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**Consensus Decision-making
as a Research Method for Generative Justice:
empirical practices
from a money-less economy in Chiapas, Mexico**

*La toma de decisiones por consenso
como método de investigación de Justicia Generativa:
prácticas empíricas
de una economía sin dinero en Chiapas, México*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how consensus decision-making can be used as a method in creating spaces for generative justice. Based on empirical research in a moneyless economy in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, the project called *El Cambalache* has created its own exchange value where everything in the economy shares equal value. The article is a praxiography of consensus decision-making as research method.

KEYWORDS

Alternative economies; anarchism; diverse economies framework; feminism.

RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga como la toma de decisiones a través del consenso es un método para crear espacios de Justicia Generativa. Para ello, nos basamos en la investigación empírica de un sistema económico sin dinero creado en San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, México. El proyecto de *El Cambalache* ha creado su propio sistema de inter-cambio basado en el valor equitativo de los bienes y servicios. Este artículo es una praxiografía del consenso como método de investigación.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Economías alternativas; anarquismo; diversidad económica; feminismo.

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1. Introduction

Following Law (2008) and Mol (2002) among many others, methods create realities. Scholarly action research can create conditions and praxis that support the flourishing of generative justice, where generative justice is a bottom-up approach to constructing egalitarian socialities (Eglash & Garvey, 2014) as well as the right to generate unalienated value and its benefits (Generative Justice Wiki, 2016). Action research is “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Generative justice through action research begins by enacting research that not only benefits research participants but strives to create the egalitarian world we want to live in. As I will demonstrate in this article, research can be an important part of generative justice because of its performative qualities; it creates a space for knowledge production that supports bottom-up social movements, while co-researchers present a voice not often heard across classes that transforms power relationships among those who produce knowledge. Heterodox economic projects present an opportunity for simultaneously resisting the exploitations implicit in creating alienated value while transforming access to resources. The practice of creating network and method assemblages that change how economic relationships are enacted aims to transform the social relationships within them. Non-capitalist networks change how economic exchanges occur.

In San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, *El Cambalache* (The Swap in English) is a moneyless economy of repair and reuse of items that are normally considered discards and an exchange of abilities, services and mutual aid. The project, constructed in a practice of non-domination, has established its own exchange value called inter-change value. In inter-change value all goods and services have the same value. A sweater can be exchanged for a radio or an English class. A pencil can be exchanged for a dentist appointment or a bag of lentils. Furthermore, *El Cambalache* is built on repairing items such as laptop and desktop computers and cell phones, both within the city and in rural areas. By working to increase access to information technologies, the project seeks to meet people's growing communication needs where there is little access to money to purchase machines. The project enacts generative justice because it is built in horizontal power relationships among the six women generators of the project and the people that participate in exchanges. The project came into existence by using methods of non-dominative decision-making.

This article is a praxiological study of methods that have led to creating a bottom-up economy of equitable resource distribution. These methods include performative research within the Diverse Economies Framework, using consensus decision-making as a research method, and building on the practices of creating heterodox economic thought as specified in the book *Take Back the Economy* (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). As an experiment in creating theory from practice, *El Cambalache* works to create a pluralistic economy generated by women that are mainly from Mexico, ranging in classes and ethnicities. As a grassroots project located in Chiapas where money is hard to come by but other resources are available, we recognize that each person might not have enough resources to meet their needs and desires but as a diverse community, we have enough. In that way, we build networks of economic autonomy and generative justice.

The work of JK Gibson-Graham and the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) has demonstrated that research into the diversity of economic relationships that exist within and alongside capitalist economies presents a great range of subjectivities, experiences and examples of resource re-allocation that build communities of care and well-being (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Roelvink et al., 2015, among others). As a practice in generative justice economies that equitably distribute resources and embrace non-dominative forms of goods production create unalienated value and transform relationships between humans among each other and with the more-than-human. The value of goods and services becomes unalienated when the social and environmental relationships of production are explicitly attached to the item or service. These economic projects shift how consumption is viewed and experienced. For example, in *El Cambalache*, accumulation of goods is antithetical to everyone in the community having access to what they need and desire.

There are recognizable differences in the way that political and economic organizational forms encourage and discourage activism, protest and relationships among the human and more-than-human. Where more-than-human refers to non-human agents such as animals, places, emotions, things and flows (Wright, 2015). Specific organizational structures such as hierarchy and capitalism transform the economic relationships among people and the more-than-human. When non-capitalist, non-hierarchical relationships of exchange are woven into the networks between and among humans our relationships to other actors is shifted. Recognizing the embedded nature of "States", "Societies" and their "Economies" (Polanyi, 2001) one must also look at how the expectations assumed within economic practice engage how people view each other both within and beyond activist circles. The practice of forming

economic relationships that are non-oppressive creates spaces for mutually dependent communities that can shift how states and the institutionalization of capitalism enforce scarcity of resources when we live in a time of actual resource abundance (Graeber, 2016; Bookchin, 1986). Anarchist theory, praxis, and scholar-activism seeks to build a world free of domination while creating an analysis of how hierarchy creates unequal power relationships. Building economies free of hierarchy creates rich fertile spaces for the enactment of liberatory relationships among both humans and the more-than-human.

This article looks at how the methods used in creating non-oppressive economic interactions shift how the social is enacted and provides space for theorizing and reproducing liberation focused economies. The literature review brings together concepts of methods assemblage and feminist decoloniality of thought in order to privilege performative economic action-research and to create spaces of generative justice. Performative research recognizes that the investigator is always a part of creating the worlds that they are researching and as such, performs specific kinds of knowledge production (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Callon (2007) refers to a similar process in capitalist economic research as being per-formational because traditional economic research requires creating the on-ground-conditions and regulations for different economic practices to occur. This research is situated within the Diverse Economies Framework. The literature review concludes with an overview of consensus decision-making as a practice that supports egalitarian anarchist research within generative justice. The methods section elaborate how and why consensus decision-making was used as a research method along with activities from the Community Economies Collective. The findings report back on how a moneyless economy based in non-hierarchical economic, material and social relationships foster generative justice. The analysis section examines the implications of the findings and the replicability of the project.

2. Literature Review:

Methods Assemblage as performative economic research-inquiry, diverse economies

Within the Social Studies of Science and Technology, it is recognized that not only the social sciences but academic scholarship in general do not discover scientific phenomena but rather create conditions for the circulation of a very specific type of knowledge about the world and its interpretation, executing realities as they discover them (Latour, 1999; Callon, 2007a). Law (2008, 2011) has extended this argument further to suggest that scientific knowledge

reflects Western ontos and epistemes, insisting that scientific knowledge is culturally specific to the West. He argues for the creation of methods assemblages that can create and participate in the construction of ontos and epistemes that are commonly obfuscated by Scientific thought. For Law, out-there-ness, independence, anteriority, definiteness, and singularity, are the primary ways in which Euro-Americans ontologically understand the world (2008). However, there are many worlds and ontos that do not embrace those core values (Law, 2011).

The decoloniality of thought also calls for the recognition of other epistemes and ontos (See work by Lugones (2010), Mignolo (2000), Quijano (2009). Scholars in this field recognize that not only is Scientific thought culturally Western, but that it is tied in with a history of colonialism and purposeful epistemicide (Sousa Santos, 2014). In working to enact ontically diverse economic spaces it is important to be conscious of the violence that has accompanied the imposition of western scientific thought on the world, and that action-research in the majority world is situated within a constant fight to bring other ontos and epistemes into validity within academic thought. For that reason, the methods used for the production of knowledge must come from spaces of oppositional consciousness and resistance to ways of being and thinking that engage in oppressive politics of domination (Sandoval, 2000). When creating methods assemblages, the methods used can only lead towards generative justice by recognizing the histories that have constructed Western thought because they are based on the benefits of colonialism. Assemblages are the combination of interrelated social, discursive and material artifacts (DeLanda, 2006). Methods assemblage in this sense brings together these artifacts in order to investigate and create new knowledge (Law, 2008). These artifacts are not innocent; they are developed within specific hegemonic regimes that support institutionalized Capitalist thought and practice (Sandoval, 2000; Potts and Brown, 2005). Returning to Law (2008), moving away from research that assumes "out-there-ness, independence, anteriority, definiteness, and singularity" of knowledge simultaneously open the door for embracing connectedness, presence, fuzziness and multiplicity. Embracing these possibilities can construct spaces for non-oppressive, liberatory economic relationships.

Research that embraces connection and multiplicity resonates with anarchist thought and inquiry because it can potentially eschew domination within the assemblage by placing all actors in the network on an equal plane. Anarchism, which rejects domination in all forms while working to create horizontality among both human and more-than-human actors opens the possibility for thinking differently about how agency impacts economic relationships. Embracing the more-than-human nature of economic practices situates humans as only one

part of the network, recognizing that the goods and services exchanged also transform economic relationships. Discards and the practice of wasting are cultural constructions (Bird-Rose, 2003). As is often recognized, that which is considered waste for one person may be a treasure for another. In *El Cambalache*, as will be elaborated in the findings section, discards are the primary objects inter-changed. When items that are normally considered discardable and thus lacking value are valued equally with “new” items in an economy, the hierarchy of value normally assumed in capitalist economics is undermined. Working to remove hierarchy within economic practice may also create non-hierarchical relationships in other relational spaces. Post-humanism re-imagines the economic assemblage to include all other beings and objects as actors within economic praxis (Roelvink, 2013). These heterogeneous actors decenter humans in economics. Rather, the objects and processes needed to provide services share an equal part in the exchanges. Methods assemblages that eschew hierarchy should embrace post-humanism to enact ontos that privilege connection and multiplicity.

By recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed within a history of colonialism and a constructed hierarchy of humans dominating the more-than-human, I here return to the practice of how specific methods create worlds that support western hegemony. Michel Callon (2007b), in researching how economic knowledge is produced, has focused on the practices embraced by economists. His findings reveal that economic research does reveal a world at play but rather is constructed. Specifically, the theorists he studied did not study and report on existing economic practices but rather created predictive suggestions, theories and models in order to constitute markets, politics and specific market regulations which then forge economic worlds. In this sense, they actively naturalized Capitalism, implying that though they actively shaped markets, they found that the world worked as their performances played out. In enacting resistance to Capitalism through research, these thinking technologies are useful for generating diverse economic thought and practice that produces spaces free of dominations. Michel Callon (2007a) argues for abandoning the distinction between economics and politics because of the political-economic assemblages necessary in the development of technology, markets and politics are intertwined and inter-dependent. This is important for constructing methods assemblages because rather than classes and capitalism being assumed to be normal, they are enacted in their production through the interests of those benefiting from the exploitive relationships that capitalism requires. Similarly, Çalışkan (2010) argues the separation of the distinct spheres of political, social, production or exchange are artificial, created by the scholars that research them. Contemporary economics (most generally within

capitalist thought and practice) are regarded as per-forming because they are generated by think tanks and economists.

In returning to bottom-up heterodox economics, the work of scholars in the CERN exposes the myriad economic practices that are constantly enacted within, alongside and in resistance to Capitalism. Rather than envisioning the economy as a monolithically capitalist space, economic relationships are multiple (Gibson-Graham, 2006; White & Williams, 2014). On an average day a worker will not only engage in remunerated work but also care, gifting, volunteering and sharing (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). White and Williams (2014) further complicate this picture, looking at remunerated and gifted work where neighbors in rural and urban localities in Britain will do yard work and other chores for each other out of feelings of care, affection and interdependence even when money is exchanged for the activity. Other scholars have looked at community gardens, community supported agriculture (Cameron, 2015), time banks (Werner, 2015), cooperative enterprises (Healy, 2015) and other diverse economic practices. Gibson-Graham (2006), similarly to Callon and Calsikan, privileges the performative work done in economic research. However, she embraces it as a provocation to create the livable economic worlds that focus first on developing well-being and collective access to resources (Gibson-graham et al, 2013). Economic research then is always action research, whether it be done through think tanks to further capitalist hegemony or in enacting community focused research that creates well-being and increased access to resources for all persons involved. Scholar-activist research that embraces non-hierarchical decolonial anarchist economics has the capacity to construct and perform economic relationships that not only benefit research participants or co-researchers, but also resist domination and oppression, thus making space for generative justice.

Because research practices are important in the construction of economic worlds, inquiry into how practices, enacted as methods, transform our economic relationships can be revealing for understanding the subjectivities created in the performance and creation of unalienated value. Annemarie Mol (2002) researches the practices of treatment and diagnosis of atherosclerosis, which are very different depending on the doctor, the patient and the institution. This created very different realities for all involved. By studying the practices involved in treatment she realized that there are multiple realities that are created by each practice as it is recommended. Meaning that depending on the practices chosen to realize a given activity, whole other worlds will be created because of the practice. In this sense the

goal of overcoming or living with atherosclerosis was not only impacted by best practices, but rather in the process of treatment realities were enacted.

Praxiography is the writing and study of practices and the multiple worlds they create. Later in the *Logic of Care*, Mol (2008) examined how the practices and their logics created or denied the act of care between doctors and their patients. By studying how practices enact realities, scholars can focus on the implications of their method assemblages. In studying heterodox economic projects, rather than creating prescriptive research that discovers economic relationships, praxiography provokes research that embraces the economic multiple, the myriad worlds that come out of diverse economic relationships.

The focus of the praxiography that is contained in this article is the practice of consensus decision-making as part of a method assemblage for developing non-capitalist economies. Consensus decision-making is the practice of making decisions in groups where each person in the group must agree with the outcome. Often contrasted to the majority vote where a percentage, usually between 51% and 66% of the participants must agree with the outcome, consensus is seen as creating the possibility for non-hierarchical decision-making. This is because within a majority vote those that lose the vote are obligated to enact a reality they do not agree with. On the other hand, in consensus decisions, conversation, debate and affect are taken into account in modifying the agreement so that all parties may have an outcome they can agree with. If one accepts the understanding that each person is an expert in their own domain of experience, with the caveat that there may be no true understanding of the self, then the decision-making process within a group of people would logically be a decision-making process among experts. The concentration of power in decision-making processes can be seen as a continuum from one person holding the decision-making power to all persons holding the power to make decisions for the group (Arnstein, 1969). In a consensus decision-making structure, all persons participating in the process are responsible for making decisions, and this responsibility is held both by the individual and the group in order to share information, create an open, welcoming space and communicate one's thoughts (Butler & Rothstein, 2007; Graeber, 2013). While the structure of making decisions aims to create horizontal power relations among participants, this idea rarely occurs completely, with group power dynamics constantly shifting among participants according to their social relations (Freeman, 2014). However, it is a goal worth working towards. Consensus decision-making within action research presents possibilities for participants to engage in horizontal decisions within their own spaces and projects. As a research method consensus presents options for participants to lead action research projects in unexpected and sometimes often liberatory

directions. In studying the practice of consensus as a research method attention should be focused on interaction, expression, outcome of decisions and the multiple practices that arise as a result.

3. Methods

Generative justice requires specific methods and methodology in order to create performative non-oppressive decolonial feminist economic systems. Working within a scholar-activist framework, this project must take into account ameliorating relations of hierarchy towards horizontality while creating inclusive participatory spaces where actors in the economy have the possibility of deciding how resources will be distributed, what needs and desires should be met and consequently assume the responsibility of participating in that process. As a praxiography of consensus decision-making, the focus of this section is how doing research is constructed through consensus. When used as a research method, the decision-making process itself functions similarly to a focus group while the researcher or collective of co-researchers engages in participatory observation and group exploration of thoughts and feelings about the direction of the activist-research. Recognizing that research is always performative (Gibson-Graham, 2006) allows for the creation of collective responses to oppressive situations. Following the framework laid out by Freeman (2014) it is important that the decision-making process is highly structured in order to avoid elite tendencies that evolve through close personal relationships among members of groups. A consensus requires that all participants agree on the decision at hand in order for it to be ratified. As such, participation in the conversation, debate and equal access to information is required for all participants. Consensus decision-making has been a cornerstone in creating the *El Cambalache* project.

We began research in July, 2014. After several conversations with another woman, Pati, in San Cristobal de las Casas who I had known for several years, we decided to invite other women we knew and post flyers in town asking: “Have you ever dreamed of making an alternative economy? We have too!” and invited other women to come to a meeting. In early August, 2014 myself, Pati and four women came together to talk about creating a non-capitalist economy. Pati and I suggested that our first meetings be workshops on consensus decision-making, so that each person would have the same knowledge about how meetings worked and how information sharing would happen.

El Cambalache opened its doors to the public on March 21st, 2015, eight months after our initial meeting. We met twice a week for four hours each meeting, totaling over 240 hours of

meeting time. During that period we tried to divide our time between practicing our economic ideas –exchanging, mutual aid, sharing meals, working on collective projects such as gardening– and developing economic theory. Recognizing that each member of the collective comes from a very different lifeworld with distinct understandings of our ontos and epistemes, we gave ourselves time to listen to each other, to think together and have fun.

Of course, not all voices are heard equally in the project. There are differences between us that facilitate some women to speak more than others. Pati said to me the other day, "It's frustrating that they [Other women in the collective] expect me to answer a lot of the questions in our presentations when they've been part of the process of creating this economy. I want to them to speak more so that I can learn too. It's not right that they expect only to learn from me, it's not a one-way street." In part age and experience is a factor. In our collective we range from Mari, being twenty-two years old, through to Sarai, Josefa and myself who are thirty-six to Cinthia, thirty-nine and Pati, being fifty-four years old. There are other differences too. Some of us have been activists longer than others, some of us are indigenous women, some of us have masters degrees, half of us are from Chiapas, one of us, myself, is from New York. I'm a doctoral student, though I've lived in Chiapas for nine years. Each of these factors influences our confidence in our ideas, and our readiness to say what we think. However, we have an agreement, a philosophy, that each person is full of abilities and resources that the rest of us don't have. The information and analysis that I share in my articles and other writings is agreed upon by consensus. However, it does facilitate a fluidity in my ability to express what I think about the project that others might not feel.

Generative justice begins with just, inclusive communication where those involved enter into the space with the goal of learning from each person building the project. Consensus decision-making can provide that space; it requires time, responsibility and humility. When used as a research method the decision-making process must be accompanied by clear, well-defined goals. In the case of this project, the goal from the outset was to create a non-capitalist economy. However, the nature and specific form of the economy was unknown. In order to explore the possibilities of how and what our economy could become I proposed we as a group do a modified version of the activity called the "Worker's Clock" outlined in the book *Take Back the Economy* by Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013). The activity consisted of looking at how each member of the group spent their time each week, then adding up the hours in each activity and creating percentages of how much of our time was involved in each activity, which was then drawn onto a pie chart. Then when we were able to see how we spent our time, we created new charts that we called "dream clocks" with new

percentages of time for different activities. The initial intent of the activity was to show and talk about what percentage of our lives were spent in Capitalist activities. The clocks did show that. We, as a group, spent between 21%-28% of our time in capitalist work relationships. This is work done for money, where another person benefits from the use of our surplus. While this did impact our way of thinking, showing that we are not engaged in capitalist activities all of the time, something even richer came out of the activity. When we created the "dream clocks" we set into motion realizing our dreams. These included realizing our economic project, learning to play the drums, having a smart phone, having a computer, traveling, having a baby, painting more, and having more personal time. We've realized all of these dreams. Travel was a dream for several people. Since the clocks were made in September, 2014 *El Cambalache* has traveled in Mexico to Veracruz, Quintana Roo, and Merida. In the coming weeks, we will visit all of those places and one of our members will fly on a plane for the first time. We have also traveled to New York, Stockholm, Oslo and San Francisco as part of our project. The project created a documentary that was completed in March, 2016 and we have used that film to continue receiving funding through my PhD advisor as well as travel grants. *El Cambalache* has also received solidarity housing, food and transportation as exchanges for showing the film. Realizing dreams is an important method for creating generative justice. It allows for the seemingly impossible ideas to become reality.

Following Law (2008) methods assemblages are not predefined lists of methods appropriate across the board for all investigations. Rather, they are chosen as are deemed useful. In our case, a focus on making dreams come true was an important method that motivates us to this day to create a just economic space.

In order to begin our money-less economy another activity used during the beginning of the project was an inventory of personal resources. This activity is a modification of the Portrait of Gifts activity from the book *Shifting Focus: Alternative pathways for communities and economies* (Cameron & Gibson, 2001). This activity asks participants to check off predetermined abilities as defined by the researcher that are envisioned as gifts each person has within them. I modified this activity to be open ended where each person lists all of the things they know how to do. These resources were explained as every language and skill each person can do and likes to do. Members of the collective then wrote long lists of all of their abilities.

4. Findings

The four methods presented in the methods section, consensus decision-making, the reality clock and dream clock, making dreams come true and doing an inventory of personal abilities, each had massive impacts on the direction the project has taken. Consensus decision-making and the inventory of personal abilities have contributed to the creation of non-hierarchical spaces. This is due to the inventory revealing long lists of abilities held by each person. These abilities included everything from cooking skills, to language skills, knowledge about gardens and medicinal plants to biochemistry and entomology. While there is not enough space in this article to list all of the abilities present in the collective, suffice to say that reading the lists had a large impact on how each member of the collective viewed herself. When we began the project most of the other members in the collective came into it feeling like they liked the idea of creating an alternative economy but had no idea what they could offer. They looked to Pati and I for guidance. However, after the inventory each person saw and understood that they were full of resources, that each person had a great deal to offer in the creation of the project and that anyone that participated in our economy would also have much to offer, even if they were money-poor they might not be ability poor. Building from that realization the collective created the concept of Inter-change value. Moving away from exchange value where “ex-” is an exclusive separation between the what is being traded and the person, inter-change value is a change from within for each person that participates in the economy where all knowledge and things are valued the same. Things are valued the same because the project asks people to trade items they no longer want and abilities, mutual aid and knowledge they want to share.

As we created and began to experience inter-change value among ourselves, the horizontality of our consensus decision-making increased. It is difficult to overcome feelings of inadequacy that accompany market relationships where it is believed to be ok to exploit people and be exploited. In recognizing the resource-full-ness of each member of the collective we have been able to increase the participation and responsibility each person takes for the project.

Our consensus decision-making practice involves regular rotation of the roles of moderator, notetaker and timekeeper. By emphasizing the responsibilities of each role, each member of the collective takes responsibility for their participation in the meeting. This has been a significant influence in creating a feeling of confidence in members of the collective.

The ability of each person to create structure in our decision-making process reinforces the egalitarian feeling between participants. However, on several occasions when Sarai was asked what is the most difficult part of bringing about *El Cambalache*, she responds: “Coming to consensus. We are all very different and making decisions together requires time and patience.”

When we began the project, decisions were made around questions such as: How many people will participate? Who will participate and will men be involved? Should we have a core group or should it just be open? How will the exchanges begin?. Each of these questions were debated over several meetings. While it may seem like a long time, giving time to create answers that were reflective of the collective was important. For example, the number of people participating was difficult because on one hand a small network of connected women that traded together would create a small interdependent community, while if we worked to create a large network, we didn't know if there would be interest in the project or what it would look like. However, within the goal of trying to make dreams realities we decided to include as many people as would be possible and figure out how to make it work as it developed. It was also decided that the Generators group would be small, six people, an all women group that would develop and administer the project. We tried doing exchanges and mutual aid between each other first to see how it would feel and work when more people began to exchange with the project. It was also decided that men would participate in the larger economy but not in the generators group because we wanted to create space for women in a non-oppressive economy.

El Cambalache opened its doors to the public in March, 2015. Over the past fourteen months around 700 people have participated in inter-changing. Three other Cambalaches have opened in Veracruz, Merida and Bacalar here in Mexico. When each person walks into the space the members of the collective have a goal that we will emphasize the resource-full-ness of each person regardless of where they are from, their body and related politics, in or the class they are supposed to occupy.

The more-than-human actors in our network have also played an important role in creating realities. The items that are exchanged transform many aspects of daily life for those that receive them. One example was a stroller that was received in exchange for a haircut. The woman that received the stroller greatly needed it but could not afford to buy one. Once she had it, her back problems and transportation problems were greatly resolved. Other important transformative items have been warm clothing in the winter, cell phones and laptop

computers. Each of these items in one way or another has shifted how the person using them experiences their lives.

5. Analysis

The practice of using consensus and activities that made explicit each person's abilities and desires has contributed to creating a space of learning and experimentation that increases resource access for participants while resisting the feelings of marginalization and inadequacy that comes with capitalist economic relationships. As a practice in creating a space without hierarchy in line with anarchist thought and practice, this is still part of our work. Some members of the collective feel more equal than others and share their ideas more freely. However, by striving to create a space free of hierarchy the project was able to create interchange value which works to make each item and service more equal in the exchanges that occur in the project. By making people feel resourceful when they enter the space, *El Cambalache* works to bring about resistance to capitalism in small incremental steps with many people, with the goal of increasing a sense of well-being among our community. Of course, the project exists alongside capitalist markets and work relationships. Everyone that participates in the project whether they be in the generators group or in the larger public has a separate form of income that pays the rent and other aspects of life that require money.

El Cambalache works to change who is creating knowledge and what kinds of knowledge are valued. By making all information that is shared about the project part of a consensus process, you, my reader, are reading a collective thought process created by six women in Chiapas, Mexico. While our ideas are built in the practice of creating our economy, we strive to slowly, incrementally decolonialize knowledge production. Collective voices, especially of women in moneyless economic projects, are rarely heard or permitted in scholarly spaces. We seek to change this. Knowing that three other Cambalaches have been brought into being by other women in Mexico, we see a small change in process around value and self-worth. Our epistemes are built on the experience of seeing hundreds of people practice inter-changes and so we produce knowledge. Our methods assemblages are non-conventional research practice but the ontic implications; creating inter-connected economic communities of trust and well-being are valid activist goals. Our project is not perfect; capitalism is still a significant part of our lives after a year of practice but we're working at it. *El Cambalache* takes items that could be discarded and knowledge that is marginalized and they are given another life in an interchange economy.

By studying the practices that were involved in creating *El Cambalache* one can observe that building trust and working to realize dreams is a goal based, long-term action research project. The outcomes are not predetermined or even possible to hypothesize because collective thinking combines the lifeworlds of each person and depends on their sense of possibility. In *El Cambalache* we were fortunate to find highly optimistic members that were open to learning from each other. The creation of inter-change value stems from embracing non-hierarchical thinking as well as being open and predisposed towards creative experimental thinking.

6. Conclusion

Generative justice is created through practice because it is supporting the flourishing of a world that is in construction. By striving to create spaces of egalitarian access to resources and unalienated value of goods and services, this practice challenges scholar-activists to eliminate hierarchical thinking from research practice. This is no easy task. Methods change how scholars practice knowledge production. By embracing experimental methods such as consensus decision-making, a researcher has to let go of their direction of the project and allow for the trajectory of the action research process to be decided by co-researchers. Rather than looking for predetermined economic relationships, consensus decision-making as a method determines the outcome of the project. In the case of *El Cambalache* this practice has been fruitful and inspiring for those participating in it. However, there are still hierarchies in our group. The economy is not everywhere and we are still figuring out how to include people in the best way possible into the project. What the project can say is that it has been bottom-up, because we depend on each other to create fulfilling ideas that are tested daily by the people that engage in inter-changes. Our economic project is only as good as its ability to meet people's needs and in Chiapas there is little money and much need. The other Cambalaches in other parts of Mexico are in their own process of deciding how inter-change will work in their community within their time restraints and conceptions of resource access. As a collective voice we challenge scholars and activists to value each other and to explore the unknown spaces of generative justice. One step in the process will be, following Gibson-Graham (2013), to start where you are. Unfortunately, there are so many spaces where generative justice is needed that there may be few if any places on Earth that does not experience some aspect of the ravages of capitalism. By working where we live, each person

has the opportunity to engage in a long-term horizontal economic project that begins with asking, What do we have and what do we need as a community? Scholars in particular can support this process because of the wealth of knowledge they might possess around non-hierarchical economics and decolonial relationships.

Consensus decision-making as a research practice presents a challenge to researchers to place their “expert knowledge” on the same plain as their co-researchers. It requires one to value the experience of oppressions such as capitalism as equal to their own. In many ways this is the decolonization of knowledge, it is recognizing that people, their experience of the world and the base of knowledge that it comes from are of equal value. In consensus decision-making, because the goal is to create a non-oppressive space, researchers have to engage in non-oppressive practices. The knowledge that will be generated in those spaces will support the struggle we all face in undermining capitalism on a daily basis.

7. References

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