitudes that characterize the majority of social life – which, in Denmark, sees a strong and deep systemic solidarity to fall back on, and also a principle of non-interference and individual autonomy.

The outward facing forms of pooling operate on different terms, as seen in the examples of the *illicit shop*, the *fix*, the special occasion car, and the turf. These spaces are used for activities carried out in the name of the gang (*centrifugal pooling*, represented by the yellow area to the right of each line). These activities project the group’s image onto the social field by *othering*, *menacing*, or *excluding*. The benefit of the *collective* is increased through acts of damage directed at outsiders, thus showing a higher level of “imposed sacrifice” or exploitation and a lower level of solidarity. The boundary of the group in this case ends at the members, this time excluding the extended kin. The principles that govern differential exclusion and mark the boundaries of the group operate along lines of ethnicity and affluence, or cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu 1986; Wallace 2016).

The *illicit shop*, a source of private profit, only employs “discreet” members and tends to deny other members access to the premises in order to preserve the face of a “respectable” business, in a self-stigmatizing move to “attract majority Danes.” Coherently, when it comes to exerting the group’s territorial influence and, thus, “increasing the brand value,” well-respected property is hijacked (the special occasion car or *the fix*) and urban space is patrolled in status-signaling clothes or cars that levy respect (Kalkan 2018: 658).

¹⁷ Drawing on Émile Durkheim (1964: 16-17).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the degree of exploitation and the invocation of status markers increase as we move towards more *collective* dimensions of the labor and benefits attached to these forms of property. The disposition to mark the “we” so much more aggressively and violently than the “I” reflects that the underlying tension towards the *outside* is more a matter of “being part of something”; a collective they reject/feel rejected by and seek to reproduce. Par contra, centripetal pooling is more about “being dependent and dependable on someone”; it is a matter of mattering to someone, of being recognized (Kuldova 2019) and seen as subjects rather categorized and processed as marginalized citizens.

What Do Danish Minority Gangs Tell Us About Solidarity Economies?

“I’m tired of being somebody’s job,” said Lisa, humiliated for receiving attention from a professional caregiver that was paid to be there for her. The abstraction of solidarity relations to a systemic level is made possible through the formalization and standardization of parameters of individual vulnerability. There are, of course, many wonderful and eclectic examples of individual and collective solidarity economies in Denmark that are neither streamlined nor bound to the state. Nevertheless, even these cannot be thought of without the context of the strong and systemic solidarity norms that the welfare state enforces.

It is in this context that minority gangs seek to create a personalized, resubjectifying solidarity system based on the refusal of explicit parameters, the celebration of ambiguity, and the pursuit of open reciprocity. As illustrated by the examples of the socialization of a gang member, these kinds of solidarity mechanisms are juxtaposed to closed and explicit forms of reciprocity that are framed as “Danish” or “*rocker*.” These gangs’ opposition to majority cultures of solidarity suggests that solidarity is *empirically* multiple, in the sense that it operates on multiple and (a)synchronous planes, as well as expressing itself in different *types*. This implies that solidarity is then *analytically* beneficial for reading for economic difference (Gibson-Graham 2020) and, thereby, for performing research in a time where borders are multiplying and rising to enforce cultures of homogeneity and sameness, also within the context of solidarity economies and welfare driven businesses.

In fact, if solidarity is *ideally* about accepting “views and practices they dislike, to accept democratic decisions that go against their beliefs or interests” (Banting and Kymlicka 2017: 1), then these gangs are absolutely not solidary, but rather celebrate homogeneity rather than diversity as the basis of sociality. The forced socialization of the new gang member into a specific form of mutualism based on open and tacit reciprocity exemplifies this. As do the examples of centrifugal pooling practices, where cars, businesses, and edifices are used to exploit others

to the benefit of the group, especially its image and status as a “we.” This essay has shown the importance of distinguishing ideals of solidarity from practices of solidarity, for although these ideals are celebrated as unconditional, gang solidarity is conditional and exclusive, and thereby constitutes a form of othering and boundary making.

If the aim of solidarity economies is to promote social justice, studies on solidarity economies might gain many insights from shifting the gaze away from ways of organizing that speak into the classical binaries that the term invokes (that is, capitalist/anti-capitalist, for-profit/non-profit, public sector/corporation, state/civil society) and instead zooming into the diversity of visions and paradoxical articulations of economic solidarity that, for good or ill, do exist. Just as there is more to gang economies than money, drugs, and extortion, there is more to solidarity economies than cooperative management, fair redistribution, and democratic governance.

It should hopefully be clear by now that my aim has not been to “defend the undefendable” (Block 2018). These gangs choose to operate on violence and are a harm to themselves and to everyone around them. They are especially harmful to other ethnic minorities that often live in proximity to their turf, suffering the consequences of their behavior and the stigma they are automatically enveloped in. Gangs are not victims; they are composed of individuals that seek to affirm their sovereignty, often at the expense of others.

I do, however, have another aim. What I think this material indirectly points to is the position that ethnic minorities inhabit in Denmark, whether or not they react by organizing in violence. Increasingly, it seems that the political atmosphere is shifting towards an idea that the access to solidarity implies a process of homogenization and the adoption of the dominant culture (Mukomel 2015).¹⁸ A culture of solidarity that is only open to submission to “one” way of being will automatically produce both frustrated submission and violent opposition. Solidarity can also be a site of struggle; not only against individualism and accumulation, but also other cultures of solidarity.

What I learned from reading for solidarity in gang businesses is, then, that these struggles are expressed in a rivalrous mimicry of majority solidarity cultures, which, like many current policies, celebrate the idea that “we could all belong to one ‘family of man’ provided that *you* become more like *us*.” (Hall 2017: 88). But violence cannot be fought with cultural assimilation, for assimilation too is violence.

¹⁸ Essentially what Durkheim (1964) called “mechanical solidarity.”

Acknowledgements

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