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**MONEYLESS ECONOMICS
AND NON-HIERARCHICAL EXCHANGE VALUES
IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO**

Erin ARAUJO*

There are few things that are not exchanged in El Cambalache. Yesterday, a woman in her thirties found someone to house and pet sit for a month in exchange for accommodation and a few pieces of amber jewelry. In the same day, several books were interchanged for other books and Xbox games were interchanged for a laptop. Clothing is interchanged everyday the space opens, and there are regular workshops. El Cambalache, located in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, is a moneyless exchange-based economy. Interchange involves the daily activities of sharing, exchange and mutual aid, which create a horizontality of relationships that will be described later in this article.

There is much debate within economic anthropology about what is a commodity, a gift, or a communal good. Questions of how forms, practices and networks of markets create and influence social relationships abound as well. This article contributes to those debates by presenting a theory of interchange value that was developed in practice in El Cambalache. The creation and practice of this theory is an example of action research using a consensus

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decision-making methodology (Araujo, 2015). The theory of interchange value was created to moderate, explain and deepen interactions within this micro-economy. Interchange value is not based on a labor theory of value. In interchange value, everything has the same value. However, this does not deny that value is generated. The items exchanged are what would normally be considered discards and the services exchanged are mutual aid, knowledge and abilities that people want to share. The value created in the exchanges is similar to use value in that people select items that are highly valuable specifically to them. However, the greatest value generated is the creation of a collectivity or network of people who support one another. For example, one could interchange a pencil, a notebook, a sweater, or a cheese grater with a computer, a radio, a dish or a pair of pants. Everything has the same value. All of these interchanges happen at El Cambalache, a space constructed to engender a horizontal economy. One could also offer classes, workshops, language exchange, services such as massage or translation to the entire community and interchange them for other classes, services or things. Other interchanges also happen in a Whatsapp (an internet texting/calling application) group with over 115 people participating and where the things and services shared are often between members of the group rather than all of the people who participate in the project.

El Cambalache was created by six women hailing from Sonora, Morelos and Chiapas, Mexico, and myself, from New York, USA. We have all lived in Chiapas for at least ten years and range in age from 24-55 years old. El Cambalache opened to the public in March, 2015 after eight months of collectively talking, deliberating and dreaming. The origins of the project are presented in other published scholarly articles, book chapters and a doctoral dissertation, but will not be elaborated here¹. Approximately 1,200

¹ For full citations of these pieces see the reference section under Araujo, 2015, 2016, 2016b for examples. The doctoral dissertation will be published in December 2017.

people have been incorporated into this economy since its inauguration in March 2015.

In the next section, I provide a literature review of anarchist and diverse economies to situate El Cambalache's theoretical and practical process of knowledgeproduction and economic performance. This segment is followed by a description of the creation and implications of interchange value. Finally, I present a conclusion that reflects on the opportunities and challenges brought forth in anarcha-feminist economic action research.

Literature Review

El Cambalache is an anarchist space formed with the goal of practicing non-hierarchical socio-economic relationships. Anarchism is, generally, the rejection of all forms of rule and domination (Springer, 2012). For El Cambalache, this means that, ideally, it functions without domination in all aspects of the creation of the project. The relationships between co-researchers and the principal investigator, our theory of interchange value, and the relationships between participants and the generators of the project all strive to create horizontality. Horizontality is the practice of creating organized, non-oppressive structures where no one person has more power than any other. Horizontality allows for non-dominating relationships to exist without the imposition of a hierarchical legal or economic system (Clough and Blumberg, 2012; Springer, *op. cit.*). Many anarchists actually strive to construct egalitarian social relationships (*ibid.*). Anarchist spaces often practice "autonomy, voluntary association, self-organization, direct democracy and mutual aid" (Graeber, 2009: 105). These practices strive to bring about non-oppressive social change. Anarchism is envisioned as a constant becoming rather than establishing regulations for a new society (Sheehan, 2003: 155).

El Cambalache is, in part, a project that seeks to create an anarchist economic space while doing research through practice. While there is no consensus about the definition of what anarchist economics are, this often refers to non-hierarchical economics

(Gordon, 2012). Research into diverse economies has shown that the economy is not a singular capitalist system, but rather a varied and textured continuum of multifarious economic interactions (See Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006; Roelvink, St. Martin and Gibson-Graham, 2013, among others). Some examples of these interactions include alternative capitalist practices such as cooperatives, self-employment, fair trade systems, and community-supported agriculture. Non-capitalist practices also abound, including gifting, volunteering, sharing, and mutual aid. When capitalism is de-centered into a heterodox economic space, it becomes one network of economic practices among many networks (Gibson-Graham, 2006). A weakened capitalist economic hegemony brings to the fore other economies as viable projects rather than idealistic fantasies (Healy, 2009).

Gordon (*op. cit.*) and Leahy (2003) note that within anarchist economics specifically, there is a wide range of practices that may or may not be considered strictly anarchist because they are hybrid systems that work within current capitalist economic relations. Some examples of an inclusive approach to anarchist economics range from the original Mondragon system of cooperative factories in the Basque region of Spain (Gibson-Graham, 2006), to different forms of production, consumption and housing cooperatives and communes around the world; Local Exchange Trading Schemes; the Really Really Free Markets; and anarchist workers unions, such as the International Workers of the World (Gordon, *op. cit.*). These projects form part of what is called prefigurative politics by, following the Wobblies, “forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.” (Gordon, *op. cit.*; Shannon *et al.*, 2012). Anarchist practice as a whole is often envisioned as creating the strategies for living in non-domination in the present that will transform our current lifeworlds towards an anarchist reality (Shannon *et al.*, *ibid.*). The prefigurative politics of anarchism do not situate economic practice as existing separately from other forms of oppression, such as patriarchy or coloniality and, as such, the economic transformations that are sought within these projects seek

to transform society as a whole (*ibid.*). El Cambalache envisions its economic project as also transforming other relationships towards more equal and more community-focused access to resources as is elaborated in the section in this article on the theory of interchange value.

Anarchist economic research often appears within research on autonomous economies. Autonomy is the desire for freedom, self-organization and mutual aid (Chatterton, 2004: 545). The practice of developing autonomy often comes about as a response to current and past struggles (Foran, 2003). Autonomy is a necessary part of performing liberatory economic and political relationships (Chatterton, *op. cit.*). El Cambalache strives to create economic autonomy for its community alongside the capitalist economy. The project's urban setting means it is unfeasible that it will create a replacement for the capitalist system. However, the project strives to decrease people's dependence on money, while creating an autonomous community parallel to the capitalist economic system. This is common in anarchist economic projects (White & Williams, 2014: 958).

Through El Cambalache's interchange of things, abilities and mutual aid, and through conversations with the people who participate in the project, we employ horizontality and solidarity. Here, I will provide a few examples that will be elaborated in the section on the theory of interchange value. At El Cambalache, one can exchange a sweater, or a box of sweaters for cooking items, books, other pieces of clothing, electronics, music, household items such as a mattress or a piece of furniture, or whatever each person who enters the space needs or no longer uses. All of these things can also be exchanged for workshops, classes, collective work days, or services such as electronics or bicycle repair, dental visits or legal services. In our conception, we might not have or know enough as individuals, but as a community we do. The workshops and mutual aid exchanged within the project are done so at each person's initiative, depending on how each person values what they share. One example is of a doctor who offered her services in homeopathy

and holistic medicine. Over a period of six months, the doctor used our space on Wednesday afternoons to give consultations and treatment in exchange for fruit and vegetables. While the doctor complemented her access to other resources by earning money giving consultations at her office, on Wednesday afternoons she made her services available to many more people through El Cambalache and decreased the hierarchy that often separates people from professional classes from those who do not have much access to money.

Diverse economies and anarchist research often employ performative research methods. Performative research recognizes the transformation implicit in the interactions between an investigator and a research subject, participant, co-researcher, or community (Gibson-Graham, 2006). As suggested by Judith Butler (1990), performativity refers to the creation of identities and realities as a person performs them in their daily lives. Gibson-Graham (2006) recognized that while research is never a neutral process, scholars can actively perform the political and economic struggles necessary for creating social change.

Investigators, co-researchers and research participants create knowledge, rather than discover it (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Co-researcher allies are essential collaborators for academics to engage in collective research that resists capitalism because we can conjointly challenge it en masse. In the experience of El Cambalache, the diversity of life experiences and networks has worked in our favor to bring a more diverse group of participants into the project. The knowledge and practices created by co-researchers through consensus decision-making provide very real non-capitalist economic options for increasing resource access for people whose limited access to money impedes their participation in the capitalist economy. This is done by practicing interchanges. Interchanges are the sharing or exchanging of things one no longer needs or the capacities, mutual aid and knowledge that people wish to share. Interchange value is not based on a Marxian concept of use or exchange value.

Marx wrote extensively about the social transformations built upon relationships of exchange value and use value in a capitalist economy. Exchange value is understood as a shifting, relative form of value of goods, services or money provided to equate a satisfactory transaction (Marx, 1976: 126). Use value, distinct from exchange value, is the value that goods or a service has to the individual (*ibid.*). Interchange value is a distinct practice of creating value. It has a twofold focus: first abrogating hierarchical exchanges of goods and services and, second, invalidating the ex- in exchange. Here, we refer to removing the exclusive nature of class and coloniality based capitalist economies. Interchange value does not focus on use value as a point of theorization; rather it is assumed that all that is interchanged within the project has a use value. The fundamental idea that one's no longer used possessions should not be discarded, but should continue within a cycle of use, is both metaphorical and literal. Goods that can be repaired or that still function, and forms of knowledge should not be marginalized or discarded; rather they should continue in the throughput of the items or knowledge's life (Araujo, 2015).

In the majority world, most people have little access to money. People find low-money solutions for meeting their social reproduction needs – be that a capitalist use of money, or other kinds of monetary interactions (Korten *et al.*, 2002; Korten, 2006). When capitalism is not the primary economy in a region, other economies are present. These economies often have systems of valuing distinct from a capitalist market. This is highly relevant to the work of El Cambalache in San Cristobal de las Casas. The area is characterized by money scarcity. For example, in 2013, 76% of the population in the municipality of San Cristobal de las Casas were living in levels of poverty or extreme poverty (CONEVAL², 2013). In the state of Chiapas, only 31% of women participate in the labor force (*ibid.*).

² Consejo Nacional de Evaluacion de la Politica de Desarrollo Social (National Evaluation Consultancy of the Politics of Social Development).

Most people in the region engage in non-monetary based economic action to fulfill their basic needs.

Hybrid economies are economies that have multiple economic systems and whose primary economy is not capitalist (Palomino Schalscha, 2015). These economies have different sociological, ecological, political and cultural characteristics than economies with a high presence of capitalist interactions. In the majority world, many economies are hybrid. These economies have a low presence of money and, as such, they are more diverse than the capitalist economies of the developed world.

In Chiapas, Mexico, capitalism is being imposed at a pace that is difficult for us to assimilate. Despite centuries of slavery and capitalism, there is a persistence of non-capitalist, non-moneyed economic practices, thought and relationships, especially in women's economies in the region. These economies are often overlooked because they are located in the spaces of minority-world women and in particular indigenous women. In an anarchist perspective, by removing hierarchy in the designation of one economy as more important than another, then all economies should be taken into account as viable and practical. It is important to incorporate the economies practiced by people who are the most oppressed in order to create liberatory opportunities.

El Cambalache is a celebration of the non-moneyed economies that have been the sustenance of women and oppressed communities over centuries. Livable worlds – that is, worlds that support the flourishing of life – can embrace the economies and other practices that are already in play.

Little work has been dedicated to the history of indigenous economies in the region and this omission continues to this day. Rather, references to indigenous economies in Chiapas most often reflect on their extreme poverty and subjugation. Evidence for non-capitalist indigenous economies often appears in texts that explore cultural relationships within different ethnic communities in Chiapas. For example, Lenkersdorf (2004) reflects on the collective decision-making practices and sharing of resources within these

communities. Other pieces, such as Paoli (2002) or Aguilar Castellanos *et al.* (2015), explore autonomous decision-making practices in Tojolobal and Tzeltal communities. In these pieces and others, the authors reflect on how collective assemblies decide how resources are shared, justice is administered and relationships within and outside of these communities are managed. Economic, political, social and sometimes spiritual relationships are interwoven in these assemblies, which vary between horizontal and hierarchical decision-making practices. Tool sharing, mutual aid and collective work practices have been historically consistent and persist to this day in many indigenous communities in Chiapas.

Interchange theory of value

In this section I describe El Cambalache's theory of interchange value and how it creates distinct economic subjectivities. As an anarchist project, we work to remove the hierarchy of value from the exchange of goods, abilities and mutual aid. At El Cambalache, no item or practice has more or less value than any other.

Interchange value is built on transforming economic interactions. Here, I include a letter from Patricia that explains her reasons for eliminating the value of things entitled, "Why have we abolished the value of things?" (March 16, 2017, my translation, Patricia's emphasis):

It is my understanding that when we speak of interchange value, of knowledge, abilities and things where everything has the same value and there is no calculation of value through money, nor any substitute of money, what we are doing is *removing the market value from knowledge and abilities that we share and the things that we reuse*. It is difficult to take oneself out of capitalist thinking, because in order to survive in this system of buying and selling of labor (for both women and men) and the product of this labor, the only way possible right now is by making money.

For that reason, removing the market value of things and hours of work is very important. It means that even though at some point we invest money in order to acquire knowledge, abilities and things, when they are brought to interchange, where money is no longer how

their value is measured (of course it is true that they are things we no longer need and time we would like to share) [...] one begins to construct a way of thinking about not making a profit, that is to say, thinking about not exploiting others. This transformation in the way of thinking, begins to, as you say in the documentary, make things start to happen. The Cambalache community, I think, is beginning, little by little, to realize that among everyone, we can contribute to lowering our dependence on money. Generating ideas is a collectively-shared process where everyone has something to interchange. Yes, we are constructing our own economic space parallel to the capitalist system, but we are ourselves, on the most intimate levels, deconstructing the essence of capitalist thought, that is, to be merchandise.

Patricia brings together several important points in this letter. The first is that by eliminating hierarchical value from our economies, we eliminate the need for profit. Without the need for profit, we no longer seek to exploit or be exploited in our economic interactions. In interchange, we promote a different kind of thought: that of questioning. How does my participation in the economy benefit others? What do I need and want? How do we share wellbeing? What is discardable? What is repairable? How do I not only lower my own dependence on money, but also other's as well? How do we de-marketize and value what is most important to us? Most of these questions do not have concrete answers. El Cambalache provokes responses through praxis.

Interchanges at El Cambalache can be classed into four types: i) things that one no longer needs; ii) abilities (e.g., personal care services; laptop repairs); iii) knowledge (e.g., language or cooking lessons); and iv) mutual aid (e.g., child care; gardening; construction of homes or schools). The category of "things that one no longer needs" includes items that might otherwise be treated as discards (e.g., a radio that might be thrown out of the house as refuse; a stored, but unused cooking pot). Via El Cambalache, that radio or cooking pot might be swapped for a class on creating tinctures from medicinal plants, or assembling laptops, or speaking Tzeltal. We bring out of the metaphorical and literal waste stream and into use

both marginalized knowledge and items that would otherwise be discarded.

While it is important to share knowledge and access to “stuff”, the value created in El Cambalache is premised on a personal transformation that shifts how we understand and interact with other people. For example, when I asked Raquel³, a woman in her mid-fifties from Cuxtitali who comes to interchange about once a month:

Why do people participate in El Cambalache?

She responded:

Because honestly, so many people need El Cambalache, so many people value it, there are people who truly need this project
(San Cristobal de las Casas, November 2016; my translation).

Another example is from an interview with a Brazilian film director in her mid-thirties who showed her short films in our cinema. She said:

You can share so much in El Cambalache. I had no idea how close I would feel to people in this space. All I wanted to do was show my film so that I could get a sweater and now I’m leaving with so much, thank you so much.

(San Cristobal de las Casas, April 2017; my translation).

For us, at El Cambalache, these two statements express the interwoven experiences in the project. We collectively build a socio-technical network for meeting one’s needs; at the same time, participation in a community of people working to be equal can be fulfilling on an emotional level.

Articulating Interchange Value

Interchange value has several baseline assumptions and goals for creating social change built out of a collective decision-making process. The assumptions presented here reflect the ideas of the generators working to create the El Cambalache project, and present

³ The non-generator participants in El Cambalache have had their names changed in this document.

ethnographic data developed through consensus decision-making. These assumptions are as follows⁴:

1– In any one geography there are many kinds of economic interactions. The economy is not only capitalist, rather there are many kinds of non-capitalist and alternative capitalist relationships.

2– Economic relationships are integral to social relationships. The hierarchical positionalities created by capitalist economies form unequal person-to-person power relationships between individuals and between mass groups of people. Those relationships shift when non-capitalist economies are integrated into social relationships. The particular influence of one kind of economy or another on these relationships is more evident in geographic regions where there is a high level of dependence on a single given type of economic system to create access to resources. For example, in regions where capitalism is the principle economy used to gain access to a resource such as water, one's access to water is governed by one's positionality in the hierarchy obligated by the capitalist economy. In regions where capitalism is one mechanism among many others in access to water, people may not necessarily use capitalist means to access water. As such, one's positionality is distinct.

3– In Chiapas, women in general and indigenous women in particular have the lowest access to money out of any socioeconomic group of people. This is particularly notable where 76.2% (CONEVAL, 2013) of the population of the state lives below the poverty line. Women in Chiapas are expected to provide food, clothing and other resources to secure the wellbeing of themselves and their families. Consequently, based on a low access to money we assume that most of the economic interactions between women do not involve money. However, their social networks limit their access to resources due to myriad oppressions imposed through coloniality (e.g., racism, sexism, lack of knowledge of Spanish, etc.) that limit class mobility in a capitalist economy.

⁴ The text covering the assumptions and goals for the project also appears in my dissertation, which will be published in December 2017.

4– Access to resources influences one’s positionality. In other words, if all people participating in the economy have the same access to resources (e.g., knowledge sharing and mutual aid), then we take a step towards a more equal positionality in the “struggle to distribute power more evenly” (Farrow *et al.*, 1995: 71).

5– Despite highly unequal access to money, we live in a time of incredible surplus of other things, knowledge, and abilities that could be circulated with mutual aid.

6– Class, gender, ethnic, racial, and sexual classifications imposed both internally and externally on each person and group of people limit the movement and expression of both physical and psycho-social resources (such as self-esteem, emotional connection, love, empathy, and care) between groups people as a consequence of coloniality.

7– Hierarchical relationships are destructive to individuals and groups of people because they require the subjugation of people and non-human others. Hierarchy limits one’s ability to thrive and flourish.

Based on these assumptions and building on the experiences of the generators through years of consensus decision-making, we decided that interchange value would foment specific goals for creating social change. These goals are:

1– Create an economy where each person has equal access to the resources available.

2– Create a space where women and anyone else vulnerable to violence are comfortable and safe to be and express themselves.

3– Support community members to make non-capitalist economic decisions.

4– Emphasize the importance of forms of knowledge that are not generally considered to be important in a capitalist economy.

5– Support the sharing and growth of forms of indigenous women’s knowledge in order to emphasize the importance of these forms of knowledge.

6– Assert that each person is resource-rich. When a new person enters the economy, every other person in the economy

becomes more resourceful because they now have access to the abilities of each new person.

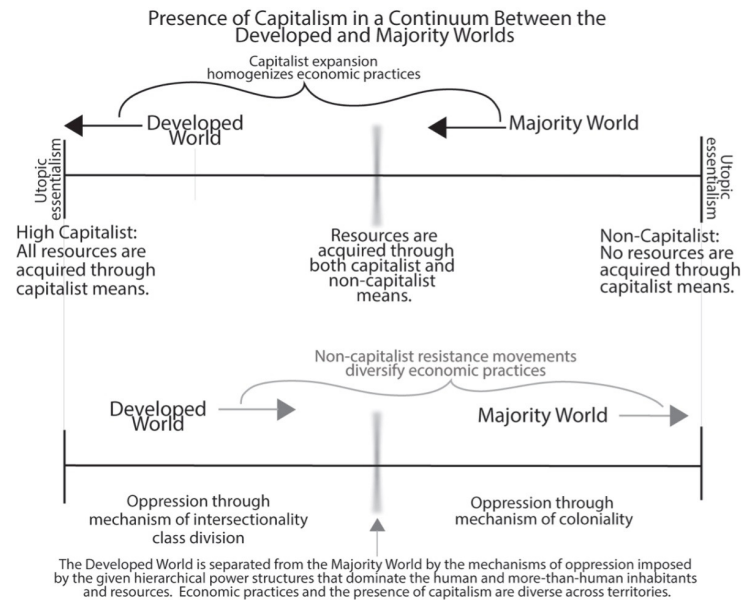
7– Create a network of abilities and knowledge that will supplement the lack of access to important services such as healthcare, education, construction (e.g., of homes) and childcare.

8– Increase people’s access to electronics through repair and redistribution because of their importance for communication and access to information.

9– Decrease the quantity of items that enter the waste stream.

Based on these assumptions and goals, El Cambalache articulates interchange value in praxis. This form of valuing attempts to create an economy based on women’s strategies for making ends meet. Interchange value reflects the economic experiences of its collective generators. Each member of the collective has had different lived experiences of hybrid capitalist and non-capitalist economies based on the distinct oppressions and geographies that each person has faced. The varied networks of capitalism have positionalities that can be situated as much as each of the generators of El Cambalache.

In Figure 1, I provide an example of the range of the forms of diverse and hybrid economies. The image represents the presence of capitalism and non-capitalist moneyless networks in the economy, ranging from the developed to the majority world. On the left is the developed world, where a high degree of resources are only accessible through capitalist economic relationships. On the right side of the diagram is the majority world, where resources are accessible to different degrees through both capitalist and non-capitalist means. The two extremes of the range represent economies dominated by only one kind of economic system. On the left, resources are only accessible via capitalist means and on the right, resources are only accessible via non-capitalist means. The extremes of the range could be interpreted as (dis) (u) -topic (they do not actually exist in those ideal forms). The range between the two sides represents the possible varied composition of diverse and hybrid economies.



The great diversity of practices and beliefs across economic can be seen in the following examples of experiences from our lives. The members of the generators' group in El Cambalache hail from Sonora, Morelos, and Chiapas, Mexico and New York, USA. Here, I focus on the differences in the economic geographies of Mexico. These observations are based on the conversations I have had with the other generators about our lives. Sarai Garcia Lopez is from Sonora. It is a state that borders on the United States. Resource access for women is mostly dominated by moneyed interactions. Cinthia Pacheco Sanchez is from Morelos and Mexico City in the center of the country. It is similar to Sonora in that money dominates the majority of economic interactions. Both Sarai and Cinthia have Master's degrees, in Biochemistry and Agro-Ecology respectively.

This is distinct from Chiapas where, as a condition of coloniality, women have less access to money and women's access to resources is less dominated by moneyed interactions. Of the three

generators from Chiapas – Patricia de la Fuente Castro, Josefa Vazquez Martinez and Maria Intzin – each has lived in comparatively distinct hybrid economies. The municipalities of Comitán, Venustiano Carranza and Tenejapa have distinct economic geographies. Comitán is a small city with a population of around 150,000 people (INEGI⁵, 2017), located relatively close to the border with Guatemala. It has been one of the key points of trade and access to the tropical regions of the state (Aubry, 2008). Venustiano Carranza is a town of around 16,000 people (INEGI, 2017b) in the center of the state. It is a largely rural area under constant pressure from mining companies to undergo exploration in the municipality. Finally, Tenejapa is approximately the same size as Venustiano Carranza and similarly, about 75% of the population is indigenous (INEGI, 2017c).

Growing up as indigenous women, Josefa and Maria were exposed to very different worlds than Patricia, who grew up as a lighter-skinned *mestiza* in Comitán. Josefa (37 yrs. old) and Mary (24 yrs. old) were told from a young age that they could not inherit land, that their voice was of little importance in family issues, that their place was to clean, cook, and help raise their younger brothers and sisters. Patricia (55 yrs. old) grew up in Comitán in a very different time and place. Patricia was on a basketball team, she was encouraged to study accounting at university so that she wouldn't have to depend on anyone (according to her mother), and after finishing her degree, dedicated her life to feminism and indigenous rights social movements.

Conversely, my experience of growing up in the middle-class suburbs of New York City has been one of a high dependence on money; even walking in the nature reserves on Long Island requires money. In Huntington, Long Island, many activities that could lead to certain levels of self-sufficiency, such as owning chickens or other livestock on one's land, are not permitted by town ordinances.

⁵ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Institute of Statistics and Geography).

There, in my experience, one's identity seems to be constructed through the items one owns and the media one consumes. As mostly white middle-class Americans, we were taught that we should be the best, and that only the best prosper in class mobility. We were taught to desire money at all times, to expect to always be treated with respect, to acquire discerning tastes regarding food, style, music, etc. and never to settle for less. We attended the same schools as the children of the mostly El Salvadorian immigrants in the area, but in my college preparatory, arts and humanities classes we rarely mixed. Our socio-economic classes were made brutally clear from an early age.

El Cambalache is an attempt to reduce poverty (here understood as a lack of access to any given resource, be it physical or psychological) not by incorporating more people into a capitalist economy that creates its own specific type of poverty, but rather, by creating or enhancing other ways of acting economically parallel to, or outside of capitalism. So while one may not have access to much money, one often has access to a wide variety of physical and mental resources that are generally not well-valued in a capitalist system (e.g., women's ideas and physical work; indigenous labor in general; Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal and Chol knowledge and experience; knowledge about living and practicing hybrid economies; practices for generating collective thought and autonomous governance; pedagogical knowledge about how to teach others that they can do many things without being an expert; etc.). As a consequence, we refer to people and communities as being resourceful in order to create no differentiation between people who have a high level of access to money and people who have a low level of access to money.

For El Cambalache, it is important to include the emotional experience of economic exchanges in a capitalist market to know what interchange value should not be. The constant experience of letting people down, of watching your loved ones feel bad, go hungry, or suffer and even die from inadequate medical care because they cannot acquire everything that in a capitalist economy implies

success and wellbeing extends the oppression that is coloniality. Coloniality is present in the experience of constantly working, destroying one's body to acquire money, while knowing that the money will not be enough to meet one's basic needs.

Creating value

Interchange value is a praxis of valuing knowledge/abilities and discards that are de-valued in a capitalist economic system. In order to create value where it was once assumed that there was only poverty, El Cambalache had to do away with a hierarchical notion of value between things, knowledges, and abilities. The destruction of differential valuing of what is interchanged was done recognizing that when value is assigned, it creates artificial hierarchies that discriminate in myriad ways. Hierarchy within groups of things, ideas, resources or people is not only violent towards the lower rungs of the given scale, but also destroys the possibility for learning about, or with, and becoming close to that which is undervalued.

In order to remove the capitalist market value from an object or ability, it is not simply enough to say value is abolished; rather we have to rethink our interactions with the world and each other. Within interchange value, value is derived from continuing the "life" of objects, knowledge, or abilities, as well as giving the persons who consent to interchange them a sense of accomplishment and worth. Self-sufficiency or autonomy as expressed through one being able to resolve problems in a group or individually is a fulfilling experience. It creates inner strength for people and decreases one's sense of vulnerability. In El Cambalache, we work to spread knowledge around healthcare, construction, repair, electricity, cooking and other knowledge that support people increasing their wellbeing not only because the knowledge is useful and decreases one's dependence on money, but also because on a personal level, it is knowledge that builds internal strength because we become members of a community who can resolve our own problems. The desire to build autonomy, to know that we are capable of becoming a community that can fix itself has been a logical and fluid process derived from

the situation we find ourselves in with one another in Chiapas. We have started from where we are.

Over the past twenty-three years, the Zapatista communities and volunteers who come to participate in solidarity with them have created an immense amount of infrastructures in the region. Roads, high-tension electrical lines, water systems, an education system that attends to around 50,000 children, a limited but functioning healthcare system, a system of governance, a military, and an agro-ecological system have developed through the work of indigenous communities in resistance and their supporters. They did this with access to few resources and an immense community of support outside of the capitalist economic system and under constant psychological violence and regular threats of physical violence from the Mexican government. In El Cambalache, we have this massive example to learn from and build on.

The Zapatistas have taught us that one does not have to be an expert in a given form of knowledge or ability in order to practice it. El Cambalache is not a Zapatista project. However, all of the members of the project have learned a great deal from the struggle, the incredible infrastructure projects and the ideal of autonomy. We consider ourselves their allies and built our project out of inspiration from, and respect for their work. The world we work to create is built by practicing it, working with others to share and create new knowledge and being humble in recognizing that, collectively, we contain the knowledge to experiment and create worlds. Each person contains myriad abilities that might not be initially understood to contribute to each and every project, but can have exciting implications. It is often easy to forget in a money-dense society that each person brings much to the world. Rather than each person only being as worthy as their state-sanctioned education (or indoctrination), its titles and accolades that are created by others located higher up in the hierarchy, we recognize each person as a whole, resourceful being.

Conclusion

In El Cambalache, we use a performative approach to practicing the economy that is understood to be one of myriad ways of interacting economically. As an anarchist research project, it seeks to create what is often referred to in prefigurative politics as, building a new world in the shell of the old'. El Cambalache does not offer an all-encompassing solution to economic and social oppression. Rather, we suggest that by performing our economy on principles of non-domination and horizontality, El Cambalache has the potential to create relationships of care while decreasing our dependence on money.

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Summary

Research on anarchist economy can adopt performative methods. To understand how an anarchist economy creates and transforms social relationships, one has to be created to be studied. In San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, a small economy of moneyless exchanges is developing. El Cambalache (The Swap) is an all women-led project that focuses on creating a non-hierarchical economy out of the reuse, repair and re-circulation of things that people no longer need and the abilities, knowledge and services that people want to share. This article shares El Cambalache's theory of the value of non-hierarchical exchange, known as inter-change value. The economic practices used by El Cambalache reflect Tzeltal and Tzotzil indigenous women's local moneyless economic practices while expanding research notions on diverse economies that exist throughout the world.

Key-words: Anarchism, Chiapas, moneyless economy, diverse economies, feminism.

Résumé

Économie sans monnaie et valeurs d'échange non-hiérarchiques au Chiapas, Mexique

La recherche économique anarchiste peut adopter des méthodes performatives. Pour comprendre comment une économie anarchiste crée et transforme les relations sociales, il faut créer cette économie pour l'étudier. À San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexique, une petite économie d'échanges sans argent se développe. El Cambalache (*The Swap* en anglais) est un projet entièrement dirigé par des femmes qui se concentre sur la

création d'une économie non hiérarchique basée sur la réutilisation, la réparation et la remise en circulation de choses dont les gens n'ont plus besoin et des capacités, des connaissances et des services que les gens veulent partager. Cet article partage la théorie d'El Cambalache de la valeur d'échange non-hiérarchique, connue sous le nom de valeur d'inter-échange. Les pratiques économiques utilisées par El Cambalache reflètent les pratiques économiques locales sans argent des femmes autochtones Tzeltal et Tzotzil, tout en élargissant les notions de recherche sur diverses économies existantes dans le monde.

Mots-clefs: Anarchisme, Chiapas, économie sans monnaie, économies diverses, féminisme.

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